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Harmonious Instability: (mixed) Dancing And Partner Choice In German-Jewish And Yiddish Literature

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Abstract

This dissertation analyzes representations of the controversial Jewish cultural practice of mixed-sex dancing in German and Yiddish literature from 1843 to 1942. Dance scenes are a pivotal moment for plot and character development that resist and reaffirm social hierarchies, due to the paradoxical role of dance for upwardly mobile Jews. My corpus consists largely of regional fiction that targeted urban readerships in Berlin, New York, and Vienna. I find parallels between the formulaic plot structures and the dance choreography, a narrative strategy that engrosses readers, at the same time that it entraps characters in a tragic fate. Transgressive dance scenes are an important form of social criticism, since they provide an entertaining way for authors to depict the way that boundary-crossing romance threatens the social order. In this way, dance scenes depict the way that men and women negotiate the process of acculturation according to gender and class identity.

For centuries rabbinic authorities focused on the connection between improper dancing and sexual transgression, yet, starting around 1800, community leaders and writers of fiction express a greater concern with interconfessional and cross-class mingling on the mixed-sex dance floor. Nineteenth century German writers deploy the character types of the physically awkward Jewish man and the beautiful Jewish woman to decry their limited options for social improvement and mobility. When these characters enter into a romance on the dance floor, they typically encounter a bitter fate, since there was no solution to their impossible social predicament. Turn-of-the-century American Yiddish writers experimented with American-style physicality and the atmosphere of dance halls, even in works set in European villages; their works reflect the way immigration disrupted Jewish community structures. Writing for a Jewish audience, they had greater freedom to depict morally-ambiguous Jewish characters, including physically robust male antiheroes and their seductive female dance partners. By the early twentieth century, women writers (in both Yiddish and German) are less reliant upon stereotypical character types and formulaic marriage plots. Their female protagonists challenge the connection between dancing and courtship, since they use the dance floor as an opportunity to express themselves.

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HARMONIOUS INSTABILITY: (MIXED) DANCING AND PARTNER CHOICE
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Sonia Beth Gollance

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HARMONIOUS INSTABILITY: (MIXED) DANCING AND PARTNER CHOICE

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Sonia Beth Gollance

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ABSTRACT

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Sonia Beth Gollance

Catriona MacLeod

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This dissertation analyzes representations of the controversial Jewish cultural practice of mixed-sex dancing in German and Yiddish literature from 1843 to 1942. Dance scenes are a pivotal moment for plot and character development that resist and reaffirm social hierarchies, due to the paradoxical role of dance for upwardly mobile Jews. My corpus consists largely of regional fiction that targeted urban readerships in Berlin, New York, and Vienna. I find parallels between the formulaic plot structures and the dance choreography, a narrative strategy that engrosses readers, at the same time that it entraps characters in a tragic fate. Transgressive dance scenes are an important form of social criticism, since they provide an entertaining way for authors to depict the way that boundary-crossing romance threatens the social order. In this way, dance scenes depict the way that men and women negotiate the process of acculturation according to gender and class identity.

For centuries rabbinic authorities focused on the connection between improper dancing and sexual transgression, yet, starting around 1800, community leaders and writers of fiction express a greater concern with interconfessional and cross-class mingling on the mixed-sex dance floor. Nineteenth century German writers deploy the character types of the physically awkward Jewish man and the beautiful Jewish woman to decry their limited options for social improvement and mobility. When these characters enter into a romance on the dance floor, they typically encounter a bitter fate, since there was no solution to their impossible social predicament. Turn-of-the-century American Yiddish writers experimented with American-style physicality and the atmosphere of dance halls, even in works set in European villages; their works reflect the way immigration disrupted Jewish community structures. Writing for a Jewish audience, they had greater freedom to depict morally-ambiguous Jewish characters, including physically robust male antiheroes and their seductive female dance partners. By the early twentieth century, women writers (in both Yiddish and German) are less reliant upon stereotypical character types and formulaic marriage plots. Their female protagonists challenge the connection between dancing and courtship, since they use the dance floor as an opportunity to express themselves.

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INTRODUCTION: AN INVITATION TO THE DANCE

1. *Es war eine reiche Jüdin,
Ein wunderschönes Weib,
Die hatt' eine einzige Tochter,
Ihr Haar war schön geflochten,
Zum Tanze war sie bereit.*

2. *„Ach Tochter, lieber Tochter,
Wenn du zum Tanz wollst gehen,
Das wär ja eine Schande
Fürs ganze jüd'sche Lande,
Wenn du zum Tanz wollst gehn.“*

3. *Die Mutter wandt den Rücken,
Die Tochter sprang davon,
Sie sprang wohl durch die Gassen
Wo Herrn und Schreiber saßen,
Dem Schreiber sprang sie zu.*

4. *„Ach Schreiber, lieber Schreiber,
Schreib meiner Mutter ein'n Brief,
Schreib mein'n und deinen Namen
Schreib mich und dich zusammen,
Daß ich ein' Christin bin.“*

5. *„Ach Jüdin, liebe Jüdin,
Das kann fürwahr nicht sein!
Du mußt dich lassen taufen,
Susanne sollst du heißen,
Mein eigen sollst du sein!“*

6. *„Ach Schreiber, lieber Schreiber,
Das kann und darf nicht sein!
Eh ich mich lasse täufen,
Viel lieber will ich mich ersäufen
Im allertiefsten Meer!“*

- “Die Judentochter,” German folk ballad¹

Dance brings people together, yet it can simultaneously usher them towards a tragic end. In the nineteenth century German folk song (with Yiddish variants) cited above, a Jewish girl contemplates intermarriage, conversion, and even death as a result of her wayward dancing. Strikingly, in several versions of this folk ballad, the Jewish

¹ 1. There was a wealthy Jewess,/A wonderfully beautiful woman,/She had one daughter,/Her hair was beautifully braided,/She was ready for the dance. 2. “Oh daughter, dear daughter,/If you want to go to the dance./It would be a real disgrace/For the entire Jewish nation,/If you want to go to the dance.” 3 The mother turned her back,/The daughter jumped away,/She skipped through the streets/Where gentlemen and writers sat./She skipped over to the writer. 4. “Oh writer, dear writer,/Write a letter to my mother,/Write both of our names/Write the two of us together,/That I am a Christian.” 5. “Oh Jewess, dear Jewess,/That truly cannot be!/You need to be baptized,/Your name will be Susanne,/You will be mine!” 6. “Oh writer, dear writer,/That can and may not be!/Before I get baptized/I would prefer to drown myself/In the deepest sea!” All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. Song text in Ludwig Erk. “98^d. Die Judentochter.” *Deutscher Liederhort*, vol. 1. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1972), 353-4. This particular text was from the Dillkreis, Oberlahnkreis, and Kreis Wetzlar, recorded 1880-90 by E. Wolfram, who lists several variations to the song and claims it entered the German repertoire around 1800. Philip Bohlman and Otto Holzapfel cite several German and two Yiddish variations. See Philip Bohlman V. and Otto Holzapfel, eds. *The Folk Songs of Ashkenaz*, vol. 6. (Middleton, Wisconsin: A. R. Editions, 2001), 15-23.

daughter is ready for death rather than dancing, suggesting that the “jüd’sche Lände” (Jewish nation) regarded the sensational elements of the two activities to be virtually interchangeable. While it is hardly surprising for a ballad to envelop its characters in a dark and cryptic fate, the dance motif plays an equally, if not more, dramatic role in short stories, novels, novellas, and dramas, which utilize dance to aid in more extensive plot and character development. Dance is a medium of communication and confrontation that provides the testing ground for the unfolding of social interactions. Nineteenth and early twentieth century German and Yiddish literary texts often employ the trope of dance to give characters the illusion of freedom before pushing them towards a conclusion as unsettling as in any ballad.

In these texts, young people challenge the social order through their partner choice on the dance floor, and frequently suffer tragic consequences. This trope takes on a particular urgency in the case of Jewish literature, since dance often accompanies discussions of Jewish modernization and acculturation. While contemporary popular culture often portrays mixed-sex Jewish dancing as either absolutely forbidden or as the punch line of a joke, for writers in German and Yiddish, dance provided a powerful metaphor that could be employed with great versatility.² Dance gives expression to unruly desires in a deceptively permissive space, yet when the dancing stops, the dominant social structures remain enforced, and characters who do not adapt their passions often suffer tragic consequences. Social dance is crucial in German-Jewish and Yiddish literature because it conveys the temptations of acculturation in a form that

² For an example of a popular reference to Jewish mixed-sex dancing, see Nathan Englander’s short story, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank.” See Nathan Englander, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank,” in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank* (New York: Knopf, 2012), 27.

shows the way options are determined by gender, and it manifests itself in a way that entertains readers while serving an important narrative function.

My dissertation project explores the intersection of German-Jewish literature, Yiddish literature, dance studies, and gender studies. I investigate depictions of mixed-sex dancing in German-Jewish and Yiddish literature from about 1840-1920, and the way in which the trope of dance conveys concerns with Jewish tradition, authenticity, and gender roles.³ My corpus consists of prose, predominantly regional, fiction with romance plots that are intensified through dance scenes. My time frame not only coincides with the most frequent usage I have found of dance motifs in German-Jewish and Yiddish literature, but also with the development of regional fiction in German and Yiddish. More than simply seeking historical evidence of a cultural practice, my project investigates the literary depiction of dance. While *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* acknowledges that dances are “often occasions for courtship, for coming of age, and for significant discoveries, especially for the heroine” in modern novels, my project analyzes the specific role of the dance trope in literary fiction with Jewish themes.⁴ Well-placed dance scenes convey local color, emotional tension, and ways for characters to relate to one another without words. Frequently dance scenes appear at pivotal moments and serve as catalysts for changed social interaction between characters. Typically dance is associated not only with disruption of normal matchmaking practice, but even with death and violence. The act of dancing increases the dramatic stakes and creates a space in which it

³ Although the majority of my corpus was first written during this period, I will also address Kadya Molodowsky’s novel *Fun lublin biz nyu-york: togbukh fun Rivke Zilberg*, which was published in 1942.

⁴ Michael Ferber, ed. *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 52.

is possible to display emotions and attractions that might have otherwise remained hidden.

Throughout this study, I refer to authors and texts using the designations “German,” “Yiddish,” “American Yiddish,” and “German-Jewish.” These terms can be slippery, since they do not map out neatly onto national boundaries. Moreover, an author’s choice to include or exclude Jewish themes does not necessarily indicate his or her own religious or ethnic affiliation. When I refer to texts and authors as “German” or “Yiddish,” it refers broadly to the language in which the author wrote the text, rather than the national or religious affiliation of the author. For this reason, I include Leopold Kompert (a Bohemian-born Jewish writer who published German-language regional fiction in Vienna and incorporated Yiddish terms in his work) among the German writers, although he lived in the Habsburg Empire. This kind of general linguistic designation becomes more complicated in the case of Abraham Cahan, who wrote in both Yiddish and English. I have opted to include him among the Yiddish writers due to his influential Yiddish literary and journalistic career, the way his concerns as an immigrant writer make it difficult to completely separate between his Yiddish and English works, and the fact that even his English-language novel *Yekl* was published in a Yiddish version (and later adapted into a Yiddish-language film). I find it helpful to use the more specific term “American Yiddish” when referring to writers published Yiddish literature in America, regardless of where these authors were born or their texts take place. With the exception of Kadya Molodowsky, who first developed a literary reputation in Europe, the American Yiddish writers I discuss in depth in this dissertation first achieved literary fame in the United States, even though they were born in Europe. Finally, the term “German-Jewish”

refers to the cultural milieu of German-speaking Jews in the German states, German Empire, and Habsburg Empire, as well as scholarship that investigates the Jewish contexts of German literature, culture, and history. In some cases, I refer to “German-Jewish literature,” by which I mean German-language works that have Jewish themes and were typically written by a Jewish writer or published for a Jewish audience.

For the purposes of this dissertation, mixed-sex dancing refers to occasions in which men and women interact with each other on the dance floor. While mixed-sex dancing typically involves couples’ dances where partners touch each other, sometimes glances can be exchanged in ways that flout propriety even when dancers do not physically touch. Although my choice of the term “mixed-sex dancing” rather than the commonly-used “mixed dancing” emphasizes a concern with men and women dancing together in couples, frequently dancers from different classes or religions interact while dancing, thus creating additional layers of social mixing. The dances described in my corpus are usually social or folk rather than courtly dances. In cases such as the bohemian peasant dance in Leopold Kompert’s *Die Kinder des Randars* (The Randar’s Children), folk dances can underscore emerging nationalism. While the structure⁵ of individual dances can elucidate the way in which characters engage and have physical contact with each other, often writers do not provide specific details on the dance steps beyond the name of the dance or a general description of how characters are interacting with one another. In this way, when thinking of the contours of these different dance scenes, it is useful to keep in mind Gérard Genette’s concept of “figures,” the spaces between rhetorical speech and the actual meaning, since gaps in these dance descriptions (like

⁵ Such as whether dances were fast or slow, for one or four couples, if they involve close contact or approaching and retreating, etc.

whether a dance is specifically named) determine how a text can be interpreted and understood.⁶ The following table will help illustrate my corpus and the variety of dances described in my chosen texts.

Table of Dance Scenes				
<i>Title/Author</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Type of Dance</i>	<i>Cause for Dance</i>	<i>Consequences</i>
Berthold Auerbach, "Der Tolpatsch" (1843)	German	Ländler	Village spinning party	Protagonist's sweetheart flirts with and later marries his rival, protagonist joins military
Auerbach, "Tonele mit der gebissenen Wange" (1843)	German	Hopser	Wedding	Protagonist mutilated by her jealous fiancé, she is courted by his rival whom her ex-fiancé murders
Kompert, <i>Die Kinder des Randars</i> (1848)	German	Bohemian peasant dance	Drinking in tavern; wedding	Son shamed; dance associated with mother's death and daughter's near conversion and spinsterhood
Leopold Kompert, <i>Die Jahrzeit</i> (1865)	German	Quadrille	Leisure activity	Woman begins affair with and marries man who later abandons her, disinherited by parents
Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, <i>Der Judenraphael</i> (1874)	German	Kosatsky and kolomeyke; mixed-sex couple's dance	Purim ball; wedding	Interfaith love affair; he dances with her at her wedding and she dies in his arms, then he goes off and dies as well
Karl Emil Franzos, "Esterka Regina" (1877)	German	Mixed-sex partner dance	Wedding	Rekindled love between doctor and childhood sweetheart from village but she has arranged marriage to another man and

⁶ Gérard Genette, "Figures," in *Figures of Literary Discourse*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 45-60.

				only admits love on deathbed
Franzos, <i>Judith Trachtenberg</i> (1891)	German	Quadrille	Welcome ball for new lord	Romance between nobleman and Jewish woman; abduction, sham marriage, fake baptism, and suicide
Abraham Cahan, <i>Yekl</i> (1896)	English Yiddish	Waltz, Lancers	Dance lessons as leisure activity	Married man delays sending for wife; divorces her to start dance school with new wife he met at dance hall
Dovid Pinski, <i>Yankl der shmid</i> (1906)	Yiddish	Mixed-sex partner dance	Raucous dancing in smithy to celebrate birth of son	Man risks his marriage by dancing with other women, including his pretty boarder
Josef Opatoshu, <i>Roman fun a ferd ganef</i> (1912)	Yiddish	Waltz, Mazurka, Pas d'espan, Lancers	Drinking in tavern; wedding	Horse thief loses opportunity to marry sweetheart and to escape from life of crime when he publicly dances with friend's wife
Fradl Shtok, "Der Shlayer" (1912)	Yiddish	Lancers	Wedding	Social outcast experiences joy and flirtation before returning to reality
Clementine Krämer, <i>Esther</i> (1920)	German	Schottisch, theater dance	Wedding, performance	Girl traumatized by treatment during dance, leaves village, becomes dancer
Kadya Molodowsky, <i>Fun Lublin biz Nyu-York</i> (1942)	Yiddish	Mixed-sex partner dances including karahod	Leisure activities, Landsmanshaftn balls, wedding	War refugee loses her identity by succumbing to blithe American culture, especially dancing

Dances and balls appear throughout literature as a place for young people to meet, flirt, and form relationships, as any reader of *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (The Sorrows of Young Werther), *War and Peace*, or *Romeo and Juliet* can attest. A dance

allows young people to explore mixed-sex sociability in an environment enhanced by music, alcohol, and fine clothes. At the same time, social dances are often carefully choreographed, socially stratified affairs that reaffirm the dancers' conformity to social norms. While many of these social functions exist at Jewish dances, dance carries a special symbolic significance in traditional Jewish culture. On one hand, the ability to dance well could both help fulfill the commandment of making a bride happy at her wedding and enable an individual to present signs of good breeding and proper management of the body, a token of acculturation into European culture. On the other hand, one faces the risk of dancing too close, too fast, too passionately, or with the wrong person. While even traditional communities had varied interpretations of the prohibition against mixed-sex dancing, in literature such boundaries were frequently transgressed. Dancing or listening to dance music inspires flirtation and presents a challenge to the practice of arranged marriages. Even when Jews adapted aristocratic social dances for their own weddings and parties, rather than participating in non-Jewish balls, the act of dancing could have destabilizing consequences.

Dance proves particularly important in regional literature concerned with questions of authenticity and modernization. These popular narratives create images of traditional Jewish small town life that are often nostalgic, yet at times critical. Writers frequently convey concerns with modernization through a romantic plot between a sheltered daughter and a dashing outsider. In this context, popular romance literature explores the impact of a Jewish daughter's love match on the fabric of a community, whose folk songs and customs serve as examples of authentic culture. A social dance, especially a folk dance, is a fitting space to commingle questions of emerging national

consciousness (at least in the Central European context), continuity, partner choice, and cultural change. Indeed, these social dances are encounters in a mixed space set within another mixed space – the traditional village encountering modernization as described by writers who left the village for an urban environment.

In these texts, social dance becomes a metaphor for how characters navigate their social landscape. Since partner dances involve music, physical contact, and the potential for intimate conversation, the dance floor frequently becomes a heady, passionate space in which emotions are excited and ordinary rules of etiquette or proper gender and class relations fall away. At the same time, certain rules and formations are maintained, and those who stumble or do not perform well may feel compelled to marshal other forms of authority in order to regain their social position after the dancing stops. Numerous writers portrayed dance both as a pivotal moment for plot development and as a lens for observing insider and outsider status. My project examines the dance trope in German and Yiddish source materials and explores the complexities of language usage and choice of audience.

Literature Review

Jewish Dance

My project intervenes in the current scholarship in two major ways. First of all, I explore European Jewish dance as a literary trope that uses a common social activity to convey challenges to the traditional social order. Secondly, I build upon Jewish dance research taking place not just inside but also outside of the academy and explore the applications for German and Yiddish literary studies.

Recent German-Jewish studies scholarship has emphasized the importance of spaces where social mixing can occur. Studies of the Enlightenment salon,⁷ the literary café,⁸ and the spa⁹ expand our understanding of Jewish social mobility and leisure activities. At the same time, these narratives tend to focus upon forms of sociability that were only available to the intellectual or economic elite.¹⁰ Remarkably, social dance, the activity that was perhaps the most universal and celebrated form of mixed-sex leisure pursuit, has received little notice.¹¹ While there have been recent studies on European Jewish leisure, American Jewish modern dance, or on Israeli folk dancing, the topic of European Jewish social dance has scarcely been broached, particularly as it appears in literature.¹² This gap in the scholarship is surprising, since dance is a frequent and highly productive literary theme. My project breaks new ground both by presenting a corpus of

⁷ Deborah Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005).

⁸ Shachar Pinsker. "The Urban Literary Café and the Geography of Hebrew and Yiddish Modernism in Europe," ed. Mark Wollaeger, *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 433-60.

⁹ Natalie Naimark-Goldberg, "Health, Leisure and sociability at the turn of the nineteenth century: Jewish women in German spas," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 55 (2010): 63-91.

¹⁰ Glenn Dynner's historical study of Jewish taverns in Poland addresses social mixing in a non-elite space (where dancing took place, as seen in the book's cover illustration), although Jews and Christians play separate economic and social roles in the taverns. See Glenn Dynner, *Yankel's Tavern: Jews, Liquor, and Life in the Kingdom of Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Chapter 2 of my dissertation discusses a fictional Jewish-run tavern in Bohemia.

¹¹ This lack is particularly striking when one observes that several recent articles in the *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* about spas, Jewish leisure activities in Nazi Germany, and records of leisure activity in Louis Lesser's diary all reference (mixed) dancing as a form of recreation. In addition to the previously cited article by Naimark-Goldberg, see Jacob Borut, "Struggles for Spaces: Where Could Jews Spend Free Time in Nazi Germany?," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 56 (2011): 307-350 and Christopher R. Friedrichs "Leisure and Acculturation in the Jewish Community of Dresden, 1833-1837," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 56 (2011): 137-162.

¹² Judith Brin Ingber, ed., *Seeing Israeli and Jewish dance*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011). It is worth noting, however, that this collection does contain an article by Zvi Friedhaber about the *mitsvetants* (a ritualized wedding dance that tested the prohibition on mixed-sex dancing), as well as an article about an Early Modern Italian Jewish dance master and several texts about performance of Hassidic(-inspired) dance. For American Jewish modern dance, see Rebecca Rossen, *Dancing Jewish: Jewish Identity in American Modern and Postmodern Dance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). For dancing in Mandate Palestine, see chapters 3 and 4 of Nina S. Spiegel, *Embodying Hebrew Culture: Aesthetics, Athletics, and Dance in the Jewish Community of Mandate Palestine* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011).

texts that describe dance practice and by analyzing the importance of dance as a literary trope.

The academic literature about Jewish dance that does exist tends to focus on documentation of a cultural activity rather than analysis of a literary trope.¹³ Eastern European Jewish dance research often exists on the margins of klezmer music research, since a number of the most useful chapters and articles for dance research can be found within volumes devoted to the study of music.¹⁴ There are also few texts about Jewish dance aesthetics.¹⁵ Studies of dance in German literature tend to focus more on solo dance, theatrical dance, and dance in fin-de-siècle literature, rather than social or folk dance.¹⁶ Zvi Friedhaber's article on the *mitsve-tants*, a ritualized wedding dance with a separating kerchief, provides historical context for the prohibition on mixed-sex dancing, although Friedhaber's sources are rabbinic decisions and memoirs rather than literary

¹³ Walter Zev Feldman has written about Eastern European Jewish folk and theater dance. For instance, Walter Zev Feldman, "Bulgareasca, Bulgarish, Bulgar: The Transformation of a Klezmer Dance Genre," *Ethnomusicology* 38.1 (1994): 1–35. Ruth Rubin's chapter on dance songs in her book *Voices of a People* is useful for considering the social function of dance. See Ruth Rubin, *Voices of a People: The story of Yiddish folksong*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1973). Lee Ellen Friedland has also published an overview of the dances practiced by Eastern European Jews. See her article, Lee Ellen Friedland, "'Tantsn Is Lebn': Dancing in Eastern European Jewish Culture," *Dance Research Journal* 17 (Autumn, 1985): 76–80.

¹⁴ Consider Walter Zev Feldman, "East European Jewish Dance," in *Klezmer: Music, History, & Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016; M.[oshe] Beregovski, *Old Jewish Folk Music: the Collections and Writings of Moshe Beregovski*, ed. and trans. Mark Slobin (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982).

¹⁵ The exception that proves the rule is Nathan Vizonsky, "Vegn yidishn folks-tants." *Shikage* (1930): 28–29. Thanks to Karen Goodman for providing me with this article and her unpublished Association for Jewish Studies talk, which includes her translations and analysis. See Karen Goodman, "Thinking about Nathan Vizonsky, thinking about Yiddish dance," (paper presented at the annual meeting for the Association for Jewish Studies, Boston, 2010). Vizonsky grew up in Eastern Europe, studied dance in Berlin, collected Jewish dances in Poland, and became a pioneer of Jewish dance in Chicago. He discusses types of Yiddish folk dances and compares Yiddish and world dance, such as by claiming that traditional Yiddish dance expresses humor, satire, and grief rather than passion or joy.

¹⁶ See Lucia Ruprecht, *Dances of the Self in Heinrich von Kleist, E. T. A. Hoffmann and Heinrich Heine* (Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2006) and Gabriele Brandstetter. *Tanz-Lektüren: Körperbilder und Raumfiguren der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995).

fiction.¹⁷ Walter Salmen has written more specifically and at greater length about European Jewish dance than in any comparable dance text I have encountered, yet the sheer scope of his scholarly work gives his work a different focus than my project.¹⁸ A large proportion of the extant texts, perspectives, and research angles related to European Jewish folk dance come from dancers and folklorists outside of the conventional academy.¹⁹ I integrate discussions of Jewish dance from inside and outside the academy into my analysis of dance as a literary trope in romantic plots.

Romance and Marriage Plots

Scholars have noted the significance of Jewish literature in general and romance plots in particular for confronting modernization and the process of acculturation. Even though this tendency is common to both German and Yiddish language literature, extant critical literature does not discuss the two literary traditions comparatively in depth. Instead, the scholarship has diverged in several key ways. My work builds upon the extant scholarship about romance and marriage plots to hone in on plots that incorporate social dance, and look comparatively at literary discussions that have developed separately in German-Jewish studies and Yiddish studies. Because my study stresses the importance of a Jewish woman's choice of partner, I also incorporate historical scholarship that explores the importance of The romance and marriage plots I analyze, in

¹⁷ Zvi Friedhaber, "The Bride and Her Guests: The Dance with the Separating Kerchief," in *Seeing Israeli and Jewish Dance*, ed. Judith Brin Ingber (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011), 225-33.

¹⁸ Walter Salmen, "...denn die Fiedel macht das Fest:" *Jüdische Musikanten und Tänzer vom 13. bis 20. Jahrhundert* (Innsbruck: Edition Helbing, 1991).

¹⁹ Dancers Karen Goodman and Helen Winkler have provided useful video and online resources. See *Come Let Us Dance (Lomir Geyn Tantsn): Two Yiddish Dances, Heritage, Style & Steps*, directed by Karen Goodman (Burbank, CA, ca. 2002), DVD and Helen Winkler, "Helen's Yiddish Dance Page: Dances of The Jews of Eastern Europe," accessed August 15, 2014, <http://www.yiddishdance.com/>. Presentations by folklorists, dancers, and scholars at symposia hosted by the Center for Traditional Music and Dance (2007) and Yiddish Summer Weimar (2011, 2016) provided forums for Jewish dance research outside of the ivory tower, and have been helpful for my research directions.

both German and in Yiddish, question whether traditional Jewish ideas of partner choice were compatible with companionate marriage and western notions of physicality.

Studies of marriage plots in German-Jewish literature tend to focus on interfaith romance between Jews and Christians²⁰ (rather than interclass or interdenominational relationships) and German-language secondary texts in particular frequently catalogue many instances of a type or genre rather than focusing on the literary depiction of a few select themes or cases.²¹ Jonathan Hess' monograph on German-Jewish middlebrow literature is an exception to this overall tendency, since he discusses literary love matches between Jews of different economic or cultural backgrounds.²² Hess does not, however, delve into romance plots specifically in his chapter on ghetto literature and the work of Leopold Kompert. By building upon this German studies scholarship and focusing on a specific literary theme, I show the role of dance in initiating romance between young people of the same or of different faiths, and my study provides examples of both types of match.

Discussions of gender and romance in Yiddish studies, on the other hand, tend to focus on questions of readership and authorship. Romance literature is typically discussed as a way for authors to convey an agenda, and interfaith romance is even more rare in the secondary literature than it is in the primary texts. Dan Miron argues that Maskilic writers (proponents of the Jewish Enlightenment) used Yiddish-language romance literature

²⁰ Eva Lezzi, *“Liebe ist meine Religion!”: Eros und Ehe zwischen Juden und Christen in der Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2013).

²¹ Gabriele von Glasenapp and Hans Otto Horch, *Ghettoliteratur : eine Dokumentation zur deutsch-jüdischen Literaturgeschichte des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2005).

²² Jonathan M. Hess, *Middlebrow Literature and the Making of German-Jewish Identity* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2010).

specifically to appeal to and influence a female readership.²³ While Hebrew competency was a prestigious sign of male erudition, Yiddish enabled authors and their ideas to reach a much broader audience. Since there was a polite fiction that men should be reading Hebrew religious texts rather than Yiddish fiction, Maskilim targeted their Yiddish works at an audience of female readers, who might influence their families to take on a more modern way of life as a result of the Enlightenment ideas they found in their reading material. In many of these texts, romance plots are not merely a form of entertainment but also serve to poke fun at the custom of arranged marriages. In contrast with German-language ghetto tales, in which intermarriage was a frequent trope, intermarriage in Yiddish stories is much more rare than stories about matches between lovers of different classes or types of observance.²⁴ Studies of gender in Yiddish prose literature tend to focus less on the characters than on gendered attitudes towards Yiddish and the reception of women writers in Yiddish,²⁵ although Mikhail Krutikov,²⁶ Ruth Adler,²⁷ and Janet Hadda have explored the agency of female characters.²⁸ Naomi Seidman's recent study of marriage plots in modern Jewish literature takes a different, and masterful, approach by looking at the differences between Jewish and non-Jewish romance fiction, such as the

²³ Dan Miron, *A Traveler Disguised: A Study in the Rise of Modern Yiddish Fiction in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Schocken Books, 1973).

²⁴ In Sholem Aleykhem's *Tevye der Milkhiger* (Tevye the Dairyman), a young woman's rebellious choice of a marriage partner indicates change wrought by modernity, but only one of Tevye's five independent-minded daughters rebels by marrying a non-Jew.

²⁵ See Naomi Seidman, *A Marriage Made in Heaven: The Sexual Politics of Hebrew and Yiddish* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) and Irena Klepfisz, "Queens of Contradiction: A Feminist Introduction to Yiddish Women Writers," in *Found Treasures: Stories by Yiddish Women Writers*, ed. Frieda Forman et al. (Toronto, Ontario: Second Story Press, 1994), 21-58.

²⁶ Mikhail Krutikov, *Yiddish fiction and the crisis of modernity, 1905-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

²⁷ Ruth Adler, *Women of the Shtetl – Through the Eyes of Y. L. Peretz* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980).

²⁸ Janet Hadda, *Passionate Women, Passive Men: Suicide in Yiddish Literature* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988).

role of *yikhes* (pedigree), intergenerational relationships, and how traditional marriages were a way for scholarly men to achieve upward mobility by marrying wealthy women (which marks a sharp contrast from the way European marriage plots generally involve a woman's social advancement).²⁹ Yet because Seidman focuses on the unique features of Jewish marriage patterns, she does not draw attention to the role of mixed-sex dancing in courtship ritual. My study considers specific Yiddish studies approaches that complicate understandings of Jewish gender roles and marriage plots by focusing on what happens when traditional Jews partake in what was arguably the most western and heterosexual of courtship pursuits: couple's dancing.

In this project, I situate illicit romance on the dance floor and connect romance with the social practice of dance. In contrast to previous literary studies, I focus on the dance trope, and I furthermore engage with discussions from both German-Jewish and Yiddish studies in order to make fruitful comparisons. I draw attention to the literary trope of dance in specific stories, some of which have escaped scholarly attention. It is precisely because of the thorny interpersonal relations encoded by dance in stories such as "Tonele mit der gebissenem Wange" (Nip-cheeked Tonele), "Die Jahrzeit" (The Yortsayt), and "Der Shlayer" (The Veil) that these texts deserve a closer look. In German texts, romance plots involving dance frequently end in the deaths of one or both of the lovers. In Yiddish texts, dance frequently threatens existing relationships and often the plot concludes with no match (or no illicit relationship) taking place. This difference is significant because it suggests that twentieth century Yiddish writers framed acculturation as a choice between individualism and adherence to a community, whereas

²⁹ Naomi Seidman, *The Marriage Plot, Or, How Jews Fell in Love with Love, and with Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016).

nineteenth century German writers tended to present impossible situations where death was frequently the best alternative, or the most persuasive way of striking a chord with readers in order to inspire serious systemic change.

Village, Ghetto, and Shtetl tales

The traditional small town is, like dance, a contested and transitional space that serves as a site for boundary crossing. I engage with three subgenres of European regional fiction that have rarely been discussed together: *Dorfgeschichten* (village tales), ghetto tales, and shtetl literature. In short, *Dorfgeschichten* are German-language stories about German rural life, ghetto tales are German-language stories about traditional Jewish life, and shtetl literature consists of Yiddish stories about traditional Jewish village life. Thus far, literary criticism tends to focus on (a) defining the subgenres, (b) presenting the paradox of authors who were politically liberal (or even radical), well-educated, modern cosmopolitans, yet grew up in rural communities and describe these traditional communities with great ethnographic detail, or (c) (in the case of *Dorfgeschichten* and ghetto tales) the utility of post-colonial theory for discussing regional fiction. My comparative study takes into account existing scholarship of the individual subgenres and places them in conversation with one another.

The *Dorfgeschichte* is a mid-nineteenth century genre of German-language regional fiction that was popularized by Berthold Auerbach's *Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten* (Black Forest Village Stories). This literature resonated with rising German national consciousness, which was not always sympathetic to Jews. Surprisingly, in this context, two of the founders of the genre (Auerbach and Alexandre Weill) were themselves Jewish and depicted positive Jewish characters in their stories (although these

stories, unlike ghetto tales, did not focus primarily on the concerns of Jewish characters). *Dorfgeschichten* were set in villages and often written by authors who had grown up in villages, but they were designed for a more urban, educated audience. In a recent study that examines *Dorfgeschichten*, Josephine Donovan argues that post-colonial theory can help us understand nineteenth century regional fiction, since the forces of Napoleon, industrialization, and capitalism can be said to have colonized certain regions by forcing rationalist thinking and standardization.³⁰ She considers ghetto fiction to be a Jewish subset of the *Dorfgeschichte* genre, rather than a separate genre unto itself, and she provides an important and useful discussion of the role of women writers and characters in regional fiction.

German-language *Ghettoliteratur* (ghetto fiction), which had its heyday in the second half of the nineteenth century, describes traditional Jewish life in small towns. While small towns were never exclusively Jewish, some stories only portray Jewish characters whereas others focus on religious boundary-crossing in particular. Yet, in contrast to *Dorfgeschichten* (which had only minor Jewish characters), ghetto tales focus on Jewish characters and Jewish communal life. Most ghetto fiction did not take place in a designated Jewish neighborhood of a city, but instead in small towns where the “ghetto” referred to a mentality rather than a legally restricted area. Ghetto tales were aimed at Jewish and non-Jewish readers, although even the Jewish readers were German-speakers (who were typically more acculturated, more educated in secular topics, or from further west) rather than Yiddish-speakers (who were typically more traditionally religious and from further east). As in the case of romance fiction, many of the German

³⁰ Josephine Donovan, *European local-color literature: national tales, Dorfgeschichten, romans champêtres* (London: Continuum, 2010).

secondary sources are particularly useful for building a corpus and tracking down texts for further reading.³¹ Works that do not focus primarily on documentation and categorization provide useful resources for exploring the connections between different types of regional fiction. Florian Krobb draws connections between German-Jewish literature and concepts such as mimicry and hybridity in post-colonial theory.³² Hess's discussion of Leopold Kompert in *Jewish Middlebrow Literature* focuses more narrowly on one author, although he discusses the broader interest in ghetto tales and their relationship to village tales. Hess notes further that authors of ghetto fiction may follow a pattern of rebellion and artistic return similar to the common trajectory of Yiddish writers.

While scholars have explored the shtetl as a theme in nineteenth and twentieth century Yiddish literature, shtetl literature has not been classified as a separate genre. I posit that shtetl literature is a subgenre of Yiddish literature that enables writers to work through themes of nostalgia and anti-nostalgia. This opposition is more immediate in shtetl literature than for either *Dorfgeschichten* or ghetto tales, since writers of shtetl literature (who were raised in the traditional communities they depicted) targeted an

³¹ Glasenapp has written exhaustive analyses of German-language Ghetto tales, organized primarily by region. See Gabriele von Glasenapp, *Aus der Judengasse: Zur Entstehung und Ausprägung deutschsprachiger Ghettoliteratur im 19. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996). See also Itta Shedletzky, "Literaturdiskussion und Belletristik in den juedischen Zeitschriften in Deutschland 1937-1918" (PhD diss., Hebrew University, 1986) for a discussion of ghetto tales in the context of German-Jewish popular literature in periodicals. Mina Schiffman's dissertation, "Die deutsche Ghettogeschichte," is still cited by scholars, although Glasenapp criticizes it for slippage between German and Yiddish texts in its classification of the Ghetto tale genre. See Mina Schiffman, "Die deutsche Ghettogeschichte" (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 1931). Wilhelm Stoffers' *Juden und Ghetto in der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgang des Weltkrieges* is an 800-page tome that starts in the middle ages. It discusses many individual authors and provides brief discussions of numerous relevant works, although the use of certain terms that were prevalent at the time of publication (such as Aryan) can be jarring. See Wilhelm Stoffers, *Juden und Ghetto in der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgang des Weltkrieges* (Nymwegen: Wächter-Verlag, 1939).

³² Florian Krobb, *Selbstdarstellungen: Untersuchungen zur deutsch-jüdischen Erzählliteratur im neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000).

audience that had also been born in these communities and sometimes even still lived there. In this respect, shtetl literature differs from *Dorfgeschichten* and ghetto tales, which did not assume an audience that was familiar with the folkways or speech patterns of their characters. Dan Miron argues that this split between a modern cosmopolitan author and traditional village is a key to understanding “classic” Yiddish literature.³³ In *A Bridge of Longing: The Lost Art of Yiddish Storytelling*, David Roskies develops the notion of “creative betrayal” to characterize Yiddish storytelling.³⁴ Most modern Yiddish authors grew up in traditional communities and left for a secular urban life. Typically they began publishing in a language other than Yiddish, such as Russian, German, or Hebrew, but eventually they began writing in Yiddish about the culture of their childhood. The authors Roskies chooses for his biographical sketches ultimately style themselves as folk bards and write using folk idiom, even though their stories subversively argue for social and political change.

My project adds to existing scholarship by drawing connections between German- and Yiddish-language regional fiction. My work also expands upon existing studies of shtetl literature by discussing the important role played by gender. Although Roskies claims that he does not include any women writers because they tended to be more radical in their writing and did not style themselves as folk bards, I find it important to include a selection of women writers since the way they focus on self-expression on the dance floor instead of emphasizing the pursuit of romance adds a fuller dimension to the

³³ Dan Miron, *The image of the shtetl and other studies of modern Jewish literary imagination* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000). According to Miron “classic” Yiddish literature is from the period between the mid-nineteenth century to the start of World War I.

³⁴ David Roskies, *A bridge of longing: the lost art of Yiddish storytelling* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 17.

narrative arc of my project.³⁵ While Yiddish writers in both Europe and the United States employed the motif of dance in their works, the most relevant Yiddish texts for my corpus are predominantly American, which appears to have been a response to American physical culture, the ubiquity of immigrant dance halls, and the break down of European communal structures. Although my first chapter includes several examples of European Yiddish (popular) fiction about dancing, most of the more celebrated Yiddish authors who write about mixed-sex dancing do so in an American setting. Especially in the case of Abraham Cahan, they appear to have been influenced by an American physical ethos and American leisure culture.

Literary dance studies

My analysis of the motif of (mixed-sex) dancing in German and Yiddish literature draws from recent literary dance studies scholarship, particularly in the field of English literature, including studies of Jane Austen's novels. Such analysis is only beginning in German Studies scholarship, and is virtually untouched by Yiddish scholarship (Zev Feldman acknowledges dance scenes in his study of klezmer music, although he does not offer a specific methodology for reading this type of source). In her study of dance in Victorian fiction and culture, Molly Engelhardt makes connections between new, faster dances (such as the polka and the waltz) and powerful social changes in the nineteenth century: "social dances were indeed more physically demanding than those of the previous century and could potentially disrupt powerful contemporary ideologies attempting to define the middle class along gendered and spatial lines of demarcation."³⁶

³⁵ Ibid., 10.

³⁶ Molly Engelhardt, *Dancing Out Of Line: Ballrooms, Ballets, and Mobility in Victorian Fiction and Culture* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 3.

Focusing on the novel, she explores the metaphor of being “out of line” in both literature and dance, claiming that new forms of social dance and ballet allowed writers to depict the things that worried and excited them.³⁷ Since dance was a popular activity that uniquely transcended class, gender, and geographic boundaries, it represents a “more inclusive template for studying the Victorian social body.”³⁸ Engelhardt’s study considers dance an ambivalent practice, containing both hegemonic and subversive elements³⁹, and having the potential to be lewd, politically progressive, or a tool for teaching social decorum.⁴⁰ It is little surprise that, by the mid-century, “a ‘spirited woman’ had come to be often considered, at least on the surface, a potential deviant or susceptible to the emotional lure of this most spectacular of social scenes.”⁴¹ Writers express concern with the problem of women who find pleasure on the dance floor, especially since culturally dance was seen as leading to intercourse.⁴²

Cheryl A. Wilson’s study of dance and nineteenth century English literature argues that authors explore physical bodies and movement through descriptions of characters and narrative structures that resemble dances.⁴³ In Wilson’s reading, both the intricacies of the marriage plot and the geographical movements of characters follow similar patterns to dance choreography, a form of analysis that I build upon in my own work. Her reading parallels Sarah Davis Cordova’s claim that analysis of nineteenth century (French) fiction “provides evidence that the incorporation of balls and dancing not only

³⁷ Ibid., 6.

³⁸ Ibid., 9.

³⁹ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁴¹ Ibid., 20.

⁴² Ibid., 71, 56.

⁴³ Cheryl A. Wilson, *Literature and Dance in Nineteenth-Century Britain: From Jane Austen to the New Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.

affects the development of the plot and the characters' roles, it also impacts the texts' structure and poetics," since both works of literary dance studies emphasize the relationship between dance scenes and plot and character development.⁴⁴ Noting that characters (and readers) were trained in dance and skilled at reading dance scenes, Wilson claims: "Because of their status as popular entertainments and their centrality to so many aspects of nineteenth-century social life, the country dance, quadrille, and waltz were involved in topical debates over gender, sexuality, social mobility, and nationalism."⁴⁵ Dancing was, therefore, a daily life practice and a favorite metaphor for authors.⁴⁶ My analysis of the dance motif in German and Yiddish literature incorporates elements of both Engelhardt's and Wilson's methodologies, since I analyze dance in the context of social hierarchies and plot structures, but adapts them for the specific contexts of Jewish embourgeoisement.

For instance, Wilson discusses dancing manuals as a text, and acknowledges the tension between etiquette norms encoded in these manuals and actual transgressions on the dance floor.⁴⁷ While I also refer to dance manuals in this dissertation, and my discussion of Abraham Cahan's novella *Yekl* in Chapter Four contrasts Yekl's behavior at the dancing academy with the social codes inscribed in an etiquette manual, my reliance on dancing manuals is complicated by the seeming absence of Jews from dancing manuals. Upwardly mobile nineteenth and early twentieth century Jews attended dancing lessons and participated in social dances, and there were even Jewish dancing masters.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Sarah Davis Cordova, *Paris Dances: Textual Choreographies in the nineteenth-century French Novel* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1999), 4-5.

⁴⁵ Wilson, *Literature and Dance*, 8, 12.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁸ Walter Salmen, *Der Tanzmeister: Geschichte und Profile eines Berufes vom 14. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1997), 95.

Nonetheless, I have so far been unable to uncover a guide to dances that specifically addresses Jewish dances or Jewish dancers. Even German-language dance manuals that depict national dances do not depict Jewish folk dances; when they do refer to “Jewish” dances, it is in the context of Biblical dances.⁴⁹ I have been unable, as yet, to find any Yiddish-language dancing manuals. Memoirs and literary dance scenes, among other sources, suggest that acculturated German-speaking Jews performed popular social dances,⁵⁰ whereas ethnographic studies of Eastern European Jews suggest a combination of traditional, cosmopolitan, and regional dances in rural communities.⁵¹ Nonetheless, in the absence of a tailored guide, the precise contours of acculturation in European Jewish dance practice remain murky, in contrast to more in-depth research on similar cultural transformations in America.⁵² Such a lack points to the interesting situation the authors and readers of these dance scenes found themselves in: striving to perform (and even taking pleasure from) a refined dance choreography in hopes of fitting into a society that did not necessarily accept or acknowledge them. The tension between dance manuals (or the absence thereof) and Jewish dancers reflects nothing less than the overall problems of modernization and Emancipation, here refracted through the prism of mixed-sex leisure culture.

Chapter Overview

⁴⁹ See, for instance, Albert Czerwinski, *Geschichte der Tanzkunst bei den cultivirten Völkern von den ersten Anfängen bis auf die gegenwärtige Zeit* (Leipzig: J. J. Weber, 1862), 14-15.

⁵⁰ For instance, Max Daniels’s father led the contradanse and the polonaise in his community. See Monika Richarz, ed. *Jewish Life in Germany: Memoirs from Three Centuries*, trans. Stella P. Rosenfeld and Sidney Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 222.

⁵¹ For instance, Beregovski, *Old Jewish Folk Music*, 533.

⁵² See, for instance, Feldman, “Bulgaresca/Bulgarish/Bulgar,” 1-35.

My study examines the role dance plays as a plot catalyst and tool for character development in German- and Yiddish-language works about Jewish small town life in Central and Eastern Europe. I show how authors expressed the complexity of acculturation in a traditional context where mixed-sex leisure culture would have been particularly taboo, while emphasizing the utility of the dance motif for this undertaking. German and Yiddish writers entertained their urban readers by depicting cosmopolitan leisure practices and intriguing gender dynamics, while making larger points about modernizing Jewish society which varied according to language and cultural context. My framework for analysis involves five chapters, which cover both literary analysis and broader cultural history. I begin with a chapter that contextualizes the role of mixed-sex dance in modern Jewish literature and culture, and continue with four chapters, ordered chronologically, that focus on literary analysis of specific works according to themes.

The first chapter, "Positioning Social Dance," traces anxieties about dance in both the Jewish and German context, demonstrating that mixed-sex dance is a particularly fraught symbol of acculturation. For centuries rabbinic authorities focused on the connection between improper dancing and sexual transgression, yet starting around 1800, community leaders and writers of fiction express a greater concern with interconfessional and cross-class mingling on the mixed-sex dance floor. As is the case throughout the dissertation, writers are frequently unable to imagine a happy fate for characters who meet potential love interests on the dance floor, due to a perceived mismatch between newly-influential European courtship ritual (embodied by social dance) and the reality of traditional Jewish partner selection. Through these tragic outcomes, writers reveal their concerns about Jewish integration, acculturation, and modernization.

The second chapter, “Figuring the Village,” focuses on dancing and (outsider) masculinity in mid-nineteenth century German texts by Berthold Auerbach (“Der Tolpatsch” [The Gawk], “Tonele mit dem gebissenen Wange” [Nip-cheeked Tonele]) and Leopold Kompert (“Die Jahrzeit” [The Yortsayt], *Die Kinder des Randars* [The Randar’s Children]). These texts deploy stereotypes about ungainly Jewish men to make a larger point about Jewish masculinity and place in European society. While Auerbach and Kompert assume young women are able to dance competently, dancing is one of the key ways for young men to prove themselves, particularly in the course of love triangles. Auerbach uses sympathetic non-Jewish outsider male characters in his stories about German life in the Black Forest in order to depict the complicated social position of Jewish men. Whether they dance nimbly or awkwardly, these characters experience tragic fates, which shows the insidiousness of antisemitism, irrespective of Jewish conformity to German cultural norms. In Kompert’s stories about traditional Bohemian Jews, the dance floor is a key location for male rivals to embody the tensions between traditional Judaism and either Bohemian nationalism or a more cosmopolitan Jewish practice. For both authors, love triangles with dancing scenes are a productive way of introducing a sly political message about contemporary Jewish life into seemingly nostalgic works of regional fiction.

My third chapter, “Adapting the Jewess,” explores dance in connection with the stereotype of the beautiful, exotic Jewish woman in late nineteenth century German works by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (*Der Judenraphael* [The Raphael of the Jews]) and Karl Emil Franzos (*Esterka Regina, Judith Trachtenberg*). These texts show how young women challenge the practice of arranged marriages through a romance with an

inappropriate suitor whom they meet at a dance, thereby disrupting traditional Jewish marital patterns and bringing modernity into the domestic sphere. Despite the radical romantic choices of their female characters, both Sacher-Masoch and Franzos depict these women according to a stereotypical character type, and explicitly refer to the figure of Esther (either Queen Esther or the legendary Esterka, Jewish mistress of the Polish King Casimir the Great) as a precedent for a Jewish woman who finds love outside the limits of her community. Whether out of liberal ideology and a primarily aesthetic interest in Jewish culture (Sacher-Masoch) or intense political interest in Jewish modernization and the problem of antisemitism (Franzos), both authors reveal the limits of acculturation for women, since they can only imagine a fatal end for their heroines.

In “Upending the Shtetl,” my fourth chapter, I discuss how dance threatens preexisting relationships in turn-of-the-century American Yiddish texts by Abraham Cahan (*Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto*), Dovid Pinski (*Yankl der shmied* [Yankl the Blacksmith]), and Yosef Opatoshu (*Roman fun a ferd ganef* [Romance of a Horse Thief]). These two novellas and one play challenge the traditional scholarly model of Jewish masculinity through robust, dancing antiheroes who embody an American style of physicality. At a time when Jewish immigrants to New York were confronted with the break-down of traditional communal structures and the popularity of immigrant dance halls, the three writers I discuss in this chapter explore desire and transgression through social realism (Cahan), psychological drama (Pinski), and naturalism (Opatoshu). Their antihero protagonists must choose between women who represent pious and more sensual ways of life, a plot device that allows writers to explore male psychology at the same time that female love interests play a comparatively circumscribed role.

My fifth chapter, “Expressing the Self,” analyzes dance in twentieth century texts by Fradl Shtok (“Der Shlayer” [The Veil]), Clementine Krämer (*Esther*), and Kadya Molodowsky (*Fun Lublin biz Nyu-York: togbukh fun Rivke Zilberg* [From Lubin to New York: Diary of Rivka Zilberg]), in which dance functions as a source of self-expression. Where male writers center romantic love and marriage as the chief outcomes of (wayward) dancing, female writers focus on dance as a form of self-expression. While dance is a site of excitement and even flirtation, neither the authors nor their characters treat lasting romance as the necessary or even ideal outcome of dancing. Instead, dancing is a way for characters to explore their own personal maturation and better understand their conceptions of those around them. Because these characters understand the transitory nature of the dance floor (and authors are as, if not more, concerned with a woman’s ability to achieve autonomy as with political questions about Jewish continuity, cultural transmission, and antisemitism), they tend to avoid the dramatic tragic outcomes faced in most of the other texts from my corpus. Rather than treat female characters as a prize (as in Chapter Two), an exotic victim (as in Chapter Three), or one half of a virgin-whore dichotomy (as in Chapter Four), the two Yiddish and one German writer I discuss in Chapter Five focus on the development of their female characters, thereby providing them with tools to survive heartache and romantic disappointment.

My study of the literary trope of mixed-sex dance makes four important scholarly contributions to the discussion of European Jewish cultural practice in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It first of all discusses the Jewish process of acculturation through an angle that incorporates both non-elite mixed-sex leisure culture and the choices of female characters, and takes into account the many Jews who lived outside of

urban centers. Secondly, I look at marriage plots, a genre of literature that emphasizes the social conditions and agency of women and the centrality of family life, and compare the ways both male and female writers depict female characters as the embodiment of social change in German and Yiddish literature. Additionally, my project investigates the social function and importance of European Jewish social dance, a topic that has received little scholarly attention, especially in connection with literary studies. Finally, my project will open up the German-Jewish narrative by looking at the experiences and literary output of writers from rural Germany or from Central Europe. The writers I discuss grew up in environments where they interacted with traditional Jewish communities and folkways. As a result, when such authors turn towards writing about village life, they are often able to employ a large palette of folkloristic motifs and ethnographic detail, which was often unavailable for their better-studied counterparts who grew up in secular urban settings.

CHAPTER 1: POSITIONING SOCIAL DANCE

This chapter introduces the social practice of Jewish mixed-sex dancing. I argue both that mixed-sex dancing was a more prevalent literary theme than has previously been acknowledged, and that dance was a particularly fraught topic in Jewish literature, since writers utilized dance to depict their concerns with (modernizing) Jewish culture. While (earlier) rabbinic condemnations of mixed-sex dancing emphasize the connection between dancing and sexual transgression, later and more secular texts demonstrate how dancing could also be problematic in connection with acculturation. My chapter looks to anti-mixed-dancing rhetoric in both Jewish and German sources, before examining the specific tensions surrounding dance as a sign of acculturation in European, German, and Yiddish literature.

In the process of Jewish modernization, between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, a shift appears to have taken place in attitudes to the prohibition on mixed-sex dancing. The mere fact of Jews engaging in transgressive dancing was not new: rabbis had been prohibiting the practice, and Jewish communities finding ways around the restrictions, for centuries.⁵³ Yet while earlier writings on the topic tended to emphasize the threat of sexual impropriety *within* a Jewish community context, starting around 1800, there was a greater concern with the relationship between improper dancing and the violation of religious or class boundaries.⁵⁴ In short, improper dancing was seen to reveal the influence of values from *outside* the traditional community, and such behavior demanded a fitting response.

This is not to suggest that understandings of Jewish law had changed. As will be seen, rabbinic authorities continued to prohibit mixed-sex dancing, often referring to

⁵³ See Zvi Friedhaber, “The Bride and Her Guests: The Dance with the Separating Kerchief,” trans. Judith Brin Ingber with Rabbi Moshe Silberschien, in *Seeing Israeli and Jewish Dance*, ed. Judith Brin Ingber (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011), 225-33.

⁵⁴ Consider, for instance, Cecil Roth’s citation of a 1791 Yiddish-language pamphlet from London, which “deplored contemporary laxity in unmeasured terms. Parents allowed their children to go bareheaded; men and women came together in dancing academies, where they embraced one another without shame; they dressed like lords and ladies, and could not be distinguished from Gentiles.” Engaging in mixed-sex dancing is associated with other activities which blur the boundaries between Jews and Christians. See Cecil Roth, *The Great Synagogue, London 1690-1940* (London: Edward Goldston, 1950), 141. Thanks to Sharon Mintz for directing me to this source.

some of the same issues of sexual misconduct. Yet the contexts in which such prohibitions were written had changed, as could be reflected in these very condemnations. One example, as will be discussed in greater detail, is the phenomenon of rabbis seeking the help of secular authorities to prevent Jews from engaging in mixed-sex dancing, particularly when they might be dancing in Christian social settings. Since non-Jewish authorities were unlikely to be convinced by the dictates of Jewish law, it was incumbent upon rabbis to invoke secular reasons for preventing transgressive behavior.

These actions were reflective of general trends during the modern era. In the period following the Enlightenment, religious communities were forever changed by the growth of secularism, and Jewish communities in particular grappled with acculturation, religious reform, and political Emancipation. Even within a Jewish communal context, interpretations of Jewish law did not necessarily carry the same force as in previous generations, and it was necessary for authorities to appeal to such values as Jewish continuity, antisemitism, the family, and bourgeois propriety. Writers of Jewish popular fiction, whether they were religiously inclined or staunchly secular, portrayed mixed-sex dancing as a threat to the social order, even when they did not couch their concerns in religious language.

Not all mixed-sex dancing was equally subject to criticism. Dances in bourgeois German-Jewish social clubs or among Yiddish-speaking immigrants on New York's Lower East Side may have appeared to have simply been a sign of the changing times, a social practice that was popular enough to overcome any potential religious censure. Yet although these social spaces represented a new form of courtship, one which fostered love matches rather than arranged marriages, they did not necessarily challenge the

composition of the matches themselves, since participants in these social events did not necessarily cross class, educational, or religious boundaries.⁵⁵ The true controversy occurred, in life and certainly in literature, when individuals danced with, flirted with, and maybe even married those whom their families and communities would not have considered an appropriate match.

It is no coincidence that such anxiety about mixed-dancing coincided with the period of Jewish acculturation and Emancipation, since social dancing was the main mixed-sex leisure activity and, moreover, an important way for young people to display their adherence to the rules of fashion and etiquette while seeking out a marriage partner. Mixed-sex dancing was, in short, a key way for both sexes, in different ways, to show their commitment to acculturation, and to display this commitment in a mixed-sex setting within the context of courtship. The stakes were, therefore, potentially quite high, for the community, the family, and the individual him- or herself. Gustav Freytag's popular novel *Soll und Haben* (Debit and Credit, 1855) states the importance of appropriate dance pairings in characteristically unsubtle terms: "mit Tanzen fängt's an, mit der Hochzeit hört's auf" (it begins with dancing, it ends with a wedding).⁵⁶ While, in the novel, Freytag excludes both members of his Jewish couple from the dance floor (unlike the bourgeois and aristocratic couples), and indeed he even prevents their marriage from taking place, the writers I discuss in this dissertation work through the thorny process of Jewish cultural engagement precisely by putting Jews on the dance floor – and describing

⁵⁵ Marion Kaplan notes that bourgeois German-Jewish families in the nineteenth century might arrange for their children to "coincidentally" meet suitable partners at social events, suggesting that appropriate matches might not always involved a strictly formalized arrangement. See Marion A. Kaplan, "As Germans and as Jews in Imperial Germany," in *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618-1945*, ed. Marion A. Kaplan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 195-96.

⁵⁶ Gustav Freytag, *Soll und Haben: Roman in sechs Büchern*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: s.n., 1856), 220.

what happens when they encounter an inconvenient dance partner. Yet, like Freytag's Jewish villain, Veitel Itzig, who meets an ignominious end because there is no place for such a scoundrel in the harmonious social order at the conclusion of *Soll und Haben*, the tales of these Jewish dancers often end tragically precisely because authors could not envision a successful resolution for them. The fatal mismatch between the utopian fantasy suggested by the dance floor and a society that was unprepared to deal with a mesalliance meant that Jewish dancers could not find a proper place for themselves. As a result, the delights of the dance floor often led to tragic consequences.

Social dance was a pastime, social marker, and art form. In the words of dance master Rudolph Voss: "Eine schöne Haltung des Körpers, sowie anmuthsvolle Bewegungen desselben sollen im Tanze zum Ausdruck kommen." (A beautiful posture of the body, as well as lovely movements of the same, should be given expression in dance.⁵⁷) F. Wesner notes similarly in his dance manual: "Auf die Haltung des Körpers muß man beim Stehen, Gehen und Sitzen Acht haben, denn nichts kleidet den Menschen übler als eine krummrückige Haltung, ein nachlässiger Gang und fehlerhaftes Sitzen."⁵⁸ (One must pay attention to the posture of the body while standing, walking, and sitting, since nothing clothes a person more unpleasantly than a crooked-back posture, a careless walk, and sitting awry.) It was precisely this issue of upright posture and body deportment that made dance a complicated issue for Jews in the era of Emancipation, since many Europeans believed Jews lacked proper grace and physical carriage. Reformers, German nationalists, and from Jewish and Christian backgrounds all claimed

⁵⁷ Rudolph Voss, *Der Tanz und seine Geschichte: Eine kulturhistorisch-choreographische Studie* (Berlin: O. Seehagen, 1869), 13.

⁵⁸ See F. Wesner, *Gesellschaftliche Tanzkunst* (Leipzig: Verlag Junst und Wiss., ca. 1890), 29.

that Jewish men had spent too much time hunched over their Talmud volumes in crowded, unhealthy Jewish quarters. Since the discourse around Jewish physical deportment typically concerned masculine fitness, scholars tend to focus on traditionally male activities (such as gymnastics, dueling, and military service) in the creation of the “New Jew.⁵⁹” Yet as we will see, the mixed-sex space of the dance floor was also an important place for physical encounters that crossed social boundaries.

While the dance floor was one proving ground among several available to Jewish men, it played a unique role for Jewish women in the context of courtship and marriage. Although scholars have shown that, in reality, Jewish women had several options for social mobility in the nineteenth century, marriage remained the preferred strategy in literary representations by Jewish and Christian authors alike.⁶⁰ Marriage plots entertained the readers of the popular Jewish weekly *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* (Universal Journal of Jewry) and became one of the hallmarks of emerging modern Jewish literature.⁶¹ A woman’s ability to choose her own marriage partner was an important theme for writers who sought to depict, and decry, the constrained social position of Jewish women in traditional communities. It is precisely because Jewish women had fewer opportunities for social mobility and acculturation outside of marriage

⁵⁹ See Sander Gilman, ‘The Jewish Foot: A Foot-Note to the Jewish Body’, in *The Jew’s Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 38-59; George L. Mosse, *Confronting the Nation: Jewish and Western Nationalism* (Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis University by University Press of New England, 1993); Daniel Wildmann, “Jewish Gymnasts and Their Corporeal Utopias in Imperial Germany,” in *Emancipation through Muscles: Jews and Sports in Europe*, ed. Michael Brenner and Gideon Reuveni (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 27-43.

⁶⁰ See Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin*; Iris Parush, *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2004); Benjamin Maria Baader, *Gender, Judaism and Bourgeois Culture in Germany, 1800-1870* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

⁶¹ See Hess, *Middlebrow Literature and the Making of German-Jewish Identity*, 111-56; Seidman, *The Marriage Plot*.

that marriage plots took on a crucial importance. These narratives often concern a sheltered daughter's love match with a suitor deemed inappropriate by her family, and the dance floor was a key location for their daring first encounter. In literature, social dance served a unique role in allowing young people to meet, and interact physically, without the involvement of the family or matchmaker.

In the literary texts I discuss in this dissertation, dance scenes act as a microcosm for Jewish integration in European (or American) society. A ball was, as Monika Fink characterizes it, a "Spiegelbild sozialer und politischer Strukturen" (reflection of social and political structures).⁶² Such scenes convey the appeal of a mixed-sex leisure pursuit in a seemingly permissive setting, yet also reveal the limited options for actual social mobility. Despite these overall patterns, individual scenes vary in terms of social context, type of dance, amount of description, and precise nature of engagement with non-Jewish culture. While I typically use the term "acculturation," since it expresses a form of cultural integration that does not exclude affiliations with a Jewish community or institutions, in some of the literary texts I discuss, it might also be appropriate to use terms such as "assimilation" or, conversely, "dissimulation" to characterize the specific ways in which characters affiliate with or reject certain types of cultural engagement. Nonetheless, all three terms point to the question of how and where boundaries should be drawn between religious groups and cultural practices. In literary plots, dance scenes take place at the fracture points between these identities and they embody the problems of modern Jews, in a manner that was designed to appeal to readers.

⁶² Monika Fink, *Der Ball: Eine Kulturgeschichte des Gesellschaftstanzes im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 1996), 11.

The Jewish Taboo of Mixed-Sex Dancing

When rabbinic authorities invoke biblical prohibitions to forbid mixed-sex dancing, they are usually concerned with sexual impropriety. Although mixed-sex dance is not specifically prohibited, scholars of Jewish legal texts cite regulations which can be understood to prevent mixed-sex dancing (other than between a married couple when the wife is not in a ritually impure state). They are typically concerned with the prohibition on lewdness (Leviticus 19:29), the possibility of a man coveting another man's wife (Exodus 20:14), or the prospect of a man touching (and therefore risking sexual contact with) a woman who is in a state of *niddah*, ritual impurity (Leviticus 18:19). Sometimes precedents of separate-sex dancing might be invoked, such as Miriam dancing with the Israelite women after the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 15:20) and Michal watching King David's victory dance from a window (2 Samuel 6:16), since they suggest separate-sex dancing was the norm (even if the precise separation between the sexes is unclear).⁶³

In her dissertation on Hassidic dance, Feigue Berman discusses the codification of single-sex dancing in the Talmud:

By the late third and early fourth century, the first legal written antecedents to separate men from women on festive occasions appeared in the Talmud. The Talmud prescribes that to avoid frivolity and avoid tempting the 'yetzer hara' (evil inclination), during the festivities of Simhat Beit ha-Sho'evah on Sukkot men and women should celebrate in separate quarters. This separation culminated in total segregation that extended to weddings and funerals. It seems that segregation in dance was a response to the belief that mixed dancing led to 'indecent behavior'.⁶⁴

In the ensuing centuries, rabbinic authorities continued to condemn the practice of mixed-sex dancing in frequently colorful terms. In his fourteenth century Ethical Will, written in

⁶³ Feigue Berman, "Hasidic Dance: An Historical and Theological Analysis" (PhD diss., New York University, 1999), 94-95.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

Germany shortly after the Black Death, Eleazar of Mainz warns his sons against mixed-sex dancing and his daughters against dancing with strangers, saying that frivolous and improper contact between the sexes leads to sinful behavior.⁶⁵ A fifteenth century manuscript by Rabbi Yohanan Luria of Alsace scolds men who embrace women (even married ones) with their bare hands and dance with them while singing and drinking.⁶⁶ Rabbi Benjamin Ze'ev the son of Mattathias (who lived in Greece in the first half of the sixteenth century) advised excommunication for married couples that switched partners while dancing.⁶⁷ It was improper for a married woman to dance with anyone other than her husband, not only out of respect for Biblical prohibitions, but also out of concern that a man might inappropriately grab or fondle a married woman.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Eleazar of Mainz, "Reading 4-516B: The Testament of Eleazar of Mainz," in *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews, Source Reader*, eds. William W. Hallo, David B. Ruderman, Michael Stanislawski (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1984), 142.

⁶⁶ Friedhaber, "The Bride and Her Guests," 227.

⁶⁷ Binyamin Ze'ev ben Matityahu, *Binyamin Ze'ev* (Venice: D. Bomberg, 1538), para. 304, p. 439a-b. Thanks to Tamara Morsel-Eisenberg for bringing my attention to this source and to Avi Garelick for his translation.

⁶⁸ See "169. Responsa Binyamin Zeev, #303," in *Controversy and Dialogue in the Jewish Tradition: A Reader*, eds. Hanina Ben-Menachem, Neil S. Hecht, Shai Wosner (London: Routledge, 2005), 205. Thanks to Jordan Katz and Wojciech Tworek for their assistance in locating this source.



Caspar Jacobsz Phillips, after Pieter Wagenaar (II), *Gemaskerd bal, by gelegenheid van het Joodsche Purim-Fest* [Masked Ball at a Jewish Purim Celebration], Amsterdam 1780, Engraving, 220 mm x 359 mm; Rijksmuseum

The anonymous late medieval *Sefer ha-kanah*, a kabbalistic text, further illuminates concern with the potential for dance to corrupt married women. Stating that mixed-sex dancing (lit. dances with women) are forbidden, the text proclaims that women who participate in mixed-sex dancing are suspected of having forbidden sexual relations. Even if they later have marital relations, they will still think back on their dance partners: “And so when there is a dance of men and women who are married, and the women have intercourse with their husbands, their thoughts will not part [from dancing] even at the

time of intercourse, because they remember their dance partner's movements."⁶⁹ Here we see a clear an explicit connection between dancing and the sex act. The text further elaborates upon this connection by detailing the twenty-six sins that result from mixed-sex dance, including pressing bodies against each other while dancing, suggestively holding hands, kissing, fondling, intercourse, coveting a neighbor's wife, desecrating the Sabbath, and forbidden or adulterous relations. While it would be misleading to assume that these various transgressions all carry a similar weight or would apply in every instance, the cumulative list represents a damning condemnation of mixed-sex dancing, focused primarily on sexual transgressions.

More recently, the Polish rabbi Israel Meir Kagan (Chofetz Chaim, 1838-1933) similarly details the transgressive nature of mixed-sex dancing in his *Mishna Berurah* commentary to the legal codex *Shulkhan Arukh*. Improper dancing leads to prostitution, masturbation, and punishment in *gehenem* (hell). It is the responsibility of rabbis to forbid it, since regardless of what simple people may believe, there is no difference in degree in transgressions, even when women are unmarried:

To sum up, there is no bigger fence to safeguard against nakedness [ervah] than the annulment of dances [rikudin u-meholot] of men and women together, regardless of whether they are married or single, as there is no degree in lewdness, and it leads to nakedness [ervah] and moreover it makes people accustomed to transgressions. And we who receive the Torah are obliged to build a fence and a barrier to prevent this from happening, etc.⁷⁰

Mixed-sex dancing is therefore the gateway to other forms of licentious behavior.

Kagan's list of multiple prohibitions on mixed-sex dancing, like the instances

⁶⁹ Shmuel Diamant, *Sefer ha-kanah of Or Tzvi* (Krakow: Yosef Fisher, 1894), 204. Thanks to Avinoam Stillman for bringing my attention to this source and to Wojciech Tworek and Jordan Katz for their assistance with this text.

⁷⁰ Israel Meir Kagan, "Be'ur halakhah," in *Mishna Berurah*, vol. 2 (Warsaw: Shriftgesser, 1891), para. 339, p. 186. Thanks to William Zev Pahl for bringing my attention to this source and to Wojciech Tworek for his assistance in translation.

mentioned in the previous paragraph, suggests that Jews did not reliably follow the bans on dancing that were proscribed by their religious leaders. The historical record contains many examples of prohibitions, implying that Jews frequently broke the rules.

Despite such prohibitions, even traditional European Jewish communities often had complicated notions about what constituted mixed-sex dancing and what amount of contact was appropriate between the sexes. Dance scholar Zvi Friedhaber suggests that most Eastern European Jews in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not refrain from direct contact during mixed dancing, leading to Rabbinic warnings.⁷¹ In Western Europe, a tradition developed of wrapping a bride's hand with a cloth (such as a glove or part of her skirt) to avoid direct physical contact with men. In Eastern Europe, a handkerchief (called a *patshayle* or *tikhl*) was the preferred form of separation.⁷² The resulting dance, where men (and famously Chassidic rebbes) danced with a bride with the aid of a separating handkerchief, was known as the *mitsve-tants* (dance which fulfills the commandment of entertaining a bride at her wedding) or even the *kosher-tants*.⁷³ Eighteenth and nineteenth century memoirs recount both traditional separate-sex dancing and Jewish versions of European social dances (such as quadrilles, Les Lanciers, and the pas d'Espagne).⁷⁴ While in many cases these social dances were performed by groups of young women, some of these dances were danced by men and women together. Feldman classifies such dances as the cosmopolitan repertoire.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Friedhaber, "The Bride and Her Guests," 226.

⁷² Ibid., 226-27.

⁷³ Ibid., 228-29.

⁷⁴ Some are listed in *ibid.*, 230-32.

⁷⁵ Feldman, *Klezmer*, 207-08.



Fig. 2: *Dos "mitsve-tentsl,"* Postcard, Scan from the Joseph and Margit Hoffman Judaica Postcard Collection, Folklore Research Center, Hebrew University of Jerusalem (hof9-0128)

While in many instances Jews integrated social dances into their own communal contexts, they also danced in non-Jewish contexts. Such acts presented a greater challenge to the social order, in part because Christian establishments were outside the purview of Jewish communal authorities. As a result, rabbis might feel compelled to seek out the assistance of state authorities to bring an end to such transgressive behavior. Rabbi Yedidia Weil of Karlsruhe wrote to his local government to request help in forbidding Jews to attend dances and masquerades. In a document from February 22nd, 1786, he explains the reasons why Jewish youth should be punished for immoral behavior if they attend balls and masquerades, including the fact that it was already forbidden by the community, that only the kind of Jew who would consume unkosher products would attend such events in a mask, most masquerade clothing is made of a combination of

linen and wool [shatnez] that is forbidden by Jewish law, there is a tendency to engage in cross-dressing in violation of a Biblical commandment, and that it is forbidden for men to dance with women.⁷⁶ While most of Rabbi Weil's grounds for his prohibition are based on scripture, his list also suggests a specific concern with Jews interacting with Christians by attending non-Jewish functions in disguise (so that they can eat forbidden food) and frequenting non-Jewish tailors (who would make masquerade clothing that was not designed according to the dictates of Jewish law). What is more, although Rabbi Weil cites scripture to explain why these actions are against Jewish customs, he requests governmental assistance in order to restore respect for the Jewish court, rather than for divine law. Although transgressive dancing violates biblical commandments, it is primarily treated as an offense against the community's ability to regulate morality.

Rabbi Weil was not the only Jewish leader to petition the state for support in upholding Jewish morality. On August 3rd, 1827, Rabbi Shloyme Zalmen Lipshits of Warsaw decided to put an end to the immoral behavior of the Jewish youth, who were taking advantage of the warm weather to go to carousing in Christian gardens, where the community beadles had no authority: "di 'mufkorim' hobn dort take geton, vos zey hobn zikh gevolt, getantst bokhurim mit meydlekh, getrunken un batsolt um shabes un yontef."⁷⁷ (The "immoral" people did as they wished, boys danced with girls, they drank and spent money on the Jewish Sabbath and holidays.) Rabbi Lipshits went to the municipal authorities to request military support for the beadles in eradicating such

⁷⁶ Y. L. [ifshitz], "R. Yedidiye Vayls kamf kegn maskaradn un tents in Karlsrue," in *Arkiv far der geshikhte fun yidishn teater un drame*, ed. Jacob Shatzky, vol. I (Vilna: Yidisher visnshaftlekher institut, 1930), 452-53.

⁷⁷ A. N. Frenk, "Di milkhome kegn der 'hefkeyrus' in amolikn Varshe: a kapitl geshikhte fun dem inerlekhn yidishn lebn in Varshe in der ershter helft fun 19-stn yorhundert," in *Almankh tsum 10-yorikn yubilum "Moment"* (Warsaw: Der Moment, 1921), 103. Thanks to Glenn Dynner for making me aware of this source.

improper behavior (claiming that a person who engaged in such practices could not be a good, loyal citizen), and his request was granted. As a result of these (sometimes violent) measures, Jews were largely confined to the Jewish quarter, at least for a time. By 1833, Jews were audaciously engaging in questionable leisure time pursuits (including dancing) in both summer and winter.⁷⁸ Since the chain of command had shifted since the Polish revolt, this time the Congregational Board (Dozór Bóźniczy) went to the police commissioner to request that the beadles have the authority to compel violators of Jewish law to appear in the police commissioner's administrative office.⁷⁹ The request was granted, again reestablishing the power of community authorities through cooperation with state forces. Jewish community leaders and state authorities shared a common interest in keeping the Jewish youth pious, decorous, and restricted to the Jewish quarter. While Jewish leaders may have professed the importance of Jewish law to the Jewish masses, they petitioned the state authorities using the language of good citizenship, obedience to authority, and general morality.⁸⁰

While most of the texts discussed in this section depict the concerns of communal leaders (and defiance by Jewish dancers), mixed-sex dancing was also an important symbol for modern writers and their urban audiences. Acculturated Jews, many of whom

⁷⁸ Ibid., 106.

⁷⁹ For more about Jewish communal authorities in Poland, see Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881*, trans. Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 84-85.

⁸⁰ Christian authorities also restricted Jewish dances, such as through sumptuary laws limiting the number of musicians who were permitted at Jewish weddings and prohibitions on Jewish dances that corresponded with Christian holidays. See, for instance, a police account of an unauthorized Purim ball held on April 24th, 1799 in Kasejovice on Good Friday, in: Wilma Iggers, ed. *Die Juden in Böhmen und Mähren: Ein historisches Lesebuch* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1986), 59. Also available in English: Wilma Abeles Iggers, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: A Historical Reader*, trans. Wilma Abeles Iggers, Káča Poláčková-Henley, Kathrine Talbot (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 62. Depending on social class, Jews who were involved in the ball were punished with fines, physical blows, or detention, and the police commissioner was reprimanded. See also Salmen, "... den die Fiedel macht das Fest," 31-32.

participated in social dances themselves, were aware of the significance of dance in both a traditional Jewish and refined European context. By gesturing to traditional prohibitions on mixed-sex dance and alluding to the appeal of the ballroom, writers of fiction with Jewish themes could titillate their audiences while addressing the clash between tradition and modernization in critical terms. As will be seen, writers who opposed dancing on religious grounds, those who welcomed it as a sign of education and modernization, and even those who simply found it a useful to depict the consequences of changing times considered the controversial practice of mixed-sex dancing a useful motif for embodying the central conflicts of their literary texts.

The Dangers of Dance in German Dance Manuals and Etiquette Guides

Jewish community leaders and writers of fiction with Jewish themes were not alone in having complicated feelings about dancing. German-language dancing manuals and etiquette guides written from a non-Jewish perspective also portrayed the dance floor as a fraught space.⁸¹ Yet their concerns were typically of a different nature. Since dance manuals doubled as a form of advertisement for the dancing masters who wrote them, manuals caution about the dangers of not knowing the proper etiquette or dance steps. Proper attendance at dancing lessons, or purchase of the book, would help rectify such deficiencies and give a dancer the proper cultural cachet on the marriage market, since: “in vielen Fällen ein guter Walzer sogar schwerer wiegt auf der Wage der Balldamen als

⁸¹ Especially in the apparent absence of dancing manuals designed for specifically Jewish readers, one presumes at least some acculturated German-speaking Jews would have consulted these dancing manuals (or the dancing masters who wrote them) when seeking out guidance about proper ballroom deportment. See also my discussion of dance manuals in the “Literary Dance Studies” section of the Literature Review in the Introduction.

– ein *Dr. cum laude*.⁸² (in many cases a good waltz carries more weight with the ballroom ladies than – a *Dr. cum laude*.) In this case of brawn beating out brains, a few minutes of well-executed intimate dancing could be more compelling than a prestigious degree (and, by implication, the financial means or social position necessary to acquire one).

Other guides stressed concern for the well-being of young women. Physical exertion on the dance floor was an exhilarating aspect of courtship that, moralists warned, could pose a threat to the physical health of refined young women. One 1834 conversation lexicon warned about the dangerous physical toll of dancing, warm air, and the ill-timed consumption of heating and cooling drinks: “so braucht man sich nicht verwundern, wenn Blutspeien und Lungenschwindsucht oft die Folgen vom Tanzen sind.⁸³” (one need not be astonished that spitting up blood and pulmonary consumption are often the consequences of dancing.) Writing in a similar, yet more dramatic, tone in 1820, L. Laenger cautions young ladies to pay heed to their physical health on the dance floor, warning against the hazards of so much strenuous activity: “Ich habe den traurigen Fall erlebt, daß ein wohlgebildetes, gesundes Mädchen von 17 Jahren um 8 Uhr Abends auf dem Balle tanzte und früh um 2 Uhr todt nach Hause getragen wurde, weil sie nach dem Tanze, an einem offenen Fenster stehend, ein Glas Mandelmilch trank, plötzlich

⁸² Emil Rocco, *Der Umgang in und mit der Gesellschaft: Ein Handbuch des guten Tons* (Halle a. d. Saale: Otto Hendel, n.d. [ca. 1891]), 155.

⁸³ Anonymous, *Conversations-Lexikon für alle Stände: eine Encyklopedie der vorzüglichsten Lehren, Vorschriften und Mittel zur Erhaltung des Lebens und der Gesundheit der Menschen und der nutzbaren Thiere, sowie zur Conservirung aller für die Bedürfnisse, die Bequemlichkeit und das Vergnügen der Menschen bestimmten Einrichtungen, Produkte und Waaren* (Leipzig und Stuttgart: J. Scheible's Verlags-Expedition, 1834), 412.

umfiel und todt blieb.“⁸⁴ (I experienced the tragic case of a healthy, well-educated girl of 17 years who danced at a ball at 8 pm and was carried home dead at 2 am, because, while standing next to an open window after the dance, she drank a glass of almond milk, suddenly collapsed, and lay dead.) Perhaps the most famous high culture example of this anxiety was the romantic ballet *Giselle*, in which the heroine dies prematurely while dancing.⁸⁵ Worries about the fragile health of young women were compounded when it came to dancing in situations that threatened a young woman’s virtue.

Even though dance manuals provided scrupulous advice about ballroom etiquette, moral guides warned about ethical lapses on the dance floor. In the story “Der erste Schritt: Eine Betrachtung nebst beigefügter Erzählung” (The First Step: A Contemplation Along with Enclosed Narrative), part of a polemical 1832 collection of stories and verse that decried the dangers of dancing, a fictional pastor declares that marriageable young men prefer to marry women they meet in church rather than on the dance floor:

Die Bekanntschaften, die auf dem Tanzboden geschlossen werden, sind nimmermehr, oder höchst, höchst selten glückliche. Gerade die jungen Bursche, die am tollsten mit den Mädchen herum rasen, sagen Tags darauf oft bei dem Bierkrüge von ihren nicht minder leidenschaftlichen Tänzerinnen: Die und die ist ein prächtiges Mädels, das ist wahr, sie kann sich drehen, daß der Staub davon fliegt, aber heirathen – nein, heirathen möchte ich sie nicht. Seid dessen gewiß; der brave Mann sucht sich sein Weib eher in der Kirche als auf dem Tanzplatze; den redlichen, wackern Jüngling fesselt an die Jungfrau nur ihr stilles, häusliches Walten, nur ihre verschämte, verhüllte Zärtlichkeit, nur ihr sitzames, züchtiges, bescheidenes Gemüth.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ L. Laenger, *Erinnerungs-Buch: zum Nutzen und Vergnügen für meine Schüler und Schülerinnen. Nebst einem Anhang der neuesten gesellschaftlichen Tänze für gebildete Stände* (Hildburghausen: s.n., 1820), 119.

⁸⁵ Inspired by Heinrich Heine’s writings about the Germanic folk beliefs, the ballet tells of a German peasant woman who dies before her wedding day. She is reborn as a *willi*, a ghostly dancer who forces men to dance to death. For an analysis of *Giselle* in terms of gender and class politics, see Sally Banes, *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage* (London: Routledge, 1998), 23-35.

⁸⁶ Anonymous, *Die Gefahren des Tanzes, dargestellt in einigen Erzählungen, und der Jugend zur Beherzigung un Warnung gewidmet von einem ihrer Freund*. 2nd ed. (Augsburg: Joseph Wolffischen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1832), 101-02.

Acquaintanceships that begin on the dance floor are never, or very, very rarely, happy. Precisely the young men who chase girls around the most wildly, will one day thereafter say about their no-less-passionate dancing partners, while drinking beer: so and so is a glorious girl, it's true, when she spins around the dust flies away, but get married – no, I'd rather not marry her. Be assured, a good man would rather seek out his wife in the church than on the dance floor; a maiden only binds an honest, upright youth to her through her quiet, domestic workings, her bashful, veiled tenderness, her demure, chaste, modest nature.

This exhortation to Biedermeier feminine ideals clearly juxtaposes the women men choose as dancing partners and those they marry. While a man may enjoy wildly spinning his partner during a social dance, he will eventually seek out a more modest and retiring woman to marry. Despite indications that dancing was, in fact, an acceptable form of courtship in working class and elite circles alike, dancing could also be the locus of anxiety about unbridled female sexuality. In the context of German-Jewish literature, a warning that men would prefer to marry a woman he meets in church rather than one he encounters on the dance floor had particularly serious implications for Jewish women, who were unlikely to meet potential suitors in church. As will be seen in Chapter 3, the trope of the exotic “schöne Jüdin” (beautiful Jewess) reveals the limits of Jewish women's social mobility in nineteenth century literature. While these women may be vulnerable to disrespectful treatment, especially in the case of Karl Emil Franzos's novel *Judith Trachtenberg*, their physical health and ability to dance properly is far less of a concern than how they encounter a clash of social identities.⁸⁷

While all of these dance and etiquette manuals portray different concerns about the dangers (and temptations) of dancing, they tend not to address a threat of social boundaries being transgressed. Dancing partners are generally assumed to be of a similar

⁸⁷ It is true that a dancing Jewish woman's fragile health is an important concern in Wilhelm Raabe's novella *Holunderblüte* (Elderflower Blossoms), yet her heart condition is caused by the poor living conditions in the Prague Ghetto rather than by strenuous dancing.

class, and religious differences are not addressed, since in a well-ordered ballroom all of the unmarried guests would be more or less appropriate marriage partners. Instead, these guides worry more generally about the fragility of female health and concerns about proper etiquette and female virtue. In general, it seems they assume that the status quo will not be challenged through dance, even though German literature was full of momentous – and even transgressive – dancing scenes.⁸⁸ In literary texts about dancing Jews, however, dance is the site which reveals challenges to the social order – even if, ultimately, it is impossible for the idealistic dancers to overcome the social world around them.

Mixed-Sex Dancing and European Sociability

Participation in social dancing was an important marker in the Jewish process of urbanization and embourgeoisement. European Jewish literary texts portray the ballroom as site for testing out Jewish participation in the process of acculturation. Ballrooms and dancing halls played a unique role in the projects of Emancipation and modernization. Not only did they challenge traditional Jewish separation of the sexes by allowing young men and women to freely mingle, they were also a venue in which both sexes could engage with European leisure practices and body culture according to their respective gender norms. What is more, the question of whether both Jews and Christians are

⁸⁸ The germanophone canon includes many momentous dance scenes in works as varied in style and period as Sophie von La Roche's *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim* (The History of Lady Sophia Sternheim), Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck*, Adalbert Stifter's *Brigitta*, Arthur Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle* (Dream Story), and Christa Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel* (Divided Heaven). While many of these texts explore themes of desire and betrayal, some also delve into questions of class or political differences in a way that relates more closely to the texts I discuss in this dissertation than to the etiquette recommendations of dance manuals.

included in these social spaces is an important issue in many of these texts, revealing the way the dance floor shows gendered pathways to acculturation. Authors frequently underscore this theme by using the dance floor in the service of (unsuccessful) marriage plots. My brief analysis of three ballroom scenes in this section (from two Anglo-Jewish novels and one Danish-Jewish novel, presented in ascending order of relevance to the German and Yiddish texts I discuss in the subsequent chapters) will sketch out some of the different ways in which nineteenth century European authors portray the ballroom as a window into Jewish cultural aspirations. As will be seen, German and Yiddish writers contributed to an international wave of Jewish popular literature that utilized momentous dance scenes in order to comment on Jewish engagement in European culture.

In his 1892 best-selling novel *Children of the Ghetto: A Study of a Peculiar People*, Anglo-Jewish writer Israel Zangwill depicts dancing as an important marker in his comparison of “ghetto” and modern Anglo-Jewish life in the London slums of Whitechapel. He describes a Purim ball at a Jewish social club, which is attended by upwardly mobile Jews. In this light-hearted setting, young people dance, flirt, consume cakes and lemonade, and show off their finest clothing to their heart’s content. In contrast to dancers in Chapter Two of this dissertation, who have difficulty executing the expected choreography, the Europeanized dancers at Zangwill’s Purim ball are perfectly capable of performing the dance choreography: “It was a merry party, almost like a family gathering, not merely because most of the dancers knew one another, but because ‘all Israel are brothers’ – and sisters. They danced very buoyantly, not boisterously; the square dances symmetrically executed, every performer knowing his part; the waltzing

full of rhythmic grace.”⁸⁹ Zangwill invokes a Jewish doctrine about Jewish brotherhood (*Midrash Tanchuma, Naso 1*) to show how this Jewish environment is characterized by close-knit relations between participants and physical harmony on the dance floor.

Zangwill’s addition of the word “sisters” to his citation of Jewish communal feeling emphasizes the importance of mixed-sex sociability in modern Jewish culture. Free mixing of the sexes is an important part of this heady new social milieu at the Club, where women are awarded a social freedom than was unthinkable in a traditional Jewish context. In sharp distinction, Zangwill’s description of traditionally religious Jews makes clear the tensions between a masculine brotherhood and the perceived dangers of female sexuality on the dance floor. He narrates: “the ‘Sons of the Covenant’ sent no representatives to the club balls, wotting neither of waltzes or of dress-coats, and preferring death to the embrace of a strange dancing woman.”⁹⁰ Zangwill acknowledges the presence of desire at the Purim ball, yet in contrast to the more traditional “Sons of the Covenant,” Zangwill supports the brokerage of companionate marriages on the dance floor.

Zangwill treats conversations and discreet forays into physical contact on the dance floor as a much more modern form of courtship than arranged marriages. He provides an even sharper contrast with one of the ways of getting married under Jewish law: a man can marry a woman without her consent by putting a ring on her finger and saying a Hebrew phrase. This ritual is an important plot twist in the novel, since a young man named Sam Levine accidentally marries a young woman named Hannah Jacobs as

⁸⁹ I.[srael] Zangwill, *The Children of the Ghetto: A Study of a Peculiar People*, in *Selected Works of Israel Zangwill* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938), 128. Thanks to Meri-Jane Rochelson for making me aware of this source.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 141.

part of a thoughtless joke that has unexpected legal consequences. A large portion of Zangwill's chapter "The Purim Ball" consists of Hannah's flirtatious conversation with another young man, even though she is technically still married to Sam. While initially Hannah refuses to dance with David Brandon, telling him she is a married woman, by the end of the chapter she reveals that she is soon to be divorced. Despite her initial reservations about David, she comes to acknowledge their philosophical compatibility, since David shares her desire to maintain a Jewish but non-Orthodox home. At the close of the chapter, after a build up of several pages, Hannah finally consents to dance with David: "She put her hand lightly on his shoulder, he encircled her waist with his arm and they surrendered themselves to the intoxication of the slow, voluptuous music."⁹¹ This sensual description of physical contact during a dance, accompanied by music, is the culmination of verbal exchange at the sidelines of the dance floor throughout the chapter. Zangwill thus reveals the close relationship between modern romantic notions of emotional compatibility, Jewish acculturation, and physical compatibility on the dance floor.

Dancing is similarly illustrative in another late nineteenth century Anglo-Jewish novel, Amy Levy's 1888 *Reuben Sachs*. In contrast to Zangwill's glowing description of the Club, Levy treats a dance hosted by a Jewish family as a prime occasion to depict Jewish social pretensions and materialism. In fact, Reuben Sachs seems to think there is something tired and striving about "the festivities of his tribe, with their gorgeously gowned and bejewelled women, elaborate floral decorations and costly suppers."⁹² Levy

⁹¹ Ibid., 140.

⁹² Amy Levy, *Reuben Sachs* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1888), 161-62. Thanks to Meri-Jane Rochelson for making me aware of this source.

underscores the unrefined nature of her Jewish characters by repeatedly criticizing their appearance, especially the physical appearance of the men. Yet this “tribe” does not share the same family feeling as in Zangwill’s *Club*. The hosts of this ball, the Leuninger family, are very sensitive about the way that hosting a dance can add to their social status. They take pains to invite Christian guests, at the same time that they resist including Jews who do not add to their notions of prestige.⁹³ Levy describes interactions between potential dance partners in coldly commercial terms; a beautiful and high-spirited young woman who is known to have a generous dowry “goes down” as a tremendous social success.⁹⁴ Marriageable young men are conscious of being a scarce resource and “were aggressively conscious of commanding the market.”⁹⁵ Nonetheless, dancing retains some measure of romantic choice: as Levy notes, a “great fortune [...] though it always brings proposals of marriage, does not invariably bring invitations to dance.”⁹⁶ Conversely, as will be seen, while a wealthy young woman is more likely to be popular on the dance floor and marriage market than her less-well-off cousin, the latter may have admirers who might not seriously consider her hand in marriage.

Levy uses the ball to heighten the romance between Reuben and his cousins’ poor relation, Judith Quixano, a beautiful Sephardic woman of good breeding but small fortune. Judith eagerly anticipates Reuben’s attendance at the ball, since it was “in the crowded solitude of ball-rooms that they had hitherto found their best opportunity” for flirtation.⁹⁷ In an environment that, by design, allows for more relaxed mixing of the

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 146-47.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

sexes, it is more permissible for a young couple to flirt without the interference of their families on financial grounds. Indeed, Levy notes that neglectful chaperones do not monitor whether their charges spend too much time with the same young man: “Hard flirtation was the order of the day, and the chaperons, who were few in number, gossiped comfortably together, while their charges sat out half the night with the same partner.”⁹⁸ When Reuben arrives to the ball late, he observes Judith in close conversation with another admirer (a Christian man who plans on converting to Judaism), which awakens his jealousy. Reuben performs a rather shocking breach of ballroom etiquette, acting out a possessive attachment that reveals an intense romantic attachment his family would rather avoid.

“May I have the pleasure of a dance?”

Reuben retained his tone of ironical formality, but looking into her uplifted face his jealousy faded and was forgotten.

She held up her card with a smile; it was quite full.

Reuben took it gently from her hand, glanced at it, and tore it into fragments.

Judith said not a word.

To both of them the little act seemed fraught with special significance, the beginning of a new phase in their mutual relations.⁹⁹

In a ball that valorizes the performance of social prestige and material prowess, Reuben’s act of tearing up Judith’s dance card is a distinctly subversive act. He symbolically makes Judith off-limits for other men, even though he has not given her an offer of marriage. Reuben has either decided to sabotage her marital prospects or chosen to disregard his own material aspirations by prioritizing his feelings for Judith over economic considerations. In either case, Reuben’s reckless romantic encounter with Judith, epitomized by literally tearing up a symbol of ballroom etiquette, completely contradicts

⁹⁸ Ibid., 153-54.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 169.

the Leuniger's aspirations with their ball. Levy cynically portrays the ball as a symbol of crass Jewish materialism, and shows how her characters transgress ballroom etiquette in their attempt to challenge broader social expectations. Yet this idealistic moment does not last. Reuben's romantic gesture proves to be his last act of courtship towards Judith – later in the evening, he finds out that a seat in parliament is suddenly available, and he chooses to prioritize his political career over his personal feelings (leaving Judith to marry another admirer). Using the dance scene as the emotional high point of her novel, Levy constructs the ball as a way of studying, and criticizing, the social habits of her Jewish characters as they struggle to acculturate and achieve social mobility.

Meir Aron Goldschmidt's 1845 novel *En Jøde* (A Jew) takes a darker view of the ballroom as a site that reveals the limits of Jewish inclusion in Christian society. Originally written in Danish, the novel was popular internationally, appearing in German in 1856 as *Ein Jude* and in English in 1852 as *Jacob Bendixen: The Jew*.¹⁰⁰ The protagonist Bendixen, a medical student, learns to dance at school, but he is almost denied admission to his first ball on account of his Jewish heritage. Just moments after complaining about the scarcity of male dancing partners, Louise, the daughter of the family hosting the ball (and sister of one of Bendixen's friends), asks dismissively: "Soll der Jude auch eingeladen werden?"¹⁰¹ (Should the Jew also be invited?) Her mother says that he can also be excluded. Louise is later mortified to find out Bendixen overheard her remarks.

¹⁰⁰ For the purposes of this chapter, I will cite the 1856 German edition. For German edition of volume 2 (which contains the dance scene), see: M. Goldschmidt, *Ein Jude*, trans. Edmund Zoller, vol. 2. (Wurzen: Verlags-Comptoir, 1856). For English edition of the three volumes, see Mary Howitt, *Jacob Bendixen: The Jew* (London: Colburn and Co., 1852). Howitt's edition claims merely to be adapted from the Danish of Goldschmidt, and leaves out a significant moment from the ballroom scene that is present in the German. Thanks to Jonathan Hess for making me aware of this source.

¹⁰¹ M. Goldschmidt, *Ein Jude*, 72.

Louise's concerns about including a Jewish man among the guests are confirmed when Bendixen meets Thora, a Christian woman, at the ball, and they fall in love. Yet even in Thora's socially liberal family, Bendixen feels out of place and is sensitive to perceived slights, which leads him to break off the engagement. He joins the military and proves himself to be more virtuous and steadfast than the officer Thora ultimately marries. Nonetheless, military service is only a temporary solution, and Bendixen reluctantly returns to the Jewish community of his youth to become a stereotypical Jewish financier. Goldschmidt's description of Jewish entry into ballroom sociability and the consequences thereof present the ballroom invitation as an entry ticket to non-Jewish society while, at the same time, proving the dubious position even of those Jews who are accepted in this social milieu.

Bendixen's unclear status on the dance floor predicts his uncomfortable position in Thora's family, and his ultimate inability to integrate into gentile society. Until Jews are fully accepted as marriage partners, Goldschmidt suggests, displays of tolerance at social events have no meaning. In a manner similar to the authors of the German-language texts I discuss in Chapter Two, Goldschmidt views the dance floor as a site that crystallizes male rivalries and leads to tragic couplings, since (Jewish) outsider males are unable to gain a social foothold based on their performance on the dance floor. His novel presents, in sharp relief, the incompatibility of the romance plot and novel of Emancipation, since a Jewish character could not achieve higher status through marriage in a system where an uncomplicated marriage between a Jew and a Christian was inconceivable.

Mixed-Sex Dancing and the German-Jewish Ballroom

Dancing is one way of determining the precise limits of Jewish integration into German and Austrian society. An 1876 report in the *Breslauer Morgenzeitung* (Breslau Morning Paper) on the annual ball of a local chamber of commerce is revealing: “Unsere christlichen und jüdischen Kaufleute haben zusammen marchandiert, discontiert, diniert, soupiert, smolirt, sie haben sogar spousiert, aber niemals miteinander getanzt. Ist das nicht höchst merkwürdig?...”¹⁰² (Our Christian and Jewish merchants have marketed, discounted, dined, and supped together. They’ve even intermarried, but they never dance with one another. Is this not highly remarkable?)¹⁰³ The use of verbs derived from French, in contrast with the Germanic participle “getanzt,” suggests that the merchants are willing to engage in all kinds of pretentious and sophisticated activities, yet are somehow unwilling to engage in a partnership on the dance floor.

Giving similar weight to dance, Marion Kaplan notes the special significance of social dance classes for Jewish embourgeoisement in the German Empire:

The dance class, a prime symbol of bourgeois aspirations, both reinforced class distinctions and allowed some social movement within the urban bourgeoisie. By the turn of the century, many of these dance classes provided a forum for young people to meet potential spouses from the same or ‘better’ backgrounds. Philipp Lowenfeld recalled that in Munich the sons of the ‘fine’ Jewish families, those with money or titles, attended dance lessons made up of Jews and Christians. The children of ‘ordinary’ Jewish business people took lessons in which only middle-class Jews participated.¹⁰⁴

Upwardly mobile German-speaking Jews echoed this sentiment about the importance of dancing for meeting suitably cultured spouses in their journals. Prominent representatives

¹⁰² Ludger Heid and Julius H. Schopes, ed. *Juden in Deutschland: Von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Piper, 1994), 13.

¹⁰³ Amos Elon, *The Pity of It All: A History of Jews in Germany, 1743-1933* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002), 209.

¹⁰⁴ Kaplan, “As Germans and as Jews,” 255.

of the Jewish involvement in German culture wrote about their love of dancing, an activity that helped them reaffirm their social position. Berlin salonière Henriette Herz took dancing lessons with a French dancing master, and Rahel Levin Varnhagen and her siblings used to perform ballet for their parents on Saturday mornings.¹⁰⁵ Fanny Lewald declares her fondness for dancing and socializing: “Die geistige Bewegung durch das Gespräch, die körperliche Bewegung durch den Tanz waren mir Zerstreuung, Erfrischung, ja recht eigentlich ein Bedürfniß, und ein Mittel, meiner selbst froh zu werden, denn ich fühlte mich für den Verkehr mit Menschen und für den geistigen Austausch geschaffen.”¹⁰⁶ (Intellectual movement through conversation and physical movement through dance were my amusement and refreshment, in truth I found them necessary, and a means to give myself joy, since I felt as if I were created for social intercourse and intellectual exchange.) In a similar vein, Arthur Schnitzler’s youthful diaries from Vienna recount his exploits on the dance floor with a woman of his class, including various courtship activities that take place on the dance floor – conversation, kissing, love declarations, and passing notes about future assignations.¹⁰⁷

Leisure activities, including dancing, played an important role in creating companionate marriages. This social reality was even more true in the case of interfaith romance, since in a society that strongly discouraged individuals from marrying outside of their religious confession, interfaith couples could only conduct their courtships outside the traditional matchmaking channels. Dance serves as an unacknowledged

¹⁰⁵ See Henriette Herz’s memoirs, in Rainer Schmitz, ed., *Henriette Herz: Ihr Leben in Erinnerungen, Briefen und Zeugnissen* (Leipzig and Weimar: Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1984), 8; letter by Marcus Robert (Levin), in Renata Buzzo Märgari Barovero, ed., *Rahel Varnhagen: Familienbriefe* (Munich: Beck Verlag, 2009), 697. Thanks to Yael Sela Teichler for making me aware of these sources.

¹⁰⁶ Fanny Lewald, *Meine Lebensgeschichte*, ed. Karl-Maria Guth (Berlin: Hofenberg, 2015), 351.

¹⁰⁷ Arthur Schnitzler, *Tagebuch, 1879-1892* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1987), 14-16.

leitmotif in Kerstin Meiring's chapter on "Die Partnerwahl – das Kennenlernen" (Partner Choice – First Meeting) in her study of interfaith marriages in Germany from 1840 through 1933. For the purposes of showing how even a study of marriage patterns that does not focus on dance cannot help but mention it repeatedly, it is instructive to go through the examples from Meiring's chapter. Meiring notes that acculturated Jews in Imperial Germany tended to socialize largely with other Jewish families, giving the illustrative example of Dora H.'s diary from Mannheim (May 1890 - September 1892), where non-Jewish visitors to the family home are so infrequent that the young girl finds it necessary to note such occurrences.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, one of these rare guests was "ihr Tanzpartner auf einem Fastnachtsball, 'ein furchtbar nobler Christ', den ihre Tante Lilly mitgebracht hatte," (her dance partner at a carnival ball, "a frightfully noble Christian," whom her Aunt Lilly brought with her), which indicates that *even though* a Christian guest was a noteworthy event, such a person could be brought by a relative and was seen as a permissible (if imposing) dance partner for an impressionable young girl.¹⁰⁹ As Meiring quotes from Frieda Hirsch's diary, house balls were seen as an opportunity for young women to become engaged.¹¹⁰ She gives the example of Anna Auerbach's proud account from her family chronicle of how her eldest granddaughter got engaged at her first ball at her first Kurmacher (spa visit).¹¹¹

Dance lessons arguably served an even more important role as "ein entscheidender Initiationsritus im Leben der Heranwachsenden."¹¹² (A decisive initiation

¹⁰⁸ Kerstin Meiring, *Die Christlich-Jüdische Mischehe in Deutschland 1840-1933* (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz Verlag, 1998), 111-12. Meiring thanks her informant, but does not provide a location for the diary manuscript.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

rite in the lives of adolescents.) Under proper supervision, as noted in the earlier example from Kaplan's book, young people learn how to behave properly with eligible members of the opposite sex. Meiring bolsters her assessment with several diary accounts, including Lowenfeld's.¹¹³ Meiring does not explicitly highlight dance, even though she acknowledges that interfaith romances typically happened in the context of leisure activities, yet several of the interfaith couples she mentions met in the context of dances. Meiring cites the example of a banking family that had converted to Christianity; when the oldest daughter met a Jewish doctor at a dance event, Meiring finds it hard to believe that the parents would have accepted a Jewish son-in-law, and Else eventually finds a judge instead.¹¹⁴ Similarly, reporting on an interview she conducted, Meiring observes: "Was kümmerte Ruth P. die Religionszugehörigkeit ihres Tänzers, dessen Bekanntschaft sie 1928 auf einem Künstlerfest im Curiohaus im Hamburg machte? Man duzte sich sofort, ein 'Muß' damals, und Ruth genoß es, von ihrem neuen Verehrer umschwärmt und 'total in Beschlag' genommen zu werden."¹¹⁵ (What did the religious affiliation of the dancing partner, whose acquaintance Ruth P. made in the Hamburg Curio-Haus at an artists' festival in 1928, matter to her? They were immediately on familiar terms, a "must" in those days, and Ruth enjoyed being idolized by her new admirer and being "fully monopolized.") Even though her father did not approve, Ruth marries her dance partner. Another informant, H.B., also married a man she met at a dance.¹¹⁶ Although such examples are certainly not exhaustive, they reveal how a study of boundary-crossing marriage patterns and romantic encounters that take place outside of conventional

¹¹³ Ibid., 112-13.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 116.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 118.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 119.

matchmaking norms cannot help *but* feature the dance floor as a key site of encounter in nineteenth and early twentieth century German-Jewish society.

Yet dancing could be a contested issue in the context of the Jewish process of acculturation, as can be seen in one rabbi's attempt to challenge mixed-sex dancing through Jewish law and popular literature by publishing a didactic work warning German Jews against intermarriage and the temptation of integration into German culture. Marcus Lehmann's serialized novella *Elvire*, published in the German Orthodox journal *Der Israelit* in 1868, explicitly discusses the fraught role of dance as part of the Jewish debate about German culture.¹¹⁷ Lehmann takes care to connect the dance floor with contemporary political concerns, particularly those affecting liberalism and emancipation. The didactic romantic narrative is frequently interrupted by accounts of the rise and fall of the 1848 revolutions, events which provide an important backdrop for the motivations of Lehmann's characters. The Jewish characters in the novella are caught between the conflicting desires to take part in secular education and non-Jewish society on the one hand, and to maintain Jewish tradition and close-knit family structures on the other. Elvire Metz, tragically, is trapped in the middle, a predicament fatally enabled by her participation in a ball. While it is possible for her banker father to balance between a university education and strict adherence to Jewish law, the narrator (her family's rabbi)

¹¹⁷ See [Marcus Lehmann], *Elvire*, *Der Israelit* 1868, no. 13 (March 25, 1868): 223-4; 14-15 (April 1, 1868): 239-240; 16 (April 15, 1868): 271-2; 17 (April 22, 1868): 295-6; 18 (April 29, 1868): 319-320; 19 (May 5, 1868): 343-344; 20 (May 13, 1868): 367-368; 21 (May 20, 1868): 391-392; 22 (May 26, 1868): 415-416; 23 (June 3, 1868): 325-436. Story was claimed to be written by an anonymous rabbi, but it is believed to have been written by Marcus Lehmann, the rabbi who edited *Der Israelit*. He, anthologized the story and claimed its authorship in his collection, Dr. M. Lehmann, "Elvire," in *Gesammelte Erzählungen für das jüdische Haus* (Frankfurt am Main: J. Kauffmann Verlag, ca. 1893), 1-32. Quotations are taken from the serialized novel, due to the strange page numberings in the later edition. Lehmann also translated *Daniel Deronda*. Thanks to Jonathan Hess for providing the reference.

disapproves of Adolph Metz's decision to educate his daughter in European literary classics.¹¹⁸ Her exposure to romantic love in the form of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* makes her susceptible to advances on the dance floor.¹¹⁹

Elvire's lover, the non-Jewish lawyer Dr. Wetting, underscores the precarious balancing act of the upwardly mobile Metz family. At the onset, he gains admittance to the family home as a proponent of Jewish emancipation. Soon, however, his attentions towards 15-year-old Elvire become a source of concern to her parents, who make a point of separating the two. Yet the couple reunites at a ball, with disastrous consequences. When Wetting seeks Adolph's permission for Elvire's hand, he uses the language of universalism and liberalism, claiming that a Jewish wife will enable him to fulfill the open-minded politics he preaches. Elvire will not need to convert, since civil marriages are now legal, and it will serve the cause of Enlightenment to have a Jewish woman act as hostess in the home of an important civil servant.¹²⁰ The argument is a compelling one, and indeed it successfully wins over many of Elvire's relatives. Elvire's parents and rabbi, however, remain unmoved. Conveniently, for them and the traditionally-religious readers of *Der Israelit*, Wetting's message of liberalism and love for Elvire turns out to be a mask for his villainy. Wetting desires Elvire for her dowry, proves to be an unfaithful husband who harbors antisemitic views, and eventually, after the failure of the liberal revolutions of 1848, decides to adopt Christian dogma and pressure his wife and daughter to convert. It is at this point that Elvire leaves her husband, returns to her family, and gains a measure of happiness through her daughter's eventual marriage to a

¹¹⁸ [Lehmann], *Elvire, Der Israelit* 1868, no. 13 (March 25, 1868): 223.

¹¹⁹ [Lehmann], *Elvire, Der Israelit* 1868, no. 17 (April 22, 1868): 296.

¹²⁰ [Lehmann], *Elvire, Der Israelit* 1868, no. 16 (April 15, 1868): 272.

suitable Jewish partner. While her fate is not as successful as it would have been had she allowed her parents to suggest an appropriate husband, the fact that she returned to her family and gave her own daughter the opportunity to marry properly makes her worthy of public accolades.

Elvire's misfortune is directly caused by her exposure to European culture and mixed-sex sociability. Her attendance at an aristocratic ball brings the most drastic consequences, since it enables her to resume contact with Wetting, now Minister of Justice, in an environment where she is less subject to the strict supervision of her parents. Ironically, Adolph initially views the ball as an opportunity to successfully integrate into German society. The ball represents progress and the spirit of 1848, since members of the bourgeoisie, including Jews, were invited to this noble divertissement.¹²¹ Adolph views his family's invitation with delight and astonishment. As he remarks to his rabbi, "“Wer hätte das noch vor Jahresfrist gedacht – ein Jude bei einem Hoffeste!”"¹²² (Who would have imagined it within a year – a Jew at a court festival!) The rabbi fails to be convinced by Adolph's excitement.

“... Du weißt, wie ich über Bälle im Allgemeinen denke. Du weißt, daß ich den Tanz als einen der gefährlichsten Sinnenreize für durchaus verwerflich halte, und daß diese meine Anschauung nicht etwa eine persönliche, sondern eine tief im Judenthume begründete ist.”

“Erlaube mir, anderer Ansicht zu sein. In Bibel und Talmud wird oft des Tanzes bei freudigen Anlässen erwähnt.”

“Ja, aber nicht jenes Tanzes, wie er jetzt üblich ist, der die verschiedenen Geschlechter sich einander umschlingen läßt, in welchem sogar verheirathete Frauen mit fremden Männern in enge Berührung kommen. Die Jungfrauen Israels führten Tänze auf, aber nicht im Vereine mit Jünglingen; die Männer tanzten vor der heiligen Lade, aber nicht mit fremder Leute Frauen.”¹²³

¹²¹ [Lehmann], *Elvire, Der Israelit* 1868, no. 14-15 (April 1, 1868): 240.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 239.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

“... You know, what I think of balls in general. You know, that I consider dance to be one of the most dangerous and altogether reprehensible delights for the senses, and that this opinion is not merely my own personal one, but rather one that is deeply grounded in Judaism.”

“Permit me to take another point of view. In the Bible and the Talmud, dancing is often mentioned at joyous occasions.”

“Yes, but not those dances that are commonly practiced today, which allow both sexes to embrace one another, in which even married women come into close contact with strange men. The maidens of Israel performed dances, but not in the company of youths; the men danced before the holy Ark, but not with other men’s wives.”

The rabbi clearly states the forbidden nature of mixed-sex dancing at a ball. He challenges the notions of those who, like Jewish reformers, might choose to selectively interpret biblical texts to allow all kinds of dancing. At the same time, the rabbi does not refer to the specific biblical prohibitions that are used to forbid mixed-sex dancing, even though such laws might convince an observant Jew like Adolph. Instead, Lehmann frames the debate around the question of acculturation: while Adolph accuses his friend and rabbi of sounding antiquated and oriental, the rabbi claims that the Book of Esther provides a warning against the dangers of Jews attending non-Jewish court functions, claiming that all the misfortunes the Jews suffer are a direct result of their participation in a Persian court feast. The rabbi seems more concerned with the possibility of intermarriage than of young Jews participating in balls at their own social clubs. He does not provide examples of precise biblical prohibitions, but his more general warning does not resonate with Adolph, who cannot bear to deprive his daughter of the pleasures of a ball. Adolph’s liberal hopes that the ball invitation represents a sign of social progress for Jews, something not to be dismissed out of hand, can not be dissuaded by the rabbi’s reminder that the near genocide of Jews in the Book of Esther was caused by interfaith

sociability between Jews and Persians.¹²⁴ The rabbi (unlike author Lehmann in penning *Elvire*) does not acknowledge the pull of acculturation, and uses a scriptural rather than contemporary example as a warning.

Ultimately the events of the ball transpire as the rabbi suggests. Elvire's beauty and simple yet tasteful attire win her vocal admiration from the other ball guests and Wetting's renewed interest.¹²⁵ In the environment of the ballroom, full of music and expensive perfume, Wetting is able to gaze at Elvire, pay her compliments, and dance with her.¹²⁶ Although Elvire feels flustered by Wetting's seductive words and wants to go home, she is trapped at the ball (and in Wetting's dangerous company) because her parents are too distracted to notice: her father is busy playing cards with the local prince and her mother is chatting with a countess, showing how the promise of inter-religious sociability literally prevents them from looking after their daughter's welfare.¹²⁷ While she is initially reticent, over the course of several dances Wetting is able to reveal his desire for a civil marriage; the repeated close quarters of the dances provide him with the opportunity to persuade the sheltered young woman to give in to his matrimonial desires. By the time the ball ends, after midnight, and Wetting escorts Elvire to her carriage, she suggests he discuss marriage to her father. Crucially, it is the space of the ballroom, with its social sanction and opportunity for intermingling of the sexes over the period of several hours, which enables the fateful courtship to transpire. As will be seen, this pattern repeats itself throughout the formulaic literature I discuss at greater length throughout the dissertation.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 239-40.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 240.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

This section focused on the acculturated social milieu of German-Jewish readers, and the contexts in which the authors lived as adults. The German texts that I discuss in the rest of the dissertation typically depict the lives of traditional, rural Jews, yet they remain conscious of the contexts that were familiar for their urban readers. Authors frequently gloss Yiddish terms or they present sympathetic Jewish characters who adhere to liberal values and are members of families whose sizes are more typical for bourgeois urbanites than traditional villagers. Furthermore, writers build upon the narrative expectations of their readers, and use dances that may not have actually reflected the normal reality of their characters. In a depiction of a Purim bacchanalia in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Der Judenraphael* (The Raphael of the Jews), Chassidic Jews dress as King Solomon and his harem, a narrative choice that says more about the reading preferences of Sacher-Masoch's urban audience than it does about the actual Purim festivities of Galician Chassidim. Throughout this dissertation, I read German regional fiction about Jewish topics both as a way of grappling with issues of acculturation and modernization in German and Austria, and in conversation with Yiddish works. Both ghetto tales and shtetl literature often depicted Galician Jews, yet Yiddish writers wrote with the assumption that their readers knew the vernacular language, folkways, and dance practices of their characters.

Mixed-Sex Dancing in Yiddish Literature

Far from being taken for granted, as one of numerous social practices adopted in the course of acculturation, mixed-sex dancing was a token of modernization in Yiddish literature. Naomi Seidman argues that courtship, specifically attention to the sexual

compatibility of the two potential spouses, was a revolutionary step in Ashkenazi culture. As she explains, matchmakers were so focused on the suitability of the two families, rather than the connection between the bridal couple as individuals, that Yiddish folklore and literature include several notable examples of matchmakers who accidentally broker matches between two young people of the same sex: “Traditional [Jewish] heteronormativity, in my reading, invests gender difference with so little individual, sexual, psychological, spiritual, dialectical, or romantic meaning that it comes close to treating all candidates for marriage, of whatever sex (although not all families), as essentially interchangeable.”¹²⁸ In sharp distinction, the act of dancing in a couple puts physical performance and compatibility in the center of marriage negotiations. Social dances, by their nature, invite young people to consider their dance partners as individuals whose physical compatibility and adherence to social graces are a necessary prerequisite to a successful marriage.

Memoir literature describes mixed-sex dancing as a form of social change. According to Jacob Baltzen’s (1872-1939) memoirs from the town of Leova, Moldova (near Bessarabia), dancing was one sign of how Leova was considered quite free in comparison with neighboring towns:

There was to be a wedding in our family by the in-laws the Shaffers. The girls learnt to dance the quadrille, the polka, the shere bulgar, hora and so on. At that wedding I was the only Leova boy that danced, of course, only with girls from our own family. There was one other boy who danced and he was related to the in-laws, he was a son of Sculeni.

The town was going wild. They asked my father how he could have allowed such a thing. He answered that he saw no harm in it, especially since I danced with the Rabbi’s daughter, (also an in-law), and she was pretty at that. Thus, people slowly

¹²⁸ Seidman, *The Marriage Plot*, 183-84.

got used to this and within a year boys were allowed to dance with girls, daughters of other gentry and our parents enjoyed this.¹²⁹

Even in this relatively liberal town, it was initially scandalous for a young man to dance with women. Such behavior was more permissible with female relatives, but still shocking. Yet after the first transgression (the account does not state the date, but it seems likely to have been in the late 1880s or early 1890s), it does not take long for mixed-sex dancing to become an accepted behavior. Interestingly, as we will see in my discussion of young women's social dance practices in Chapter Three, the memoir notes how young women learn to dance social dances, while it is much less clear if (or how) their new male dance partners learned to accompany them in social and circular dances.

On a similar note, in her oral history testimony about her life in Vishni Bystry (today Ukraine) prior to 1939, Etta Freilich Wandrei describes the limitations on mixed-sex dancing and mingling between Jews and Christians: "The Christians were 'hillbillies.' They'd come into the village, go to the beerhouses owned by the Jews, and had dances on Sunday afternoons. We couldn't go. We couldn't dance with Christian boys. Even the Jewish girls couldn't dance with the Jewish boys. It was a very strict Orthodox village."¹³⁰ Wandrei bristled against such restrictions, which led her to seek out the more liberal social practices of a new religious Zionist group in the community: "I joined them to dance and sing with boys."¹³¹ She claims that becoming a Zionist, which led her to leave her hometown and thus avoid Nazi persecution during the Holocaust,

¹²⁹ Jacob Baltzen, "Our House in Leova," *JewishGen*, accessed Feb. 26, 2017. <http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/leova/leo000.html>. Thanks to Helen Winkler for making me aware of this source.

¹³⁰ Etta Freilich Wandrei, "Notes from Yale University Archives Interview with Etta Freilich Wandrei," *JewishGen*, 2003, accessed 2/26/17. http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/verkhnyaya_bystra/memoir2.html Thanks to Helen Winkler for making me aware of this source. See Etta W. Holocaust Testimony (HVT-1482) at the Fortunoff Video Archives for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

ultimately saved her life. While dancing leads to tragic consequences in many of the literary texts I discuss, in Wandrei's life, the desire to engage in mixed-sex dancing helped save her from catastrophe.

Frequently this social change occurred in the context of Jewish urbanization. When young people who had moved to the cities returned to visit their families in traditional villages, writers describe ensuing cultural clashes. One particularly illustrative account can be found in the *Pinkas Khmelnik* (Community Records of Chmmielnik), which describes a clash between musicians and wedding guests in a community where the rabbi had asked the local *badkhen* (wedding jester) and musicians to promise that they would “never play at a wedding where boys and maidens dance together.”¹³² This community learned of this arrangement, and the status quo was maintained until a wedding in 1895. The *Pinkas* describes the wedding festivities, including dancing, and the way the bridegroom's brother decides to show off his big city airs:

Meanwhile the young men began dancing. Girls danced also, but separately. They danced folk dances and waltzes, in which boys dance with boys and girls dance with girls. Everything went fine until the young folk grew tired and settled down to rest a bit. Later the groom's younger brother, Shmuel Stelmakh [wheelwright], got up. [...] Shmuel was already one of the “playboys,” as they were called in Khmelnik; he worked in the big city, where the pay was a lot better. He wanted to show his friends that he was a real sport, that he could afford to pay the musicians for a long dance all by himself. The dance was a kind known as a “Kutner” or a “Larsey,” in which eight couples take part. He asked the musicians how much he had to pay for the Kutner, and they told him that it cost a whole ruble. He gave them a ruble, and the leader of the musicians, Yoysef-Leyb, threw the coin into the tin can that was tied to a leather belt and hung from the shoulders of the young musician who played the drum.¹³³

¹³² Moyshe-Leyzer Mints, “The Ruined Wedding (On account of an agreement between the Rabbi of Khmelnik and the musicians),” in *From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry*, trans and ed. Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 148.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 149.

Paying for an expensive dance is, the account reveals, a sign of big city opulence. While contemporary Yiddish dance scholars have been unable to give a definitive answer as to the form of the dance Shmuel requested (one possibility is that “Larsey” is a misattribution of the Les Lanciers quadrille), Shmuel’s intentions are clear.¹³⁴ He shows off his salary by paying the musicians an entire ruble to play the complicated dance, which their leader, Yoysef-Leyb inserts into a locked tin can. The key to this can, the account notes, is kept securely in the home of the *badkhen*. The account proceeds:

So, the couples began getting into position for the dance. The musicians began playing in rhythm. Since they were standing way up in the first room, they couldn’t see what was happening in the much larger second room, especially as the youngsters who weren’t dancing blocked off the view into the room. Thus no one would see that boys and girls were dancing together. But a mishap took place. The musicians began playing the second introduction to the Kutner dance before the dancers had finished the first steps. One of the young men who was conducting the dance shouted out to the musicians not to change the music. Since Sane, who was playing first fiddle, didn’t understand what the young man wanted, he came closer to the entrance to the second room in order to ask him. He was rather tall, and could see over the heads of the people who were blocking the doorway. He looked over, and saw the boys dancing with the girls. With his eyes to the ground, Sane returned to the musicians and said something in the musicians’ jargon, which no one else understood. The musicians immediately stopped playing. The dancers grew frightened and stopped dancing. The boys came out of the second room, demanding to know why the musicians weren’t playing. Yoysef-Leyb explained why they had stopped and scolded them for their behavior, which had caused the musicians this embarrassment: “Everyone in Khmelnik knows about our agreement with the rabbi, which prohibits us from playing when boys and girls dance together.”

“And what about my ruble? After all, I paid you to play!” stormed Shmuel.

“We’ve been playing, and we will play, on condition that you dance separately, not together with girls.”¹³⁵

It seems surprising, for anyone familiar with how dancers interact with musicians, that the wedding musicians would play in a location where they are unable to see the dancers they are accompanying. Nonetheless, that is just what occurs in this account, allowing the

¹³⁴ E-mail correspondence with Helen Winkler and Jill Gellerman in August 2015.

¹³⁵ Mints, “The Ruined Wedding,” 149.

“youngsters” to temporarily flout convention by engaging in forbidden mixed-sex dancing, a sign of how modern, urban culture intrudes on village social norms. Presumably, such dancers were selected from Shmuel’s friends, who might be eager (like him) to show their urban cosmopolitanism. Once the secret is revealed, however, the musicians refuse to play for mixed-sex dancing, due to their arrangement with the rabbi, yet they are unable to return Shmuel’s payment for the dance from the locked tin after Shmuel insists on a refund. Eventually Shmuel breaks Sane’s fiddle over his head, and the wedding guests beat up the teetotaling musicians. The consequences of mixed-sex dancing in this record are obvious (the account is literally titled “The Ruined Wedding”), yet not as melodramatic as in many of the literary accounts I describe throughout my dissertation, such as the dances that lead to the romantic deaths of one or both lovers in Chapter 3. In Yiddish literary texts as varied as a critical Eastern European novel, a mainstream American Yiddish novel, a pamphlet novella, and a polemical story, dancing leads to a variety of plot twists and provides opportunities for character development. What is more, dance scenes in these divergent texts reveal the impact of urbanization, changes in social relations between Jews and Christians, and concerns with whether dancing classes are a prudent way of meeting potential marriage partners.

In Yehoshue Perle’s largely autobiographical 1936 novel *Yidn fun a gants yor* (Everyday Jews), two of the narrator’s half-siblings (his father’s daughter and his mother’s son) who have found work in the cities come home for Passover, bringing with them the cultural norms they experienced in their new, urban environments. Ite works in a wealthy kitchen in Warsaw, whereas Yoyne is a salesman from Lodz. Although Ite is initially concerned by the way Yoyne treats her father, her step-brother’s urbane charm

causes her to forget. Specifically, she begins to warm up to him when they dance together in the way they learned in the cities.

– konen zi tantsn? – hot er eynmol gefregt Ite un ongeshtelt oyf ir dem eyntsikn goldenem tson zaynem.

– farvos zol ikh nisht konen? – hot Ite arayngeshmaykhlt in ir eygenem goyder.

– aderabe, lomir zeyen, vos zi konen. – hot Yoyne oysgeshtrekt beyde hent.

Ite hot nisht gezogt yo un nisht gezogt neyn. Yoyne hot nisht gefregt. shvaygendik, mit a fartsoygn [sh]maykhl, hot er arayngenumen Ites brayte, fule figur in zayne oygeshtrekte, halb-oysgeboygene hent.

er hot zikh arumgedreyt mit ir etlekhe mol iber der shtub, untergefayft tsum takt, un khotsh, keynehore Ite hot gehot oyf zikh a shpar bisl fleysh, hot Yoyne fundestvegn gezogt, az in tantsn iz zi gring, vi a federl.¹³⁶

“Do you know how to dance?” he once asked Ite, showing off his lone gold tooth.

“Why shouldn’t I?” Ite smiled down into her double chin.

“Well, let’s see what you know.” Yoyne held his hand to her.

Ite said nothing, and Yoyne asked no more questions. Silently, lips pursed, he put his arms, bent at the elbow, around Ite’s ample waist. He twirled her around the room several times, whistling all the while to set the beat, and although Ite carried a few extra pounds on her, Yoyne nevertheless said that when she danced, she was light as a feather.

“That’s what everyone says,” Ite replied.¹³⁷

Yoyne addresses her in a Germanicized Yiddish, which (like the dancing itself) is a sign of his metropolitan pretensions. In the same way that Yoyne treats most other characters in an arrogant manner that lacks refinement or sympathy, he takes hold of his step-sister’s body without waiting for her to formally accept his teasing invitation to dance. Yoyne’s questioning of Ite’s abilities, and assessment of her skill, turns the entire dance scene into a test of Ite’s physical abilities, rather than an opportunity for her to decide Yoyne’s compatibility as a partner. Soon after this encounter, Yoyne and Ite begin a short-lived sexual affair, which takes place, awkwardly, in the family’s one-room house. Despite

¹³⁶ Yehoshue Perle, *Yidn fun a gants yor* (Warsaw: H. Bzshoza, 1936), 134

¹³⁷ Yehoshue Perle, *Everyday Jews: Scenes from a Vanished Life*, ed. David G. Roskies, trans. Maier Deshell and Margaret Birstein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 95.

Perle's explanation that springtime is the season for weddings, the novelist makes clear that Yoynes's urban swagger is a major reason why he is an inappropriate – and unavailable – longer term partner for Ite. Perle uses a partner dance to show how metropolitan cultural practices challenge traditional village norms, yet urbanization is only one example of the multiple social changes that Yiddish writers depicted in their dance scenes.

Dancing could also be a sign of changing relationships between Jews and Christians, such as in Isaac Bashevis Singer's novel *The Manor*, the first half of his two-novel family saga depicting the period between the 1863 Polish uprising and the end of the nineteenth century. Singer wrote the novel between 1953 and 1955. It was first serialized in the New York Yiddish daily *Forverts* (Yiddish Daily Forward), and appeared in book form in multiple translated editions, including English, German, Polish, Hebrew, and Chinese. In the novel, the Polish countess Helena attends a Jewish wedding and befriends a Jewish girl, Miriam Lieba, who speaks Polish. Wedding guests view Helena's willingness to participate in the Jewish wedding dancing, and later invite Miriam Lieba to visit her at home, as remarkable: "When the band struck up and the girls paired off with each other for dancing, Helena, requesting a mazurka from the musicians, threw a coin onto the drum as was the custom, bowed like a gallant before Miriam Lieba, and asked her to dance. The company watched, with a good deal of laughter, chatter, and clapping, the unusual spectacle of a Polish countess dancing with a Jewess."¹³⁸ For Jewish wedding guests, Helena and Miriam Lieba's dance is striking, but not yet transgressive, since both

¹³⁸ Isaac Bashevis Singer, *The Manor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967), 81. Although no translator is credited on the title page, the book's front matter lists Joseph Singer and Elaine Gottlieb as translators.

dancers are women. Yet even this seemingly-innocent dance has devastating consequences for Miriam Lieba.

Through her new friendship with Helena, cemented by a Polish social dance at a Jewish wedding, Miriam Lieba has a second momentous encounter that further challenges normal relations between Jews and Polish nobility: she meets the countess' dissolute brother Lucian. In fact, their very first conversation involves dance, and Lucian informs Miriam Lieba just how extraordinary he finds Helena's attendance at a Jewish wedding: "Times are changing then. Not so long ago, that would have been impossible. My father always felt sympathy for the Jews, but other landowners ridiculed them, even set their dogs on them. At balls, the court Jew was forced to disguise himself as a bear to entertain the guests. Now we're the victims."¹³⁹ Where once Polish noblemen forced Jews to participate in humiliating dances, now it is possible for a Polish noblewoman to dance graciously with (and befriend) a Jewish young woman. Ultimately, Lucian pushes Miriam Lieba's unusual closeness with Polish aristocracy one step further, since, at the dramatic conclusion of the first part of the novel, he invites Miriam Lieba to elope with him and she agrees. Yet as dashing as she considers Lucian, he turns out to be an irresponsible and faithless husband. Although Miriam Lieba may have thought that her well-intentioned dance with Helena was a sign of mutual respect and admiration, her sad fate reveals the limitations of her encounter with the Polish nobility, a sign of how vulnerable Singer considered even acculturated Polish Jews.

Popular literature in Yiddish suggests that parents and moralists were anxious about the kinds of potential marital partners young people would encounter at dancing classes.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 104.

One striking example from Vilna is the 1914 *Der tants klas: a zeltener roman vos di lezer veln zayn hekst tsufridn* (The Dance Class: A singular romance which will greatly please the reader), a 32-page novella by “Sh. B.” Although the title refers to dance lessons, class consciousness is an important component of the novella, since Sh. B. takes pains to show that dancing classes can be an appropriate activity for bourgeois young women.

The protagonist Tsiliye is a modern young woman who wants to go to dancing classes, a sign of changing social norms. As she explains to her parents, all of her friends are attending classes at Waldmann’s Dancing School: “yeder dinst meyd l kon bay itstige tsayt tantsn un ikh darf nit konen! zeyer sheyn fun aykh! tomer vet zikh makhn az men vet amol darfn geyn oyf a khasene, vel ikh muzn farblaybn in shtub, andersh kon nit zayn...”¹⁴⁰ (These days every servant girl can go dancing but I’m not allowed! Very nice of you! What’s going to happen when I need to go to a wedding? I suppose I’ll need to stay at home, there’s no way around it...) At first her father, Borukh, forbids her to attend these lessons, concerned that dancing lessons are not an appropriate activity for someone of his daughter’s class and respectability. He refers nostalgically to the old days, when girls would learn to dance at home, after dinner, on the Sabbath and holidays. Yet in contrast to women’s dances in a communal religious context, now young people want to participate in mixed-sex dancing with skirt-chasers: “keyn guts kon nit aroyskumen fun azelkhe klasn, dos iz nor gemakht gevorn far hultayes, leydikgeyers” (No good can come from such classes, which were only designed for libertines and idlers), since “gevis kumt far azelkhe zakhn vos es past gor nit tsu reydn...”¹⁴¹ (certainly the sort of things happen

¹⁴⁰ Sh. B., *Der tants klas: a zeltener roman vos di lezer veln zayn hekst tsufridn* (Vilna: L. L. Mats, 1914), 4.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

that one doesn't talk about). Borukh worries that the men who attend dancing schools might expect that dancing will lead to other forms of physical intimacy.

While Tsiliye emphasizes the importance of dancing for keeping up with her female friends and participating in the social function of a wedding, Borukh assumes dance leads to flirtation and seduction. Although his wife tries to reason with him that the times are changing, Borukh only relents when a family friend tells him that she is also sending her own daughter to the dancing school, like other members of their social circle. Yet Borukh is correct about the connection between dance classes and romance: Tsiliye meets a young man named Avrom at her first dancing class, and he walks her home. Soon he walks her home every evening and she stops dancing with other young men. Eventually Avrom proposes, and Tsiliye delightedly accepts, even though her parents have no notion of her budding romance. Much to Tsiliye's dismay, when her parents learn of her relationship with a man from the dancing school, they forbid her to contact him or return to the dancing school.

Ultimately, Borukh discovers Avrom's virtues through another channel, and Sh. B. implies that dancing lessons are a reasonable courtship option for respectable young women. Avrom saves Borukh and Tsiliye from a burning building at risk to his own life, and the story ends happily with Tsiliye and Avrom's marriage. While changing times demand that young people have new ways to meet and court one another, the rather-contrived ending suggests that the author still hoped children would not completely transgress older expectations of parental approval. Or, in keeping with Seidman's analysis of Jewish marriage plots, it is not enough that Avrom pleases Tsiliye on the dance floor

and in conversation on their walks: ultimately, he must also court her father.¹⁴² Sh. B.'s story of romantic love and bourgeois entertainment refers to changing times but ultimately does not question parental approval, social respectability, or the ultimate goal of marriage. While Tsiliye has the good fortune to meet a virtuous young man, there is little about the unsupervised dancing school that would ensure the man in whom she quickly became enamored was a decent fellow. Even her friend Annette, who initially championed Tsiliye's participation in dancing, seems surprised that her friend would keep a courtship secret from her parents. Instead, the best solution appears to be that parents communicate with their daughters as they pursue appropriate bourgeois refinements on the dance floor.¹⁴³

While Sh. B. shows how a romance begun on the dance floor can end in a respectable marriage, Polish Yiddish writer Khayim-Avrom Yakhnuk (1867-1933) views dancing as a ridiculous and morally dubious practice that is a waste of working women's time. Yakhnuk harshly criticizes dance classes in his polemical 1905 story *Tants-klasin, oder di freylekhe yugend* (Dance Classes, or the Happy Youth), which depicts the miserable fate of a young woman who regularly abandons her husband and young child to attend dancing lessons. Yakhnuk disputes notions that dance is a sign of education and cultivation, instead portraying dance as laughable and, moreover, as an activity that distracts young women from learning the skills they need to run a proper household (which is what working class women should be doing once they come home in the evenings). He gives the example of a man whose wife knows no better than to put salt in

¹⁴² Seidman, *The Marriage Plot*, 93.

¹⁴³ See Hess, *Middlebrow Literature*, 120 for a German-Jewish Studies perspective on "the crucial role that popular-cultural visions of love and romance were called on to play in sustaining a community dedicated to Jewish ideals of endogamy."

his coffee.¹⁴⁴ More erudite readers may have understood this comical household mishap in sexual terms, as a reference to the Talmudic metaphor of an adulterous wife “spoiling” her husband’s dish, which Rashi identifies with over-salting food.¹⁴⁵ Yakhnuk questions the utility of dancing classes for courtship purposes, since he suggests dancing interferes with a woman’s ability to be a good housekeeper and faithful wife.

Yakhnuk takes a critical stance towards the morality of women who participate in dancing lessons and casts doubt on the kinds of relationships into which they enter. Some women meet “cavaliers” at their dancing lessons, swear eternal devotion, get engaged, “un bald gor gikh a khasene un take bald in a monat tse in tsvey monaten arum vert a bris...”¹⁴⁶ (and very quickly there’s a wedding and really soon, a month or two later, there’s a circumcision...) The kind of woman who goes to dancing lessons, Yakhnuk implies, is the kind of woman who has a baby a month or two after her wedding. What is more, according to the broader plot arc of *Tants-klasin*, a woman who goes to dance classes before she gets married (even if she tells her prospective husband she is pious) will not stop after the wedding, but will instead leave her hard-working husband with all the household and childcare duties. She gets her comeuppance, though, after he works himself to death, since she is left responsible for all of the same responsibilities, yet without the income a man could earn. Yakhnuk gestures towards the sexual morality of traditional prohibitions against mixed-sex dancing, but he also pays close attention to issues of time and marital divisions of labor, particularly in a working-class context.

¹⁴⁴ Kh.[ayim] A.[vrom] Leybovitch Yakhnuk, *Yakhnuk’s tants-klasin, oder, di freylekhe yugnt: a kritische dertseylung fun yidishn lebn* (Grayevo: Avrom-Mordkhe Pyurko), 13.

¹⁴⁵ Mishnah Gittin 9:10; Bavli Gittin 90a. Thanks to Federico Dal Bo for this interpretation, which is particularly useful in the context of Yakhnuk’s other comments about dance classes leading to sexual impropriety.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

Yiddish texts, representing a wide variety of genres, utilize the mixed-sex dance floor as a way of depicting (anxieties about) social change while entertaining their readers. In this respect, they share many similarities with the German texts that I discuss in this chapter and throughout the dissertation: both components of my corpus reflect concerns about social mixing and changes to cultural norms. Such similarities become even more pronounced in works of regional fiction, since both German writers of ghetto fiction and Yiddish writers of shtetl literature represented traditional village Jews confronting modernity. Nonetheless, there are some notable differences between the German and Yiddish literary texts that I discuss.

First of all, the German texts were primarily written in the second half of the nineteenth century, whereas the Yiddish texts tend to come from the first half of the twentieth century. This timing reflects Jewish acculturation trends in the German states and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, on the one hand, and the great wave of Eastern European Jewish immigration to America at the turn of the twentieth century, on the other. Similarly, while Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Karl Emil Franzos, Yosef Opatoshu, and Fradl Shtok all depicted their native region, the Habsburg territory of Galicia, they differ greatly in terms of tone, style, and political and aesthetic concerns. Some of the factors that distinguish these authors include the era in which they were writing, relationship to the Jewish community, audience, whether they lived in a European or an American metropolis, and attitudes towards gender.

German and Yiddish texts also tend to diverge with regard to audience. Where the authors of these works of regional fiction tended to depict the small towns of their youth, only the Yiddish writers could assume that their readership was familiar with the

language and traditional culture they depicted. Readers of Yiddish fiction were generally only a generation or two removed from traditional Jewish life, which meant that Yiddish writers did not need to explain Jewish rituals. Since Yiddish writers wrote for a largely Jewish audience (and the Yiddish writers I address tend to be considered more high brow than the German writers I discuss, even though both groups were similarly committed to questions of Jewish gender roles and patterns of modernization), they focused on raising the status of Yiddish literature. German writers, in comparison, often explained Jewish rituals and terminology, since many of their non-Jewish or acculturated Jewish readers would have been unfamiliar with them. These writers were also more likely to present Jewish protagonists in a flattering light, incorporate characters who fit certain Jewish stereotypes (such as the exotic Jewish woman or the physically awkward Jewish man), and to educate their audiences about the evils of antisemitism. While it is true that some stylistic differences can also be attributed to the writer's era or geographic context (Dovid Pinski's psychological depiction of desire is part of a larger *fin-de-siècle* phenomenon), Yiddish writers likely also felt they had more freedom to depict Jewish antiheroes, since their texts were designed for an audience of insiders.

Finally, German and Yiddish texts differ with regards to the kinds of transgressions they tend to depict on the dance floor. In German texts, writers are particularly concerned with Jews and Christians dancing together, although they also write about flirtation between more assimilated men and more traditional women. In this way, writers punctuated their local color fiction with plot elements that were designed to excite readers and inspire them to contemplate the "Jewish Question" of integration into European society. At the same time, however, these formulaic plots did little to explore

the social possibilities for Jewish women, whom they tend to depict as passive victims or as delightful prizes for male heroes. Clementine Krämer challenges such a limited view of female autonomy in her short novel, *Esther*, in which a Jewish woman leaves behind her traditional village and an unwanted suitor to become a modern dancer. The dance scenes in Yiddish texts, in contrast, most typically transgress class differences. In comparison to the largely bourgeois readership of Jews and non-Jews for ghetto fiction, Yiddish readers tended to share a Jewish, working class background and were often engaged in left wing politics. Yiddish literature probes issues of class boundaries and challenges the traditional scholarly masculine ideal. Yet while male writers made an effort to inject robust American-style physicality into their Yiddish texts, they are less eager to challenge social expectations for women, who primarily feature as love interests and romantic rivals. It is up to Fradel Shtok and Kadya Molodowsky to deemphasize the importance of the romance plot, since their female protagonists focus on their own self-expression on and off the dance floor. In one sense, the trajectory from traditional arranged marriage to companionate marriage to (female) self-expression is a move that goes from prioritizing the family to privileging the heterosexual couple to emphasizing the individual. Interestingly, although the stories in my final chapter on women writers end ambiguously, their outcomes are less tragic than most of the stories that challenge traditional matchmaking through romantic mesalliances.

In Heinrich Heine's 1843 mock-epic *Atta Troll*, the eponymous dancing bear declares, "der Tanz, in allen Zeiten,/War ein frommer Akt des Glaubens" (throughout the

ages, dance was a pious act of faith).¹⁴⁷ Dance is a timeless, universal activity with specific religious connotations. Although Heine had already converted from Judaism to Christianity by the poem's publication, his verse also points to the importance of dance in Jewish culture and religious practice. Dance has been, as the character Adolph Metz notes in *Elvire*, a sign of joy since biblical times. It also fulfills an important part of wedding ritual, since Jews are commanded to bring joy to the bride by dancing before her. Yet, almost paradoxically, dance could also be a show of faith in the power of acculturation and social communication. Whether they dance at a wedding to entertain a bride or attend a ball in order to exhibit their refinement, the characters I discuss in this dissertation approach the dance floor with a belief in the utopian promise of a social dance. Success on the dance floor – and the social capital or brilliant marriage it promised – marks the triumph of upwardly mobile Jews in the face of antisemitism and traditional social constrictions. Yet in literary fiction, if not in reality, encounters on the dance floor often end tragically. Authors use the dance floor to entertain their readers, develop their characters, and shape their plots. They recognize the power of the dance floor to inspire, delight, and (at the same time) regulate social hierarchies. While ill-fated dance scenes may appear to legitimate the concerns of community authorities, they were in fact an important way for authors to think critically about social problems, especially the position of Jews in European and American society from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century.

In 1843, the same year that Heine published *Atta Troll*, his contemporary Berthold Auerbach published his best-selling *Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten* (Black Forest

¹⁴⁷ Heinrich Heine, *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 4, 7th ed. (Philadelphia: Schäfer und Koradi, 1871), 89.

Village Stories). Unlike Heine, Auerbach maintained a Jewish identity throughout his life, although he switched from writing novels about explicitly Jewish topics to penning regional fiction that did not openly address his concern with the place of Jews in German society. Whether writing directly or indirectly about the “Jewish Question,” Auerbach (like popular ghetto writer Leopold Kompert, whose work he inspired) focuses on the issue of Jewish masculinity. Auerbach and Kompert were conscious of the *schlemiel* figure, a hapless fellow whose awkward fit in society they (like other German writers, including Heine) use to represent the difficult balancing act of German Jews. As we will see in Chapter Two, both Auerbach and Kompert present the dance floor as a key testing ground for (Jewish) male performance and anxiety about the place of Jews in German society.

CHAPTER 2: FIGURING THE VILLAGE

This chapter examines the relationship between dancing ability and masculine prowess in German-language regional fiction. Popular fiction writers Berthold Auerbach and Leopold Kompert depict male rivalries between village insiders and outsiders, who view the dance floor as a battleground for a young woman's affections. Both Auerbach (implicitly) and Kompert (explicitly) use male performance on the dance floor – and exclusion from village society – to reflect critically upon the problem of Jewish integration into European culture.

Social dance was an important form of masculine performance and token of changing social mores in mid-nineteenth century German(-Jewish) literature. In contrast to other venues for demonstrating masculine physicality, such as military service, social dance requires that men prove themselves, not merely to other men, but also to women. At the same time, masculine performance on the dance floor differs from mixed-sex sociability in intellectual salons in two key ways: 1) where salon guests sought to satisfy the expectations of uncommonly educated and cultured women, the female dancers with whom my subjects interact are not necessarily exceptional themselves and 2) the dance floor is a space in which men can resort to direct and indirect physical dominance over both their female partners and other men. For both of these reasons, authors use social dance to develop competition between men, often using women's bodies as a props as they explore feelings such as jealousy, inadequacy, and anxiety.

This chapter explores nineteenth century portrayals of Jewish masculinity, not in the homosocial space of the study house or gymnasium, but rather on the dance floor, where Jewish men demonstrated their ability to become heads of family through physical dexterity, proper use of etiquette, and fluency in the language of love. The cultural

practice of dancing was a crucial way of proving physical suitability when pursuing marriage partners or socializing at community celebrations, at a time when Jews were slowly shifting away from arranged marriages towards companionate marriage.¹⁴⁸ Proper performance on the dance floor demanded acculturation in a heterosexual context based on gallantry, flirtation, and notions of romantic love. As writer and playwright Arthur Schnitzler notes in the diary he kept as a seventeen-year-old in 1880, dances were a location for flirtation, covert kisses, and even exchanging ardent love letters.¹⁴⁹ Social dance was thus further removed from the traditional study house than the homosocial spaces of the dueling society or gymnastic club. In sharp contrast to these other spheres of male achievement, masculinity on the dance floor was defined in relation to women, and was attained by complementing them aesthetically and giving them pleasure.

In this chapter, I discuss four German-language literary texts that are concerned with the performance of masculinity on the dance floor. Their young male protagonists suffer from various combinations of social exclusion, romantic difficulties, and physical awkwardness. Aloys, in Berthold Auerbach's "Der Tolpatsch" (The Gawk) is nicknamed "Tolpatsch" (Gawk) for his clumsiness, just as Maier in Leopold Kompert's *Die Jahrzeit* (The Yortsayt) is called "Maier mit den vier Händen" (Four-Handed Maier) for his habit of flapping his ungainly limbs around. Both men hope to marry a beloved cousin, only to be verbally tormented and physically humiliated by a romantic rival whose skills include leading the young people in dancing. Auerbach and Kompert confront and resolve the social exclusion of their characters differently, yet they frame the problems using similar plots. In contrast to physically awkward men, female dance partners are assumed to be

¹⁴⁸ See Kaplan, "As Germans and as Jews in Imperial Germany," 195.

¹⁴⁹ Schnitzler, *Tagebuch, 1879-1892*, 26.

proficient dancers, although they, too, face gender-based social constraints and the consequences of being caught up in a love triangle. Both Tonele in Auerbach's "Tonele mit dem gebissenem Wange" (Tonele with the Bitten Cheek) and Hannele in Kompert's *Die Kinder des Randars* (The Randar's Children) end up (at least temporarily) lonely after they dare fall in love with a man from outside their community, a man who is both charming and skilled in dancing.

The authors of these four primary texts were both pioneering Jewish authors of German-language regional fiction. While scholars have noted that Auerbach's stories about German village life were a model for Kompert's regional fiction about traditional Jews,¹⁵⁰ the plot similarities and aesthetic connections between their text have received less attention; their depictions of dance have been almost entirely overlooked.¹⁵¹

Auerbach and Kompert reveal the deep-seated prejudices of their rural characters, which turn sympathetic men into outsider figures and exacerbate rivalries between men. These characters often feel compelled to prove their masculinity through physicality: dancing, military service, nationalistic bravado, and violence. By comparing the plot trajectories of Auerbach's non-Jewish outsiders, who are identified with Jews, with Kompert's Jewish male characters, I will demonstrate the social importance of skill on the dance floor for greater social recognition and acceptance, both in the public realm of social life, and also in the family, courtship, and domestic sphere. Dance scenes were a form of entertaining local color that helped writers draw connections between the masculine anxiety of their

¹⁵⁰ Hess, *Middlebrow Literature*, 73.

¹⁵¹ Kristina Sazaki's discussion of the schlemiel figure in texts by Auerbach and Kompert is a rare example of a text that does a comparative literary analysis of the two authors, see Kristina Sazaki, "The Assimilating Fool? Berthold Auerbach's 'Der Tolpatsch' and Leopold Kompert's 'Schlemiel,'" *seminar* 39 (February 2003): 1-14. In another exception that proves the rule, Sazaki also briefly mentions Auerbach's use of the dance motif in "Der Tolpatsch."

characters and larger issues of Jewish participation in European culture.

Writers in the long nineteenth century, and beyond, demonstrate a commingled fascination and concern with Jewish men's ability to dance and to dance well. These concerns are closely identified with notions of courtship and romantic love, as well as with anxiety about Jewish men's suitability as marriage partners. While traditional Jewish society privileged male religious scholarship over physical strength or military service, in Jewish literature since the *Haskole* (Jewish Enlightenment), young women tended to look more fondly at a beau with European accomplishments. Aaron Halle Wolfssohn portrays a variety of Jewish attitudes towards salon culture in his ca. 1794 *Laykhtzin un fremelay* (Silliness and Sanctimony), a West Yiddish Enlightenment play in the mold of Molière's *Tartuffe* that illustrates the temptation and dubious pleasure of dance. In this play, the charlatan tutor Reb Yoysefkhe takes advantage of his employer, Reb Henokh, and seeks to marry his daughter, Yetkhen. While Reb Henokh dismisses Yetkhen's favorite activities (dancing, singing, and playing music) as foolishness that she will give up upon marriage to a pious man,¹⁵² Reb Yoysefkhe finds it expedient to woo Yetkhen, imitate refined manners, and claim he loves music, song, and dance.¹⁵³ Wolfssohn considers such elegant accomplishments incompatible with a Hassidic lifestyle, and Reb Yoysefkhe's failed attempt to court Yetkhen merely proves that he is both ridiculous and hypocritical, traits underscored when he turns out to be a regular patron of a brothel. Interestingly, dance is the only leisure pursuit that Wolfssohn invokes in both the context of the salon

¹⁵² Aaron Halle Wolfssohn, *Silliness and Sanctimony*, in *Landmark Yiddish Plays: A Critical Anthology*, ed. and trans. Joel Berkowitz and Jeremy Dauber (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 90. For more about Wolfssohn and his play, including an analysis of the various stock character types in the context of Jewish Enlightenment drama, see Jeremy Dauber, *Antonio's Devils: Writers of the Jewish Enlightenment and the Birth of Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 164-206.

¹⁵³ Wolfssohn, *Silliness and Sanctimony*, 95.

and the brothel. Where both Reb Henokh and Reb Yoysefkhe refer to song and dance together, the madam in the brothel and Yetkhen (who has been placed in the brothel by the Christian man she had hoped would save her from her arranged marriage) associate drinking and waltzing.¹⁵⁴ As such, dance is a sign of Enlightened sociability and salon culture that is inconceivable for traditional Jewish men and, at the same time, a suspect physical activity associated with poor morality and licentiousness.¹⁵⁵

Social dance was an important marker of social class and venue for impressing the opposite sex. In his remarkable English-language diary of his leisure activities (1833-37), Louis Lesser, a Jewish bank clerk living in Dresden, recounts studying social dances with several dance masters. Even as a beginner, Lesser prefers to make a positive impression on his dance partners. Initially he practices with his male friends to learn the steps, and the first time he has a mixed-sex dance lesson, Lesser complains that: “we were not glad, being not yet far advanced.”¹⁵⁶ Lesser would have preferred to hone his skills before dancing with female partners. He eventually joins a Jewish social club, where members can take part in German bourgeois culture in a wholly Jewish milieu, and enthusiastically describes the balls and dances in which he participates.¹⁵⁷ Lesser’s diary suggests, and literary sources confirm, that for upwardly mobile Jewish men, the ability to conform to gender conventions on the dance floor was a particularly fraught sign of masculinity.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 103.

¹⁵⁵ Hans Ostwald reports that in the time Friedrich II, most bordellos were connected with dance halls. Hans Ostwald, *Das Galante Berlin* (Berlin-Grunewald: Verlagsanstalt Hermann Klemm, n.d. [1928]), 232.

¹⁵⁶ Louis Lesser, *A Jewish Youth in Dresden: The Diary of Louis Lesser, 1833–1837*, ed. Christopher R. Friedrichs (Bethesda, Maryland: University Press of Maryland, 2011), 70.

¹⁵⁷ For Jewish social clubs, see Marion Kaplan, “As Germans and as Jews in Imperial Germany”, 249-50.



Fig. 3: Julius Moser, *Familienbild Manheimer*, Berlin 1850, Oil on canvas, 96 x 126 cm; Jüdisches Museum Berlin, gift of Mary Blaschko, photo: Jens Ziehe

In visual culture, as in literature, dancing ability clarifies Jewish bourgeois aspirations, whether in positive or negative light. The painter Julius Moser, himself an upwardly mobile Jew who changed his surname from the “Moses” of his merchant father to the more ethnically-ambiguous Moser, includes dance among the signs of social grace and bourgeois refinement in his 1850 group portrait “Familienbild Manheimer” (Manheimer Family Portrait).¹⁵⁸ In the foreground, children perform a couple’s dance. A

¹⁵⁸ Franz Landberger, “Julius Moser: Ein vergessener jüdischer Maler,” *Central-Verein-Zeitung* 1 (April 1 1937): 2. Beiblatt. Landberger writes the family name as “Mannheimer” and dates the work 1858, but I have followed the listing of the Jewish Museum’s website in cases of discrepancy. See “Familienbild

boy leads a slightly taller girl, concentrating intently on her face as he guides her past the piano. She steps lightly on her feet, her free arm set on her hip, and her posture proud, as if she knows that she is the focal point of the painting, and of most people in the room. Behind her, a younger girl playfully joins the dance, lifting her skirt and pointing her toe as she follows them. Surrounded by portraits in gilt frames, a piano, and their family, the children capture the viewer's eye. The taller girl is strikingly graceful, whereas the boy stands off to the side and must take care not to collide into the piano. The brightness of the girls' dresses and the boy's trousers makes them stand out, in contrast to the darker shades worn by the adults, yet the children do not seem at odds with the bourgeois comfort and gentility of the interior. In fact, their very youth suggests that they will continue of this style of living into the next generation, perhaps by one day meeting a suitable marriage partner on the dance floor.



Fig. 4: Caricature of Jewish wedding dancing, Photo of cover image from Itzig Feitel Stern, *Gedichter, Perobeln und Schnoukes fer unnere Leute, Zweyter Thahl, ouder Knoblichblüthe* (Meissen, F. W. Goedsche, n.d. [1833])

While Moser uses dance to portray a bourgeois Jewish family in a positive light, dance was also a tool in antisemitic caricature, as can be seen in the image of a Jewish wedding celebration that illustrates the title page of *Gedichter, Perobeln und Schnoukes fer unnere Leute, Zweyter Thahl, ouder Knoblichblüthe* (Poems, Parables and Jokes for Our People, Part Two or Garlic Blossoms). The book was published in Leipzig in 1833, one of several volumes printed under the “Jewish” pseudonym Itzig Feitel Stern.¹⁵⁹ The identity of Itzig Feitel Stern is unclear, and Alfred Klepsch speculates that these publications were likely the product of multiple authors.¹⁶⁰ Claiming to be a collection of humorous satirical poems and stories in the Jewish vernacular, *Gedichter, Peroblen und Schnoukes fer unnere Leute* poses as entertaining literature for Yiddish-speaking Jewish

¹⁵⁹ Alfred Klepsch, “Jiddische Mundartdichtung von Nichtjuden aus Franken. Das Rätsel des Itzig Feitel Stern,” *Jahrbuch für fränkische Landesforschung* 68 (2008): 180.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 192-93.

insiders when, in reality, it mocks the cultural pretensions and perceived linguistic impurities of Jews.

The author uses a combination of Jewish and Frankish vernacular to denigrate Jews, as can be seen in the title page to his book. The bride and groom sit on chairs, pointing and laughing, as a man and woman perform a hopping dance step in the center of the circle of guests, accompanied by several musicians. The groom and other male guests have protruding, beak-like noses and dark curly hair, although the women are depicted with more delicate, less stereotypically Jewish features, other than their dark hair. Just as as the men suffer the brunt of the stereotypical representation, so too is a man, quite literally, the butt of the joke: the male dancer's trousers are falling down. As he lifts his leg for the dance, his coattails fly up, exposing his bare backside to general amusement. The antisemitic cartoon reveals the progress of acculturation, since a man and a woman dance together. At the same time, they perform this couple's dance in the context of Jewish wedding practice. Dancing in front of newlyweds for their entertainment is an important part of Jewish wedding celebrations, which takes place here in the literal circle of the community. While nineteenth century Jews may have hoped to maintain their wedding rituals while entering into bourgeois society, the offensive caricature suggests that Jews, or at least Jewish men, are incapable of becoming European.

Jewish writers also questioned Jewish male performance. Moving forward to the literary milieu of the Weimar Republic, Vicki Baum's character Raffael Levy in her short story "Der Knabe und die Tänzerin" (The Youth and the Dancer) is a Sephardi Jew, an exotic type in the German-Jewish imagination. At the same time, since he grew up in a

“ghetto,” he is also identified with two elements that were more commonly associated with Ashkenazim: Jewish effeminacy and degenerate traditional communities. When the exotic dancer Iszäil seeks a perfect male specimen to assist her in her sword dance, the youth she finally selects is 16-year-old Raffael. Baum contrasts Raffael’s physical beauty and Iszail’s Orientalist performance with Raffael’s home in the dirty Jewish quarter, his sickly brother, and his father’s chronic cough. Yet even though Iszäil claims Raffael has a body “wie ein Gott” (like a God) and takes him, not merely as an assistant, but also as a lover, Baum does not describe the adolescent’s hard muscles or robust strength but rather “Tränen in die Augen” (tears in his eyes), how his fingers and hands “zitterten” (trembled) and his lips “bebten verzweifelt” (quivered in doubt).¹⁶¹ A Jewish young man might appear, to the *femme fatale* dancer, to have the ideal male form, but his fear, willingness to forget his family, and ultimate sacrifice of his life for Iszäil proves he does not embody the conventional masculine attributes of aggression, dominance, or violence.

Auerbach and Kompert explore the relationship between dance, male rivalry, and violence in their regional fiction. All four of the primary texts I discuss in this chapter depict tensions between competing models of masculine performance, which pit male rivals and opposing value systems against each other. Such conflicts are virtually impossible to resolve; each of the stories ends with the death or exile of at least one of the contenders. Ability to dance well is a form of masculine display and source of male anxiety, whereas all of the female characters are assumed to be competent dancers. Nonetheless, in depicting the mixed-sex dance floor as a field of male competition, both authors take into account women’s ability to choose their own (dance) partners and the

¹⁶¹ Vicki Baum, “Der Knabe und die Tänzerin,” *Schloßtheater: Erzählungen* (Munich: Wilhelm Heyne Verlag, 1985), 95.

consequences male rivalries impose on female characters. Despite their reliance on formulaic love-triangle plots, Auerbach and Kompert build a complex and unsettling portrait of Jewish male anxiety and social exclusion in the nineteenth century.

Berthold Auerbach

Berthold Auerbach (1812-1882) was an incredibly popular, well-regarded, and influential writer during his lifetime who has recently inspired greater attention from literary scholars, due in part to a growing interest in (Jewish) popular and regional literature.¹⁶² Alongside Heinrich Heine and Ludwig Börne, Auerbach was one of the best-known politically liberal German Jewish authors of the early nineteenth century, although unlike his two better-known contemporaries, Auerbach never converted to Christianity. Instead, Auerbach's "conversion" was of a literary nature: his turn from writing Jewish historical novels (which scholars such as Gabriele von Glasenapp have described as early examples of *Ghettogesichten*)¹⁶³ that mostly interested Jewish readers to best-selling German *Heimat* (homeland) fiction, based on his childhood in the village of Nordstetten in Württemberg.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, it is an interesting paradox of Auerbach's career that a Jewish writer, who once aspired to become a rabbi, became a principal exponent of the genre of *Dorfgeschichten* (village tales) and was widely celebrated for his authentic portrayal of

¹⁶² See, for instance, Sven-Erik Rose, "Patriotic Pentheism: Spinoza in Berthold Auerbach's Early Career," in *Jewish Philosophical Politics in Germany, 1789–1848* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2014), 200–40; Jonathan Skolnik, "Jewish History Under the Sign of Secularization: Berthold Auerbach's *Spinoza* (1837)," in *Jewish Pasts, German Fictions: History, Memory, and Minority Culture in Germany, 1824–1955* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 23–44; Anita Bunyan, "Berthold Auerbach's *Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten*: Political and Religious Contexts of a Nineteenth-Century Bestseller," in *The German Bestseller in the Late Nineteenth Century*, ed. Charlotte Woodford and Benedict Schofield (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2012) 127–43; Petra Schlüter, *Berthold Auerbach – ein Volksaufklärer im 19. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2010).

¹⁶³ von Glasenapp, *Aus der Judengasse*, 33-52.

¹⁶⁴ For information about Jewish life in Nordstetten, see Schlüter, *Berthold Auerbach*, 47-48.

rural Germany. Published in five volumes between 1843 and 1854, the *Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten* (Black Forest Village Stories) exemplify both German regional fiction and early European literary realism.¹⁶⁵

Auerbach depicted dance strikingly in a variety of his works throughout his literary career. As revealed in his correspondence, Auerbach mixed with non-Jewish elites at balls¹⁶⁶ and used dance as a metaphor. As he describes in a letter to his future second wife, Nina, a particularly engaging political discussion with a female aristocrat reminds him of walking, in contrast to more typical conversations that resemble leading a good dancing partner, since they make you feel “daß man sie in seiner Gewalt und im Takte hält.”¹⁶⁷ (that you keep her in rhythm and under your authority.) While one might expect that a dynamic conversation might resemble the pace and excitement of a waltz, Auerbach views male dominance as a key element of the dance floor, which helps explain why he represents the dance floor as a proving ground for male physical prowess. In stories such as “Der Tolpatsch,” men exercise control over women’s bodies through dance, and thereby exhibit their power relative to other men.

Auerbach presents dance as a way of showing dominance and order, but in a particular political environment, it can also be a sign of chaos. In Auerbach’s diary account of the 1848 Revolution in Vienna, rowdy dancing reveals the riotous mood of the

¹⁶⁵ For a discussion of Auerbach’s success, see *ibid.*, 193-95 and Jörg Schönert, “Berthold Auerbachs *Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten* der 40er und 50er Jahre als Beispiel eines >literarischen Wandels<?,” in *Zwischen Goethezeit und Realismus: Wandel und Spezifik in der Phase des Biedermeier*, ed. Michael Titzmann, vol. 92 of *Studien und Texte zur Sozialgeschichte der Literatur*, ed. Wolfgang Frühwald et al (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2002), 336-37.

¹⁶⁶ See letter from March 3rd, 1870 in: Berthold Auerbach, *Briefe an seinen Freund Jakob Auerbach: Neuedition der Ausgabe von 1884 mit Kommentaren und Indices*, ed. Hans Otto Horch, vol. 2, vol. 83/2 of *Conditio Judaica Studien und Quellen zur deutsch-jüdischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte*, ed. Hans Otto Horch (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), 13-14.

¹⁶⁷ Berthold Auerbach, *Bräutigamsbriefe von Berthold Auerbach*, ed. Anton Bettelheim (Berlin: Rudolph Masse, 1910), 33.

radicals. As a band plays Ländler music and military marches, “junge Männer unter sich oder mit schnell aus dem Umkreise eroberten Mädchen tanzten und sprangen, jauchzten und sangen.”¹⁶⁸ (young men danced, leaped, whooped, and sang with one another or with girls they seized from the vicinity.) Rather than invite women to join them in decorous dancing, the revolutionaries behave wildly; the men either dance with one another or simply take their dance partners at will, a description which illustrates the general chaos Auerbach encounters in Vienna. In works such as this diary or his 1839 novel *Dichter und Kaufmann* (Poet and Merchant) about Jewish Enlightenment poet Ephraim Moses Kuh, Auerbach emphasizes the unruly or symbolic aspects of dance, whereas in works of regional fiction, Auerbach typically employs dance as a form of local color that aids in character and plot development. Dance features in dramatic moments in the *Dorfgeschichten* – indeed, it is impossible to imagine a Cinderella story such as *Barfußbele* without an important dance scene – but Auerbach shows how dancing is a part of local culture and a sign of normative village behavior, rather than a symptom of mishap and disorder.

In *Dichter und Kaufmann*, Auerbach uses dance to show disruptions to the normal social order. Auerbach only briefly notes ritual *Simkhes tora* holiday dancing and he does not include dance descriptions in his two Jewish wedding scenes, instead focusing on more dramatic dances that are further removed from traditional Jewish life. The protagonist Ephraim’s sister Veilchen has a disturbing dream on Yom Kippur, which foretells the death of her fiancé on an antisemitic espionage charge. When she later

¹⁶⁸ Berthold Auerbach, *Tagebuch aus Wien: Von Latour bis auf Windischgrätz (September bis November 1848)* (Breslau: Schletter, 1849), 127.

receives word of the young man's execution, she describes her terrifying vision, in which the young couple dances to violin music in a field:

[...] wir fingen an zu tanzen, ganz allein, immer lustiger, da ließ mich Daniel plötzlich los, ich stand wie angenagelt, konnte kein Glied rühren, er aber tanzte immer fort, hüpfte hoch in die Luft, und schwebte endlich ganz frei über dem Boden, bis ich ihn auf einem hohen Berge hinter einem Baume verschwinden sah; ich wollte schreien, konnte aber nicht, da erwachte ich voller Angst [...]¹⁶⁹

We began to dance, all alone, merrier and merrier, then suddenly Daniel let go of me. I stood as if I were nailed in place and couldn't move a single limb, but he kept dancing, leaped high in the air, and finally floated completely free over the ground, until I saw him disappear on a high mountain behind a tree. I wanted to scream but couldn't, then I woke up completely terrified.

Veilchen does not describe the initial dance figures in detail, nor does she specify how she interacts with the young man while dancing. Her description instead emphasizes feelings of isolation, motion and stillness, and a sense of helplessness. Would Veilchen, who has had a sheltered upbringing, imagine a *mitsve-tants*, a wedding dance performed with partners separated by a handkerchief? Is her horror primarily caused by the thought of her future husband abandoning her to dance on his own? Or does Veilchen, who later learns to read German and develops unrequited feelings for Enlightenment writer Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, envision a couple's dance that challenges her cultural experience? Does this unfamiliar physical intimacy, followed by abandonment, contribute to her discomfort? Auerbach does not specify, with the result that his dance scene is more symbolic and atmospheric than his descriptions of Jewish religious life in his historical fiction or later use of dance in his regional fiction.

Where Veilchen's dream shows how antisemitism prevents an arranged marriage, Ephraim's participation in a masquerade ball reveals his inability to join Christian

¹⁶⁹ Berthold Auerbach, *Dichter und Kaufmann: Ein Lebensgemälde*, vol. I (Stuttgart: Adolph Krabbe, 1840), 80-81.

society. Ephraim attends the lavish affair in a Spanish costume under an assumed noble identity, and gains the admiration of his hostess, Countess Aurora. Despite this apparent social success, Ephraim feels ill at ease at this noble event. The riotous nature of the celebration disturbs him (especially since the masquerade starts a chain of events that leads to him being challenged to a duel) and visions of his relatives and friends haunt him. What is more, Ephraim is unable to participate in one of the chief amusements at a masquerade, dancing, because: “wo sollte er tanzen gelernt haben?”¹⁷⁰ (Where should he have learned to dance?) He prefers to engage in gallant flirtations with the countess than to attempt dancing, behavior which suggests that charming pleasantries are easier for an Enlightened Jew to master than physical grace and skill on the dance floor. Yet ultimately Ephraim reveals his true identity to the countess, only to be discharged from her presence under threat of violence. Memories of this insulting treatment torment him, even years later. Because he is a Jew, Countess Aurora cannot accept him as a social equal or potential suitor, no matter how good an impression he makes on his own merits. Yet as a follower of the Enlightenment, Ephraim feels he can only marry a woman he loves, and thus rejects potential brides from the Jewish community. Auerbach, like most writers I discuss, portrays romantic failure as a symptom of being caught between two worlds. Until Jews are emancipated, he suggests with his ball scene, they cannot succeed in romantic love and companionate marriage.

Auerbach uses the dance floor to bring disparate characters together and facilitate romance in his regional fiction. He includes a particularly developed dance scene in his sentimental Cinderella story *Barfüßele* of 1856, which includes a hopser and a waltz, as

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 78.

well as a description of paying the dance musicians. In this tale, the virtuous orphan girl Amri meets Johannes, a well-to-do farmer's son, at a village dance. Assuming that they will never see one another again, they do not reveal their names to each other, although later they find each other again, Johannes proposes, and the happy couple marries. Despite her humble background, Amri is well-liked by basically everyone she meets, even when she engages in low-status work as a goose girl. She dances without difficulty and becomes a wife and mother. Her brother Dami, in contrast, has a more difficult time adjusting socially, does not dance, and never marries. In this respect, he resembles Auerbach's other male outsider figures, who sometimes have difficulty dancing and typically remain unmarried.

In the period between 1839, when Auerbach published his historical novel of Emancipation, *Dichter und Kaufmann*, and 1856, when he published his conservative *Dorfgeschichte, Barfüßele*, Auerbach wrote his most famous *Dorfgeschichten*. These local-color stories were less politically tendentious than his historical novels, yet more liberal than his later works. Through an analysis of the dance scenes in two of the stories, I posit that these *Dorfgeschichten* have more in common with Auerbach's Jewish fiction than is immediately apparent. In the next section, I will focus in greater depth Auerbach's sympathetic outsider characters Aloys and the Jäger, and how Auerbach identifies their social exclusion with discrimination faced by Jews.

Berthold Auerbach's "Jewish" Outsiders

Auerbach engages with contradictory notions of Jews in his *Dorfgeschichten* through his depictions of dance. In two stories from his original 1843 collection, "Der

Tolpatsch” (The Gawk) and “Tonele mit dem gebissenen Wange” (Tonele with the Bitten Cheek), Auerbach portrays outsider males as Jewish identification figures. That is to say, Aloys and the unnamed Jäger (hunter) are not Jewish, but Auerbach invokes their social isolation and mistreatment in the village in a way that identifies them with Jews. In both cases, Auerbach uses the dance floor as a space for male competition and local color. While the one “Jewish” figure is clumsy and a poor dancer, the other is urbane and nimble on his feet. Despite these differences, both men are excluded from Nordstetten society; Aloys for his gawkiness and the Jäger for his foreignness and finesse.

One component of antisemitism, according to Gavin Langmuir’s definition, is xenophobic assertions, in which an entire group is deemed negative or threatening based on actions observed in only a few members.¹⁷¹ Xenophobic hostility often involves seemingly contradictory claims because in these situations an “abstraction is not used logically and empirically but is intended to symbolize ill-understood and unconnected menaces.”¹⁷² An out-group, such as Jews, is blamed for different social ills and anxieties simultaneously, an approach which may soothe the xenophobe but is not logically consistent. Antisemitic renderings thus attack Jews for embodying opposite extremes. They are simultaneously perceived as coldly rational and overly emotional or superstitious, both cosmopolitan and parochial, sexually repressed and dangerously licentious. Auerbach uses two very different outsider figures to criticize two different types of anti-Jewish prejudice.

¹⁷¹ Gavin I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 328-29.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 334.

My discussion takes as a starting point Kristina Sazaki's argument that Auerbach uses the blond, blue-eyed protagonist of "Der Tolpatsch" to represent the outsider experience of Jews.¹⁷³ She identifies Aloys with the hapless Jewish type of the schlemiel: he is mistreated in his village, his superiors in the military associate him with a persecuted minority group (since they initially assign him to sleep next to a gypsy in the military barracks), and he is never able to lose his reputation for physical awkwardness despite learning to dance. Sazaki situates her argument within a broader discussion of the pitiable and socially awkward schlemiel in works by Auerbach and Kompert. This discussion focuses on a particular German-Jewish literary figure, which appears in texts by such luminaries as Rahel Varnhagen, Adelbert von Chamisso, Heinrich Heine, and Kompert.¹⁷⁴ I expand this argument by looking at Auerbach's corpus more broadly.

Auerbach portrays a variety of Jewish characters in his historical fiction; they are rarely schlemiels. It would be surprising if an author who was so invested in describing the dignity of Jewish life would limit himself to depicting a hapless Jewish identification figure. Auerbach's Jewish protagonists in his historical novels, like Aloys in "Der Tolpatsch," are unable to integrate completely into mainstream society, nor are they able to participate in traditional family and religious life. Yet tragic characters such as Ephraim Moses Kuh in *Dichter und Kaufmann* are thoughtful and admirable heroes who are caught between worlds; they are not clumsy, laughable schlemiels. Auerbach includes a wide spectrum of Jewish characters and approaches to cultural contact in his novels; he presents resolutely pious characters and intrepid followers of the Enlightenment sympathetically and offers more critical portraits of Jewish parvenus, apostates, or those

¹⁷³ Sazaki, "The Assimilating Fool?," 11.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

who, due to the poor social and legal condition of European Jews, focus on money rather than feeling. Auerbach continues his practice of portraying diverse Jewish experiences through his identification figures in *Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten*.

Both Aloys and the Jäger use dance as a way of complying with village norms, proving they belong, and impressing women, yet they remain outsiders. While Aloys is a gawky village youth who is unable to perform in the village pastime of dancing, the Jäger is an accomplished dancer with a worldly perspective. Both stories feature tragic romantic rivalries, in which the dance floor is a fraught site of male rivalry and masculine performance. Both tales end unhappily: Aloys leaves for America, his former sweetheart now the wife of a more stereotypically masculine rival, and the Jäger is murdered, shot in the woods by the jealous former fiancé of his sweetheart. “Der Tolpatsch” and “Tonele” reveal that neither social improvement nor natural ability is sufficient to win social acceptance for an outsider, a lesson that was bitterly learned by German Jews. For the rest of this section, I will show the role of dance in depicting outsider masculinity first in “Der Tolpatsch” and then in “Tonele.”

“Der Tolpatsch” was the first story published in Auerbach’s original *Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten*. He finished writing the story on December 1, 1841 and published it in the journal *Europa* in September 1842, before publishing his story collection in book form.¹⁷⁵ Known by the insulting nickname of “Tolpatsch” (gawk) on account of his clumsiness, Aloys seeks out the military draft in order to prove himself in the village. When Aloys returns home on leave from military service, he has a straighter posture, an increased self-confidence, and he has learned to dance, but he is still unable to

¹⁷⁵ Sven-Erik Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics in Germany*, 203.

escape his derogatory nickname. Sazaki argues that “Der Tolpatsch” is a metaphor for the complicated relationship between Jews and mainstream German culture. Auerbach translates the social exclusion of German Jews into a form that appealed to a broader readership than was interested in his Jewish novels.¹⁷⁶

Dance, like military service, is as an important leitmotif in Auerbach’s story and a sign of masculine fitness for communal life. In fact, the importance of military service transcends social identity, since Herzles Kobbel (the Jewish friend of Aloys’s rival Jörgli) is also part of Jörgli’s group by virtue of having served in his military regiment. Yet where military exercises take place away from the village, dance is a skill that men exhibit in full view of local women. In two dance scenes (one before Aloys joins the military and one when he has returned home on leave) and two letters to his mother (one while in the military service and one while living in America), Auerbach describes the extent to which Aloys feels he must prove himself on the dance floor. For Aloys, dancing and military service are the most important ways of proving physical fitness and masculine worth. He compares himself with his Jörgli, a cavalry officer whose jaunty military hat and proficiency in song and dance make him the heartthrob of the village. Aloys becomes obsessed with proving himself physically, and opposes all the efforts his mother and sweetheart Marannele take to get him an exemption from the military draft. Aloys’s anxiety to prove his masculinity thus leads him to ignore the wishes of the people who are closest to him, his mother and Marannele, a tendency that ultimately leads the latter to marry Jörgli and Aloys to go into American exile.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 11.

Early on in the story, Jörgli and Marannele dance a Ländler, a South German and Austrian country dance closely related to the waltz, which is thus both a typical expression of local culture and an opportunity for a couple to dance standing closely together. Richard Wolfram claims that this dance is “unstreitig” (inarguably) the most particularly German dance.¹⁷⁷ Historically, there were several terms for (variations of) the Ländler, including “Deutscher” (German),¹⁷⁸ although by the time Auerbach published his story, “Deutscher” referred to a waltz.¹⁷⁹ Arguably the most famous example of a Ländler takes place in one of the best-known exponents of Germanic culture: the dance shared by Fräulein Maria and Captain von Trapp in the musical *The Sound of Music*, in which the two characters simultaneously display both their mutual attraction and their support of Austrian culture. Yet while the film choreography emphasizes national identity by depicting, in the background, a ballroom full of dancers performing the same steps in unison, a Ländler, like a waltz, depends very much on the choices of the male partner and the relationship between the dancers. A Ländler thus not only demonstrates ability to perform local and German national culture, it is also a particularly challenging male physical accomplishment.

In contrast to set dances, such as the minuet or the quadrille, for which a dance master calls the names of specific dance figures, a Ländler allows for improvisation.

Ernst Hamza notes:

Der Tänzer macht selbstverständlich ganz andere „Stückl“ (Improvisationen), nimmt überhaupt eine ganz andere Haltung ein, wenn er sich einem Mädchen

¹⁷⁷ Richard Wolfram, “Die Frühform des Ländlers,” *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* V, no. 2 (1922): 129. On p. 132, Wolfram notes that the Ländler appears in Auerbach’s *Dorfgeschichten*.

¹⁷⁸ See Ernst Hamza, *Der Ländler* (Vienna: Verein für Landeskunde von Niederösterreich und Wien, 1957), 7 and Reingard Witzmann, *Der Ländler in Wien: Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des Wiener Walzers bis in die Zeit des Wiener Kongresses* (Vienna: Arbeitsstelle für den Volkskundeatlas in Österreich, 1976), 27-28, 30.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

nähern will, wenn ein ausgesprochenes Liebespaar tanzt, oder wenn er als junger Bursch mit „der Frau des Hauses“ tanzt, usf. Es ist nicht derselbe Tänzer, wenn er zwanzig Jahre alt ist oder sechzig.¹⁸⁰

It goes without saying that a male dancer makes completely different “Stückl” (improvisations), takes a completely different approach overall, if he wants to get closer to a girl, if an avowed couple dances, or if a young fellow dances with the lady of the house, and so forth. He dances differently at twenty years old than at sixty.

The very fluidity and expressiveness of the Ländler makes it particularly treacherous for a clumsy or novice dancer. Instead of being directed in a set pattern, announced by the dance master and already familiar to his partner, a man dancing a Ländler is expected to demonstrate creativity, grace, a repertoire of steps, and a sense of rhythm. In addition, a successful dancer needs to communicate the precise steps to his partner through physical cues, and use the dance to express the appropriate emotional connection. Such a dance, when performed well, adds to a feeling of enjoyment and heightens the emotional connection between the dancers. Failure to dance, or to dance well, on the other hand, could be catastrophic for an emerging courtship.

Throughout “Der Tolpatsch,” various characters demonstrate the social importance of dance for village culture in general and masculine performance in particular. Young people of both sexes dance and flirt at village spinning evenings (social events where young women spin together), and Auerbach sharply distinguishes how Jörgli and Aloys behave at these events. Jörgli plays a central role in the festivities; he sings, he dances, and spins around “wie eine Spindel” (like a spindle) when dancing with Marannele.¹⁸¹ When Jörgli dances the Ländler with Marannele, he whirls her so that her skirt billows

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 23.

¹⁸¹ Berthold Auerbach, “Der Tolpatsch,” *Berthold Auerbach's Sämmtliche Schwarzwälder Droggeschichten*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1871), 10.

upward, exposing her body, almost as if he is publicly removing her clothes. In contrast, Aloys's mother reminds her nineteen-year-old son not to sit dreaming in a corner. Even when he participates in the festivities, he is more comfortable serving food (a traditionally female task) than playing a flirtatious game where a man steal's a woman's spindle and she must ransom it back. When he dares attempt the game, Marannele fears he will be unable to properly execute it. Yet she makes her affection for Aloys clear. As soon as her dance with Jörgli ends, Marannele runs over to Aloys to dance with him, seeming to prefer Aloys's earnestness and considerate behavior to Jörgli's brash showiness.

„Komm Aloys, du mußt auch tanzen.“

„Laß mich, du weißt ja, daß ich nicht tanzen kann. Du willst mich nur foppen.“

„Du Tol-“, sagte Marannele, es wollte: du Tolpatsch sagen, aber es hielt schnell inne, denn es sah sein Gesicht, auf dem die Wehmuth ausgegossen war, daß ihm das Weinen näher stand als das Lachen, es sagte daher freundlicher: „Nein, g'wiß nicht, ich will dich nicht foppen; komm, und wenn du auch nicht tanzen kannst, so mußt du's lernen, und ich tanz so gern mit dir als wie mit einem.“

Sie tanzte nun mit ihm herum, aber Aloys schlenkerte seine Füße, wie wenn er Holzschuhe an hätte, so daß die Anderen vor Lachen nicht mehr singen konnten.

„Ich lern' dir's ganz allein, Aloys“, sagte das Marannele, ihn beruhigend.¹⁸²

“Come, Aloys, you also need to dance.”

“Leave me alone, you know I can't dance. You just want make a fool of me.”

“You ga-,” said Marannele, she wanted to say “you gawk”, but she quickly restrained herself, since she saw his face, which effused with melancholy, so that he was closer to tears than to laughter, and as a result she said in a friendly tone: “No, of course not, I don't want to make a fool of you. Come, and if you can't dance as well, then you must learn, and I dance as gladly with you as with anyone.”

She then danced around with him, but Aloys swung his feet, as if he was wearing wooden shoes, so that others began laughing so much they could not sing.

“I will teach it you all by myself, Aloys,” Marannele comforted him.

¹⁸² Ibid., 10-11.

Marannele attempts to dance with Aloys, yet he proves unequal to the challenge. He is unable to please Marannele on the dance floor, lacking the skill, grace, and creativity necessary to properly perform a Ländler. His heavy footwork contrasts miserably both with Jörgli's nimbleness on the dance floor and the cavalry officer's "geraden, kecken Haltung, die Füße auswärts setzend" (brash, upright posture, his feet turned outwards) when going about the village.¹⁸³ Indeed, Aloys's inability to master a graceful dance step is reminiscent of how Sander Gilman claims that Jewish men were frequently considered incapable of serving in the military of the European nation-state, and thus of entering society, due to flat-footedness, club-footedness, weak-footedness, or having an unnatural gait.¹⁸⁴ Feet are thus an important component of suitability for military service, as shown both by Jörgli and Gilman respectively, and an important quality in dance performance.

Aloys feels he can only get past his physical awkwardness on the dance floor by joining the military. Once he does so, his training improves his physique and confidence, and he proudly sends his mother a portrait that reveals his physical transformation. Yet rather than go into detail about training exercises or military drills in a letter to his mother, Aloys chooses to announce his new-found dancing abilities. Where military service removes a male laborer from the village economy, dancing is a tangible skill that can be used and appreciated at home. Aloys delights in the fact that his military service has made him almost unrecognizable at home, but Marannele remains unenthused by his newfound pride and boasting, and chooses to marry Jörgli instead.

Aloys's dancing abilities improve in the military, along with his confidence about engaging in public social pleasantries with women. When he returns to the village on

¹⁸³ Ibid., 6.

¹⁸⁴ See Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, 38-59.

leave, he directly asks a woman, Mechthilde, to dance with him and exhibits his new-found dancing skills; he “tanzte dann so flink, daß Alle staunten.”¹⁸⁵ (danced so nimbly that everyone was astonished) Dancing is very much a public display that leads to admiration or ridicule for the dancers. Yet Aloys’s performance is not completely flawless; he has a slight moment of hesitation before he begins to dance that suggests he is still aching from Marannele’s loss. Dancing and strutting in the village are not sufficient to make up for Aloys’s acute sense of betrayal.

Not surprisingly, Aloys and Jörgli end the evening in a brawl, which further illustrates the lack of separation between dancing and fighting. The musicians do not immediately stop playing, thus accompanying the altercation as if it were a dance. Yet unlike dancing, which is considered appropriate behavior for a soldier, fighting (without being ordered to do so) is a punishable offense for a man in service. Rather than face army discipline for his brawling, Aloys chooses to go into exile; his American uncle purchases the young man’s discharge to spare him the consequences of his indiscretion. Aloys and Mechthilde leave for America and the young man writes a letter to his mother in Nordstetten in which he wistfully remembers both Marannele and village dancing. Auerbach shows that dancing is a leisure activity with very high stakes for a male sense of belonging in the village. Yet in “Der Tolpatsch,” as in “Tonele,” ability to dance is not enough to win acceptance for an outsider male.

“Tonele mit der gebissenen Wange” was first published in the journal *Der Freihafen* (The Free Harbor) in 1842 and was the fourth story in Auerbach’s original 1843 *Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten*. Scholars rarely address this troubling story and

¹⁸⁵ Auerbach, “Der Tolpatsch,” 21.

when they do it is typically in a brief plot summary or a textual comparison between Auerbach's preliminary drafts and his published versions of the story.¹⁸⁶ The story recounts a tragic love triangle involving a village girl named Tonele, her fiancé (a soldier named Sepper), and an unnamed Jäger who seeks out Tonele's affections. While Tonele is not initially affected by the Jäger's attempts to flirt with her, she resists Sepper's attempts to control her behavior and prevent her from talking or dancing with her admirer. When the Jäger dances with Tonele at a village wedding (and proves he is a better dancer), Sepper retaliates horrifically by biting and scarring his sweetheart's cheek. Tonele decides to have nothing more to do with Sepper and slowly allows the Jäger to court her, but when Sepper returns from his military service, he shoots and kills the Jäger in the woods.

The title "Jäger" can be translated variously as gamekeeper, hunter, or forester, and was an official position in the service of the baron, the duties of which included both hunting and maintaining order in the woods. This particular Jäger is an outsider; he comes from a different village and is dismissed as a potential suitor by the young village women who scorn him for killing animals and administering the baron's justice. They do not even want to be seen walking around with him, even though these same young women frolic openly with their suitors from the village and do not reflect upon the violent nature of their suitors' military service. Much like Jewish tavern keepers and tax collectors, who acted on behalf of the nobility and at the perceived expense of the peasantry, the Jäger works for a local landlord in a position that does not make him

¹⁸⁶ See Anton Bettelheim, *Berthold Auerbach; der Mann, sein Werk, sein Nachlass* (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1907), 137, 149; Edna Huttenmeier Spitz, *Studien zu den Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten Berthold Auerbachs* (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 1957), 71-72.

popular with the farmers. Auerbach most clearly identifies the Jäger with Jews by giving him a burial near a Jewish cemetery in the woods. Auerbach starts his story by describing the graves of seven Jews who perished in a horrific fire, and ends his story by describing the grave of the murdered Jäger in very close proximity to the Jewish graves. Both the Jews and the Jäger perished in tragic, unnecessary circumstances and are outsiders known by their social or professional identity rather than by name. Auerbach does not provide an explanation for why a Catholic man from Mühringen would be buried in the woods near Nordstetten instead of in a churchyard, yet this decision gives his work a poetic resonance and links the Jäger with Jews.

In German folk culture and literature, both hunters and Jews are associated with the devil, notions that Auerbach refutes in his text. Carl Maria von Weber's 1821 Romantic opera *Der Freischütz* (The Marksman), based on a marksman's pact with the devil in German folklore, portrays the devil in the form of Samiel, the Black Huntsman. Jeremias Gotthelf's green hunter in his 1842 novella *Die schwarze Spinne* (The Black Spider) is a demonic figure who makes a devil's pact with a village woman that has horrific consequences for her community. Jews, too, were identified with the devil in Medieval and Early Modern thought; early Christian thinkers accused them of an alliance with the devil during Jesus's time on earth and of participating in an ongoing war against the Church.¹⁸⁷ Stereotypes claimed Jews possessed diabolical physical maladies, including a foul odor and horns, some of which persisted into the modern era.¹⁸⁸ Walter H. Sokel argues that Jews are associated with the devil in nineteenth century "ontological

¹⁸⁷ Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and its Relation to Modern Antisemitism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), 21.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 44-47.

antisemitism,” which he defines as hostility towards Jews based upon their existence, rather than theological differences or economic practices. In contrast to race-based antisemitism, which views Jews as inferior, ontological antisemitism is a particularly German form of incomplete secularization that regards Jews as successors to the devil who embody “an evil will endowed with the freedom to choose evil.”¹⁸⁹ The character Moses Freudenstein in Wilhelm Raabe’s 1864 novel *Der Hungerpastor* (The Hunger Pastor) exemplifies such an evil Jewish figure. Auerbach incorporates negative views of hunters and, indirectly, Jews in his work in order to criticize them. Tonele’s friend Bärbele claims that a Jäger is no true Christian, a “grün’ Teufelsknecht” (green servant of the devil), and an unthinkable marriage partner.¹⁹⁰ Auerbach’s text plays with demonic notions of outsiders, which he subverts with his sympathetic, nimble-footed Jäger.

Dance plays an important role in Auerbach’s plot development and construction of village masculinity in “Tonele,” since this courtship practice indicates physical compatibility and is a marker of women’s pleasure and consent. While Tonele and Sepper initially appear to be “ein herrliches Paar, beide fast gleich groß und schlank, und beide doppelt schön, wenn sie mit einander gingen”¹⁹¹ (a marvelous couple, both almost identically tall and thin, and twice as beautiful when they were with each other), their physical and emotional compatibility is tested on the dance floor. Sepper tries to prevent Tonele from dancing with the Jäger, whose greater skill and good spirits make him better able to please a woman both on and off the dance floor. Even when Tonele prepares to

¹⁸⁹ Walter H. Sokel, “Dualistic Thinking and the Rise of Ontological Antisemitism in Nineteenth-Century Germany: From Schiller’s Franz Moor to Wilhelm Raabe’s Moses Freudenstein,” in *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis*, eds. Sander L. Gilman and Steven T. Katz (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 155.

¹⁹⁰ Berthold Auerbach, “Tonele mit der gebissenen Wange,” *Berthold Auerbach’s Sämtliche Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1871), 77.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

dance with Sepper, her body language points to his rival: “Es wendete sich aber nochmals nach dem Jäger um, ehe es zu tanzen begann.”¹⁹² (But she turned towards the Jäger once again before she began to dance.) The Jäger’s superior ability to dance a hopser and stated willingness to listen to what Tonele wants reveal his greater suitability as a partner for her.

Unlike a conversation, which could incorporate several parties including both Sepper and the Jäger, the hopser is a partner dance and thus more intimate than the encounters Tonele and the Jäger have had thus far. The partners move around the dance floor as a pair, holding each other, hopping in unison while spinning as in a polka, and can talk privately at a very close distance, as seen when Bärbele chides Sepper while dancing with him.¹⁹³ Later in the story, Tonele and the Jäger dance at a wedding in Mühringen, and it is clear that dancing brings them closer together, emotionally as well as physically. For such reasons, Sepper is wary about his sweetheart dancing with another man. Indeed, the wedding dancing is particularly important since, for the first time, it clearly shows why the Jäger (whom at this point Tonele barely knows) might be a more compelling suitor than Sepper in his own right, rather than simply as an example of a man with whom Tonele insists she has the right to converse.

Bärbele warns Sepper (as they dance together at her wedding) that he should not draw attention to the Jäger’s interest in Tonele, since Tonele might notice that the Jäger “kann doch noch besser tanzen, als du, so links 'rum kannst du doch nicht hopsen.”¹⁹⁴ (can also dance better than you can, you can’t do a reverse hopser like he can.”) The

¹⁹² Ibid., 85.

¹⁹³ Special thanks to German folk dancer and musician Vivian Zeller for demonstrating a hopser for me.

¹⁹⁴ Auerbach, “Tonele,” 85.

Jäger's skill on the dance floor pleases Tonele. When she later goes to his hometown of Mühringen, his attentions on the dance floor, along with their visit to a performance at the Baron's theater, contribute to her enjoyment and esteem of her comparatively sophisticated suitor. Yet the Jäger's appeal is not merely his physical abilities, or even his greater horizons, but the way he insists Tonele has a right to her own mind. Auerbach contrasts the suitors when the Jäger asks Tonele at the wedding if she is already taken for a dance. Sepper misunderstands the French loan word "engagirt" (partnered) and retorts, in a malapropism turned Freudian slip, that she is "schon angeschirrt" (already harnessed).¹⁹⁵ Auerbach emphasizes that the word is a loanword by placing it in quotes: "der Jäger kam nämlich auch zum Tanze, und die erste, die er »engagierte«, war Tonele."¹⁹⁶ (Indeed, the Jäger also came to the dance, and the first woman he "engaged" was Tonele.) In contrast to the Jäger's presumed use of a French term, Sepper implies that his fiancée is an animal restrained and in his possession, to which the Jäger claims indignantly that Tonele can speak for herself.

Auerbach's sympathetic and appealing Jäger challenges Tonele's prejudices. He tells her that she is the prettiest girl between Nordstetten and Paris; regardless of whether he has actually visited Paris, the fact that he mentions the world outside of the two villages indicates that his horizons are broader than Tonele's experience. The Jäger introduces Tonele to cultural experiences that engage her imagination and treats her in a courteous, gentlemanly manner. Where the soldier Sepper resorts to control and violence when he does not get what he wants, the Jäger uses language, access to his employer's

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

theater, and dancing to secure Tonele's affections. His actions are much more seductive than Sepper's abusive behavior, yet ultimately Sepper's violence prevails. At the story's tragic end, Sepper overcomes and shoots the hunter with his own weapon; the suave Jäger felled in the woods by his bestial rival.

Auerbach's turn to regional fiction did not hinder him from including political messages or signs of social change in his work. Instead, his development of a best-selling genre enabled him to present his ideas to a larger audience than would have been interested in his Jewish tales. In his story "Des Schloßbauers Vefele" (The Manorhouse Farmer's Vefele, 1843), Auerbach includes a Jewish minor character who embodies the author's liberal humanism. In "Der Tolpatsch" and "Tonele," Auerbach goes further in encouraging readers to imagine the difficult situation faced by German Jews by trapping his Catholic characters between different forms of prejudice. The Jäger's social exclusion, caused by his profession and the fact he was raised in a different town, rather than innate qualities, has more in common with Auerbach's Ephraim Moses Kuh or Kompert's character Moritz than it does with Aloys's marginalization on account of his lack of physical grace. At the same time, Aloys's struggles with ungainliness resemble the plight of Kompert's character Maier, as will be seen in my discussion of Kompert's work.

Leopold Kompert

Leopold Kompert (1822-1886) is best known for popularizing the *Ghettogesichte* (ghetto tale) genre, which depicted traditional small-town Jewish life. During his lifetime, he published five volumes of ghetto tales and two novels, which were popular among Jewish and Christian readers alike. Contemporary reviewers, such as Gustav Freytag,

compared the “schwäbischer Bauernbursch” (Swabian farmer boy) Auerbach with the “Sohn des böhmischen Ghettos” (son of the Bohemian ghetto) Kompert on account of their shared interest in regional fiction.¹⁹⁷ Kompert’s ghetto fiction was based on his youth in Bohemia and Moravia, although he primarily lived in Vienna after 1839.

According to Jonathan Hess, “Kompert provides a useful window into the genre as a whole both because of his pioneering role in establishing the ghetto tale as a reputable form of belles lettres and because his fiction left a particularly rich paper trail in the nineteenth-century press.”¹⁹⁸ Where Hess focuses upon how Kompert’s popular fiction helped readers negotiate a bourgeois German Jewish identity, other scholars go further in their rejection of nostalgic readings of his texts. Eva Lezzi argues that these stories are inherently subversive; the bourgeois settings resist notions of Jews as outsiders¹⁹⁹ and characters have hybrid desires that complicate the reconciliatory endings of his stories.²⁰⁰ Anne Fuchs analyzes Kompert’s work from a post-colonial perspective, arguing that assimilation is a form of mimicry and cultural ambivalence.²⁰¹ My analysis is concerned primarily with how Kompert uses a particular motif in the shape of his plots and development of his characters. I consider how Kompert expresses ambivalent desires and conflicted identity through dance.

¹⁹⁷ Gustav Freytag, “Die Dichter des Details und Leopold Kompert (1840),” in *Ghettoliteratur: Eine Dokumentation zur deutsch-jüdischen Literaturgeschichte des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts*. Teil I: Rezeptionsdokumente (1), ed. Gabriele von Glasenapp and Hans Otto Horch, vol. 53 in *Conditio Judaica: Studien und Quellen zur deutsch-jüdischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte*, ed. Hans Otto Horch (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2005), 293.

¹⁹⁸ Hess, *Middlebrow Literature*, 75.

¹⁹⁹ Eva Lezzi, “Tradition oder Akkulturation? Liebeskonflikte in der Ghettoliteratur von Leopold Kompert,” in *Fremdes Begehren: Transkulturelle Beziehungen in Literatur, Kunst und Medien*, eds. Eva Lezzi and Monika Ehlers (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2003), 267.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 265.

²⁰¹ Anne Fuchs, “Mimicry und Assimilation: Leopold Komperts Ghettogeschichte in postkolonialer Perspektive,” in *Das schwierige neunzehnte Jahrhundert: Germanische Tagung zum 65. Geburtstag von Eda Sagarra im August 1998*, ed. Jürgen Barkhoff, et al. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2000), 491.

The two texts that I discuss in this section use dance to portray social changes that challenge the fabric of the Jewish family. Not only do these dance scenes explicitly depict men and women dancing together, they trespass religious boundaries as well. In *Die Kinder des Randars*, dance scenes occur when Jews and Bohemian peasants meet, especially when the Jewish children commit transgressive acts, persuaded by their Bohemian friend Honza. The dancing scenes in *Die Jahrzeit* occur between Jews, but this leisure activity brings a pious man's daughter into contact with an irreverent Hungarian, who ultimately impregnates her. In both texts, transgressive dancing intensifies the emotional stakes, psychological drama, and moral dilemma in a way that is, moreover, entertaining for readers.

Kompert depicts dancing ambivalently, and even portrays Jewish wedding dancing in a troubling light. Although wedding dancing is a traditional sign of joy in Jewish culture, the dancing at Mendel Wilna's wedding in *Die Kinder des Randars* reflects the young man's inner torment. He would rather rebuild Jerusalem than establish a family, a conviction that causes him to abandon his wife immediately after the wedding (although she follows after him and they reunite, he problematically abandons her again before the events in the story take place). Mendel Wilna does not want to get married, and he views the lively wedding dancing as a form of torture:

Sie haben da um mein Weib herumgetanzt und tausend Narreteien gemacht. Auf einmal ist sie mit den 'alten Weibern' verschwunden. Dann sind sie wiedergekommen, haben um mich herumgetanzt und gelacht und geschrien. Sie schleppen mich gewaltsam fort, ich wehr' mich gegen sie, aber sie lachen darüber, du kannst dir das Gelächter nicht vorstellen.²⁰²

²⁰² Leopold Kompert, *Die Kinder des Randars*, ed. Primus-Heinz Kucher, vol. 9 in Edition Mnemosyne (Klagenfurt: Alekto Verlag, 1998), 78-79.

There they danced around my wife and did thousands of follies. Suddenly she disappeared with the “old women.” Then they came back, and danced around me and laughed and shrieked. They physically dragged me away, I resisted them, but they laughed about it, you can’t imagine the laughter.

As this description makes clear, Mendel Wilna feels bewildered by and estranged from the celebration. He refers to the wedding guests as “sie” (they), rather than acknowledging them as friends or family with whom he feels a sense of community. Guests who endeavor to entertain the newlyweds with antics, according to Jewish custom, are, in his view, performing “Narreteien” (follies). Mendel Wilna’s description does not specify the gender of the guests who dance around him and take him from the room, or whether the same people interact with him as interact with his wife. Instead, Kompert details the young man’s feeling of horror.

Where Mendel Wilna abandons his wife (and later children) for the life of a wandering beggar, a Jewish woman does not have this option. In Kompert’s 1860 novella *Die Schweigerin* (The Silent Woman), Veile, like Mendel Wilna, waits until her wedding to admit she does not want her partner. As in *Die Kinder des Randars*, festive dancing is the backdrop for the psychological torment of an unhappy spouse.

Sie tanzten unausgesetzt fort, sie tanzte mit jedem, der sie aufforderte. Wer aber den Bewegungen des jungen Weibes mit aufmerksamem Auge folgte, dem mußten sie hastig, fliegend, beinahe wild vorkommen. Sie sah niemandem ins Angesicht, nicht einmal ihrem Bräutigame, der zumeist zwischen der Tür stand, und mehr an den Witzen des Narren Gefallen zu finden schien, als an Tanz und Tänzerinnen. Wer aber dachte darüber nach, warum dem jungen Weibe die Hand glühte, warum ihr Atem so heiß wehte, wenn man ihrem Munde nahe kam?²⁰³

They danced on without pause. She danced with anyone who asked. If anyone followed the young woman’s movements with a careful eye, they would appear hasty, flying, almost wild. She did not look anyone in the eye, not even her bridegroom, who mostly stood in the doorway and seemed to appreciate the jokes

²⁰³ Leopold Kompert, *Die Schweigerin*, in *Leopold Komperts sämtliche Werke in zehn Bände*, ed. Stefan Hock, vol. 4: Neue Geschichten aus dem Ghetto (Leipzig: Max Hesse, n.d. [1906]), 47.

of the fool more than the dance and the women dancing. But who considered why the young woman's hand blazed, why her breath blew so hot whenever anyone came near her mouth?

Wedding guests seek out Veile as a dance partner, yet her suffering escapes notice. As at Mendel Wilna's wedding, the dancers are an undifferentiated "sie" that does not notice Veile's increased body temperature or unwillingness to meet anyone's eye. Her bridegroom pays more attention to the wedding jester's antics than to the mental state of his new wife, a lack of care that reveals their lack of emotional connection. She flees the celebration and makes a declaration of love to the village rabbi, telling him that she will accept his judgment about what she should do. Since Veile was silent when she could have rejected her wealthy and influential bridegroom, and now speaks when it would be better for her to be silent, the rabbi orders her to return to her husband, be a dutiful spouse, and remain silent until God gives her the word. Veile accepts the punishment as just and appears happier for it, yet her many years of silence also help preserve the village status quo and save the rabbi both from temptation and the suspicions of Veile's influential husband. In *Die Schweigerin*, as in the two primary texts that I discuss in this chapter, a woman who is caught between two men suffers the most and bears more severe social consequences for her desires, on or off the dance floor. Kompert uses the motif of dance ambivalently to depict both male rivalries and the psychological turmoil of his male and female characters.

Drunkenness and Sobriety: *Die Kinder des Randars*

At a critical point midway through Kompert's 1848 novella *Die Kinder des Randars* (The Randar's Children), the protagonist, a Jewish Gymnasium student named

Moritz, visits a Bohemian peasant wedding with his Catholic classmate Honza. Moritz's landlord, a pious Jew, hears about the young man's exploits and writes a letter to Moritz's parents. The landlord writes:

Wissen Sie, was Ihr Moritz Leben hat angestellt? Am heiligen Jontef ist er mit sein Chaver (Kamerad) Honza auf 'n Dorf gegangen und hat da getanzt und getrunken und gegessen. Und mit wem getanzt und getrunken? Mit Bauernmägden und Jungen, daß Gott erbarm'!²⁰⁴

Do you know what your darling Moritz undertook? On the holy *Yontef* [holiday], he went into town with his *Khaver* (pal) Honza and there he danced and drank and eat. And with whom did he dance and drink? With peasant maids and boys, God have mercy!

Most scholars who discuss *Die Kinder des Randars* or the scene of Moritz's transgression focus on the fact that the young man consumes non-kosher food and alcohol. Instead, I consider the first offense on the list: dancing. More specifically, Moritz dances with a Bohemian peasant woman, as part of an attempt to prove to Honza that he can be a "Hussite", a paragon of Bohemian masculinity. In doing so, Moritz violates both communal boundaries and the traditional Jewish prohibition on mixed-sex dancing.

Dance scenes reveal changing social values and challenge the fabric of the Jewish family in Kompert's novella. Not only do these dance scenes explicitly depict men and women dancing together, they also trespass religious norms. In *Die Kinder des Randars*, dance scenes occur when Jews and Bohemian peasants meet, and they coincide with moments when Honza persuades Moritz and his sister Hannele to commit acts which violate the values of their parents. Transgressive dancing intensifies the emotional stakes, psychological drama, and moral dilemma in a way that is simultaneously entertaining for readers. By using mixed-sex dancing to underscore rebellion, rather than merely focusing

²⁰⁴ Kompert, *Die Kinder des Randars*, 86.

on Moritz's acculturation, Kompert reveals the way each sibling's flirtation with Bohemian culture reflects gendered social and educational norms and underscores the centrality of the individual, as opposed to the community, in modernization. That is to say, Kompert's novella depicts the way individual choices on or around the dance floor contribute to the breakdown of the traditional Jewish family.

The term "randar" is Yiddish for arendator, the lease-holder on a village tavern or brandy distillery belonging to a nobleman. Randars were often Jews, and their families were also sometimes the only Jewish family in rural villages, as is the case in *Die Kinder des Randars*.²⁰⁵ The randar and his family thus served as intermediaries between the nobility and the peasantry, at the same time that their establishments were a village meeting place. To date, most discussions of randars focus on their role in Poland rather than in Bohemia,²⁰⁶ whereas most critical assessments of *Die Kinder des Randars* focus on the tension between Jewish and German identity in the novella.²⁰⁷ This section concentrates, instead, on the seductive influence of Bohemian culture on the randar's two children and I consider in particular the way Kompert uses peasant dances to reveal culture clashes, identity crises, and the role of gender in acculturation.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ For more information on Bohemian randars, see Thomas Winkelbauer, "Leopold Kompert und die böhmischen Landjuden," in *Conditio Judaica: Judentum, Antisemitismus und deutschsprachige Literatur*, eds. Hans Otto Horch and Horst Denkler, vol. 2: Vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989), 190. In 1724, there were 328 Jewish "Randaren", and Winkelbauer suspects this figure didn't change much until the middle of the nineteenth century when Jews began entering into the liberal professions. Winkelbauer, "Landjuden," 192.

²⁰⁶ See Dynner, *Yankel's Tavern*.

²⁰⁷ Hess, *Middlebrow Literature*, 86-87.

²⁰⁸ For more about the Jewish acculturation process in Bohemia, see Hillel J. Kieval, "The Social Vision of Bohemian Jews: Intellectuals and Community in the 1840s," in *Languages of Community: The Jewish Experience in the Czech Lands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 65.

Die Kinder des Randars is one of Kompert's best-known works²⁰⁹ and his first extended story, which was first published in his 1848 debut collection *Aus dem Ghetto* (Out of the Ghetto). *Die Kinder des Randars* explores the temptation of non-Jewish culture and draws unsettling conclusions about the future of Jewish communal life and the feasibility of negotiating between worlds. The novella centers upon a Jewish family – the randar, Rebb Schmul, his wife, the randarin Rachel, and their two surviving children, Hannele and Moschele. At the story's beginning, Rebb Schmul is a prosperous and respected man. He enjoys the special patronage of the Count from whom he leases the tavern, due to the nobleman's lingering affection for Rachel, who was a beautiful woman in her youth. Rebb Schmul is friendly with his fellow villagers, the Bohemian peasants who patronize his tavern. What is more, Jewish beggars travel for miles to stay with him and enjoy his hospitality. Moschele grows particularly close to one of these guests, a proto-Zionist named Mendel Wilna who has abandoned his family to raise money for the cause of rebuilding Jerusalem. Rachel enlists the help of both Mendel Wilna and the Count to convince Rebb Schmul to send Moschele to the Gymnasium in Bunzlau, even though such studies are unusual for a Jew at the time. She is eager for him to study and take advantage of this opportunity for social mobility, and even changes her son's Jewish-sounding name to Moritz to aid in this endeavor. Hannele, meanwhile, remains in the village and works in the tavern.

²⁰⁹ See for instance, M. Theresia Wittemann, *Draußen vor dem Ghetto: Leopold Kompert und die 'Schilderung jüdischen Volkslebens' in Böhmen und Mähren*, in vol. 22, *Conditio Judaica: Studien und Quellen zur deutsch-jüdischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte*, ed. Hans Otto Horch (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998), 277-86 and Stefanie Leuenberger, "'Wo ist des Juden Vaterland' – Jerusalem im Werk Leopold Komperts," in *Schrift-Raum Jerusalem: Identitätsdiskurse im Werk deutsch-jüdischer Autoren* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2007), 31-68.

Moritz excels in school and successfully negotiates the unfamiliar, sometimes hostile environment, yet his greatest challenge comes much closer to home. Moritz's only ally and greatest rival at school is a Catholic boy named Honza. Moritz and Honza grew up together in their village, Honza and his father drink at Rebb Schmul's tavern, and Honza is Hannele's best friend. Honza embodies Bohemian culture in the novella and tempts both siblings to rebel against their family and community. Honza convinces Moritz to join him at a peasant wedding, for which Moritz receives community censure and his mother's disapproval. Then Honza's father, who has a tendency to drink away his money, sets fire to the randar's barn, which lands the peasant in jail, devastates Rebb Schmul economically, and leads to the illness which costs Rachel her life. Honza wants to become a priest but cannot afford to do so, until Hannele lends him money she steals from her father and dying mother. After his return, Honza tries to persuade Hannele to convert to Christianity. Since Hannele loves Honza and dreads the idea of an arranged marriage, she sneaks out of the family home in order to convert. In a dramatic confrontation, Moritz persuades Hannele to return home, but her decisions cost her her father (who dies shortly after), Honza's love, and any chance for marriage in the Jewish community. At the story's end, Moritz works as a doctor in the Jewish quarter and cares for his unmarried sister.

Dance reveals the influence and appeal of Czech culture in the novella, since is a cultural practice and leisure pursuit that facilitates boundary crossing, physical contact, and potential romance, while all the while transgressing Jewish cultural norms. What is more, Czech nationalists specifically cited the importance of dance in Bohemian folk culture. In 1836, in his monumental history of Bohemia, published in German as

Geschichte von Böhmen (History of Bohemia), historian František Palacký discusses the praiseworthy attributes of the old Bohemians and notes their “Liebe zu Gesang, Musik und Tanz” (love of song, music, and dance).²¹⁰ Similarly, Albert Waldau argues in his 1859 *Böhmische Nationaltänze* (Bohemian National Dances) that Slavs particularly revere dance and that, even among the Slavs, Bohemians dance the most. At every social occasion, “muss gesungen, gejubelt und getanzt werden.”²¹¹ (There must be singing, rejoicing, and dancing.) Scholars attest the rich variety of Bohemian folk dances, including the Husitská, a warlike dance performed by the late medieval Hussites, which has since been forgotten to history.²¹² The most famous Bohemian dance is the polka, which achieved widespread fame as a ballroom dance. In *Die Kinder des Randars*, dance scenes depict moments of tension, regardless of the cultural and religious background of the dancers. The fact Kompert portrays a Jewish wedding, a Bohemian peasant wedding, and tavern dancing as potentially catastrophic underscores Kompert’s inability to envision a happy resolution for his characters. Nonetheless, Kompert focuses particular attention on dance scenes that occur when Jews and Bohemians meet in mixed spaces, such as the tavern.

Kompert describes the tavern as a place of mingling and even tolerance, yet dancing reveals the limits of religious coexistence in the village. The randarin Rachel’s attitude towards dance exposes her dismissive opinion of her peasant customers, even though she depends upon their consumption of alcohol for her family’s livelihood.

Kompert notes that: “Wenn Sonntags Tanz in der Schenkstube war, durften die Kinder

²¹⁰ Franz Palacký, *Geschichte von Böhmen*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (Prague: Gottliebe Haase Söhne, 1864), 189.

²¹¹ Alfred Waldau, *Böhmische Nationaltänze: Culturstudie*, vol. I (Prague: Hermann Dominikus, 1859), 8.

²¹² W. K. von Jolizza, *Die Schule des Tanzes: Leichtfaßliche Anleitung zur Selbstlernung moderner und alter Gesellschaftstänze* (Vienna: A. Hartleben, n.d. [1907]), 280-81.

nie dazu” (When there was dancing in the tavern on Sundays, the children were never allowed to join).²¹³ The children are required to stay out of the way, as the peasants get *schicker* (drunk), a Yiddish word that Kompert defines as “trunken” in the text.²¹⁴

Moritz’s mother tells him he does not need to see it and Jews, moreover, are not designed to get drunk like peasants. Not surprisingly, Kompert includes Honza in this scene, as one of the peasants who consumes alcohol and engages in behavior that would be inappropriate for a Jew such as Moritz. By putting his archetypical Bohemian character in the tavern, Kompert underscores Rachel’s distinction between Bohemian drunkenness and Jewish sobriety. Ultimately, however, the borders between Jewish and Bohemian behavior become blurred and the parents cannot keep the children away from the dancing.

Kompert draws distinctions between how Honza tempts each of the siblings with Bohemian culture and reveals how both Moritz and Hannele rebel against Jewish communal norms. Moritz faces a choice between his Jewish upbringing, the German culture he encounters in school, and Czech nationalism. Hannele is tempted by Czech culture and the allure of romance. The ghetto poet thus articulates two different, gendered paths for Jews to engage with Bohemian identity, which he presents in two key dance scenes: when Moritz joins Honza at a peasant wedding to prove his Bohemian masculinity and as a backdrop when Hannele leaves her dying mother to give Honza money so he can go train to be a priest. Where Moritz’s dancing is publicly undertaken, quickly regretted, and soon censured by the community, Hannele’s action is covert and part of a long-term, unnoticed shift in her alliances, which continues to escalate.

²¹³ Kompert, *Die Kinder des Randars*, 28.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

Significantly, Moritz's transgression occurs when he leaves home and encounters nationalist ideology at school, whereas Hannele opposes the norms of her family precisely because she was left uneducated and vulnerable to seduction at home.

In the chapter entitled, "Wo ist des Juden Vaterland?" (Where is the Fatherland of the Jews?), Honza advocates Bohemian independence and glorifies the Hussites. The Hussites were followers of late medieval Bohemian priest and Christian religious reformer Jan Hus. By the nineteenth century, both Protestants and Catholics characterized the Hussites as Bohemian freedom fighters and as a symbol of national identity. Such ideas are more challenging for Moritz than the Christian prayer he encounters daily at school and which he already knows how to negotiate. As a Jew, Kompert explains, Moritz cannot fully grasp the essence of Bohemian religious and doctrinal conflicts, but he intuitively understands a struggle for freedom and independence because it reminds him of Jewish history and yearning for Jerusalem. Christian prayer and doctrine do not tempt Moritz, but he identifies with a liberal fight for freedom.

Moritz's perspective both reflects Kompert's liberal views and challenges the ideas of his friends and family. Moritz's Jewish elders consider the concept of Bohemia to be yet another notion that is of little relevance for Jews, other than as a geographic designation that helps Jewish travelers find the tavern or as a political entity that treats Jews better than in Russian Poland. Honza, on the other hand, dismisses Moritz's claim about similarities between Bohemian and Jewish history completely. When Moritz tries to compare the Jewish Maccabees to the Bohemian Hussites, Honza claims that the Maccabees are long dead, whereas Hussites still live in anyone who speaks Czech.

Moritz promises to be a Hussite but rightly wonders if Jewish identity has a place in Honza's Bohemian nationalism.

Honza's vision of Jewish inclusion in Bohemian culture demands complete assimilation. Whether or not Honza is aware of how Rachel dismissively refers to tavern customers as drunken non-Jews, he considers Jewish dietary laws and separation to be (or at least be interpretable as) a mockery of Bohemian culture. When Moritz hears music from a peasant wedding and says he would like to see the festivities, Honza claims that the revelers will think Moritz is laughing at them. Although Moritz denies this, Honza says that if they invite him to eat and he refuses to eat non-kosher food, "lachst du sie nicht aus?"²¹⁵ (Aren't you laughing at them?) Honza challenges Moritz, mockingly calling him a handsome Hussite, and Moritz impulsively tells Honza to come along as he proves that he belongs. He will show that he is a true Bohemian, which means embracing the legacy of a Christian religious sect. According to Honza's worldview, the main non-Jewish perspective in the novella, a Jew such as Moritz can join in Bohemian national identity, but at the cost of his own language, culture, and ritual practice.

Although Moritz flirts with this vision, like Hannele later on, he ultimately rejects a national identity that forces him to break completely with the Jewish community. For one night, however, Moritz tries to prove that he is a Hussite and joins in the festivities.

[Moritz] sprang voran, Honza ihm nach. Athemlos kamen sie über den Berg im Dorfe an.

Die schallende Trompete diente ihnen als Wegweißer zum Hochzeitshause. Honza warf sich sogleich wie ein Heimischer auf diesem Boden mitten in das Getümmel, er ergriff eine schöne Dirne und begann mit ihr unter Juchherufen und Fußstampfen einen volkstümlichen Tanz. Moritz stand seitwärts und sah zu. Wie Honza an ihm vorbeikam, rief er ihm lachend zu. "Thu's nach, scham' Dich nicht." Der Kopf wirbelte ihm, die Füße fingen sich von selbst an zu drehen und

²¹⁵ Ibid., 68.

ehe er noch wußte, was er unternahm, war er schon mitten in Tanze drin und jubelte und jauchzte mit, eine knochige Magd an der Hand.²¹⁶

[Moritz] sprang forth, Honza following after him. Breathlessly they came down the mountain and went into the village.

The resounding trumpets guided them to the wedding hall. Honza immediately threw himself into the middle of the turmoil on the dance floor, as if he were a local. He seized a pretty lass and began a folk dance with her, stamping his feet and whooping for joy. Moritz stood off to the side and watched. "Follow me, don't be shy." Moritz's head spun, his feet began to turn on their own accord and before he knew what he was doing, he was in the middle of the dancing and joined in the rejoicing and cheering, holding a bony maid by the hand.

Kompert's description emphasizes the ecstasy of this moment, while nonetheless acknowledging Moritz's outsider status. Although Moritz initially makes the decision to join the festivities, spurred by Honza's cynicism and the sound of the music, Honza is the first to actually participate in the dancing and he still needs to encourage Moritz to copy him. Honza dances a folk dance, grabs an attractive dance partner, and acts as if he belongs on the dance floor. Even though Moritz executes the dance steps without needing to even think about it, he must content himself with a bony maid instead of a pretty lass. A more desirable partner, the scene suggests, might be unwilling to dance with a Jew. Even in the moment in which Moritz tries hardest to show that he is Bohemian, Kompert's description questions how fully Bohemian a Jew can be. Such a question is emphasized by the fact that Honza enjoys a feeling of shared companionship with Moritz throughout the wedding, whereas the randar's son soon recovers from his excesses of Bohemian nationalism and regrets his actions.

Kompert focuses on the relationship between Moritz and Honza and on the stakes of their shared participation in this Bohemian marriage celebration. Even the women with whom they dance are simply tools that the two men use for their bonding, although

²¹⁶ Ibid.

Honza's partner is more decorative than Moritz's partner. Mixed-sex dancing is an important symbol of boundary-crossing and cultural difference, but the real mixed partnership on the dance floor is between the randar's son and the future priest. One can even say that Moritz, like his sister Hannele later on, is considering a metaphoric "marriage" with Honza. Kompert does not imply that the two friends and sometime rivals share romantic feelings (unlike Hannele and Honza, who also cannot marry), yet Moritz contemplates his participation in the Bohemian culture that Honza represents and a permanent solidarity with his childhood companion, all with the backdrop of a wedding.

Indeed, scholars such as Yaron Peleg acknowledge a homosocial and even homoerotic strain in nineteenth century European nationalist discourse. Peleg considers homoeroticism, like nationalist ideology, to be a form of exaggerated masculinity, as exemplified by eighteenth century classicist and art historian Johann Winckelmann, who inspired German interest in Greek imagery and body culture.²¹⁷ Honza and Moritz use shared physical activity and identification with national heroes as they attempt to solidify their bond. Moritz's reference to the Maccabees prefigures early twentieth century Zionist rhetoric, which encouraged European Jews to seek out models in ancient, warlike Jewish men.²¹⁸ United in their identification with the Hussites, Moritz and Honza share a liberating, libidinal moment of masculine solidarity, which uses women's dancing bodies as props to convey a sense of community between men. Like the young lass, Moritz follows Honza in the dance, even though the two men mask the closeness of their interaction by use of female dance partners. The stakes of such a choice are apparent

²¹⁷ Yaron Peleg, "Heroic Conduct: Homoeroticism and the Creation of Modern, Jewish Masculinities," *Jewish Social Sciences* 13 (Autumn, 2006): 33.

²¹⁸ Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 94.

when members of the Jewish community hear about Moritz' participation in the revelry. They report the transgression to Moritz's landlord, who sends a reproofing letter to the young man's parents, which Rachel receives and hides from her pious husband. While a dance might initially appear to be mere amusement, here it has very serious consequences. On her deathbed, Rachel tells Moritz that the letter broke her heart.

Hannele does not have a similar opportunity to hear her mother's last wishes and remarks. Rachel's sudden turn for the worse coincides with a parish fair, and the peasants insist on dancing in the tavern, despite the randar's attempts to stop the disturbance of his beloved wife's final hours. Hannele must tend to the guests, including wild Pawel, a man who physically assaulted her father in his own tavern when he tried to stop the dancing. The boisterous revelry differentiates between Jews and Bohemian peasants and reminds readers of how Rebb Schmul and his wife, once respected members of the village, have shrunk in influence and become marginal within their own home. Yet it is precisely in this context, under the cover of Pawel's boisterous dancing, that Hannele furtively helps Honza and further undermines the Jewish family. As is the case throughout the novella, Hannele's work in the tavern, and her family's benign neglect because she is a girl, gives her greater freedom to spend time with Honza and greater vulnerability to his persuasions.

Where Moritz's one moment of transgression receives an immediate reprimand, nobody notices the gradual process by which Honza seduces Hannele away from the beliefs of her family over the course of over a decade. There is a stark contrast between the way Rebb Schmul questions whether Moritz can remain a good Jew while studying in Gymnasium, and his utter disregard for Hannele's temptation at home. Moritz is

surprised to hear his sister sing a plaintive Bohemian love song, but he does not grasp the deeper implications of her fondness for Bohemian culture and expression of romantic longing. What is more, the moment Moritz goes to school, Hannele's formal education ceases, since her parents no longer arrange for a tutor in Jewish subjects. Rachel does not object if her daughter (but not her son) receives a practical training in the family business instead. This parental choice unintentionally makes Hannele vulnerable to Honza's advances, since she lacks sufficient Jewish or secular training to counter his theological arguments and, moreover, she works in the tavern, where he can visit her without suspicion. Tragically, Honza is the only person who takes the trouble to actually teach or discuss ideas with Hannele. Despite the young peasant's frequent dismissal of Jewish concepts he does not understand or Jews who displease him, Honza and Hannele's affection for each other transcends religious boundaries.

The peasant festivities disguise the moment when Hannele brings Honza the twenty guilder he needs to go study in seminary for two years, money that she takes from her family's income on this particularly profitable day. She thus prioritizes a Christian man's aspirations to become a priest over the financial well-being of her own family, giving a small fortune to the son of the man responsible for the family's financially precarious situation and her mother's fatal illness. Indeed, when Honza asks if Hannele's father knows about the money, she screams and runs back to the house, only to find that her conversation with Honza cost her her last opportunity to speak with her dying mother and receive her blessing. Although Kompert does not reveal Hannele's inner thoughts at the

time, she later tells Honza that giving him the money was “eine große Sünde von mir” (my great sin), since her mother died at the same moment.²¹⁹

Hannele’s covert action undermines her loyalty to her family, which is mirrored by disorder on the dance floor when she meets with Honza.

Hannele benützte einen Augenblick, wo es in der Schenkstube stürmisch zuing. Der trunkene Pawel hatte die Tänzerin eines Andern an sich gerissen, was der nicht zugeben wollte. Darüber war eines jener gewöhnlichen “Geschläge” entstanden, wie sie der Randarhof schon lange kannte.²²⁰

Hannele used a moment when the tavern had become tumultuous. Drunken Pawel had snatched the dance partner of another man, who refused to give her up. The result was one of those typical brawls, which were well known on the premises.

Although Hannele’s transgression is much less public than her brother’s involvement in the Bohemian wedding, and indeed never becomes known, they both take place in the context of Bohemian dancing. What is more, the precise dance figure at the moment of her rebellious act mimics the social configuration between the three young people in the novel. Pawel, like Moritz and Honza at the wedding, has the opportunity to test out his prowess on the dance floor and negotiate his relationship to other men through his handling of a female partner’s body. Pawel’s very action, the attempt to take a woman away from her dance partner, underscores the stakes of Honza’s request to Hannele.

Honza asks Hannele to support him (in this case financially) at the expense of her family, an action he repeats (with graver consequences) when he returns from seminary and tries to convince her to convert. Indeed, he uses her remorse for her transgression that night as an argument in favor of baptism, since he reframes her deed as an act of Christian charity and suggests that entering the Church will give her absolution from her feelings of filial

²¹⁹ Ibid., 119.

²²⁰ Ibid., 103.

guilt. Pawel's wild actions on the dance floor are not merely a backdrop and a cover for Hannele's furtive actions in the garden, but also reiterate them.

In this sense, the tavern dancing continues the pattern of substitution that took place in the wedding dancing. There Moritz and Honza "danced" together, using their female partners as surrogates. In this later scene, Pawel, his rival, and their dance partner stand in for the three young people. Moritz, who has just promised his dying mother to remain a Jew, will no longer indulge in peasant revelry. Instead, he guards his sister and seeks to prevent her from partaking permanently in the world he tested out so briefly. To put it in stark terms, Pawel's dance acts out the figure of the forthcoming struggle between Honza and Moritz for Hannele's soul. Honza, like Pawel, seeks to wrest a young woman from her proper place. Yet even though Moritz succeeds in preventing Hannele from leaving her community, it is a bitter triumph that costs Hannele her remaining parent and the chance of a good marriage. The fact that Honza's stand-in Pawel is the only dancer in the tavern with a name and a personality hints that the forces of order and the Jewish family might be fighting a losing battle. While the Hussites may be remembered in the hearts of Czech-speakers, rural Jews, Kompert warns, may soon be forgotten.

Dance is a leitmotif in Kompert's novel, a reoccurring theme that manifests the physical temptation of Bohemian peasant life. While the randar and his wife initially shield their children from boisterous peasant dancing, they are ultimately unable to prevent their children from getting close to the seductive physicality of gentile culture. Kompert inserts dance at key narrative moments. Each sibling's crucial act of transgression takes place against the backdrop of peasant dancing. Moreover, the way

both siblings interact with Honza is reminiscent of a dance figure. Honza “dances” with each of the siblings, pushing each one to challenge traditional restraints. To take the metaphor further: although Honza is conscious of the differences between his two dance “partners” and modifies his behavior according to whether he engages with the educated brother or innocently doting sister, the steps he performs follows a similar pattern as he encourages the siblings to see his worldview and comply with his wishes.

Jonathan Hess rightly notes the novella’s ambivalence and the fact that Moritz does not follow Kompert’s path to Vienna, but instead remains in the Bohemian ghetto.²²¹ Moritz and Hannele remain isolated and unmarried at the novel’s end; the chain of Jewish tradition ends with this generation. Moritz, a doctor, devotes himself to healing the bodies and souls of ghetto Jews, including his sister. The children of the randar do not have children of their own. Kompert’s Jewish family is fractured, broken, and unsustainable, even though the randar’s son has become a doctor. Yet, Kompert suggests, both the path of assimilation that Honza advocates and Mendel Wilna’s dreams of Jerusalem are no real alternative for Bohemian Jews. Where is the fatherland of the Jews? Kompert never fully answers the question. Only when there is an answer, he suggests, will Jews be able to find a home for themselves on the dance floor.

Dance and the Maiden: *Die Jahrzeit*

Kompert introduces two competing modes of masculine performance in his novella *Die Jahrzeit* (The Yortsayt): participation in an exclusively male religious ritual on the one hand, and pleasing women on the dance floor on the other. In a manner that

²²¹ Hess, *Middlebrow Literature*, 87.

will remind readers of Auerbach's "Der Tolpatsch," Kompert both portrays homosocial and heterosocial activities as spaces for displaying adherence to masculine gender norms, and depicts a love triangle where a physically awkward man is challenged by a more fleet-footed rival for his cousin's affections. At the same time, Kompert's *Ghettogesichte* has a very different conclusion from Auerbach's *Dorfgeschichte*: an apparently happy resolution which has led critics to characterize his story as nostalgic. Yet by reading the story against the grain, with a gender analysis that takes into account the importance of female pleasure (especially on the dance floor), *Die Jahrzeit* can also be understood as a didactic tale advocating a woman's capitulation to patriarchal social norms.

First published in Kompert's 1865 novella collection *Geschichten einer Gasse* (Stories of a Street), *Die Jahrzeit* rarely receives more than a brief mention in the secondary literature. Most commentators focus upon the importance of the mourning prayer *kaddish*, and largely accept the male ritual performance uncritically.²²² My focus on the role of dance and of women's pleasure challenges these views. Such summaries and commentaries moreover tend not to mention that the novella is not a linear account of events, particularly since it includes a frame narrative, thus making it more like a realist novella than was typical for *Ghettogesichten*. While a thorough analysis of Kompert's narrative chronology is outside of the scope of this section, Kompert weaves together events from the main female character's lived experience with those she encounters in

²²² For instance, see Krobb, *Selbstdarstellungen*, 91-92; J. J. Honegger, "[Über >>Gesammelte Schriften<<. Bd 5-8] (1884)," in *Ghettoliteratur: Eine Dokumentation zur deutsch-jüdischen Literaturgeschichte des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts*. Teil I: Rezeptionsdokumente (1), ed. Gabriele von Glasenapp and Hans Otto Horch, vol. 53 in *Conditio Judaica: Studien und Quellen zur deutsch-jüdischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte*, ed. Hans Otto Horch (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2005), 334.

her dreams, creating a multifaceted portrait of female desire which he articulates through dance. By analyzing the dance motif in *Die Jahrzeit*, it is possible to resist nostalgic readings of the text, introduce greater psychological and narrative richness, and complicate the gender roles.

The title *Die Jahrzeit* refers to the Yiddish term for a death anniversary. For pious Jews, it is of crucial importance that their (male) descendants commemorate their death and death anniversaries with proper mourning ritual, especially the *kaddish* prayer. In Kompert's novella, two incidents threaten to break the chain of tradition and prevent Jakob Löw and his wife Esther from having anyone to say *kaddish* for them. When their five sons die of disease, the pious couple hopes nonetheless that their daughter, Blümele, will bear sons and raise them to mourn properly for them. Unfortunately, Blümele's father indulges his only surviving child, which leads her to become spoiled and reject her pious cousin Maier as a marriage candidate in favor of Jaques, a Hungarian who leads the young people in weekly dancing and, Jakob Löw suspects, flouts Jewish law.

Blümele enjoys Jaques's flirtations, and she dances with him both at village dances and in her dreams, even though her unconscious is also tormented by her cousin's hurt feelings. Ultimately, Blümele becomes pregnant, and she and Jaques hurriedly marry, after which the young couple moves to Hungary and her parents act as if Blümele has died. The marriage is unhappy, and after Jaques leaves for America, Blümele returns to her childhood home with her young son, coincidentally on the anniversary of her mother's death. Jakob Löw refuses to acknowledge his daughter and, as described in the frame narrative at the opening of the novella, denies her and his grandson admission to his home. Only after Maier teaches her son to say *kaddish* and surprises Jakob Löw with

a grandson to join in the commemoration of his late wife do father and daughter reconcile. After Jaques conveniently dies, Maier proves his even greater worth to the family by marrying Blümele and fathering seven sons, all of whom recite *kaddish* after their grandfather's death. The happy ending of *Die Jahrzeit* paradoxically depicts neither a wedding nor joyous dancing, but instead proper observance of a mourning ritual.

In *Die Jahrzeit*, Kompert contrasts the synagogue and the dance floor as spaces of male performance. The synagogue is a privileged, male realm, where *kaddish* is recited. This male community is essential for the happy resolution of the story and the continuity of Jewish life. The dance floor, on the other hand, is a mixed-sex space that is dominated by a male dance leader, with the enthusiastic participation of women whose presence is necessary for the dancing to take place. While young women go to the Saturday dancing sessions with male companions, Kompert's description emphasizes the fact that Jaques teaches the dances to the girls. At the same time, although Jaques appears charming and gallant, he does not hesitate to possessively claim Blümele as his dance partner, in part to show his dominance to other men.

Jaques leads entertainments for young people of both sexes, but he is the particular object of female desire. In contrast to Maier, who is "ein frommes Kind, ehrt Vater und Mutter"²²³ (a pious child who honors his father and mother), the dance leader is "der Abgott der gesamten Mädchenwelt in der Gasse"²²⁴ (the idol of all of the girls in the Jewish Quarter). Jaques is a passionate and exotic Hungarian whose sensual, physically attractive appearance proves irresistible to Blümele and the other young women. His curly black hair, sparkling dark eyes, gleaming white teeth, haughty red lips, and twirled

²²³ Leopold Kompert, *Die Jahrzeit in Geschichten einer Gasse*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Louis Gerschel, 1865), 19.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

Hungarian mustache capture the interest of young women in a manner that is impossible for the local youths to replicate:

Jaques stellte sämtliche junge Männer in tiefen Schatten; wo er erschien, da war es, als ob sich mitten unter allerlei niederem Geflügel ein Adler niedergelassen hätte! Der ganze grelle Unterschied zwischen der träumerisch düstern Natur der Böhmen und der leidenschaftlich erregten, leichtblütigen, von einer heißeren Sonne gleichsam durchglühten des Ungars trat hervor, wo Jaques erschien; und es ist leicht zu begreifen, wem der Sieg zufiel.²²⁵

Jaques greatly eclipsed all of the other young men; where he appeared, it was as if an eagle had come to rest in the midst of various barnyard fowl. The full glaring difference between the dark, dreamy nature of the Bohemians and the passionately excited, sanguine temperament of the Hungarian with the glow of a hot sun, as it were, came to the fore where Jaques appeared. One can understand who was victorious.

Kompert starkly differentiates the young men, drawing upon national stereotypes and the language of competition. He cites several extreme oppositions: sunlight and shadow, eagle and poultry, passion and dreaminess, all of which heighten the contrast between the Hungarian and the Bohemian youths. Kompert describes Jaques using two European symbols for kingship: an eagle and the sun, and the young man, in turn, treats Maier with lordly contempt. Kompert identifies Jaques with the sort of beauty, sensuality, and cruelty that characterizes Leopold von Sacher-Masoch Central European characters, such as the Hungarian nationalist heroine of his 1881 *Die Deborah of Nagy-Nemethy* (The Deborah of Nagy-Nemethy), who reports her husband to the authorities and watches him hang after he spies for the wrong side. Jaques aggressively isolates and humiliates his rival by claiming Blümele as a dance partner, even though Maier had already invited his pretty cousin to dance and been accepted. While Jaques may be the object of the female gaze, he uses Blümele in his show of dominance over Maier.

²²⁵ Ibid., 23.

Jaques's argument for why he should dance with Blümele could not be more different from Judah Löw's explanation for why his daughter ought to marry Maier. Judah Löw is concerned with Maier's piety, ability to be a good moral influence on Blümele, and high likelihood of teaching his sons to say *kaddish* for Judah Löw and his wife; Jaques is much more concerned with physical appearances. Jaques claims that the fact that Blümele is "die schönste Blume in der Gasse"²²⁶ (prettiest flower in the Jewish Quarter) means that she should dance with him, the talented and handsome dance leader, rather than with Maier, whom he disparagingly nicknames "Maier mit den vier Händen" (Four-Handed Maier) because he awkwardly flaps his long arms around. Jaques publicly insults Maier, saying he is unfit for dancing, and claims Blümele for his partner, encouraging her to laugh at his mockery of her hapless cousin: "Beim Tanze braucht man nur zwei Hände!" raunte Jaques dem Mädchen in's Ohr. ("You only need two hands to dance!" Jaques whispered in the girl's ear.)²²⁷ Blümele's reluctance to defend Maier as Jaques claims her foreshadows her initial rejection of Maier as a marriage partner. Although Kompert sympathetically compares the young man to a lion as he implores his cousin to remember their agreement to dance together, Jaques adds to the young man's humiliations by likening him to a predatory insect: "der ist wie eine Spinne, wenn sie eine Fliege verspeisen will."²²⁸ (He is like a spider who wants to eat a fly.) This last insult is especially emasculating, since a spider is gendered feminine in German. Before Maier can defend himself, Jaques and Blümele begin dancing, along with the other couples.

²²⁶ Ibid., 25.

²²⁷ Ibid., 26.

²²⁸ Ibid., 27.

Kompert develops dance as a theme, not merely to depict the challenge Jaques represents to Meier and to Jewish communal norms, but also as a tool to give Blümele greater psychological depth than is typical for a female character in a *Ghettogesichte*. If one merely regards Blümele's words and actions, she is as spoiled as her parents claim. When she reports to her mother about the dancing, Blümele's blithe description of the day's events does not acknowledge her cousin's pain and humiliation: "Jaques hat uns so gut unterhalten, Mutter... wir haben getanzt... und dann habe ich über unsern Maier so lachen müssen."²²⁹ (Jaques entertained us so well, Mother. We danced, and then I had to laugh so much at our Maier.) Even Blümele's later repentance for her actions does not distinguish her from melodramatic heroines, such as Judith in *Judith Trachtenberg* (see Chapter 3). Blümele's actions are predictable, but Kompert gives her character more complexity through his depictions of her vivid dreams.

Blümele's dreams are both a poetic exploration of female desire and a sign of her conflicted loyalties: in sleep, Blümele acknowledges a greater sympathy for Maier's feelings than she does while awake. Significantly, Kompert reiterates the dance motif as he depicts Blümele's divided feelings towards her two suitors. In her dream, Jaques sings a sweet dance melody and she flies over to him, light as a feather. This vision of bliss is disturbed when Maier reaches out to her and implores her, as he did in real life. Blümele cannot fantasize about dancing with Jaques without remembering her cousin's pain; in her dream she recalls Maier's suffering rather than Jaques's disparaging remarks about her cousin's appearance. Nonetheless, Jaques dances off with her, far away from her poor cousin. He "riß sie immer weiter, der Tanzplan dehnte sich in unübersehbare Fernen

²²⁹ Ibid., 28.

aus... immer schöner und schmelzender sang Jaques... bis sie endlich ganz allein waren....”²³⁰ (kept tearing her further, the dance floor extended further off into the distance beyond where the eye could see... Jaques sang more sweetly and more beautifully ... until they were all alone...) Blümele’s dream shows the pleasure she takes in Jaques’s attentions and company, as well as the way her desire puts her in opposition to the norms of her community. Indeed, she dreams of escaping from the presence of other people, which foreshadows her illicit love affair with Jaques.

Blümele’s waking and sleeping hours take on a common intimacy. The “schöne, gefährliche” (handsome, dangerous) Jaques whispers in her ear as they dance at another *Shabbos* gathering and, at a ball held on the last day of the harvest festival of *Sukkos*, Jaques refuses to allow her to dance with anyone else.²³¹ Her dream repeats, and she imagines dancing alone with him surrounded by ghostly figures. During their waking hours he kisses her, and Maier catches them embracing under a tree. Where the quadrille she danced with Jaques took place in open view among other Sabbath-observant young people, Blümele’s dream is more of a threat to her parents’ values: an intensely private expression of her desire, which Jaques does not hesitate to encourage. The affair that began with mixed dancing results in the consequence that moralists sought to avoid: an illicit sexual relationship.

Interestingly, however, despite Kompert’s acknowledgment of female desire, he frames the decision about Blümele’s dance partner as a conflict between men. The way the two rivals engage with Blümele on the dance floor clearly indicates the different sorts

²³⁰ Ibid., 29.

²³¹ Ibid.

of husbands they turn out to be. Maier asks Blümele to dance, showing a sensitivity and concern that later leads him to be a supportive and compassionate partner, even though he cannot offer her the glory that comes from partnering with a dance leader. Jaques, on the other hand, claims Blümele for his own and demands her consent. Jaques's aggressive performance of masculinity on the dance floor foretells the way he charms Blümele but ultimately neglects her social and physical well-being by impregnating her, disparaging her homeland, and later abandoning her. Yet while Maier and the social norms he represents offer Blümele social protection and affection, he can only offer her a socially marginal, even invisible, role in the traditional Jewish religious system. At the same time Jaques offers to delight her senses, her father verges awfully close to viewing her merely as a vessel for producing grandsons. In other words, Jaques's selection of Blümele as a dance partner awards her a public recognition that would be virtually impossible for her to obtain in a Jewish ritual context. The novella's happy resolution is only possible because Blümele relinquishes her untoward desires and submits to patriarchal social norms.

Kompert contrasts the male communal ritual of *kaddish*, which is positive and eternal but also represents a burden, with the mixed-sex activity of dancing, which offers fleeting sensual and aesthetic pleasure but is ultimately no foundation on which to build a relationship or a community. The moral of the story, at least as directed at women, is that it is better to choose a partner for his fitness to say *kaddish* for your parents than on his ability to complement you on the dance floor, a message that privileges the Jewish community and a traditionally male ritual practice over an individual woman's pleasure. As this view makes clear, the story accepts patriarchal ritual as a given and champions

the existence of (observant) Jewish men; although Kompert acknowledges the foibles of both male and female characters, it is religious Jewish men who receive the best outcomes in the novella, with the tacit expectation that women cooperate in supporting male-led ritual practice.

Dance is a sign of male socialization. In village physical culture, pleasing women is one aspect of being a healthy young man and a participant in courtship culture. Such a form of masculine performance exists alongside, and at times in opposition to, homosocial forms of male physicality, such as military service or religious devotion. As a result, the dance floor both gives women more control over their partner choice and provides men with new venues for expressing their desires. When romantic rivals compete for a woman's attentions, they often employ both homosocial and heterosocial cultural practices to achieve their aims, with mixed results for the women they court.

The four texts I discussed in this chapter use dance to display and intensify male rivalries and depict oppositional forms of performing masculinity. At the same time, both Auerbach and Kompert stage these rivalries on the dance floor, a location that caters to the bodies and pleasure of women. The true worth of male characters and the consequences of male anxiety are thus revealed by the impact of these actions on women. In Chapter 3, I turn to texts that focus more directly on women's role in romance plots and the social position imagined for them by male authors, as seen through the stereotypical figure of the *schöne Jüdin* (beautiful Jewess).

CHAPTER 3: ADAPTING THE JEWESS

*Jewish women, and their bodies, were a source of fascination and anxiety in the nineteenth century. Yet while Jewish men's physicality was often considered degenerate, Jewish women were coded in sympathetic and oriental terms. In this chapter, I explore the significance of the dance floor in connection with the figure of the *schöne Jüdin* (beautiful Jewess) in three middlebrow German-language works. In these texts, beautiful women meet dashing suitors on the dance floor, yet their romance leads to tragic conclusions, a sign that society was unable to support matches that (or individuals who) crossed social boundaries.*

Rachel Welt's beauty inspires a Polish poet to nickname her "Esterka Regina," after the biblical queen and the legendary Jewish mistress of King Casimir the Great. Hadaßka, daughter of Gershon Chefez, resembles a Rembrandt painting and would be a fitting model for a Madonna. Judith Trachtenberg's good looks and European education give her admission to Polish elite social activities and create occasions for noblemen to take liberties with her. The three female characters I discuss in this chapter are examples of the literary trope of the *schöne Jüdin*, the beautiful Jewess. As can be seen, such characters, by definition, balance between worlds. The beautiful Jewess possesses an oriental beauty that differentiates her from her fellow Jews and makes her a romantic prospect for acculturated or Christian men. What is more, for authors of middlebrow literature, the beautiful Jewess provides the opportunity to combine melodramatic romance plot twists with Jewish themes and allusions to high culture. In this chapter, I examine the dance floor as a place of fateful encounter that was, moreover, the site of boundary-crossing, cultural transfer, and illicit romance between the beautiful Jewess and a forbidden beau.

In nineteenth century literature, Jewish women encountered specific physical expectations and options for agency. Characters such as Jessica, in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, and Rebecca of York, in Sir Walter Scott's

Ivanhoe, are two of the most famous examples of a sexualized stereotype labeled variously as the beautiful Jewess, *belle juive*, ghetto rose, or *schöne Jüdin*.²³² In fact, a hopeful Christian suitor in George Eliot's 1876 novel, *Daniel Deronda*, assumes that the Jewish woman he adores will convert and marry him because, "who ever heard in tale or history that a woman's love went in the track of her race and religion? Moslem and Jewish damsels were always attracted towards Christians."²³³ Appearing throughout European literature, the beautiful Jewess was highly feminine in her oriental good looks, demure sexuality, and options for agency: chastity, suicide, or romantic love, typically with a Christian man. While modern readers may bristle at the limited choices for such characters, liberal writers found the positive stereotype useful in pleas for social reform.

In German literature, works such as Karl Gutzkow's *Wally, die Zweiflerin* (Wally, the Doubter, 1835) and Franz Grillparzer's *Die Jüdin von Toledo* (The Jewess of Toledo, 1851/72) contribute notable examples of the *schöne Jüdin* motif.²³⁴ The lives and writings of early nineteenth century *salonières* such as Rahel Varnhagen and Dorothea Schlegel, who converted to Christianity in order to marry Christian men, give credence to the trope. Even in works by Jewish writers that do not primarily focus on the exotic sexual appeal of Jewish women, such as Fanny Lewald's *Jenny* (1843) and Georg Hermann's *Jettchen Gebert* (1906), a bourgeois woman's ability to marry a man of her choosing is decisive for her happiness and one of the main ways she can take control of her future. As famously shown in Yiddish literature by Tevye's daughters in *Sholem*

²³² For a more in-depth analysis of this archetype, see Florian Krobb, *Die schöne Jüdin: Jüdische Frauengestalten in der deutschsprachigen Erzählliteratur vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993).

²³³ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1996), 607.

²³⁴ For analysis of *Wally die Zweiflerin*, see Lezzi, >>Liebe ist meine Religion!<<, 326-33. For discussion of *Die Jüdin von Toledo*, see chapter 6 of Martha Helfer, *The Word Unheard: Legacies of Anti-Semitism in German Literature and Culture* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011).

Aleykhem's *Tevye der milkhiger* (Tevye the Dairyman, 1894-1914), a marriage plot is the main avenue for a young woman to change her circumstances and a sheltered daughter's choice of a suitor is a key way for the author to show the incursion of modern society into the domestic sphere. To put it crudely, men could demand respect and display masculinity through professional success or physical prowess in the military, gymnasium, dueling club, or dance floor; women used their bodies to entice a suitable man to marry them and enhance their status. It is through such a choice, to the extent a Jewish daughter had one, that female characters could change their prospects and even bring modernization and secularization into the home. Since the dance floor was one of the main social opportunities for young people to flirt and court without the consent of their parents or the matchmaker, dancing played a vital role in plots where characters choose their own romantic partners.

More socially constrained than their brothers, Jewish women nonetheless had several key advantages when it came to engaging with European non-Jewish culture and dance. Traditional Jewish communities prized religious scholarship as the epitome of male accomplishments; boys who were well-off or gifted enough to receive an education learned Talmud rather than German literary classics. In their biographical writings, male *Maskilim* often describe rebellious activities like learning to read Russian, studying Hebrew grammar, or writing literature. Girls, on the other hand, had more freedom and opportunity to learn modern languages and read fiction, which created a gulf between accomplished young ladies and the religious men their parents wanted them to marry.²³⁵

²³⁵ See Chapter 2, in particular, of Parush, *Reading Jewish women*. For the German context around 1800, see Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin*, 147. For the role of this gulf in conversions, see Todd M. Endelman, "Gender and Conversion Revisited," in *Gender and Jewish History*, ed. Marion A. Kaplan

A young woman was free to read cosmopolitan or romantic fiction, unless it interfered with an appropriate marriage and children in good course.

In addition to this historical reality, Jewish women had a particular affinity for culture (and Christian men) in the European cultural imagination. In Gustav Freytag's problematic 1855 bestseller *Soll und Haben*, Rosalie Ehrenthal strives for cultural sophistication and even has an affair with a non-Jewish nobleman, Fritz von Fink. In contrast, the Jewish men in her life (with the exception of her scholarly brother Bernhard) largely concern themselves with unscrupulous financial dealings. In literature from the long nineteenth century, Jewish women are typically beautiful, graceful, feminine, and vulnerable. What is more, in texts such as Wilhelm Raabe's *Holunderblüte* (Elderflower Blossoms, 1862/3) and Eduard Kulke's *Der Glasscherbentanz* (The Shards of Glass Dance, 1906), Jewish women dance, in a manner that combines Jewish tropes with attributes of the gypsy dancing girl.²³⁶ It is very unusual to have a scene like in Ludwig Jacobowski's novel *Werther der Jude* (Werther the Jew, 1892), where Fräulein Rosalie is mocked and socially excluded at her first dance lesson, since dances were precisely the sort of activity that highlighted a Jewish young woman's exotic charms. More typical is the Jewish celebration in *Esterka Regina*, where there is a lack of suitable male dance partners. While the nineteenth century Jewish man needed to improve his physical constitution, the Jewish woman was already available for Christian appraisal and delectation, including on the dance floor.

and Deborah Dash Moore (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2011), 170-86. For more about the role of literature in changing Jewish attitudes towards love, see Seidman's *The Marriage Plot*.

²³⁶ In fact, Martha Helfer argues that Achim von Arnim's novella *Isabella von Ägypten* fails to fully differentiate between Jews and Roma. See Helfer, *The Word Unheard*, 73.

Indeed, the historical record suggests that traditional Jewish women in Galicia were familiar with cosmopolitan dances, which they performed in a separate-sex environment. Where traditional Jewish men favored solo or circle dances, Jewish women's dance style frequently included European set and couple's dances, including the quadrille, the polka-mazurka, and the waltz. In his ethnographic study of the traditional Jewish school system, Yekhiel Stern notes that girls in the *meydl-kheyder* (girl's school) reenacted weddings as a game, including popular social dances for couples or squares of couples.²³⁷ Young women also performed these dances as part of actual wedding celebrations. When describing a *zmires* party held on the Saturday evening before her sister's 1848 wedding, early twentieth century memoirist Pauline Wengeroff remarks that, "Alle Freundinnen und Bekannten kamen, und wir waren lustig und tanzten uns müde, da wir Mädchen auch die Kavaliers vorstellen mußten. Mit einem Mann zu tanzen, verbot unsere religiöse Erziehung."²³⁸ (All of our girlfriends came, and we made merry and wore ourselves out dancing, since we girls also had to play the role of the cavaliers. Our religious upbringing forbade us from dancing with men.) Wengeroff's description of the female "Kavaliers" suggests that young women knew that the dances they performed were originally designed for a mixed-sex context, even though they typically modified the dance pairings to adhere to a community religious standard. This practice may help explain why writers of ghetto fiction assumed Jewish women would have the skills to perform mixed-sex

²³⁷ Yekhiel Shtern, *Kheyder un beys-medresh: A Study in Traditional Jewish Education* (New York: Bibliotek fun YIVO, 1950), 65-67. These girls were 7-13 years old on average. Thanks to David Roskies for suggesting this source.

²³⁸ Pauline Wengeroff, *Memoiren einer Grossmutter: Bilder aus der Kulturgeschichte der Juden Russlands im 19. Jahrhundert* (Band 1. Berlin: Verlag von M. Poppelauer, 1908), 174.

social dances, even though their communities generally discouraged men and women from dancing together.

In the three texts I focus upon in this chapter, Eastern European Jewish women are more suited for the dance floor than their male counterparts are, and beautiful Jewesses are particularly susceptible to forbidden romance with a man from outside the community. It is thus no surprise that all three Jewish women are identified with Esther, an iconic figure known for a romantic relationship with a gentile king, both as the biblical Queen Esther of Persia and as the legendary Esterka, mistress to King Casimir the Great of Poland.²³⁹ Yet while Queen Esther used her influence to save her people from genocide, the fates of the three nineteenth century literary Esthers are more ambiguous. The young women are tragically unable to overcome the tension between their wayward hearts (and dancing bodies) and community expectations. These beautiful Jewesses are victims twice over: first due to the constrained social circumstances they experience and second from narratives that can only be resolved in death. To put it bluntly, dead Jewesses make an emotional argument and prove a political point.

In this chapter, I explore dance scenes in three works of ghetto fiction by two of the most notable proponents of the genre: Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and Karl Emil Franzos. The two men shared East Galician origins, liberal politics, an interest in High Culture, and a concern with the plight of beautiful Jewish women. At the same time, they approached Galician Jewry from opposing personal perspectives and aesthetic aims, and

²³⁹ For a discussion of Sacher-Masoch's 1895 story, "Esterka," about the legend itself, see Maria Kłańska, "[...] echt jüdische Geister: der Geist der Liebe und der Geist der Familie.' Leopold von Sacher-Masoch und die Juden," Marion Kobelt-Groch and Michael Salewski, eds. *Leopold von Sacher-Masoch: Ein Wegbereiter des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2010), 191-93. The article also notes Sacher-Masoch's reference to the legend in "Souvenirs," autobiographical prose that was originally published in French.

notoriously did not get along. In an 1884 book review, Sacher-Masoch claims it is easier for a Christian, like writer Elisa Orzeszkowa (and presumably himself), to gain entrance to a Polish Jewish house than for a Polish Jew like Franzos, who was not raised with Jewish traditions.²⁴⁰ While Franzos claimed not to know he was Jewish until the age of six, the Austrian nobleman Sacher-Masoch integrated a deep knowledge of Jewish folk customs into his ghetto fiction and faced accusations of having Jewish origins.²⁴¹ These two prominent writers of ghetto fiction represented Jews from very different perspectives, which are reiterated in their very different approaches to the dance motif. While Franzos deploys the ballroom to make a didactic case for Jewish engagement in Habsburg society, Sacher-Masoch envelops a liberal agenda in his spectacular and highly-theatrical dance scenes.

Leopold von Sacher-Masoch

Internationally renowned during his lifetime for his middlebrow erotic fiction, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836-1895) is best known today for a rather dubious honor. Sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing derived the term “masochism” from Sacher-Masoch’s stories featuring domineering women, who, in accordance with the author’s particular preference, often wear fur.²⁴² Born to a Catholic noble family in Lemberg, in close proximity to Chassidic Jewish communities, Sacher-Masoch wrote several collections of stories about Jewish life in Galicia, which combine ethnographic detail and

²⁴⁰ Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, “Ein polnischer Roman,” *Auf der Höhe. International Revue* 13 (1884): 460.

²⁴¹ Karl Emil Franzos, “Mein Erstlingswerk: ‘Die Juden von Barnow,’” in *Die Geschichte des Erstlingswerks*, ed. Karl Emil Franzos (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta’sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger), 223.

²⁴² Barbara Hyams, “The Whip and the Lamp: Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, the Woman Question, and the Jewish Question,” *Women in German Yearbook* 13 (1997): 68, 75.

erotic themes. Although usually described as Austrian, Sacher-Masoch identified himself as Ruthenian, first learning German after moving to Prague at age 12.²⁴³ Sacher-Masoch was an unusual writer of ghetto tales, both due to the blatant eroticism of his philosemitic fiction and because he did not have Jewish origins. Sacher-Masoch's liberal cosmopolitanism was characterized by feelings of affinity with Austro-Hungarian minorities, including Jews.

Sacher-Masoch's reception reflected his cosmopolitanism and liberal politics. The antisemitic press circulated rumors that he had a Jewish background.²⁴⁴ Sacher-Masoch received overwhelmingly positive reviews in the Jewish press, which welcomed the nobleman's liberal ideology at the same time it overlooked his eroticism and use of stereotypes in his ghetto tales.²⁴⁵ Wilhelm Goldbaum stands out for his observation that Sacher-Masoch, unlike Kompert, depicted Jewish suffering sympathetically but did not advocate for legal emancipation.²⁴⁶ More recent critics have tended to take an even more complicated view of Sacher-Masoch's philosemitism, in general, and portrayals of Jewish women, in particular. Krobb notes that Jewish women are "nur Staffage, schmückendes Beiwerk, farbige Illustrationen" (merely decorative, ornamental props, colorful illustrations) in Sacher-Masoch's ghetto fiction.²⁴⁷ Krobb views these portrayals as a

²⁴³ Andrea Wodenegg, *Das Bild der Juden Osteuropas: Ein Beitrag zur komparatistischen Imagologie an Textbeispielen von Karl Emil Franzos und Leopold von Sacher-Masoch* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987), 32.

²⁴⁴ Wodenegg presumes this falsehood was spread by Adolf Bartel's *Jüdische Herkunft und Literaturwissenschaft. Eine gründliche Erörterung* (1926, Leipzig). See *ibid.*, 32. See Hyams, "The Whip and the Lamp," 70 for how Sacher-Masoch was the target of late nineteenth century antisemites. See Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Souvenirs: Autobiographische Prosa*, trans. Susanne Farin (Munich: Belleville, 1985), 69-70 for Sacher-Masoch's response.

²⁴⁵ See, for instance, Ludwig Geiger, "Sacher-Masoch: *Ghettogesichten*," *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 82 (1918) 50: 596; Gustav Karpeles, "Geleitwort," *Ausgewählte Ghetto-Geschichten* (Leipzig: Dr. Sally Rabinowitz Verlag, 1918), VIII.

²⁴⁶ Wilhelm Goldbaum, *Literarische Physiognomien* (Vienna: Karl Prochaska, 1884), 216.

²⁴⁷ Krobb, *Die schöne Jüdin*, 213.

token of an outsider's rather superficial aesthetic fascination, rather than part of the larger project of pursuing Jewish emancipation. David Biale, on the other hand, considers the erotic portrayal of powerful Jewish women an essential component of Sacher-Masoch's philosemitism. He speculates that, "Given the nature of his erotic fantasies, it is possible that the only way he could express his philosemitism was by portraying the Jews – through their women – not as victims, but as powerful and victorious."²⁴⁸ As we will see in my discussion of *Der Judenraphael* in the following section, Sacher-Masoch uses dance scenes to identify his Jewish heroine with canonical heroines and advocate a liberal attitude towards Jews, incorporating diverse interests in spectacle, eroticism, political liberalism, and the arts.

While previous scholarship emphasized the author's distinctive brand of eroticism, more recent studies recognize Sacher-Masoch's deep commitment to the visual arts and music.²⁴⁹ Yet scholars have paid less attention to Sacher-Masoch's spectacular dance scenes. In her article on Sacher-Masoch's musical novellas, Martina Bick provides a few brief remarks about Sacher-Masoch's interest in dance: she notes that Sacher-Masoch frequently mentions dance in his (unspecified) works, as a token of local color, and claims Sacher-Masoch's fondness for the Radetzky march, gypsy music, and dancing

²⁴⁸ David Biale, "Masochism and Philosemitism: The Strange Case of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch," *Journal of Contemporary History* 17 (Apr., 1982): 320.

²⁴⁹ Larissa Cybenko, "'Jetzt heißt es auftreten, eine neue Szene beginnt': Leopold von Sacher-Masoch und die Welt des Theaters," Marion Kobelt-Groch and Michael Salewski, eds. *Leopold von Sacher-Masoch: Ein Wegbereiter des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Marion Kobelt-Groch and Michael Salewski (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2010), 221. For a recent example of a study that looks at the visual arts in Sacher-Masoch's work, see Catriona MacLeod, "Still Alive: Tableau Vivant and Narrative Suspension in Sacher-Masoch's *Venus im Pelz*," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 80, no. 4 (2006): 640-65.

was legendary.²⁵⁰ In her unpublished memoirs, Sacher-Masoch's youngest daughter proudly recounts that her mother (Sacher-Masoch's second wife) could dance the waltz, polka, and mazurka, but does not say if her father danced with her – even though she makes a point of mentioning that the couple fenced together.²⁵¹ Nonetheless, Sacher-Masoch's fiction reveals his interest in dance. In works as varied as a musical novella, German court stories, and tales of Jewish life, Sacher-Masoch's dance scenes combine careful attention to local color with sensational plot elements.

Sacher-Masoch uses dance to add local color to his prose and to underscore personal relationships and sexual tension between his characters. In his short story, "Das Erntefest" (The Harvest Festival, 1875), Sacher-Masoch uses a passionate "Kolomijka" (kolomeyke) dance to express the physical attraction shared by two Podolian peasants and to emphasize the young woman's forwardness.²⁵² The young man and woman take turns pursuing each other with an almost animalistic frenzy until the dance inscribes them, symbolically if not in reality, in a marital bond: "Unter bacchantischem Jubel des Kreises tanzen sie jetzt zusammen, die Geigen jubeln, der Cymbal jubelt, der Tanz wird zum Hochzeitsreigen, der Gesang zum Hymenäus."²⁵³ (Now they danced together in the bacchantic exultation of the circle. The fiddles rejoice, the cimbalom cheers. The dance becomes a wedding circle, the song a bridal hymn.) This folk dance crystalizes the dancers' underlying emotions and reiterates Sacher-Masoch's own liberal attitude

²⁵⁰ Martina Bick, "Klingende Geschichte(n) – Leopold von Sacher-Masochs 'Musikalische Novellen'", Marion Kobelt-Groch and Michael Salewski, eds. *Leopold von Sacher-Masoch: Ein Wegbereiter des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Hildesheim: Georg Ulms Verlag, 2010), 207-08.

²⁵¹ Marion Kobelt-Groch, "Leopold, Hulda und 'Die drei Kinder im Herrengarten'. Marfa Corays unveröffentlichte Kinheitserinnerungen." Marion Kobelt-Groch and Michael Salewski, eds. *Leopold von Sacher-Masoch: Ein Wegbereiter des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Hildesheim: Georg Ulms Verlag, 2010), 338.

²⁵² Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, "Das Erntefest," in Alois Brandstetter, ed., *Österreichische Erzählungen des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1986), 306.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 308.

towards women's sexual autonomy. Sacher-Masoch further expresses female agency on the dance floor in works with Maenad-like women who compel men to participate in their frenzied dancing. For instance, in the German court story "Die Bachantinnen von Bonne humeur" (The Maenads of Bonne Humeur, 1887), Landgravine Friederike Caroline and her courtiers force the court preacher to dance for hours as punishment for his anti-dance sermons. Similarly, in the musical novella *Cherubini und Théroigne* (Cherubini and Théroigne, 1891), Amazonian French revolutionaries capture an Italian composer and make him purchase his freedom by accompanying their wild dancing with violin music. In his dance scenes, Sacher-Masoch showcases aggressive female sexuality for the entertainment of his readers, yet these dances take on a particular political dimension in works with Jewish themes.

Sacher-Masoch consciously plays with the issue of mixed-sex dancing in his Jewish stories. In his novella *Hasara Raba* (1882), Sacher-Masoch includes dance in a detailed ethnographic description of Jewish wedding customs. He uses the taboo of mixed-sex dancing to develop his plot and characters, since the wealthy bride Penina's transgressive desire to dance with her new, working class brother-in-law (the husband of her groom's sister) reveals her inconvenient sexual attraction to him. As Sacher-Masoch describes: "Sie tanzte nicht. Sie lächelte spöttisch, als sie nach jüdischem Brauch die Frauen mit den Frauen tanzen sah und Männer mit Männern. Sie dachte daran, wie schön es wäre, mit Baruch zu tanzen."²⁵⁴ (She did not dance. She sneered as she saw the women dancing with the women and men dancing with men, following the Jewish custom. She thought about how lovely it would be to dance with Baruch.) Penina's wish for a transgressive

²⁵⁴ Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Hasara Raba* (Leipzig: E. L. Morgenstern, 1882), 24.

dance with her handsome brother-in-law indicates her even more rebellious desire for a man who, unlike her scholar husband, embodies Western European values of male physicality. Penina's mixed-sex dancing fantasy prepares the reader for her complete disregard for the traditional Jewish value system, which culminates in her destruction of her husband's library.

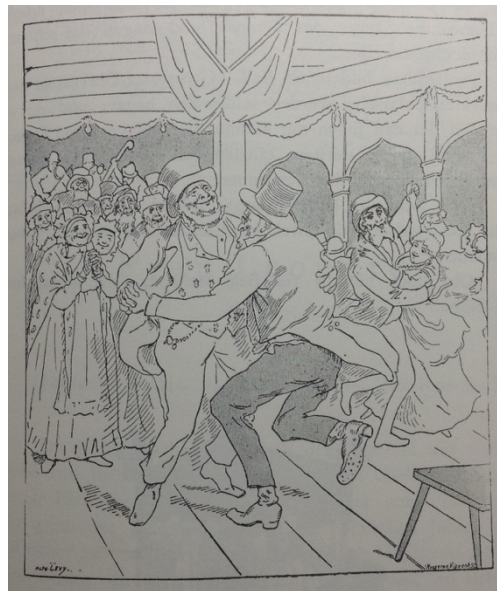


Fig. 5: Dancing at Bele's wedding, Photo of illustration [by Alphons Levy?] from "Wie Slobe ihre Schwester verheiratet," in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Jüdisches Leben in Wort und Bild* (Mannheim: J. Bensheimer, 1891), 103

Sacher-Masoch explicitly identifies mixed-sex dancing with changes to Jewish social norms as a result of acculturation. In "Wie Slobe ihre Schwester verheiratet" (How Slobe Gets Her Sister Married, 1891), from a collection of short Jewish tales set around the world, Sacher-Masoch describes how Danish Jews shift away from formally arranged marriages. Sacher-Masoch underscores this social change with the motif of mixed-sex

dancing, since young people dance in mixed-sex couples while elderly men dance together:

Den Schluss bildete ein Ball. Grossvater Ohrenstein und Grossvater Jadassohn wurden schliesslich heiter, und da zu ihrer Zeit bei den Juden nür Männer mit Männern und Frauen mit Frauen tanzen dürften, tanzten die beiden alten Herren unter allgemeinem Jubel zusammen.

“Wie sich alles ändert”, sagte zuletzt Grossvater Jadassohn, “da haben wir zwei Hochzeiten auf einmal, ohne Schadchen.”²⁵⁵

The end [of the wedding] took the form of a ball. Grandfather Ohrenstein and Grandfather Jadassohn became suddenly cheerful, and since in their day, Jews only permitted men to dance with men and women with women, the two old gentlemen danced together in the midst of the celebration.

“How everything changes”, said Grandfather Jadassohn finally, “Here we have two weddings at once, without a shadkhen [matchmaker].”

While the older generation is most comfortable performing separate-sex dancing and accustomed to relying on matchmakers, the younger generation embraces mixed-dancing and foregoes the professional matchmaker. Nonetheless – and this is a crucial distinction between Sacher-Masoch and Franzos – both generations are able to celebrate together harmoniously in the same ballroom space. In the image illustrating this scene, the two older men appear to dance the same European social dance as the mixed-sex couple, a choice which suggests the dancers’ movements are aligned, even if their dance partnerships are different. While “Wie Slobe ihre Schwester verheiratet” uses dance to emphasize the larger themes of a rather sentimental story, dance is a key plot element in *Der Judenraphael*.

As we will see in greater detail in the next section, Sacher-Masoch incorporates familiar elements from other parts of oeuvre in his two elaborate dance scenes in *Der Judenraphael*. His Purim bacchanalia deploys the rapacious female sexuality of his

²⁵⁵ Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, “Wie Slobe ihre Schwester verheiratet,” in *Jüdisches Leben in Wort und Bild* (Mannheim: J. Bensheimer, 1891), 104.

musical novellas and court stories, yet he tempers his Jewish female characters' aggression by having them harass Jewish men, rather than target men from outside their social group. Although he does not include any detailed descriptions of traditional wedding dance choreography, he is sure to mention his favorite aspect of Jewish dance practice: the taboo on mixed-sex dancing. Yet unlike the weddings in *Hasara Raba* and "Wie Slobe ihre Schwester verheiratet," where challenges to the prohibition on mixed-sex dancing do not interfere with the wedding itself, in *Der Judenraphael*, mixed-sex dancing brings fatal consequences.

Like the Montagues at the Capulets' Ball: *Der Judenraphael*

Sacher-Masoch intended *Der Judenraphael* to be part of his unfinished novella cycle, *Das Vermächtnis Cains* (The Heritage of Cain). Comprised of six sections, *Der Judenraphael* would be in the final section, entitled "Der Tod" (Death). Sacher-Masoch's most famous work, *Venus im Pelz* (Venus in Furs) appeared in the first section, "Die Liebe" (Love), published in 1870, and *Hasara Raba* in the second volume, "Das Eigentum" (Property), which appeared in 1874. Although Sacher-Masoch includes varying scenes and locals in his published and planned novellas for the cycle, at least three contained Jewish themes.

Der Judenraphael is an ambivalent story about Plutin, an antisemitic Polish painter.²⁵⁶ His combined hatred of and fascination with Jews leads him to create nasty caricatures of local Jews, a practice which inspires the nickname "der Judenraphael" (the

²⁵⁶ Plutin's name may derive from Pluto, the Roman god of wealth and the underworld. Thanks to the participants in the November 2016 "Slavics without Borders" colloquium at Yale University for suggesting this etymology.

Raphael of the Jews). Plutin and his artist friends also devise mean-spirited pranks that humiliate Jewish men. Plutin is unable to resist attending Jewish celebrations, however, and falls in love with a beautiful Jewish woman, Hadaßka, whom he meets at a Purim ball. She convinces Plutin to abandon his antisemitism, but he continues to torment Lebele Hirsch, the rather pathetic man Hadaßka's parents have chosen as her fiancé. Hadaßka is unwilling to convert and marry Plutin, but would rather die than marry anyone else. She dies scandalously dancing in Plutin's arms on her wedding day, and Plutin retreats to the wilderness to follow her in death.

Two key dance scenes occur in *Der Judenraphael*. Their position in the novel brackets the romantic relationship central to the arc of the plot; the Purim celebration is where Plutin and Hadaßka meet, the wedding dance is where she dies and his fate is sealed. These two episodes also divide the plot in two: the first dance scene, a frenzied dance party, bids farewell to Plutin's wild youth and ushers him in to the role of a lover; the second dance scene, which focuses on the physical connection between the two lovers, cements the bond of a couple that can only be united in death. The two dance settings, a Purim ball and a wedding, are common locations for dances in Jewish literature. Moreover, Sacher-Masoch exploits these locations for maximum atmospheric effect, which is in the former carnivalesque and in the latter romantic. In both instances, Plutin crosses boundaries by attending a Jewish ritual function under dubious pretenses and exploiting the social environment to get closer to Hadaßka. At the Purim ball, where Plutin's disguise makes him appear to be a member of the rabbinic elite, the wild dancing and carousing of the Jewish guests provides the distraction necessary for him to pursue Hadaßka. At the wedding, Plutin uses a display of force (brandishing a gun) to violate the

prohibition on mixed-sex dancing, which is particularly taboo since, in this case, it involves dancing with a newly married woman. As will be shown in greater detail, dance and mixed-sex sociability establish social relationships and define religious and gender boundaries. Sacher-Masoch combines formulaic, sensational plot elements with canonical allusions to elevate the status of his Jewish heroine.

Der Judenraphael stands out as a ghetto tale packed full with references to European high culture. While a thorough discussion of the many references to painting and music are beyond the scope of this study, the title demands a brief discussion to illustrate the cultural references at work in the novella. Plutin is known as the *Judenraphael*, due to his offensive caricatures of Jews. Sacher-Masoch does not explain why Galician Jews choose to nickname their tormentor after the Italian High Renaissance painter Raphael, although a likely explanation is that Raphael was famous for his skill as a draftsman and he relied heavily on drawings to plan his paintings. Sacher-Masoch, who was very familiar with German Romanticism, may have also wanted to draw parallels with an artist seen as a sensualist turned Christian painter.²⁵⁷ Once Plutin meets Hadaßka, however, he falls in love at first sight and transforms from an antisemitic Raphael into a latter day Rembrandt, since like the seventeenth century Dutch painter, he creates sympathetic genre paintings of Jews. At the same time, like the Romantic vision of Raphael as reformed sensualist, Plutin's love for Hadaßka arguably not only strips him of

²⁵⁷ For more on the tension between Raphael's eroticism and German Romanticism, see Catriona MacLeod, *Fugitive Objects: Sculpture and Literature in the German Nineteenth Century* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014), 84-94.

his antisemitism, it also makes him a better Christian, who displays a newfound (yet problematic) love for his Jewish neighbors.²⁵⁸

While Sacher-Masoch evokes classical painting in his references to the visual arts and deploys folk culture when discussing music, his dance scenes in *Der Judenraphael* are much more highly contrived. The fanciful, highly dramatic nature of the two dance scenes reflects the impossibility of the boundary-crossing romantic plot. Sacher-Masoch alludes to three examples of high culture in the two dance scenes: the biblical book of Esther, *Romeo and Juliet*, and the ballet *Giselle*. Sacher-Masoch's three chosen texts emphasize boundary-crossing romance, disguised identities, and opportunities for dance. His use of these canonical texts reconciles his liberal tendencies with a primarily aesthetic interest in Jewish culture. Dance is a focal point for the intersection of these interests.

Sacher-Masoch's most explicit allusion to a canonical literary text in *Der Judenraphael* is the biblical book of Esther. Hadaßka's name is a diminutive form of the name Hadassa, the Hebrew name for Queen Esther. Plutin explicitly identifies Hadaßka as an exotic Esther figure, while he is attending her father's Purim ball in the disguise of a Chassidic rebbe. Inspired by the scriptural account of Haman lying at Esther's feet, begging for his life from the cold, proud queen, Plutin flirts with Hadaßka, using a rather extraordinary pick-up line. He asks her, "Wenn Sie jetzt Esther wären [...] und es gäbe hier in Wrublowize so einen Haman, würden Sie ihn auch hängen lassen?"²⁵⁹ (If you

²⁵⁸ For a discussion of the thorny connections between the artist, the masochist, and the male Jew, see Hans Otto Horch, "Der Außenseiter als 'Judenraphael'. Zu den Judengeschichten Leopolds von Sacher-Masoch," *Conditio Judaica* 3 Teil II (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989), 277-78.

²⁵⁹ Leopold Ritter von Sacher-Masoch, *Der Judenraphael. Geschichten aus Galizien*. (Vienna: Böhlau, 1989), 94.

were Esther now [...] and there was a Haman here in Wrublowize, would you also let him hang?) Still under the mistaken assumption that she is speaking to a rebbe, she tells him there is a Haman in her town, Plutin the painter who caricatures Jews.

Hadaßka's response to Plutin's outrageous flirtation is measured and sympathetic. She feels righteously angry about the cruel antics of the Judenraphael, yet she does not seek to punish him. Since she considers it impossible for an artist, endowed with a spark of divine creativity, to be truly evil, she would not condemn Plutin to hang. Instead, she would like to educate him so that he can get to know Jews. Jews, like every people, have good and bad sides. Hadaßka speaks in a way designed to appeal to liberal readers—as well as to Plutin himself, whom she quickly convinces of her viewpoint.

While Hadaßka is not a sadistic character, Sacher-Masoch's interpretation of the biblical text portrays Esther as one of his cruel heroines. In his account it is Esther, not her husband, the Persian King Ahasverus, who decrees Haman's death. Furthermore, it is almost as if Esther were engaged in a sadomasochistic relationship with Haman that ultimately results in her condemning him to death, like one of Sacher-Masoch's cruel heroines. Haman's hanging is not merely punishment for attempted genocide, but instead a terrible token of a beautiful woman's cruelty. Sacher-Masoch further underscores this point later in the novel, when Plutin's friend Hlamton dresses up as Queen Esther for another Purim celebration, and cruelly torments a Jewish man (Lebele Hirsch) who is under the mistaken impression that he is talking to a coquettish widow, rather than to a slightly-built man in drag. Sacher-Masoch's novella identifies the figure of Esther with female cruelty, yet in order to portray the Jewish Esther figure Hadaßka sympathetically, Sacher-Masoch creates an effeminate, male, non-Jewish Esther who cruelly mistreats and

sexually humiliates a hapless Jewish man.²⁶⁰ The parallels between Hadaßka and Hlamton are even more striking since the two Esther figures switch partners – Plutin and Hlamton used to earn money singing folksongs together with Hlamton disguised as a woman, and Lebele Hirsch later becomes Hadaßka’s fiancé. The social configuration of these two Esthers and their male partners suggests a partner-swapping dance structure.

Hadaßka and Plutin do not dance at the Purim party, yet dance facilitates their interaction. They meet in the context of a Purim celebration, described as a Jewish carnival. Revelers dress up in fine clothes, sing folksongs, and dance the *kosak* and the *kolomeyke*. Lebele Hirsch dresses as King Solomon, in a manner suggestive of the stereotype of the effeminate oriental male, and he is waited on by a harem of beautiful Jewish women. The women who do not attend to Solomon’s immediate needs play flutes and tambourines and they dance. This image is pure fantasy; it is very hard to imagine traditional Jewish women dressing as harem women for Purim.

Sacher-Masoch creates a scene of colorful chaos at the Purim ball, full of costumes and mistaken identities. The atmosphere suggests Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the carnivalesque, a topsy-turvy environment in which social rules are momentarily suspended.²⁶¹ The Purim celebration enables Plutin and Hadaßka to meet in a way that prevents their prejudices from interfering with romance, since Hadaßka is initially unaware that Plutin is not Jewish and that he is, worse yet, the notorious caricaturist. The wild frenzy of the dancing, instigated by Solomon’s harem, conveniently creates a distraction that enables Plutin and Hadaßka to talk privately together. Ordinary social

²⁶⁰ For more about cross-dressing and ethnic drag, see chapter 12 of Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

²⁶¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), 10.

boundaries between the sexes and religious groups are temporarily ignored in the context of the Purim celebration.

A costumed dance is thus a clever narrative ploy to enable unlikely lovers to fall in love unintentionally, and Sacher-Masoch was certainly not the first to create this plot twist. Early in the novella, Sacher-Masoch explicitly references William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* when he compares Plutin and his friends to the Montagues visiting the masked ball of the rival house of Capulet. Like Romeo and his friends, they appear uninvited in Jewish homes to amuse themselves with Jewish beauties. The comparison with the Capulet ball is also apt when Plutin and his friends crash the Purim party dressed as five wise rebbes from Jerusalem. In the same way Romeo, standing at the side of the dance floor, is astonished to notice Juliet for the first time, Hadaßka appears to Plutin in the midst of Purim revelry. Of course, since Sacher-Masoch is the author, the moment is ripe with aggressive female sexuality:

Immer ausgelassener, immer bacchantischer wurde der Tanz, die Tollheit hatte ihren Höhepunkt erreicht, die entarteten Weiber begannen über Stühle und Tische zu springen und die lachenden, bärtigen Männer mit derben Küssen zu verfolgen, als wieder die Türe aufging und ein schönes Mädchen, vom Kopf bis zu den Füßen in einen langen, dunklen Pelz gehüllt, in das Zimmer trat.

Es war Hadaßka, die Tochter des Gerson Chefez.²⁶²

The dance became more and more exuberant, turning into a bacchanalia. At the height of the madness, the depraved women began to jump over chairs and tables and pursue laughing, bearded men with bawdy kisses. Then the door opened and a pretty young woman, draped from head to toe in a long, heavy fur, entered the room.

It was Hadaßka, the daughter of Gershon Chefez.

²⁶² Sacher-Masoch, *Der Judenraphael*, 90.

This scene has many classic elements of Sacher-Masoch's prose. Frenzied women chase traditional Jewish men, trying to kiss them. When Hadaßka emerges, she wears a fur and appears frozen as a work of art, a motif that also appears in *Venus im Pelz*. Her resemblance to a Rembrandt painting foreshadows Plutin's conversion from Raphael to Rembrandt. At the same time, Plutin's reaction to seeing Hadaßka parallels Romeo's speech after noticing Juliet. Romeo describes Juliet using comparisons between light and darkness, such as teaching the torches to burn bright and a snowy dove among crows. Hadaßka, similarly, emerges from the darkness of her fur wrap like an angel coming out of a dark night, which also reminds us that she wears the preferred costume of Sacher-Masoch's demonic women. In Act I, Scene V of Shakespeare's play, Romeo asks himself, "Did my heart love until now?"²⁶³ Plutin also asks himself a rhetorical question, "Wo habe ich sie schon gesehen?" ("Where have I already seen her?")²⁶⁴ Plutin's immediate feeling of kinship with a Jewish woman is just one way Sacher-Masoch seeks to undermine anti-Jewish prejudice. Sacher-Masoch takes delight in exotic images of Jews, but portrays Hadaßka sympathetically. Much like Gottfried Keller's effort to elevate Swiss peasants in his village tale *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* (A Village Romeo and Juliet, 1856), Sacher-Masoch uses the famous love story to enhance the stature of his characters, particularly Hadaßka.

The boundary crossing romance and encounter at a costume party share structural similarities with *Romeo and Juliet*, yet the comparison would be unthinkable without the romantic deaths of the lovers. Like Juliet, Hadaßka refuses to be the bride of another

²⁶³ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Horace Howard Furness, 14th ed. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1913), 76.

²⁶⁴ Sacher-Masoch, *Der Judenraphael*, 90.

man, promising to die before she will marry the husband selected by her parents. She agrees with Plutin that she was created for him, in order to love him. Yet Hadaßka is unwilling to convert or marry a non-Jew, and the only conversion Plutin considers is his decision to stop being an antisemite. Sacher-Masoch may have personally believed that, “intermarriage was a delightful way to irritate antisemites”, as Barbara Hyams argues, yet his Jewish women rarely marry their Christian lovers.²⁶⁵ Unlike Franzos, who depicted ill-starred romance to advocate for cultural and political change, Sacher-Masoch’s artistic vision demanded a tragic end to the novella. Gilles Deleuze views delayed gratification as an important part of masochistic pleasure, and the impossibility of Plutin and Hadaßka’s love affair is a form of infinitely delayed gratification.²⁶⁶ Hadaßka’s proclamation of loyalty to her family and faith are portrayed as positive traits, although her parents would probably argue that the true show of commitment to the Jewish community would involve building a Jewish family of her own and raising Jewish children, rather than dying artistically on her wedding day. Sacher-Masoch’s resolution of this interethnic romance thus reflects his philosemitic fascination with beautiful Jewish women rather than a concern with Jewish communal continuity, a crucial distinction between Sacher-Masoch’s ghetto fiction and that of Jewish writers such as Kompert.

Hadaßka’s decision to die before marriage would, according to German and Slavic folk belief, turn her into a Willi. These ghostly dancers are brides who die before their wedding day and gather at night at crossroads to compel unfortunate men to dance with them, until they die of exhaustion. Heinrich Heine’s description of Willis was so popular when he published it in the 1830s that it was soon adapted into the French Romantic

²⁶⁵ Hyams, “The Whip and the Lamp,” 71.

²⁶⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty*, in *Masochism* (New York: Zione Books, 1989), 71.

ballet *Giselle*.²⁶⁷ Sacher-Masoch explicitly compares Hadaßka to a Willi when she dances a couple's dance with Plutin. Sacher-Masoch does not directly cite the ballet *Giselle*, and claims not to have been influenced by Heine,²⁶⁸ yet there are many parallels between the exotic sexuality of the beautiful Jewess and the otherworldly femininity of the romantic ballerina, which in turn connect Sacher-Masoch's novel to the famous Romantic ballet. Lovers are separated by social hierarchies, a man courts his love interest disguised as someone from her social group, the main villain is a man from her social group, and most significantly a beautiful young woman dies while dancing. Viewed in the context of the ballet, Hadaßka and Plutin perform a *pas de deux* when they dance together.²⁶⁹ In fact, the two dance scenes in *Der Judenraphael* mimic the two act structure of the ballet itself; the Purim bacchanalia corresponds with the earthly first act, the wedding dance with the otherworldly second act.²⁷⁰

The couple's dance takes place on Hadaßka's wedding day, immediately following the marriage ceremony. It is at this moment that Plutin enters, brandishing a gun. In contrast to the traditional wedding dancing, "Männer mit Männern und Frauen mit Frauen" (Men with men and women with women), that is already taking place, Plutin demands to dance with the bride.²⁷¹ Hadaßka complies, relieved that now she can die in her lover's arms. Her new husband Lebele Hirsch tries to interfere, shouting that: "Es ist doch nicht erlaubt bei uns Juden, zu tanzen einem Manne mit einem Frauenzimmer. Ich

²⁶⁷ See Heinrich Heine, "Elementargeister," in *Schriften 1831-1837*, ed. Karl Pörnbacher, vol. 5 of *Sämtliche Schriften in zwölf Bänden*, ed. Klaus Briegleb (Frankfurt/M: Ullstein Werkausgaben, 1981), 654-55.

²⁶⁸ Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Souvenirs*, 64.

²⁶⁹ The *pas de deux* is a couple's dance and a characteristic form of classical ballet that emerged in the nineteenth century. It represents the love of the two romantic leads.

²⁷⁰ For comparison of the two acts, see Banes, *Dancing Women*, 25.

²⁷¹ Sacher-Masoch, *Der Judenraphael*, 139.

lasse mein Weib nicht herumspringen mit dem Purez, dem Goj!”²⁷² (We Jews don’t permit a man to dance with a dame. I won’t stand for my wife to jump around with the porets [landowner], the goy [non-Jew].) When Lebele Hirsch attempts to pull Hadaßka away from Plutin, the painter grabs him by the beard and pulls him to the ground. In a scene that would have seemed nightmarish to traditional Jews yet promised melodramatic entertainment to German readers, Plutin physically abuses the Jewish bridegroom and gains the opportunity to dance intimately with the Jewish bride.

Sacher-Masoch depicts Plutin and Hadaßka’s dance as highly dramatic and romantic. He does not specifically state the dance Hadaßka and Plutin perform, or whether a sheltered Jewish woman has had any opportunity to learn European couple’s dancing (although she may have learned when she was attending a school in Lemberg). Based on the conventions of national dances performed in Romantic ballets, one might expect a mazurka, since the setting is in Galicia.²⁷³ On the other hand, the fact that the couple flies around the room in close embrace suggests the more scandalous couple’s dances, such as the waltz or polka.²⁷⁴

Earlier we saw how Sacher-Masoch suggests Esther’s cruel potential while allowing Hadaßka to avoid fully identifying with it. Now Sacher-Masoch compares Hadaßka to the threatening figures of a Willi and the angel of death. While normally both of these figures are fatal for their interlocutors, since Willis dance men to death and the angel of death literally causes death, Hadaßka does not immediately endanger Plutin.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Lynn Garafola, “Introduction,” in *Rethinking the Sylph: New Perspectives on the Romantic Ballet*, ed. Lynn Garafola (Hannover: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 6.

²⁷⁴ Despite the name, the polka was original Czech, although like the waltz it went through an international craze in the nineteenth century. While these dances may seem stuffy or old-fashioned now, in the nineteenth century these folk turned ballroom dances were notorious for the way men could whirl women around a ballroom and make them dizzy at close quarters.

Instead, she welcomes her own death. In this sense she invokes Jean Paul Sartre's classification of the beautiful Jewess as a sexualized victim, even though she is brutalized, not by cossacks, but by conflicted value systems that puts her into an impossible position.²⁷⁵ Hadaßka is self-sacrificing, even when Sacher-Masoch's aesthetic choices and typical preferences seem initially to suggest otherwise. Plutin views death as an opportunity for artistic expression. During the course of the novel, he is eager to freeze Hadaßka in place, imagining her both as a painting and a sculpture. He even paints her as an angel in a genre painting. Plutin finds Hadaßka attractive, whether she is frozen, willing to die for him, or dead. In a moment that defies belief, he doesn't even notice when she dies in his arms. Plutin continues dancing with her, and then, once he becomes aware of her fate, eagerly awaits his own death.

Sacher-Masoch's *Der Judenraphael* is a philosemitic, middlebrow extravaganza. It is inspired as much by the sentimental narratives and romantic formulas that would allow a financially-struggling writer to sell books as it is by literary ambition. Nonetheless, this novella is a more complex and ambivalent text than Sacher-Masoch's shorter ghetto tales, as is revealed by the dance scenes. While Sacher-Masoch concerned himself with ethnographic accuracy throughout his ghetto tales, his use of dance in *Der Judenraphael* reflects the artistic temperaments of the lovers themselves, which he marshals in support of his own philosemitic views. As Esther, Juliet, and Giselle, Hadaßka is both a positive representation of Jewish femininity and a fitting counterpart for the artist Plutin. Sacher-Masoch identifies her with tragic heroines, prefiguring her own doomed romance and premature death.

²⁷⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Réflexions sur la Question Juive* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), 58-59. For English, see: Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 48-49.

In his dance depictions, Sacher-Masoch combines elements of popular exoticism, high culture, and liberal, philosemitic politics. He employs these elements to increase the stature of the beautiful Jewess Hadaßka, whose engagement with the dance floor displays her enlightened values, rather than the dangerous sexuality that characterizes so many of his female dancers. In this novella, as in his corpus as a whole, Sacher-Masoch uses dance to reflect physical desire in an aesthetically-pleasing way that takes into account the cultural milieu of the dancers for maximum crowd-pleasing affect. Since Hadaßka and Plutin are unable to enjoy a sexual union, their outrageous final dance scene is as close as they come to consummating their love affair. This dance scene is designed to excite and entertain readers, while nonetheless keeping threatening female sexuality in check. Minor characters, such as the members of King Solomon's harem who torment Jewish men, embody aggressive female sexuality, yet Hadaßka herself avoids the characteristics of Sacher-Masoch's demonic dancing women. Instead of forcing men to dance, she elicits sympathy for Jewish womanhood by martyring herself on the dance floor out of love for a Christian man. Just as Sacher-Masoch's depictions of Jewish dance favor sensational exoticism over ethnographic accuracy, the resolution of his star-crossed romantic plot emphasizes liberal and artistic ideals over the community values of his Galician characters.

Der Judenraphael is a veritable medley of ethnographic detail, liberal sentiment, high culture, and melodramatic romance. Compared to Franzos's more tendentious or didactic ghetto tales, this outrageous novella may seem refreshing. At the same time, Sacher-Masoch's emphasis on elevating the female heroine, at the frequent expense of a hapless Jewish man, leads him to tacitly encourage activities that seem almost

indistinguishable from antisemitic attacks. While Franzos, for his part, did not shy away from negative portrayals of orthodox Jews, he is careful not to let entertaining devices distract him from his political aims.

Karl Emil Franzos

Franzos (1848-1904) was born in Czortkow, Galicia and wrote about traditional Jewish life, but this son of an assimilated doctor did not actively participate in a Jewish community. Arguably the best sign of his Jewish identity was the fact he never converted. Franzos was raised with an appreciation of German literature, lived in Vienna, and ultimately moved to Berlin. Franzos did not practice Jewish ritual or have much contact with Jewish communal life, yet he was not immune to the effects of antisemitism. Barred from pursuing a career in philology as a Jew, Franzos studied law in order to support his family, yet eventually turned to writing.²⁷⁶ Most of Franzos's literary works describe Jewish life in Galicia, often in terms that are sharply critical. Petra Ernst comments that:

Er scheint davon überzeugt, dass die galizischen Juden durch eine westliche Orientierung an der allgemeinen Modernisierung, wie er sie in anderen Kronländern bereits vollzogen sieht, partizipieren könnten. Dabei ignoriert Franzos die negativen Folgen der Modernisierung und Technisierung für einen Großteil der jüdischen Bevölkerung.²⁷⁷

He appears to be convinced of the fact that the Galician Jews, if they had a western orientation, could participate in modernization generally, as he already saw it executed in the other crown lands. In this way Franzos ignored the negative consequences of modernization and technologization for the majority of the Jewish population.

²⁷⁶ Carl Steiner, *Karl Emil Franzos, 1848-1904: Emancipator and Assimilationist*, North American Studies in Nineteenth-Century German Literature 5 (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 18, 25.

²⁷⁷ Petra Ernst, "'Ach! Was wißt ihr Gebildeten in den großen Städten...!': - Zum Motiv des Lesens in 'Ghettogeschichten' von Karl Emil Franzos," in *Karl Emil Franzos: Schriftsteller zwischen den Kulturen*, ed. Petra Ernst (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2007), 78.

Franzos's work furthers his polemical views of modernization and assimilation, which were initially quite positive. In his early work, Franzos often employed interfaith romance plots to display the blindness of traditional religiosity and the backwardness of traditional marriage practices.²⁷⁸ Stories that recounted doomed love affairs between Jews and Christians were popular with readers of both faiths.²⁷⁹ Franzos's 1877 collection of stories (including *Esterka Regina*) set in a fictional town based on Czortkow, *Die Juden von Barnow* (The Jews of Barnow), achieved widespread, international success and established his position as an "early master of the ethnographic novella."²⁸⁰ Yet by 1890, an increasingly antisemitic climate in Germany meant there was less of a market for ghetto literature. Franzos had more limited options for publishing his work, such as in *Deutsche Dichtung* (German Poetry), the literary journal he edited, or in book form.²⁸¹ This sad chapter of Franzos's career affected him deeply and was detrimental to the quality of his literary output, although his 1891 novel *Judith Trachtenberg* is one of his better later works.²⁸²

As can be seen in both *Esterka Regina* and *Judith Trachtenberg*, Franzos's interest in dance relates to issues of access and how the dance floor encodes larger social interactions. More than the other authors that I discuss, Franzos looks to the question of who has the skills and social graces to be admitted on the dance floor, and what the consequences are for admission. Dancers are particularly primed for falling in love or at

²⁷⁸ Gabriele von Glasenapp, "'Nur die Liebe macht Selig, der Glaube aber blind.' – Zur Inszenierung interreligiöser Liebesbeziehungen im Werk von Karl Emil Franzos," in *Karl Emil Franzos: Schriftsteller zwischen den Kulturen*, ed. Petra Ernst. (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2007), 59.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

²⁸⁰ Steiner, *Karl Emil Franzos*, 29.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 48, 140.

least experiencing infatuation. In his 1875 novella *Die braune Rosa* (Brown Rose), young people are initiated into youthful romance through the figures of the quadrille and cotillion:

Ich habe die Liebe später bekommen, als andere Leute, als insbesondere meine Gefährten. Denn für den Gymnasiasten ereignet sich die erste Liebe in Ober-Tertia: der Cursus im Herzweh fällt mit dem Tanzcursus zusammen. Fritz und Minna beginnen in der dritten Position sachte zu glühen und drücken einander während der Quadrille zum ersten Male die Hand, bis schließlich der letzte Cotillon die Höhe dieses etwas geringfügigen Liebesglücks herbeiführt und das Ende dazu. Ich hatte nie eine solche Minna, weil ich mir den Luxus eines Tanzcursus nicht erlauben durfte.²⁸³

I experienced love later in life than other people, especially my companions. Gymnasium students experience first love in their fifth year: the course in heartache coincides with the dance course. Fritz and Minna begin to gingerly glow in the third position and press their hands together for the first time during the quadrille, until finally the last cotillion precipitates the high point of this somewhat insignificant but happy love affair, which soon ends. I never had such a Minna, because I was never allowed the luxury of dance lessons.

As this episode suggests, Franzos found it almost impossible to separate lessons in dance, grace, and bodily comportment from schooling in love and heartache. Dancers go through the stages of romance in an accelerated state as they progress through the steps of the dance, first blushing in the third position of a dance figure, then holding hands in the quadrille, a brief experience of the happiness of love during the cotillion, and finally an end to the brief romance as the dance finishes. Dance inspires romantic feeling, but those who do not have the opportunity for dance lessons are unable to experience these heady emotions

Franzos is deeply aware of social hierarchies that operate within and without the dance itself. Not only are the figures themselves reminiscent of courtly dances; the early

²⁸³ Karl Emil Franzos, *Die braune Rosa, Junge Liebe* (Breslau: Eduard Trewendt, 1884), 23-24.

romances on the dance floor are only available to those with the financial means to be able to afford dancing lessons. Franzos develops this notion of class and exclusion on the dance floor even more deeply in two of his works that concern the Jewish process of acculturation. In both the early novella *Esther Regina*, which concerns intra-Jewish cultural clashes, and the late novel *Judith Trachtenberg*, which also attacks anti-Jewish prejudice, Franzos deploys dance as a crucial meeting point. Participation in dance does not occur in a vacuum and, in fact, contributes to the didactic and political aspect of Franzos's work. Dance is a sign of the German cultural engagement he favors in *Esterka Regina* and an opportunity for Jewish and Polish values to clash in *Judith Trachtenberg*. That is to say, in both works, dance serves to convey the overall authorial message of the text in a manner that entertains readers. The space of the dance floor enables Franzos to both instigate a romance between two characters of different stations in life, seemingly against their will, and to showcase the orientalized figure of the *schöne Jüdin*.

Trapped Between Worlds: *Esterka Regina*

Franzos began writing his novella *Esterka Regina* between 1870 and 1872, and included it in his first collection of ghetto tales about his hometown of Czortkow (here called Barnow), *Die Juden von Barnow* (1877).²⁸⁴ Andrea Wodenegg claims that almost all of Franzos' novellas that involve interconfessional love are in *Die Juden von Barnow*, most of them (like *Esterka Regina*) written between 1870 and 1872.²⁸⁵ Interestingly, she includes *Esterka Regina* in this list, even though it focuses on the cultural divide between an acculturated, German-speaking medical student and a Yiddish-speaking young woman

²⁸⁴ Wodenegg, *Das Bild der Juden Osteuropas*, 52.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

from his childhood village. Nonetheless, one of the defining features of the heroine, Rachel Welt, is the fact that she is physically appealing to Christian men. Reminded of both Queen Esther and the legendary Esterka, Polish poet Thaddäus Wiliszewski nicknames her Esterka Regina.²⁸⁶ The nickname sticks, and Rachel is thereby inscribed as a *schöne Jüdin*. Even though Rachel never considers her non-Jewish admirers, Franzos frequently eludes to the possibility of interfaith romance in his novella, especially since the Jews of Barnow suspect that the acculturated Jewish man Rachel loves is at risk of converting to Christianity.

Of the three texts discussed in this chapter, Franzos' novella *Esterka Regina* contains the clearest articulation of the options available to a beautiful Jewess: engage in a love affair with a Christian or submit to the marriage arranged for her by her family. When acculturated Jew Adolf (born Aaron) Leiblinger hears that his childhood protector Rachel has grown into a beautiful and clever woman, he expresses dismay about her limited options in life. He explains her two possible choices in starkly contrasted terms:

“...wenn das Mädchen wirklich so schön und dabei so klug ist, verdammt wenig Aussicht. Entweder läßt sie sich durch all' die Versuchungen bethören und fällt trotz ihrer Klugheit einem dieser polnischen oder ungarischen Herren zum Opfer... Oder sie bleibt die brave, gehorsame Tochter ihres Vaters und der verschachert sie dann eines Tages, ohne sie zu fragen, an einen rohen chassidischen Bengel. Und da sie klug ist, so wird sie den Jammer und die Niedrigkeit eines solchen Daseins über kurz oder lang begreifen und schließlich als armes, geknicktes Judenweib in irgend einer Ecke eines podolischen Ghetto verkümmern.”²⁸⁷

“If the girl is really that beautiful and clever at the same time, damned little chance. Either she lets herself get bewitched by all the temptations and, despite her intelligence, becomes the victim of some Polish or Hungarian gentleman... Or

²⁸⁶ Wiliszewski also appears as a guest at a salon in chapter three of *Judith Trachtenberg*, where his reading of the poem, “König Kasimir und die schöne Esther,” is part of a plan to prime Judith to become a Polish noble's mistress.

²⁸⁷ Karl Emil Franzos, *Esterka Regina*, in *Die Juden von Barnow* (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1920), 182-83.

she remains the good, obedient daughter of her father and he sells her off one day, without asking her, to some crude Chassidic lout. And because she is clever, sooner or later she will grasp the misery and baseness of such an existence and ultimately wither away as a poor, broken Jewish woman in some corner of a Podolian Ghetto.”

Adolf imagines two options for Rachel, each of which demands she submit to the will of a man, and neither of which will lead to a happy outcome. Her beauty will make her prey to the romantic advances of Christian nobleman intent on seduction, her intelligence will cause her to recognize the limitations of the life intended for her by her family. Rachel’s fate, like that of Judith in *Judith Trachtenberg* and Hadaßka in *Der Judenraphael* is overwhelmingly determined by men: father, brother if she has one, and suitors. Unlike Adolf, who uses his grit and power of persuasion to rise above his poverty and study medicine in Vienna because he dreams of a better future for himself, the women in this chapter must select between life paths determined by their choice of male partner. Even Judith, whose father plans to marry her to an Enlightened German Jew, cannot pursue any ambitions outside of a splendid marriage. Yet Rachel’s options are, in a real material sense, more limited than her well-heeled counterparts Judith and Hadaßka. All three young women have been groomed for a particular type of marriage, yet Rachel’s class also limits her future prospects. Unlike Judith, who has been privately tutored, and Hadaßka, who went to school in Lemberg, Rachel’s lack of education limits her social mobility. She marries the ox trader chosen for her by her parents.

Adolf may claim that Rachel has only two possible options, yet Franzos’s novella offers up a third example: Sprinze Klein, a wealthy widow who attempts to fuse traditional Jewish observance with modern European culture. She is a ridiculous figure; according to the narrator she would make “eine interessante Charakterstudie” (an

interesting character study): a woman who displays copies of German literary classics she is unable to read and justifies her possession of the purportedly immoral secular books by reminding herself she is unable to read them.²⁸⁸ Frau Sprinze grotesquely embodies Rachel's fear of what she may become if she attempts to enter Adolf's cultured world. As she says, "Weh' mir, ich kann ja nicht einmal "Deutsch" sprechen! Was wollt Ihr, der einst ein Doktor sein wird, mit einer Frau, die gar nichts von der Welt versteht, in der Ihr leben werdet."²⁸⁹ (Woe is me, I can't even speak German! What would you, who will one day become a doctor, want with a wife who understands nothing of the world in which you will live?) Rachel's concerns about belonging to a different world than Adolf are underscored by the fact that her last name, "Welt," literally means world. Adolf is confident that he can teach Rachel the linguistic skills and cultural competence needed for her to be a Viennese doctor's wife, yet Rachel is unable to forget her concern that she will prove unable to acculturate. She is unwilling to challenge her father's decision that she marry a traditionally pious man, since the alternative is a controversial love match in which she would risk her husband's regret and disdain.

Frau Sprinze is, in this context, doubly important, because she facilitates Adolf and Rachel's complicated reunion and the revival of their affectionate memories, eleven years after Adolf left Barnow. Frau Sprinze hosts a party with mixed-sex dancing, which leads to Adolf and Rachel's renewed contact. According to the narrator, dance challenges Jewish cultural norms and represents the latest example of Frau Sprinze's love of progress: "Sie hat es nämlich durchgesetzt, daß bei der Hochzeit ihrer Tochter nicht nach 'jüdischer Art' getanzt werden soll – die Männer mit den Männern, die Weiber mit den

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 188.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 200.

Weibern – sondern nach der ‘christlichen Mode’: die Herren mit den Damen.”²⁹⁰ (That is to say, she had asserted that the dancing at her daughter’s wedding would not be in the “Jewish manner” – men with men, women with women – but instead in the “Christian fashion”: the gentlemen with the ladies.) Like Frau Sprinze’s own habits, mixed-sex dancing is caught in a nebulous realm between competing notions of sanctioned and forbidden. The novella explicitly codes mixed-sex dancing as Christian, and thus as foreign, yet Frau Sprinze considers it appropriate for a Jewish wedding (and her guests do not shun the festivities). Even the language Franzos’s narrator uses suggests that mixed-sex dancing has the potential to elevate the participants and heighten the festive mood; the men (Männer) and women (Weiber) become gentlemen (Herren) and ladies (Damen). Mixed-sex dancing is presented as a logistical challenge (since few men are trained in it) rather than a moral challenge (Rachel claims she is willing to participate). It thus serves as a convenient and romantic means for Franzos to thrust his characters into the same physical space, while also serving to underscore the conflicted cultural choices they must navigate.

Adolf’s presence at this dance is particularly significant because he and his friend, the narrator, are two of the very few men in the village who know how to dance in the modern, mixed-sex style. The narrator speculates that they were invited because “es dabei an geschulten Tänzern fehlt.”²⁹¹ (There was a lack of schooled dancers.) He notes, however, that attendance does not present too much of a sacrifice, since “bliebe es auch eine langweilige Tanzrobot, die Aussicht, mit einem schönen Mädchen, wie die Esterka

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 189.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

Regina ist, tanzen zu können, wiegt ein Opfer auf.”²⁹² (Even if it was boring to perform this dancing-service, the chance of being able to dance with a pretty girl, like Esterka Regina, compensated for the sacrifice.) The narrator’s comments reflect the fact that dancing lessons and leisure time were required to become well-versed in upwardly-mobile social accomplishments. Cultivation of skill on the social dance floor is, in a certain sense, antithetical to the tradition value system in Barnow; not only is it coded as Christian, social dance lessons require diverting time and money from traditional Torah study or working to provide for a family. The very fact that Adolf is able to dance in the modern or Christian style is a reminder of how far he has come from the traditional Judaism and poverty of his childhood.

At the same time, if Adolf’s one job is to be a dancing partner for the ladies, he is noticeably bad at it. While he initially fulfills the hostess’ expectations by dancing with the ladies, Rachel’s appearance in the ballroom captures his attention and distracts him from dancing. In fact, he removes himself from the normal social circulation, much in the same way he refuses to participate in the social norms of the village. Instead of dancing with Rachel (or anybody else), he spends the evening talking with her. More scandalously, she is already engaged to another man. In fact, Frau Sprinze’s comment that she is already engaged to be married reminds savvy readers of Werther’s dance with Lotte in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (The Sorrows of Young Werther, 1774), another popular work about an ill-fated romance between an intellectual and a village girl, since Werther only learns she has a fiancé when a village woman makes a comment to that effect. Notwithstanding Rachel’s attempt at the end of

²⁹² Ibid.

the evening to refute rumors that Adolf is on the verge of apostasy, the encounter at the dance results in even greater chaos. Adolf is initially reluctant to attend the ball or reacquaint himself with his childhood friend, yet, from the moment he sees Rachel at the ball, they begin a transgressive love affair. They meet by chance, then deliberately, exchange weekly love letters, and then, when Rachel determines that a marriage between them is impossible, she writes a letter retracting her declaration of love. Only years later does she admit her love, when she is already on her deathbed.

Rachel's behavior on the dance floor foreshadows her hesitance to marry Adolf. Adolf asks her to dance, but she refuses him. Her objection is not to the idea of mixed-sex dancing (Adolf's first suspicion), but rather to dancing with a man who scorns Jews, their ways, and their language. Rachel frames her values in terms of cultural solidarity and Jewish identity rather than scriptural source or personal faith, as is to be expected from a Franzos heroine. She has listened to rumors that he is about to marry a Christian woman, and refuses to tacitly accept his behavior by dancing with him. Just as Rachel does not dance with Adolf because his behavior favors the foreign over the Jewish, she also refuses to marry him. She does not refuse to marry altogether, but marriage to a man from another world would be impossible. Just as Adolf's sympathetic speech at the dance suggests that he would have been a suitable dance partner, Franzos's sympathetic narrative indicates that it should have been possible for the two lovers to marry. Franzos suggests that, in the same way village rumors separated Rachel and Adolf on the dance floor, the social chasm created by Jewish refusal to modernize keeps the lovers from dancing at their own impossible wedding.

Franzos emphasizes the theme of two separate worlds in the novella. Tragically, traditional Barnow and cosmopolitan Vienna are unable to meet, except, fleetingly, on the dance floor. It does not matter how Rachel and Adolf dance, or even if they actually take a turn together. Of greater significance is the fact that a space exists for mixed-sex dancing in Barnow, which reveals an opportunity for boundary-crossing in the novella. Franzos intimates that the worlds should be bridgeable, if only women such as Rachel and Frau Sprinze could be properly educated. Unfortunately, by the time he wrote *Judith Trachtenberg* (which features a highly-educated woman), Franzos was more concerned with the problem of antisemitism. His novel reveals that, contrary to Rachel's hope, education alone does not guarantee a Jewish woman's happiness.

Caught in a Dance Square: *Judith Trachtenberg*²⁹³

Charming and graceful steps, an elastic gait, levity, and obvious pleasure – according to the 1889 dance manual *Die Tanzkunst und die Tänze* (The Art of Dance and Dances), these are some of the attributes of the quadrille, an elegant social dance.²⁹⁴ These same qualities of grace and enjoyment in dance can be seen in Judith, protagonist of Franzos's 1891 novel, *Judith Trachtenberg*. Her love of European social dances, as well as her fair features, distinguish Judith from the other inhabitants of her city's Jewish quarter (referred to as the ghetto), and set her apart as a liminal figure in aristocratic Polish salon culture. Her beauty wins her admirers, but her Jewish identity makes her

²⁹³ My literary analysis of *Judith Trachtenberg* can also be found in Sonia Gollance, "'Spaß mit der schönen Jüdin'. Mixed Space and Dancing in Karl Emil Franzos's *Judith Trachtenberg*," *Austrian Studies* 24: Jews, Jewish Difference and Austrian Culture. Literary and Historical Perspectives (2016): 66-78.

²⁹⁴ *Die Tanzkunst und die Tänze* (Vienna: C. Daberkow, 1889), 53.

vulnerable. In this Galician setting, Franzos explores the aristocratic ballroom as a space that invites dancers to cross social boundaries, leading to tragic consequences. Focusing on analysis of a fateful quadrille, I will show how Franzos uses dance to excite emotions, push his narrative forward, crystallize social relationships, and reflect on Jewish social mobility in Habsburg Galicia.

Judith Trachtenberg is melodramatic, readily invokes stereotypes, and, like many of Franzos's other ghetto tales, is blatantly didactic. Nonetheless, it has had a surprising vitality for a work of popular fiction. First serialized between 1889 and 1890 in *Deutsche Dichtung* (German Literature), the journal Franzos edited in Berlin, the novel was published in book form in 1891. It was translated into English in the same year, and was also translated into Danish (1890) and French (2003). A Yiddish translation was published as *Der graf un di yidin* (The Count and the Jewess) in two editions, in 1895 and 1904. In 1920, Henrik Galeen made a film version, which has unfortunately been lost.²⁹⁵ George Roland, a New York-based editor who refashioned extant films as talkies, appears to have re-released much of Galeen's footage with a frame narrative as *Yidishe tokhter* (A Daughter of Her People, 1932).²⁹⁶ Nonetheless, *Judith Trachtenberg* has received little critical analysis by scholars, who, with the exception of Florian Krobb and Fred Sommer, rarely devote more than a few paragraphs to the novel in their discussions of Franzos's oeuvre. To my knowledge, Krobb is the only scholar to discuss the ball; his brief remarks focus on the use of the term *schöne Jüdin*.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ Correspondence with Sharon Rivo (National Center for Jewish Film), April 2014. See also: J. Hoberman, *Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film Between Two Worlds* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2010), 60, 184, 188-89.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 182-83, 189.

²⁹⁷ Krobb, *Die schöne Jüdin*, 200-01.

Judith Trachtenberg depicts the tragic love affair of a Jewish woman and a Polish nobleman. Most critical assessments of the novel focus on Franzos's views of intermarriage, antisemitism, and assimilation. Given Franzos's lifelong investment in German culture, it can be difficult to determine the extent to which *Judith Trachtenberg* reflects the political situation in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which was Franzos's birthplace and the novel's setting, or in the German Empire, where Franzos lived at the time and published his novel. Krobb nonetheless views the novel as a comment on Austrian politics, acknowledging references to Habsburg political leaders and stating that Franzos uses a love story to examine, "what happens if the Jewish individual, having done her part in developing the equation by adopting German culture and manners, claims the right to be actually accepted into gentile society on equal terms, including respect for her family and family traditions."²⁹⁸ Indeed, Franzos acknowledged Austrian antisemitism in an 1891 letter to writer Ernst Eckstein, in which he mentioned the necessity of finding a "Vollblut-Arier" (thoroughbred Aryan) to write a feuilleton about *Judith Trachtenberg*.²⁹⁹ Fred Sommer reads the novel as a clash between the sexual mores of the Polish nobility and the Jewish community.³⁰⁰ Maria Kłańska argues that it is the Orthodox Jews, rather than Judith's enlightened father or the interfaith couple, who

²⁹⁸ Florian Krobb, "'Auf Fluch und Lüge baut sich kein Glück auf': Karl Emil Franzos' Novel *Judith Trachtenberg* and the Question of Jewish Assimilation," in *The Habsburg Legacy: National Identity in Historical Perspective*, eds. Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms, Austrian Studies 5 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 86.

²⁹⁹ Margarita Pazi, "Karl Emil Franzos' Assimilationsvorstellung und Assimilationserfahrung," *Conditio Judaica: Judentum, Antisemitismus und deutschsprachige Literatur vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Hans Otto Horch and Horst Denkler, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989), 229 For another interpretation of the letter which nonetheless acknowledges Austrian antisemitism, see Steiner, *Karl Emil Franzos*, 48.

³⁰⁰ Fred Sommer, "*Halb-Asien*": *German Nationalism and the Eastern European Works of Emil Franzos* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1984), 135-36.

succeed at the novel's end.³⁰¹ Similarly, Gabriele von Glasenapp views *Judith Trachtenberg* as a sign of the author's disenchantment with assimilation. While earlier works, including the story upon which the novel was originally based, pit young Jews against arranged marriages and the religious orthodoxy of their families, the titular character in *Judith Trachtenberg* grows up in an acculturated but Orthodox environment and her happiness is primarily thwarted because Christian society refuses to accept her.³⁰²

In this framework, dance plays an instrumental role in developing the transgressive love affair and articulating the tricky balancing act of acculturation. Descriptions of dance crystallize the theme of border crossing in *Judith Trachtenberg*. Several illustrative uses of dance in the book's first chapter underscore significant questions of Jewish representation and inclusion in Galicia, and moreover prepare a foundation for the interfaith relationship that dominates the rest of the novel. Franzos uses dance to show the varied approaches his characters take as they negotiate between Jewish and Christian culture and identity.

Judith's father, Nathaniel Trachtenberg, is a Central European Moses Mendelssohn figure, albeit one who is less resilient than the philosopher when his worldview is challenged. Even the name Nathaniel reminds a savvy reader of the hero of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's Enlightenment play *Nathan der Weise* (Nathan the Wise), a character inspired by Mendelssohn. Nathaniel attempts to participate in Christian society as an observant Jew, with dubious success. While the elder Trachtenberg can balance, at

³⁰¹ Maria Kłańska, "‘Jedes Land hat die Juden, die es verdient,’: Karl Emil Franzos und die Juden," in *Karl Emil Franzos: Schriftsteller zwischen den Kulturen*, ed. Petra Ernst (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2007), 46-47.

³⁰² von Glasenapp, "Nur die Liebe," 69.

least temporarily, between these worlds, this tenuous equilibrium proves impossible for his children. Tragically, Judith and Raphael's failure to find a path of moderation leads to Nathaniel's death of a heart attack when Judith is abducted by her Polish lover. At the novel's opening, Nathaniel insists that his children engage in traditional Jewish learning with a Hebrew tutor, as well as studying modern European subjects, including social dancing. Franzos uses the dance classes to reveal the Trachtenberg children's differing attitudes towards acculturation and how they challenge to their father's enlightened

Judaism:

Beide hatten eben den Tanzkurs beendet, welcher im gastlichen Hause des Kreiskommissärs von Wroblewski, eines der kostspieligsten Freunde [Nathaniel] Trachtenbergs, abgehalten worden war. Der Jüngling... erklärte nun mit bitterer Entschiedenheit, er habe es satt, sich um seiner krausen Haare und runden Augen willen schlecht behandeln zu lassen; er werde nie wieder ein Christenhaus betreten und seinen Verkehr ausschließlich unter jenen suchen, zu denen er durch Abstammung und gemeinsames Leid gehöre. Im entgegengesetzten Sinne hatten die Erfahrungen dieses Unterrichts auf Judith gewirkt; sie ward in den christlichen Familien immer heimischer und rümpfte ihr Näschen, wenn sie die hebräische Lehrstunde erledigen mußte. Beiden trat das Machtgebot des Vaters entgegen und hinderte sie, ihren Neigungen ganz zu folgen, aber sie fügten sich doch nur so weit, als sie nicht anders konnten, oder vielmehr, wie sich Nathaniel in ruhigen und gerechten Stunden sagte, soweit sie eben konnten... Der arme Rafael war seinen kleinen Tänzerinnen doppelt häßlich erschienen, weil er ein Jude war, wogegen die früh gereifte Schönheit seines Schwesterchens ihre jugendlichen Hofmacher vielleicht um so mehr entzückte, weil sie der Jüdin gegenüber Hoffnungen hegten, deren sie sich bei Mädchen ihrer Kreise nie erdreistet hätten...³⁰³

The two siblings had just completed a course of dancing lessons, held in the convivial home of District Commissioner von Wroblewski, one of [Nathaniel] Trachtenberg's most expensive friends. The youth [...] declared, with bitter resolve, that he would no longer allow himself to be mistreated on account of his curly hair and round eyes. Never again would he enter the house of a Christian; he would socialize exclusively with those to whom he belonged on account of

³⁰³ Karl Emil Franzos, *Judith Trachtenberg: Erzählung* (Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1987), 8-9. For a published English translation of the novel, see Karl Emil Franzos, *Judith Trachtenberg: A Novel*, trans. Mrs. L. P. and C. T. Lewis (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1891). I have opted to use my own translations. Thanks are due to Deborah Holmes, Lisa Silverman, and the anonymous peer reviewer for their assistance.

common ancestry and shared suffering. The experience of these dancing lessons had the opposite effect on Judith. She felt ever more at home among the Christian families and wrinkled her nose when she was forced to sit through a Hebrew lesson. The paternal decree prevented both siblings from fully following their inclinations, but they submitted to it only as far as they had to, or rather, as Nathaniel sometimes said to himself in calm and righteous hours, as far as they were able to. [...] Poor Raphael appeared twice as hideous to his little dance partners because he was a Jew, whereas the precocious beauty of his younger sister may have delighted her young admirers all the more because they cherished hopes for the Jewess that they would never have presumed for girls of their own social circle.

Rafael decides after a dance lesson that he will no longer take part in Christian society, in part because he is tired of mistreatment by his dance partners on account of his Jewish appearance. Judith, in contrast, is admired for her fair features, which Franzos deems atypical for a Jewish woman and Christian men take as an invitation to dalliance. She much prefers social dancing to Jewish learning. It is unclear whether the differing attitudes of the siblings are determined entirely by Christian reactions to their physical features or also by personal taste and inclination. In any case, both Trachtenbergs strive to satisfy their father while inwardly disapproving of one half of their educational curriculum.

Franzos uses dance lessons to describe the differences among Jewish responses to Christian culture. Nuanced characters are not his focus, and indeed many characters are one-dimensional or overtly symbolic. Rafael and Judith's attitudes towards dance classes highlight their most notable attributes. Rafael possesses both stereotypical Jewish physical features and a stubborn attachment to Judaism over Christianity. Assimilation holds no appeal for him and he mistrusts the motives of his Christian neighbors. Although he initially appears intolerant, by the end of the novel, Rafael has negotiated his fate more successfully than either his father or his sister.

In contrast to her brother, Judith has conventionally attractive features, little interest in Judaism, and generally prefers the company of Christians to that of Jews. Judith initially thinks conversion would not be too much of a sacrifice for love, although her moral system still requires marriage for sexual intimacy. Ultimately, Judith learns that Christians mistreat even acculturated Jews and that Judaism is more important to her than she realized. At the same time, her devotion to maintaining her social respectability trumps her newfound appreciation for Judaism. While Franzos does not initially reveal Judith's willingness to convert, he does use her fondness for social dancing among Christian neighbors to introduce readers to her taste for Christian society and dislike of traditional Jewish learning. These attitudes, the novel suggests, ultimately lead her to a tragic fate.

Although Judith receives compliments from her Christian dance partners, she is not accepted as an equal. This lack of respect is particularly noticeable when Judith is invited at very short notice to the ball given by the Wroblewski family to welcome Count Agenor Baranowski, the new lord. Even though the ball will take place in the building in which Judith lives, she was not initially invited, nor were any other Jews. Since Judith is beautiful, wealthy, educated, and the daughter of the host's friend and landlord, the only possible reason for her exclusion is the fact that she is Jewish. At the same time, the Wroblewskis count on Judith as a reliable last-minute guest and expect her to be grateful for the honour, despite the insulting circumstances. She is neither someone who can be included on the initial guest list, nor someone who is inconceivable as a guest. Judith's position is unclear, and thus risky. She is not accorded the respect that would provide her

with safety in a social situation, yet she is awarded too many compliments for her to comprehend her precarious position.

While Judith naively delights in these social activities, her brother Rafael worries about his sister's happiness and reputation. Rafael tells Judith that she is only desired at the ball because the Christian men like her appearance. Astonished that Judith has not noticed the way she is treated, he warns her:

Du bist kein Kind mehr, ein vollerblühtes, ein schönes Mädchen, Judith – schön und eine Jüdin! Ist es dir wirklich noch nicht aufgefallen, daß dich diese Herrchen anders behandeln als ihre christlichen Tänzerinnen, daß sie sich gegen dich solcher Reden erfreuen... Der Ehrenmann da oben lädt dich nicht allein deshalb, weil er dem Vater den Mietzins schuldig bleibt, sondern auch, weil es die jungen adligen Herren wünschen, denen er nach dem Tanz ihr Geld im Pharao abnimmt. Die wollen ihren Spaß mit der schönen Jüdin haben! Hüte deine Seele, Schwester, hüte deine Ehre, du wärest die erste nicht...³⁰⁴

You are not a child anymore, Judith, but a beautiful girl in full bloom – beautiful and a Jewess! Did it really never occur to you that these lordlings treat you differently than their Christian dancing partners, that they say audacious things to you [...]. The gentleman upstairs does not only invite you because he owes father rent, but also because the young aristocrats want you there, and after the dancing he takes their money at faro. They like to have their fun with the beautiful Jewess! Guard your soul, sister, protect your honor; you would not be the first...

Judith refuses to believe his accusations. In fact, the argument with her brother convinces Judith to attend the ball.

While Rafael's words prove to be well intended and, according to the novel's logic, correct, they also deny the possibility of female agency. All the actors in his account here are men. While Rafael can aspire to a publicly prominent role within the Jewish community, as a learned professional, wealthy businessman, or head of a household, Judith has fewer opportunities. For her, Christian society offers freedoms, such as mixed-sex dancing, which would not be possible within the Jewish community in

³⁰⁴ Franzos, *Judith Trachtenberg: Erzählung*, 21-22.

Galicia. Even her father's aspirations for her, that she become the wife of an enlightened German Jew, give her only a limited degree of choice over her life. Judith savors the exciting literary and cultural possibilities that she experiences in the Wroblewski salon. She cannot bear to imagine that, as Franzos soon proves to his readers, the pleasures she encounters in this environment are actually an extended degradation and a plot to spoil her virtue. The stakes of Judith's decision of whether to attend the ball and participate in mixed-sex dancing are nothing less than a choice between submission to one of the roles constructed for her by the men in her family and testing out her autonomy with Christian men. If she accepts Rafael's account, she will have no choice but to limit herself to the confines of traditional Jewish life that even her father finds stifling. While Judith is unwilling to consider this possibility, her brother's words introduce the reader to the prospect of an interfaith romance by suggesting that motivation for such a dalliance exists. Ironically, Rafael's warning sets the plot in motion for Judith to come into close quarters with Agenor Baranowski. Even though she initially planned to stay at home with her brother, their dispute leads her to the ball, with fateful consequences.

When Judith arrives late, Frau von Wroblewska assigns her an unsatisfying partner and suggests that she would have gained a more favorable one if she had arrived earlier. The young man she is to dance with, Wladko Wolczinski, is a boorish and clumsy nobleman:

Da war auch Graf Baranowski, er erfüllte eben eine bittere Pflicht der Höflichkeit, indem er die sehr umfangreiche Gattin des dünnen Bürgermeisters zum Tanze führte. <<Wer weiß>>, sagte Frau Anna lächelnd, <<welche Ehre dir beschieden gewesen wäre, wenn du früher gekommen wärest, nun mußt du dich mit dem jungen Wolczinski begnügen... Wladko!>>

Der lange, unbeholfene Mensch stolperte eilig heran. <<Sie tanzen mit Fräulein Judith die Quadrille!>> Er zögerte. <<Ich bin...>>, stammelte er, <<ich habe...>> – <<Was? Schon engagiert?>> – <<Nein, aber...>> <<Was sonst?

Müde?>> Frau Annas Augen blitzten ihn nicht eben freundlich an. <<Wird's? Allons!>> Er zuckte die Achseln und bot dem Mädchen den Arm.³⁰⁵

Count Baranowski was also there, at present fulfilling one of the severe dictates of courtesy by leading the slender mayor's enormous wife in a dance. "Who knows," said Frau Anna, smiling, "what honor would have been yours, if you had come earlier; now you must content yourself with young Wolczinski... Wladko!"

The tall, clumsy fellow stumbled over hastily. "You will dance the quadrille with Fräulein Judith!" He demurred. "I am..." he stammered, "I have..." – "What? Already engaged?" – "No, but..." "What else? Tired?" Frau Anna's eyes flashed at him in a manner that was not particularly friendly. "If you please? *Allons!*" He shrugged his shoulders and offered the girl his arm.

Both Agenor Baranowsky and Judith are obliged to dance with ungainly partners who do not suit them. Agenor dances with the mayor's heavysset wife out of politeness, perhaps because she is the lady with the highest rank in the room. Judith dances with Wladko, who is physically awkward, because their hostess assigns him to her. Even though it is questionable if Agenor, who is no philosemite, would dance with a Jewish woman at a ball, the fact that descriptions of the two awkward pairings follow one after the other suggests that Agenor and Judith might be better suited to each other than to either of their respective dance partners.

While Frau von Wroblewska tries to mask the social hierarchy, Wladko reads his pairing with a Jew as a social snub and reacts accordingly. Rather than express resentment towards his hosts, Wladko directs a chilly demeanor towards Judith. Although Judith initially attributes Wladko's coldness towards her to a financial dispute between their fathers, she wonders if Rafael's concerns may have a basis in fact. Her misgivings are proven correct when Wladko aims an antisemitic barb at her father. Wladko's refusal even to look at Judith as they dance foreshadows his hostile words. The argument quickly

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 24.

escalates and gains the attention of neighboring couples, which only makes it more severe.

The quarrel probably would not have occurred or become so heated if Wladko and Judith had not been required to dance together. Wladko preferred to ignore Judith rather than speak with or bait her, and Judith similarly had little grounds for talking to him. Even after they partner for the quadrille, it takes time for Wladko's resentment to build. He initially remains silent and refuses to acknowledge Judith. Yet the dance requires them to remain in close quarters for a specific amount of time and provides opportunities for conversation. Wladko is thus able to embroil Judith in an argument that quickly becomes inflammatory. Interestingly, even though quadrilles involve a variety of dance figures, including those where dance partners switch temporarily, Franzos focuses on interactions between the couple, although he hints at the presence of other couples. Since quadrilles are danced in squares of four couples, the neighboring couples soon become aware of the argument and Wladko feels social pressure to put Judith in her place, not only literally but also figuratively. The fact that the quarrel gains the attention of the other guests allows the entire affair to escalate from verbal barbs to a sexualized insult and potential duel.

Until this point, Judith has been unwilling to believe Rafael's warning. She lets Frau von Wroblewska lull her into a positive vision of her social milieu. She would rather believe that individuals such as Wladko are resentful on account of specific grievances, rather than harbor the possibility that her friends and admirers do not respect her because she is Jewish. When Wladko insults her, Judith does not act as if she is in a potentially hostile space. She spiritedly and forcefully defends her father, and by extension Jews,

even though she does not identify with many aspects of Jewish culture. While Judith may want to believe that Wladko is a single rude guest, the public response to their argument challenges her optimism.

A drunken prior encourages Wladko to kiss the “beautiful Jewess” rather than argue with her.³⁰⁶ Since they are already in intimate quarters as dancing partners, and Wladko has thus already been given social approval to handle her body in polite ways, it is not a great conceptual leap for the young man to escalate their physical contact. Although Judith trembles with rage or fear, the young man kisses her neck. Nearby guests laugh with approval, while it is clear that Judith feels violated. “Im nächsten Augenblick hatte er seine Arme um die Zitternde geschlungen und sie auf den Nacken geküsst. Lachen und Händeklatschen lohnte [sic.] die kühne Tat” (in an instant he had wrapped his arms around her trembling form and kissed her on the neck. The bold deed earned laughter and applause).³⁰⁷ Wladko is able to build an alliance with nearby dancers through his brazen conduct, while excluding Judith and making her into a sexual object. He shows mastery over her body, reminding her of her subordinate position as a Jewish woman. Whereas Judith’s last rejoinder in her argument with Wladko received a few laughs, his obvious violation of her autonomy meets with boisterous approval.

By attending a ball, without an escort, at which she is the only Jewish guest, Judith enters an intermediary space that facilitates unwanted physical contact. If she had followed the path of most women in the Jewish quarter, she would not have had the opportunity to dance with Christian noblemen. She would have danced in a Jewish setting, in all likelihood apart from men or separated from direct physical contact by a

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 26.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

handkerchief. The logical leap between a dance and a kiss is, intentionally, not as easy to traverse when partners do not touch hands. It would have been more difficult for Wladko to kiss Judith and handle her body if he were not already leading her around the dance floor. Furthermore, even if Judith had danced with a man in a Jewish milieu, her father's status as a leader of the community would have rendered her immune to crude insult. Judith's honor was only insulted after Wladko had already spoken libelously of her father. Franzos exploits social boundaries and conventions on the dance floor to escalate the insults and sexual tension until they precipitate Judith's fateful encounter with Agenor.

While Judith did not invite untoward conduct by her own behavior, her mere presence at the ball inspires both Polish aristocrats and Jewish villagers to judge her actions and character negatively. Members of the Jewish community take a particularly harsh attitude when they note that scandalous things happen, "wenn ein jüdisch Kind, schlamlos entblößt, unter Christen geht und mit Männern tanzt" (when a Jewish girl, shamelessly exposed, goes among Christians and dances with men).³⁰⁸ Their accusatory words emphasize the transgressive nature of the ball and the way Judith's attendance crosses social boundaries. The attitude of Wladko and the prior toward Judith reveal the sexualized role young men at the ball imagine for her. Although Judith eschews Christian society after this incident, she is later lured back to the salon as part of Herr von Wroblewski's plot to win her for Agenor. Wladko's kiss thus foreshadows the graver liberties Agenor takes with Judith's body and autonomy.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 27.

As lord and guest of honor, Agenor immediately defends Judith. He chastises Wladko, authoritatively escorts Judith from the liminal space of the ball, leaves her at her doorstep with a deep bow, and later prepares to fight Wladko in a duel. He treats the young woman publicly with the respect her other associates have been lacking, even though they are socially inferior to him. Ultimately, however, Agenor's honorable treatment of Judith leads her to even greater suffering. Since Judith is Jewish, his behavior appears highly irregular. Her father takes pains to avoid a duel, as the ghetto inhabitants might face severe repercussions if a nobleman should lose his life to preserve the reputation of a Jewish woman. While Judith and others repeatedly ask Agenor if he would have gone to this trouble for a less attractive Jewish woman, the nobleman insists that he is no friend of the Jews and that he would uphold the honor of any female guest. The fact that he is infatuated with Judith, he privately claims to Herr von Wroblewski, plays no role in the matter.

Agenor's defense of Judith at the ball and immediately thereafter makes their romantic relationship not only possible, but almost inevitable. Agenor reveals a destructive sense of honour that will later cause him to deceive and make miserable the woman he loves. His chivalry puts him in greater contact with Judith, both as defender of her virtue and because his behaviour leads him to admit that he bears amorous feelings towards the young woman. Ironically, Agenor's gallant actions lead him to mistreat Judith in a far more enduring manner than Wladko. He desires to make her his mistress, but feels he cannot make her his wife. Since Judith will only consent to a marriage and Agenor is unwilling to lose her, Herr von Wroblewski suggests abduction, fake conversion, and sham marriage. Judith is thus deprived of family, marital status, honor,

and her own religion, a situation that ultimately leads to her death by suicide. Even the seemingly positive resolution of the incident at the ball points to a tragic conclusion.

While Franzos used dance motifs in works such as *Esterka Regina*, he employs dance in *Judith Trachtenberg* in a way that engages more deeply with the “Jewish Question.” The dance motif allows Franzos to explore Judith’s precarious social position as a Jewish woman. Judith’s participation in social dancing characterizes her relationships with four men who represent four different approaches to the place of Jews in Galicia, almost as if she were “dancing” with each of them in turn in the course of a quadrille: her father Nathaniel, her brother Rafael, Wladko, and Agenor. Structurally, Judith’s tragedy can thus be compared to a failed quadrille. In this courtly dance, it is necessary for a dance master to dictate the formations performed by all four of the couples, creating an external power dynamic where rules are imposed on a group. In *Judith Trachtenberg*, Franzos takes on the role of the dance master, both by directing his characters according to didactic aims and in his use of specific dance figures to add aesthetic force. Through her interactions with each of the four men, Judith learns a bitter lesson and Franzos demonstrates the limited options for a Jewish woman to experience social mobility or control her fate.

Judith is repeatedly passed between male interlocutors under the direction of the “dance master” Franzos, led, as it were, from one dance partner to another. The compromise of a civil marriage and baptised children ultimately leaves her dissatisfied. Both her father’s precarious cultural balancing act and her brother’s ethnocentrist worldview give her little room for autonomous expression, yet Wladko’s overt anti-Jewish prejudice and Agenor’s spineless attraction exploit her very real social

vulnerability. Anna-Dorothea Ludewig observes that Judith is a passive figure whose actions are determined by the men around her, until her death by suicide leads to her burial with a tombstone that acknowledges her as a countess and as a Jew, a morbid model of successful integration.³⁰⁹ In a milieu in which a woman's agency is determined, as in a social dance, by a male partner, her lack of a decisive and compatible counterpart leaves her without a proper place. Initial indications seem to suggest that Agenor may be appropriate, and scholars claim that Franzos viewed assimilation and romantic love (but not conversion) as the ideal but unattainable path to Jewish integration into Austrian society. However, *Judith Trachtenberg* reveals the social and political limitations that make full Jewish emancipation impossible.³¹⁰

Judith's death underscores the fact that, despite the social importance of marriage and Franzos's commitment to German culture, there is no satisfactory way of pairing her off. There is no successful trajectory between the bourgeois marriage plot, in which a heroine achieves social mobility through marriage, and the emancipation plot, which advocates social acceptance for Jews, because an unproblematic marriage between a Jew and a Christian is unthinkable. Austrian political culture and German society have not progressed to the point that Jews like Judith – or Franzos – can live as free and equal imperial citizens. If Judith's four 'dancing partners' – her father, her brother, Wladko, and Agenor – represent four different approaches to the "Jewish Question" in Galicia, then she herself stands for all four of the female dancers needed to complete the quadrille.

³⁰⁹ Anna-Dorothea Ludewig, "Fiktionale Authentizität und poetischer Realismus. Die literarische Annexion und Rezeption Galiziens am Beispiel der Ghettogesichten von Karl Emil Franzos und Leopold von Sacher-Masoch," in *Galizien im Diskurs: Inklusion, Exklusion, Repräsentation*, ed. Paul Giersch, Florian Krobb, and Franziska Schößler, Studien zu Fremdheit und Armut von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart 17 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), 150.

³¹⁰ See Kłańska, "Jedes Land hat die Juden, die es verdient," 40-41, 46; Krobb, "Auf Fluch und Lüge baut sich kein Glück auf," 199; Steiner, *Karl Emil Franzos*, 25-26.

This role gives her, despite her status as the title figure of the novel, a certain vagueness or lack of specificity that, moreover, invites the reader to consider how she embodies the circumstances of Jewish women in Galicia. Indeed, Franzos uses social dance to make a broader point about how Habsburg society has failed Jews in general, and Jewish women in particular. Franzos's depiction of Judith as typically feminine and as a stereotypical beautiful Jewess helps him fit her into the existing social system and available plot structures, revealing the flaws in how the system treats Jews. As the only prominent Jewish woman in the story, Judith represents an alluring and non-threatening cliché that Franzos exploits to convey his political message. Not only does Judith take the women's part in her dance with Wladko; when Franzos "leads" with his political agenda, Judith follows, until she commits a dramatic suicide at precisely the moment when it seemed as if her wishes had finally been fulfilled. Her strong will and pretty sentiment serve merely as ornamental expression to enhance the narrative that Franzos forcefully directs. Judith's role at the Wroblewski's ball and her "dancing" with other characters throughout the novel establishes her complicated, and ultimately tragic, social status as a Jewish woman.

David Biale notes that, "although romantic love played practically no role in the ethos of traditional Jewish life, the *Ghettogesichten* revel in stories of beautiful 'semitic' girls and their romantic problems."³¹¹ Writers such as Sacher-Masoch and Franzos interrogate the life choices available to women through their choice of partner, as a way of considering the place of Jews in German society and culture. In depicting the plight of the beautiful Jewess in Eastern Europe, writers step away from direct

³¹¹ Biale, "Masochism and Philosemitism," 306.

engagement larger questions about civic engagement or national participation (which were irrelevant for women in an era predating women's suffrage), and instead frame the "Jewish Question" with regards to the role of the domestic sphere, the sustainability of Jewish family structure, and rights and education for women. To a greater extent than in stories about male characters, who at least have educational opportunities, beautiful Jewish women face a hopeless situation. Although they fight against it through the only means available to them, a love affair with a man from outside the Jewish community, even this option is ultimately doomed. What makes a Jewish woman's situation particularly heartbreaking is the fact that her failure comes despite the fact that she is, by nature, a sympathetic character. Social accomplishments, cultured trappings, and dancing feet are insufficient to save the pretty Jewess from a tragic fate. She gives in to the magic of the dance floor, and succumbs to the strictures of social structures it encodes. Where the male protagonists of Chapters 2 and 4 test the boundaries of social hierarchies and physical prowess, the beautiful Jewess is caught – or frozen – in place, trapped in a formulaic plot sequence that nonetheless resembles the choreography she so deftly executes.

CHAPTER 4: UPENDING THE SHTETL

The American Yiddish writers I discuss in this chapter portray the choice of dance partners (and even the choice of whether or not to dance) as a choice between worlds. Where the writers in the previous chapters depict a conflict between a young woman's desire and her parents' marital plans, the authors I discuss in this chapter portray a more psychologically complex inner struggle: a robust young man must choose between an existing (often marital) relationship and a flirtation on the dance floor. In these texts, the anti-hero's dance partner represents a coarser way of life that he is attempting to leave behind. These works directly challenge traditional Jewish notions of masculine scholarly refinement through an alternative model of male physicality. As a result, social expectations and the nature of the protagonist's transgressions on the dance floor determine the success or failure of his attempt to become respectable: the greater the opposition between the protagonist and the traditional model, the more difficult it is for him to give up his dancing and change his ways.

Between 1881 and 1923, a massive wave of Eastern European Jews immigrated to America. The majority of the two million newcomers ended up in New York, where they made the city into a center of Yiddish culture. The *goldene medine* (Golden Land) opened up new opportunities for individual Jews. It also challenged traditional notions of Jewish communal life. Young people who followed economic opportunities now found themselves beyond the watchful eye of the family and communal structures that had governed life in European villages. They had the freedom (and the social pressure) to learn English, give up their religious practice, and to participate in leisure activities, including attending dance halls and *landsmanshaftn* (organizations for immigrants from the same community) balls.³¹² When it came to marriage, young people had the choice of partners from the Old Country or those they met in New York, often through work or leisure opportunities rather than a traditional set up. Indeed, these new opportunities and

³¹² For more about the uniqueness of dance halls as a working-class entertainment, with particular attention to the role of gender, see Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 88-114.

social pressures often deterred men from sending tickets for the women they left behind. In response, the *Forverts* ran a column shaming men who abandoned their wives.³¹³

New York, especially the immigrant enclave of the Lower East Side, was the site of a dynamic Yiddish intellectual life. Yiddish daily papers and literary journals published works by the sweatshop poets, *di yunge* (The Young Ones), and the *inzikhistn* (Introspectivists).³¹⁴ A lively Yiddish theater scene flourished on Second Avenue.³¹⁵ Novelists and short story writers depicted the experiences of their immigrant readers, and they also portrayed the communities they had left behind in Europe. When these authors turned to a new (dance) culture in America in their works of fiction, their characters, in Europe or America, experiment with a form of leisure culture that was explicitly forbidden in traditional communities. In this chapter, which focuses on how the American setting influenced depictions of the European past in literary fiction, dance figures as a sign of cultural transformation. Even when writers portray traditional European villages, they write with the knowledge of the American dance hall, a primary setting for the physicality and mixing of the sexes allowed in the New World. Yet while new immigrants considered dance hall culture to be symbolic of American opportunity, Yiddish writers remained skeptical about the encounter between Old World values and New World dancing, which is one reason why dancing captures the difficult position of men who do not fit the traditional scholarly mode.

³¹³ Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 179.

³¹⁴ See Benjamin and Barbara Harshav, *American Jewish Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 27-44; Ruth Wisse, *A Little Love in Big Manhattan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 1-13.

³¹⁵ See Nahma Sandrow, *Vagabond Stars: A World History of Yiddish Theater* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 251-302.

Male physicality was an important theme in Yiddish American literature and drama. Authors were inspired by the exuberance and newness of American life, as well as by currents of European politics and culture. In both cases, dance served an important but as yet unrecognized role in portraying shifting social norms. Commenting in 1927 on the emergence of the *molodyets* (fine youth, a Russian loan word) figure in Yiddish theater, A. Mukdoyni writes:

In the early days of Jewish operetta the dancing comedian was always a *shlimazl* with *payes* and a long *kapote*. Then a new type of Jewish lad appeared in the Russian-Jewish milieu. [...] An agile dancer, with a quick tongue, he will beat up anyone who insults him; he will fight for a girl, for the revolution, for a comrade. He is not comical. He is not a *yold* [fool] like the bourgeois sons and daughters. He is full of joy.³¹⁶

Mukdoyni's description of the *molodyets*, a figure shaped by radical politics and Russian culture, explicitly contrasts traditional Jewish male physicality with a robust masculinity more in keeping with non-Jewish, nationalistic models. The *molodyets*, like the Zionist "New Jew," a type that was also in play during the fin-de-siècle, is a nimble dancer who is comfortable with his body and sexuality.³¹⁷ He marks an explicit break with the comically pathetic Jewish dancer in his traditional garb, a figure of *maskilic* fiction. Yiddish authors, in America and in European cities, incorporated Jewish dancer types akin to the Yiddish theater characters and Zionists.

The three texts I discuss in depth in this chapter are concerned with movement between different social realms: the public and private spheres; home, workplace and

³¹⁶ See J. Hoberman, *Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film Between Two Worlds* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1991), 266. Hoberman specifically identifies Dovid Pinski's character Yankl the blacksmith with the *molodyets* type. He quotes Mukdoyni's *Teyater* as found in Irving Howe and Kenneth Bibo, *How We Lived: A Documentary History of Immigrant Jews in America, 1880-1930* (New York: Marek, 1979), 261-62. On p. 262 in the Howe and Bibo volume, Mukdoyni notes that in peacetime "[the *molodyets*] sang and danced and laughed."

³¹⁷ For dancing in Zionist ideology, see chapters 3 and 4 of Spiegel, *Embodying Hebrew Culture*.

leisure activities; Europe and the United States. Different from the previous two chapters, which focus on anxiety about Jewish masculinity and the precarious position of Jewish women respectively (in the German literary context), this chapter concerns male antiheroes who are caught between two different social realms, and the very different women they encounter in these divergent spaces. Written by three Yiddish writers who themselves were born in traditional European Jewish communities but made their literary mark in New York, the three literary works depict characters who must choose their allegiance to one of two vastly different ways of life. Jake, in Abraham Cahan's *Yekl* (1896), must choose between flirtations at the dance academy and his responsibilities to his wife and son. Yankl, in Dovid Pinski's *Yankl der shmied* (Yankl the Blacksmith, 1906) must prove that he has left his wild youth behind him when he married a woman from a rabbinic family. The horse thief Zanol in Yosef Opatoshu's *Roman fun a ferd-ganef* (Romance of a Horse Thief, 1912) carries on his secret romance with a respectable young woman at the same time that he participates in the Underworld. Each character is caught between the appeal of a respectable or traditional life and the temptation of a social milieu that offers him greater freedom and more care-free mixing of the sexes. Yiddish writers employ the motif of mixed-sex dancing to differentiate between accepted and taboo behaviors in different contexts, dramatically reveal the tension between socially sanctioned and forbidden activities, and determine the ultimate resolution to this conflict. In pursuing these narrative possibilities of the dance motif, writers underscore the crucial importance of dancing in embodying a new model of Jewish masculinity.

The three Yiddish literary works discussed here were published over a sixteen-year span. The two novellas and one play exist both as literary texts and as film

adaptations, which speaks to the continued relevance of the antihero figures for American audiences. The central psychological conflict in each text concerns whether or not the protagonist has the moral resolve to leave his dubious connections and dancing women behind for domesticity with a woman who follows a more conventionally proper lifestyle. During the course of the text, each man moves between spaces that are sites of domestic, professional, and leisure pursuits with a greater ease than the female characters (who are limited to just one or two of these realms). Nonetheless, each author questions throughout the work how free these characters are, confronted by their many temptations, and, more significantly, how much they actually move. As will be seen, the movements of these male protagonists between spheres are frequently limited by their base desires and economic necessity, and the dances they perform are physically constrained by their own physical and cultural limits. Ironically, it is precisely the characters who are most agile on the dance floor and at moving between spaces who have the greatest difficulty in transforming their social role, since physical fitness challenges inner compatibility with traditional Jewish values.

Typically described respectively as a (social) realist, a psychological playwright with proletarian sympathies, and a naturalist, Cahan, Pinski, and Opatoshu injected ideas of physicality, passion, and eroticism into their work, expanding the boundaries of desire in Yiddish literature. All three repeatedly and productively employed the dance motif in their work, a fact which has gone largely unnoticed in the current scholarship. My analysis of dance scenes in the three primary texts considers the way that authors were influenced by Old World social dance and social conventions, at the same time that their work is colored by “dance madness” in immigrant dance halls. Dance is a key component

of how these writers express transgression, sensuality, and desire for improper relations. While other scholars emphasize language politics, desire, and criminality in their assessments of Cahan, Pinski, and Opatoshu respectively, I explain the importance of dance in their literature and literary aesthetics. Dance is a crucial element in determining plot outcomes and analyzing the role of space in these literary works. By using mixed-sex dancing to convey how their antiheroes challenged Jewish social norms, Cahan, Pinski, and Opatoshu convey the complexity of modern Jewish identity in a way that spoke to the lived experiences of their immigrant audiences.

Abraham Cahan

Born in Podberezye (today Paberžė) near Vilna and raised mostly in Vilna, Cahan (1860-1951) left his traditionally religious upbringing behind to become a teacher in Russian-language government schools. He immigrated to the United States in 1882, fleeing persecution for his political radicalism, and became one of the most influential proponents of Americanization among the great wave of Yiddish-speaking immigrants to the United States.³¹⁸ Cahan is famous both for his regional fiction in English, which described the language and daily reality of Jewish immigrants, and for editing the influential *Forverts* newspaper for nearly half a century. In his prolific journalism and social realist fiction, Cahan articulated American values, masculine identity, and shifting cultural norms. As will be seen with Opatoshu and Pinski, Cahan did not shy away from depicting physicality or sexuality,³¹⁹ and his interest in such topics has much to do with

³¹⁸ Clay Motley, “‘Dot’sh a’Kin’ a man I am!’: Abraham Cahan, Masculinity, and Jewish Assimilation in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Studies in American Jewish Literature* (1981–) 30 (2011): 4.

³¹⁹ Jules Chametzky, *From the Ghetto: The Fiction of Abraham Cahan* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1977), 34.

his American environment, even at the same time that English-language American literature faced more censorship than Yiddish literature.³²⁰ Cahan associated these transformations of culture, sexual mores, and partner choices with dance.

Cahan frequently wrote about music and dance. This section will demonstrate how Cahan used dance as a sexualized symbol of social change throughout his oeuvre, before we proceed to a more detailed examination of dance in *Yekl* in the following section.

Cahan's memoirs, feuilletons, and social realist fiction all contain detailed portraits of everyday life, including moments of levity, sensuality, artistic expression, and dance.

Dance frequently shows changing cultural norms and the presence of flirtation, romantic love, and a type of physicality that was not the norm among traditionally religious Jews in Europe. In his five-volume memoir, *Bleter fun mayn lebn* (Pages From My Life),

Cahan contrasts the ritual dance practiced by his pious father (a rare Lithuanian proponent of Chassidim) and the flirtatious partner dances of his own politically radical circle in Vilna. He notes how, "tsuzamen mit gaystige benkshaft iz oykh geven a benkshaft nokh libe un nokh geshlekhts-interesen fun nisht keyn romantishn sort" (our spiritual longing was accompanied by a longing for love and also a sexual interest of a non-romantic kind).³²¹ Cahan and his like-minded friends would dance with women on

³²⁰ Josh Lambert notes how Aviva Taubenfeld has shown that Cahan's *Yankl der yankee* contained English swearwords "hell" and "damn" that did not appear in the English-language version, *Yekl*, and would have been considered more inappropriate to an English public. "This move demonstrates Cahan's canniness about his audiences; he, or his editors, knew what to expect in these linguistic markets." See Josh Lambert, *Unclean Lips: Obscenity, Jews, and American Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 150. See also Aviva Taubenfeld, "'Only an 'L': Linguistic Borders and the Immigrant Author in Abraham Cahan's *Yekl* and *Yankel der Yankee*", in *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 157-58.

³²¹ Cahan, *Bleter*, 252-53. For an English translation of the entire section, which omits some of the specifics about the dancing, see Abraham Cahan, *The Education of Abraham Cahan*, trans. Leon Stein, Abraham P. Conan, and Lynn Davison (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), 100.

Saturday afternoons, in the same alley where they discussed intellectual ideas. Two young tailors came with their fiancées and other young women: “zeyer hoypt-tsvik iz geven tantsn. un mir flegn ale ontaylnemen. dortn hot men mir oysgelernt a kadril un a lansie. keyn klezmer zaynen nit geven. men flegt aleyn tantsn un aleyn zingn dem nign.”³²² (Their main purpose was dancing. We used to all take part. There I was taught to do a quadrille and Les Lanciers. There were no musicians. We would dance on our own and sing the melody for ourselves.) Dance was the physical embodiment of Cahan’s radical program of education, a sign of Jewish modernization and the political ideas that led him to flee to America.

As we saw in the discussion of Leopold Kompert’s *Die Jahrzeit* in Chapter 2, Cahan suggests that the pairings on the dance floor led to couplings of a more intimate nature. He distinguishes concretely between the romantic love that is appropriate for more respectable women and the sexual interest with which the young men regarded other women. With regards to the tailors’ sweethearts and their friends, the Jewish radicals practiced the social pleasantries of European courtship: “zaynen di farheltnisn tsvishn di tsvey geshlekhter geven hekst onshtendik.”³²³ (The relations between the two sexes were most respectable.) Sometimes, but not often, other young women would join in the dancing. Although these women were still respectable – prostitutes (“gasn-meydlekh”) would not have been allowed to participate – they did not have male protectors and were thus fair game for “lustige shtundn fun a sort, vegn velkhn men ken nisht shraybn.”³²⁴ (lusty hours of the sort one does not write about.) It is no surprise that

³²² Cahan, *Bleter*, 252-253.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid.

Cahan draws a connection between dancing ability and the creation and destruction of romantic relationships in his fiction, since: “do bin ikh mit azelkhe erfahrungen bekant gevorn tsum ershtn mol.”³²⁵ (It was there that I encountered such experiences for the first time.)

Where Cahan began dancing in Europe, his fictional characters tend to learn to dance in America. As a result, they experience dancing as a clash between European (village) and American (metropolitan) values, rather than Cahan’s own shift between traditional religiosity and political radicalism in Vilna. In his semi-autobiographical English-language novel *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), Cahan uses dance to convey an American sexual ethos that marks a sharp departure from European Jewish sensibilities. In David’s hometown of Antomir, “Dancing with a girl, or even taking one out for a walk, was out of the question.”³²⁶ David characterizes Jewish modernization through mixed-sociability, exemplified by “young mechanics of a coarser type” who attended the two local dancing schools and the young Russian-speaking Jews who lived “‘like Gentiles,’ who called the girls of their acquaintance ‘young ladies,’ took their hats off to them, took them out for a walk in the public park, and danced with them, just like the nobles or army officers of my birthplace.”³²⁷ In a traditional European Jewish community in which a Torah scholar was the paragon of masculinity, physical prowess on the dance floor and chivalry did not represent refinement, but instead the debauched

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Abraham Cahan, *The Rise of David Levinsky* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), 42. While these statements might appear exaggerated, given the widespread practice of promenading on Shabes in works such as Pinski’s *Yankl der Shmid*, Wilma Iggers notes that even Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch was chastised for walking arm in arm with his wife in the Moravian city of Nikolsburg in the mid-nineteenth century. Wilma Iggers, “Die jüdische Frau in Böhmen und Mähren und ihr Verhältnis zur Religion,” in *Die Religion der Geschlechter: Historische Aspekte religiöser Mentalitäten*. ed. Edith Saurer (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1995), 261.

³²⁷ Cahan, *David Levinsky*, 42.

behavior of menial laborers and gentiles. The people who engage in this daring modern behavior have also left their Jewish language, Yiddish, behind and now speak Russian and dress in European style. Although David follows a traditional Jewish lifestyle in Europe, he embraces the English language and American culture in America.

Surprisingly, David never learns to dance, even though this cultural practice is practically obligatory in his new social milieu. Throughout the novel, his inability to dance reminds the reader of his lack of romantic success, and, according to my reading, even contributes to his failure in matters of the heart.

In Cahan's novel, the mark of becoming American is, in fact, learning to brazenly flirt with women. David's friend Max Margolis, a peddler who frequents the dance halls, encourages the young "greenhorn" to learn this skill by commenting, "A fellow like you ought to make a hit with women. Why don't you learn to dance?"³²⁸ David finds the nonchalant sexuality in the dance halls shocking, "Here were highly respectable young women who would let men encircle their waists, each resting her arm on her partner's shoulder, and then go spinning and hopping with him, with a frank relish of the physical excitement in which they were joined."³²⁹ David is fascinated by the sexual pleasure women display on the dance floor, a pleasure he is ultimately unwilling to give them because he never takes dancing lessons. Yet his unwillingness to dance does not diminish his attraction to dancing women: "for the moment I was in love with her. As this young woman went round and round her face bore a faint smile of embarrassed satisfaction. I knew that it was a sex smile. Another woman dance with grave mien, and I knew that it

³²⁸ Ibid., 116.

³²⁹ Ibid., 140.

was the gravity of sex.³³⁰ David is highly attuned to the sensual promise of the dancing and the connection between activities on the dance floor and those performed in the bedroom. As he admits: “To watch the dancing couples became a passion with me.”³³¹ Nonetheless, even in this ostensibly permissive atmosphere, codes of propriety remain. Upwardly-mobile American society was governed, not by respect for the study of religious law, but instead by economic prosperity and material success. David is soon kicked out of the dance hall on account of his ragged clothing and sloppy appearance.

Throughout Cahan’s work, dancing is a sign of Americanization and of shocking new forms of familiarity between the sexes. It can be a gateway to sexual intimacy, a symptom of changing linguistic and religious practice, and a preferred leisure activity. Dance lessons, like courtship, are furthermore inseparable from notions of commerce and class. As we will see in the next section, in my discussion of *Yekl*, working-class dancers operate within their own notions of refinement and respectability, which allude to but cannot replicate the behaviors American gentility. Dance is an organizing principle in *Yekl* that emphasizes physicality and circularity. Cahan depicts tensions between memories of Europe, the reality of sweatshop labor, and aspirations towards American social mobility, and inscribes these forces onto the bodies of his Jewish dancers.

“A valtz from the land of valtzes!”: *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto*

Early on in *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto*, the protagonist Jake faces a dilemma. His coworker Fanny (one of his many female admirers) spots him at a dancing school, even though he previously told her that he was going straight home after work. As

³³⁰ Ibid., 140.

³³¹ Ibid.

at many points throughout the novella, Jake is unable to express his inner conflict through words. Unbeknownst to Fanny, he is in fact a married man who should be saving money for his wife's ship passage to America instead of spending his wages at the dancing school. Jake temporarily resolves his predicament through a show of masculine vigor that displays brute force more than it does gallantry: Jake abandons his dance partner Mamie, pulls Fanny from her chair, declares "*lesh have a valtz from the land of valtzes!*," and proceeds to spin his new partner around until she stops protesting and melts into his arms in grateful bliss.³³² As noted in the chapter on ballroom deportment in the Yiddish-language etiquette guide *Etikete: a veg vayzer fun laytische oyfirung, heflikhkayt un sheyne manieren far mener un froyen* (Etiquette: A Guide for Proper Conduct, Courtesy, and Manners for Men and Women), Jake's decision to change dancing partners in the middle of a song is a serious breach of ballroom etiquette; his behavior is just as unrefined as his Yiddish-inflected speech.³³³ Jake's multilingual exclamation reflects the cultural, linguistic, and emotional complexity of the novella as a whole, and moreover conveys the crucial significance of dance for the text's themes and narrative arc. Both thematically and structurally, Jake experiences America as "the land of *valtz*es."

Most *Yekl* scholarship focuses on Jake's performance of masculinity,³³⁴ his grotesquely incomplete process of Americanization,³³⁵ or Cahan's use of Yiddish-inflected English.³³⁶ Cahan's portrayal of the dance floor contributes to all of these

³³² Abraham Cahan, *Yekl and the Imported Bridegroom: and other stories of the New York Ghetto* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1970), 22.

³³³ Tashrak, *Etikete: a veg vayzer fun laytische oyfirung, heflikhkayt un sheyne manieren far mener un froyen* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1912), 91.

³³⁴ See Merle L. Bachman, "A Real 'Yankee': *Yekl* as a Yiddish Burlesque," in *Recovering "Yiddishland": Threshold Moments in American Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 43-79.

³³⁵ See Motley, "'Dot'sh a'Kin' a man I am!," 3-15.

³³⁶ See Taubenfeld, "Only an 'L'," 144-65.

factors. As Merle L. Bachman observes, in one of the few analyses of *Yekl* that addresses the dance motif, the “dance hall is a testing ground for American culture. It is a place where, even in a strictly Jewish context (for apparently there are no gentiles there) a sort of ‘mixing’ takes place, of men and women (very much against Jewish tradition) and of languages (Yiddish, English, and dialects of both).”³³⁷

Dance typifies the conflict between European and American value systems in *Yekl*, particularly as relates to family and marital bonds. Before delving into a close reading of specific scenes, I will give four brief examples of the ways Cahan integrates the dance motif into his fictional account of a major culture clash. First of all, Jake’s fondness for dancing prevents him from saving money to send steamship tickets to his family in Povodye. Instead, he spends his money at Joe’s dance school. In order to raise the necessary funds, he borrows \$25 from Mamie, who assumes he intends to turn their interactions on the dance floor into an actual courtship. Secondly, Jake’s participation in the dance hall culture socializes him as an American man and creates a greater cultural divide between himself and Gitl, the wife he left behind. When she finally arrives in America with their son, Gitl is conscious of looking and acting very differently from the women who frequent the dance halls. When her rival Mamie makes a social call dressed in intimidating finery, Jake tells his wife that their caller must be on her way to a ball, a term that Gitl barely recognizes but associates with the Russian aristocracy.³³⁸ Furthermore, Jake participates in the dance halls in a way that suggests he is, in fact, a bachelor. He dances, flirts with other women, and “treats” young women to soda, without breathing a word of the fact he is married (until his wife actually arrives). Finally, Jake

³³⁷ Bachman, “A Real ‘Yankee’,” 64.

³³⁸ Cahan, *Yekl*, 52.

and Mamie plan to open a dance school of their own after Mamie pays for Jake's divorce and they get married. The activity that brought them together will be their livelihood as husband and wife. In short, dance pushes along the plot arc and forces Jake and Gitl apart.

Yekl established Cahan's literary fame in English and won him recognition as an American social realist.³³⁹ As the novella's full title suggests, Cahan's contemporaries considered the novella to be an example of ghetto fiction, even though it was set in New York.³⁴⁰ Yet compared to German readers, American audiences were less interested in the daily life of assimilating or acculturating Jews, perhaps because they considered New York's East Side too familiar, rather than quaint or exotic. Even with the support of eminent American realist writer William Dean Howells, it was a challenge for Cahan to find a publisher. Editors were not convinced that a novella describing poor Jews and a dancing school fulfilled their artistic vision.³⁴¹ While waiting to find an English-language publisher, Cahan serialized his immigrant tale as *Yankl der yanki* (Yankl the Yankee) in Yiddish from October 18, 1895 to January 31, 1896 in *Arbeter tsaytung* (Worker's Newspaper) with the title *Yankl der yanki* (Yankl the Yankee), which Howells had initially rejected as sounding too vaudevillean.³⁴² Later in 1896, D. Appleton and

³³⁹ Dexter Marshall, "The Life of A. Cahan, Novelist: How a Russian-Hebrew Nihilist Came to Write of New York's Cosmopolitan East Side," *Boston Sunday Post* (Sept. 27, 1896), reprinted in Kirk and Kirk, "Abraham Cahan and William Dean Howells," 44.

³⁴⁰ In his 1969 introduction to *Yekl*, Bernard G. Richards claims that *Yekl* turns Cahan into a "Ghetto storyteller" and compares him to Leopold Kompert. See: Richards, "Introduction," VI. For more about the ghetto moniker, see: Taubenfeld, "Only an 'L,'" 147.

³⁴¹ According to John S. Phillips, Associate Editor of *McClure's*: "'Art should concern itself with beautiful things. A dancing school on the poor East Side, ignorant people, a man who isn't true to his wife. What do these have to do with Art?'" Quoted from *ibid*. It is worth noting that in 1913 *McClure's* serialized Cahan's early version of *The Rise of David Levinsky*, a novel full of unrefined topics, including dance halls.

³⁴² Taubenfeld wonders if it may have also been too close to the word "Yankee" for the comfort of American readers such as Howells, and notes that "Yekl" is not actually a Yiddish name. See Taubenfeld, "Only an 'L,'" 161. Taubenfeld seems not to be aware of Yekl, the nickname of the (antihero) protagonist of Sholem Asch's 1907 play *Got fun nekome* (God of Vengeance).

Company agreed to publish the English novella, and Howells wrote a favorable review of *Yekl* in *The World*.³⁴³ In stark contrast to the notion that an immigrant dancing school could not be properly artistic, Howells cites the episode in the dancing academy in his list of scenes that prove the excellence of Cahan's prose and the promise of his future work.³⁴⁴ Although *Yekl* was not a commercial success, the novella became a classic of American immigrant fiction.³⁴⁵ In 1975, it was adapted into the feature film *Hester Street*, which begins with the scene in Joe's dancing academy.³⁴⁶

In his novella, Cahan describes the dancing academy as a boisterous, cramped, even grotesque site of spectacle. Dancers try to replace their European reserve with refined American manners, yet ultimately reveal their own working class reality. Dancers do not appear to be individuals, but rather a "waltzing swarm," as if they were buzzing insects rather than actual human beings.³⁴⁷ Dancers, including Jake, view the dancing academy as a site of escape, yet Cahan shows that it has permeable boundaries with the "New York Ghetto." Music spills out into the street, where children dance and young women on the street longingly watch "young women like themselves" inside the dancing school.³⁴⁸ There is no true barrier between the dance hall and the crush of humanity on the street. Even waltzing is insufficient to truly elevate the working-class immigrants to the status of genteel Americans.

³⁴³ Rudolf Kirk and Clara M. Kirk, "Abraham Cahan and William Dean Howells: The Story of a Friendship," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 52 (September, 1962): 37.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁵ Seth Lipsky, *The Rise of Abraham Cahan* (New York: Schocken, 2013), 69.

³⁴⁶ For more about the film, see Patricia Erens, *The Jew in American Cinema* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1984), 325-327.

³⁴⁷ Cahan, *Yekl*, 63.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

Cahan portrays dance as a working class entertainment that aspires to, but cannot fully represent, the refinement of an American ballroom. Dancers at Joe's dancing academy deport themselves in a manner that lacks genteel expression and posture. They still wear their work clothes and many of the couples "had the air of being engaged in hard toil rather than as if they were dancing for amusement."³⁴⁹ Dancers do not obey the conventions of formal ballroom etiquette: they do not pay heed to any possible unintended messages that could be sent by dancing with a partner several times in a row and feel free to ignore both the music and the dance master if they would prefer to dance a waltz instead of a Lancers. This lack of concern for general dance floor decorum is magnified by a disregard for traditional sexual mores.

Jake regards dancing as a form of currency, which he uses to keep both Mamie and a wealthy but shy businessman "satetzfiel."³⁵⁰ Jake barter his and Mamie's physical services on the dance floor in exchange for favors. In the context of Jake's emphasis on physical satisfaction on the dance floor, this trade resembles a form of prostitution. In contrast to proper ballroom etiquette, which requires a gentleman to ask a lady for a dance, Jake asks Mamie to invite the businessman to dance, which comes very close to asking her to proposition a potential dancing school patron. Although Cahan does not suggest that Mamie performs sexual favors as part of the exchange, Jake acts as her "pimp" for the potential financial benefit of Joe's dancing school. As Kathy Peiss notes, moralists associated dance halls with vice and prostitution.³⁵¹ Indeed, Mamie has no problem asking a man to reward her for services rendered on the dance floor, since she

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 15-16.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 18.

³⁵¹ Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 98.

pesters Jake to “treat” her to soda after she dances with him. Peiss notes that treating could involve an implied exchange of monetary expenditures for sexual services, indeed: “Engaging in treating ultimately involved a negotiation between the desire for social participation and adherence to cultural sanctions that strongly discouraged premarital sexual intimacy.”³⁵² Cahan does not indicate the extent to which “treating” implies other flirtatious or sexual behavior, although Jake himself judges some of the dancing-school girls have questionable morals: “it was from his own sinful experience that he knew them to be of a rather loose character.”³⁵³ Even more explicitly, when Jake asks Mamie to dance with the “ungainly novice,” she negotiates a fee in advance for her services on the dance floor.³⁵⁴ After crassly, or flirtatiously, haggling over their favors, Jake and Mamie come to an agreement. The price of her acquiescence to dancing with the businessman is a couple of waltzes with Jake.

Jake claims that he likes women “wholesale” instead of favoring any particular lady. Yet in his eagerness to show the dancing-school girls a “sholid good time” without becoming emotionally invested in any of them, Jake acts the part of a “lounge lizard” or gigolo.³⁵⁵ His waltz with Mamie is full of sexual energy and female pleasure:

They spun along with all-forgetful gusto; every little while he lifted her on his powerful arm and gave her a “mill,” he yelping and she squeaking for sheer ecstasy, as he did so; and throughout the performance his face and his whole figure seemed to be exclaiming, “Dot'sh a kin' a man *I* am!”³⁵⁶

Jake boisterously leads Mamie in an exuberant waltz that abandons all pretensions of physical elegance or refined expression. The choreography suggests the spieling or

³⁵² Ibid., 109.

³⁵³ Cahan, *Yekl*, 32.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 20.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

pivoting dance, a parody form of the waltz, which Peiss describes as: “a dance out of control, its centrifugal tendencies unchecked by proper dance training or internalized restraint. Instead, the wild spinning of couples promoted a charged atmosphere of physical excitement, often accompanied by shouting and spinning.”³⁵⁷ Jake spins and lifts Mamie, exhibiting muscular power rather than grace or nimbleness. Both dancers make undignified sounds, out of physical exertion and pleasure, in an example of how Cahan connects dancing with sexual intercourse. Jake proudly displays his skill and ability to please women on the dance floor, which are vital to his sense of masculine identity, yet even these accomplishments fall short of his goal of truly acting like an American.³⁵⁸ Bachman describes dance in *Yekl* as: “a burlesque of the genteel qualities associated with waltzing and the kind of civil restraint that middle- and upper-class America would expect from people claiming to be ‘real Americans.’”³⁵⁹ Indeed, the message Jake conveys with his body language, “Dot’sh a kin’ a man *I* am!,” is a mangled version of standard English speech.

Jake associates dancing with freedom. It is arguably the clearest embodiment of American opportunity in the novella, and certainly Jake’s greatest source of pleasure in his otherwise austere working-class life. Although Cahan does not draw an explicit connection between the dancing academy and liberation from traditional Jewish restrictions on interactions between the sexes, he fully articulates the freedom of unmarried people to dance and flirt to their hearts’ content. At Joe’s dance academy, Jake

³⁵⁷ Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 101.

³⁵⁸ Jake defines his masculine self-image by, to a greater extent than his male colleagues, relying upon physical performance and almost theatrical displays of crudely American behavior. See: Motley, “‘Dot’sh a’Kin’ a man I am!’,” 8.

³⁵⁹ Bachman, “A Real ‘Yankee’,” 66.

experiences easy mixed-sex physicality of a kind that was impossible during his bachelor days in Europe. When Jake gives up dancing after Gitl's arrival in America, he finds he misses the dancing-school girls "whose society and attentions now more than ever seemed to him necessities of his life."³⁶⁰ While once Jake was nostalgic for the wife he left behind in Europe, now he is tormented by the thought that the other dancers are laughing at him and deem him less of an American because he stays home.

As this moment suggests, Jake is more motivated by a desire to insert himself in American physical culture than he is interested in cheating on his wife. Yet Jake's ostensibly innocent dancing is nonetheless morally fraught, since in the heterosexual space of the dancing academy it is assumed that dancers participate in a courtship ritual. Although Jake attempts to mitigate this perception by claiming he is not interested in any one girl in particular, both Fanny and Mamie assume that he pays them special attention, and Jake lies to them by omission. That is to say, Fanny wrongly believes that the ecstasy Jake insists on giving her in his arms on the dance floor will be followed by more private and intimate attentions as a suitor and potential marriage partner. In his eagerness to position himself as an American, and through his susceptibility to the temptations of the dance floor, Jake takes a cavalier attitude towards the romantic expectations of his dance partners.

For Jake, the dance floor represents a temporary escape from the burdens of his family responsibilities. It is an illicit pleasure, since as a married man he ought to focus first and foremost on bringing his family to America and providing for them financially. Jake thus often feels guilty about his participation in dancing. He watches single men

³⁶⁰ Cahan, *Yekl*, 44.

with envy and observes bitterly: “Such shnoozes, they can hardly set a foot well, and yet they are free, while I am a married man.”³⁶¹ Jake has mastered the immigrant style of dancing, yet he cannot engage in his favorite leisure pursuit without betraying his wife.

Jake’s understandable feelings of frustration, and even resentment, prevent him from recognizing the even more socially circumscribed lives of those around him, especially the wife he left behind in Europe. Gitl is completely dependent on Jake for her livelihood and her ship’s passage, and she is furthermore responsible for the care of their young son and, presumably, her dying father-in-law. Even in America, she exists exclusively within the domestic sphere. While Jake, Fanny, and Mamie move between the workplace, dancing-school, and their places of residence, Cahan confines Gitl to her tenement building in every scene taking place between her arrival at Ellis Island and her divorce from Jake. Her circumscribed domestic existence amplifies the way in which she is caught in a marriage with a man who no longer shares her values, especially since she *keeps* a traditional value system at the same time that he *moves* rapidly towards assimilation. In their attitudes towards tradition and the ways in which they spend their days, Cahan identifies Gitl with stasis and Jake with motion. Yet in the final chapter, Cahan reveals how Jake’s attempt to make a new start is actually a circular path. In contrast, Gitl’s second marriage promises a fresh start after Jake’s mistreatment.

Jake alternately despises Gitl for lacking the sophistication of the dancing-school girls and idealizes her purity in contrast to the women with whom he flirts, since she will not be distracted from her household duties by balls. When Gitl attempts to revive his affections by discarding her wig in imitation of Mamie’s uncovered hair, Jake cannot

³⁶¹ Ibid., 16.

process this challenge to his binary view of women, and he responds with verbal abuse. Throughout the novella, Jake proves that he is unable to empathize with the emotional needs of the women around him. While he prides himself on physically satisfying women on the dance floor, he only offers fleeting pleasure without emotional attachment and does not award even this consideration to his wife. Jake's insecurities about his American identity and his inability to consider Gitl's emotional needs lead to the breakdown of their marriage.

When Jake eventually decides to divorce Gitl and begin an American-style romance with Mamie, their relationship talk combines Old World economic considerations with ideas of romance that they learned at the dancing school. Jake finally decides to marry Mamie, rather than another dancing-school girl, because her savings, a sizeable "dowry" of \$340, will allow him to divorce his old-fashioned wife and start a new life, unencumbered by an embarrassing "greenhorn." In exchange, Mamie demands that Jake charm her with his sweet words and gallant behavior, practices which he has honed on the dance floor. Jules Chametzky observes that, "the characters attempt to handle unfamiliar emotions with their broken English and seem only touching and a little absurd. The old language did not deal with such concepts as 'love' while the new one is grasped only in clichés; the result is a sense of their acting out forces they cannot comprehend."³⁶² This rather formulaic romantic dialogue can in fact be understood as a continuation of the outlandish dance floor choreography.

Both characters play with the formulas and choreography of polite American behavior, skills of which they are very proud, even though they are unable to perfectly

³⁶² Jules Chametzky, "Regional Literature and Ethnic Realities," *The Antioch Review* 31, no. 3 (Autumn 1971): 392.

execute the forms. In fact, Cahan incorporates references to dance throughout the scene, tying together the threads of romance and dance at several auspicious moments. At the very beginning of the scene, Mamie rehearses a waltz step at the moment Jake arrives. Although Cahan does not directly state it, Mamie's actions both remind the reader of an activity she shared with Jake and, since she is an individual performing one half of a partner dance, underscores her present availability as a single person. When Jake starts to tell her of his feelings for her, she claims he did not care for her before Gitl arrived, "laboring to disguise the exultation which made her heart dance."³⁶³ Mamie's ordinary behaviors are inseparable from her fondness for dancing, reminding the reader of her ability to charm Jake and the gulf that separates her from Gitl.

Jake and Mamie discuss marriage and opening a dancing school together, yet they suspect each others' motivations. Even in this supposedly romantic moment, Jake and Mamie dance around each other, without truly establishing a harmonious partnership. Yet they do agree to the match, and Jake begins "dancing" with his new partner. His metaphorical waltz with Gitl ends, and now Mamie takes the lead. As Cahan's narrative reveals, the kind of man who will discard a partner in the middle of a dance is the sort of man who will divorce his first wife and remarry a woman he meets in a dance hall. In the novella's circular conclusion, Jake's second marriage leaves him feeling just as trapped as before, only now dance is no longer an escape from the realities of marital life. Where Jake loses the illicit pleasure of the dance floor, Gitl's neighbor Mrs. Kavarsky implies Gitl should "dance for joy" to be rid of her good-for-nothing husband.³⁶⁴

³⁶³ Cahan, *Yekl*, 76.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 88.

In *Yekl*, dance is an important component of the social life and Americanization process for Eastern European Jewish immigrants, as well as a useful metaphor for the circular plot arc and the relationships between the characters. Like dancers switching partners before the next dance set, life in the New World demands a new life partner. Both Jake and Gitl realize that their shared history cannot overcome the incompatibility of their values and life goals in America, and thus they divorce and take on new partners. Jake is caught in a circular system with the women he encounters, ending his marital “dance” with his first wife Gitl only to begin a new number with his new wife Mamie. Yet unfortunately for Jake, he has little of Cahan’s sympathy — he may be an excellent dancer, but as a husband he is certainly lacking. Mamie may find bliss in his arms on the dance floor, however a harmonious marriage is another proposition entirely. While Mamie and Jake’s striving for American identity appears to be a recipe for marital dissatisfaction, Gitl’s European values sets her up for a happy second marriage. In *Yekl*, Cahan questions the success of a relationship begun on the dance floor at the same time that he artfully uses dance as an organizing narrative structure in his novella.

As will be seen in the following section, where Cahan explores how the social circumstances of Americanization determine desire, Pinski examines the psychology of passion.

Dovid Pinski

Pioneering playwright, writer, and journal editor Dovid Pinski bridges the German and Yiddish components of my dissertation corpus more clearly than any single other author I discuss. Born in Mohilev, Russia (now Belarus), as a young man Pinski

lived in Vienna (where he initially planned to study medicine) and Berlin (where he actually studied in the university), and married his wife in Geneva, Switzerland.³⁶⁵ It is clear that Pinski combined his dedication to Yiddish literature with a passion for German culture. After immigrating to New York in 1899, Pinski studied for a doctorate in German literature at Columbia University. Although he did not complete the degree,³⁶⁶ Pinski maintained ties to Germany: his work was performed in German by Max Reinhardt's theater in Berlin and his papers contain correspondence in German, including with his German translator, Rosa Nossig³⁶⁷ and with Reinhardt.³⁶⁸ Not surprisingly for an author who once lived in fin-de-siècle Vienna, Pinski's work explores the psychological motivations of his characters. Although all three writers I discuss in this chapter were concerned with sexual themes and corporeality, Pinski's studies of passion and transgression diverge from Cahan's sexually-charged realism. Not surprisingly, Pinski uses dance to embody the conflicted desires of his characters, at the same time that he is generally less precise than Cahan when it comes to describing the actual physical movements of the dancers.

Pinski's characters struggle with desire. One of his story collections was even translated into English with the titillating title *Temptations*.³⁶⁹ In a biographical entry, Ben Furnish claims that, "in 1906 [Pinski] introduced what was for its time a frank

³⁶⁵ The Pinskis' marriage certificate from 1897 is located in the Dovid Pinski Collection at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. See Papers of David Pinsky (1872-1959) RG 204, Folder 1.

³⁶⁶ Ben Furnish, "David Pinski (Dovid Pinski) (15 April 1872 - 11 August 1959)", in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 333: Writers in Yiddish, ed. Joseph Sherman (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2007), 244.

³⁶⁷ Papers of David Pinsky (1872-1959) RG 204, Folder 1155. This folder includes a five-year contract with Nossig from 1926.

³⁶⁸ Papers of David Pinsky (1872-1959) RG 204, Folder 1199, undated radiogram with greetings in German.

³⁶⁹ David Pinski, *Temptations: A Book of Short Stories*, trans. Isaac Goldberg (New York: Brentano's, 1919).

depiction of illicit passion in his play *Yankl der shmīd* (published 1910, Yankl the Blacksmith) [...].”³⁷⁰ In works such as *Yankl der shmīd*, Pinski uses dance to physically manifest the psychological desires and conflicts of his characters. Indeed, the dance scenes I have found in his dramatic and prose works crystallize several of the elements that characterize dance in *Yankl der shmīd*. As I will show in this section, in order to contextualize my closer examination of *Yankl der shmīd* in the following section, Pinski’s dance scenes reveal conflicted (male) desire, express a clash between the arts in a way that heightens the dangerous libidinal qualities of dance, and portray the role of dance in traditional Jewish life.

In his psychological works, Pinski uses dance to embody desire. This desire is typically male, since these works primarily delve into the psychological conflicts of male protagonists. Pinski’s female characters usually take a more limited role as the interlocutors of male desire, whose dancing helps unleash a physical outpouring of psychological tumult. These women’s emotional register tends to be much more circumscribed and one-dimensional than their more psychically complex male counterparts. Pinski articulates the dark sexual passions of his male characters more clearly than does Cahan, yet his depictions of female characters lack the subtle sympathy of Cahan’s portrayals of Gitl, Mamie, and Fanny.

For example, in the fourth act, “In harem” (In the harem, 1914), of Pinski’s *Dovid hameylekh un zayne vayber: finef aynakter* (King David and His Wives: Five One-Act Plays), the troubled, aging King David uses the bodies of his harem women to recoup his sense of virility after his son Absalom undermined it by raping the king’s concubines.

³⁷⁰ Furnish, “David Pinski,” 244. Furnish provides a detailed summary of the play that I have opted not to use because it switches the names of the two leading female characters.

King David explicitly connects dance with heat, vitality, and passion. He declares: “ah, ikh bin nokh man, un vil laydnshaft un fayer arum zikh, ikh vil mayn man-tsayt in lustigkayt farbrengen. mayne yunge kebsvayber, ikh lod ayh ayn tsum tants.”³⁷¹ (Oh, I am still a man and I want passion and fire around me. Let joy regale the time of my manhood. My young concubines, I invite you to the dance.)³⁷² King David frames dance as an antidote to powerlessness, an act whose life-giving properties are transferable from the youthful dancers to the aging spectator. Yet although the King commands his reluctant concubines to stop being sad and start dancing, he reveals a callous disregard for their actual emotional well-being. In fact, he recovers his equilibrium by treating them as playthings to be used or discarded at will. As quickly as the king pushes the concubines to become joyful for his own entertainment, he revokes his favor with devastating finality. He springs to his feet, orders them to stop, and banishes them forever from his sight. The insult Absolam delivered to the royal honor by defiling the king’s concubines cannot be redeemed even by the most sensual of dancing. While such an appropriation of female bodies is hardly surprising in the context of the ancient world or a harem, Pinski stages this scene – and situates dance within it – for maximum dramatic tension.

Similarly, Pinski uses dance to embody conflicted desire in his novel *Arnold Levenberg: der tserisener mentsh* (Arnold Levenberg: the divided human, first published in English translation as *Arnold Levenberg* in 1928, the Yiddish version following in 1938). The novel depicts the New York aristocracy during World War I, focusing on the romantic troubles of the eponymous protagonist, an idealistic but weak-willed scion of a

³⁷¹ Dovid Pinski, *Dramen*, vol. v (New York: Farlag Poaley tsion, 1920), 85.

³⁷² David Pinski, “King David and His Wives,” in *The Dybbuk and Other Great Yiddish Plays*, trans. and ed. by Joseph C. Landis (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1966), 204. Here I have opted to use a published translation, although the following quotation uses my own translation.

wealthy German-Jewish family. Throughout most of the novel, Arnold is torn by his ambivalent feelings for various women of his social circle. Theresa Kellerman, the woman who initially seems the most appropriate match, repeatedly antagonizes Arnold, although she hopes to eventually marry him. At the same time, Arnold desires Katherine Shufro, a manipulative fortune-hunter with a gambling problem and toxic home life. Ultimately, Arnold frees himself from his attachments to both women and marries a more serene and safely bourgeois woman. Throughout the novel, Pinski uses dance to explore the psychology of desire and make comparisons between the arts.

Arnold belongs to the rarefied world of the upper bourgeoisie, and shows a serious commitment to the arts. He admires German literature and enjoys playing the piano. The woman he ultimately marries is a painter, who asks him to sit for a portrait but does not appear to have broader career ambitions. In contrast to these refined references to the arts, Pinski generally associates dance with Katherine's vulgar milieu. Katherine's dissolute father carries on an affair with a "khoristke" (chorus girl), a woman whose profession depends on engaging in dance for popular consumption.³⁷³ In one of Katherine's failed attempts to manipulate Arnold into proposing, she invites him to a sordid house party where, to Arnold's disgust, a woman openly flirts with Mr. Shufro in a way that suggests she is dancing.³⁷⁴ Pinski most clearly connects Katherine with dance when Arnold later reflects on the difficulty of trying to cut her out of his life completely, reflecting that he would "hobn oystsutantsn mit Ketrin a shvern tants" (need to finish dancing a difficult dance with Katherine) before he could be done with her.³⁷⁵ Pinski repeatedly links

³⁷³ Dovid Pinski, *Arnold Levenberg: der tserisener mentsh* (Warsaw: Ch. Brzoza, [1938]), 190.

³⁷⁴ David Pinski, *Arnold Levenberg*, trans. Isaac Goldberg (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1928), 172.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 401. For greater precision, I have used my own translation.

Katherine's pursuit of Arnold with a dance. Pinski contrasts the dangerous potential of dancing with other, more immaterial art forms. Yet he also uses the dance floor to stage Arnold's moment of liberation from the schemes of marriage-minded women.

Arnold finally frees himself from his romantic indecision at a ball, where he dances with Theresa. Arnold's indifference to Theresa belies his physical closeness to her. He feels Theresa warm to him as he presses her body to his in a way that ought to create greater closeness, yet he realizes he is no longer interested in her. Ironically, at the very moment Arnold is most emotionally distant from Theresa, he unconsciously pulls her closer to him, a move that Theresa completely misreads.³⁷⁶ Theresa assumes that she inspired Arnold's involuntary reflex and that it is a sign of his feelings for her. Since she behaves coyly when she actually wants his affection, she does not expect his words to match his feelings. Yet neither her attempts at polite conversation nor her bashful caresses are enough to change Arnold's mind. In this scene, Pinski demonstrates the emotional complexity of the dance floor, where dance partners and spectators have conflicting desires that they reveal or mask through their physical interactions. Yet at the same time dance can encode bourgeois norms of etiquette, Pinski also uses dance to reveal religious feeling in texts that, like *Yankl der shmide*, treat dancing as a part of daily life rather than as a bourgeois pastime.

Pinski recognizes the importance of song and dance in Jewish religious life, as a way of expressing emotional devotion. In his short story "Der koyekh fun a nign" (The Power of a Melody), Pinski depicts a surprising encounter between a Christian peasant and a group of Chassidim, whose ecstatic singing and dancing in the middle of the woods

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 370.

cuts right through a country path, blocking the peasant's way.³⁷⁷ At first the peasant is annoyed by what he interprets as an intentional disruption to his chosen route. He calls the Jews insulting names, but their singing is too loud for them to hear him. Next he tries mocking their singing and dancing: “oyfgehoybn zayn rok fun hintn, oysgeshtelt zey zayn breytn hintern un geshoklt im, un gedreyt, un gevorf'n mit di hent...”³⁷⁸ (He lifted up his coat by the hem, showed them his large behind, shook it, spun around, and threw his hands around in the air...) The peasant continues on his way, but finds that his walk is less interesting without the dancing Chassidim. He slows his pace so he can hear the Jews for as long as possible. He begins to sing a folksong of his own, as loud as possible, but he forgets the tune and begins singing the Jewish melody. Finally, the peasant rejoins the Chassidim, singing and dancing. Recognizing the power of their faith, he crosses himself, and the Chassidim think that their shared dancing is a miracle; they treat him “vi an undzeriker” (like one of ours).³⁷⁹ Pinski's description emphasizes the emotional closeness and physical similarities between the dancers, whose shared sense of piety and humanity overcomes their confessional differences. Yet while the peasant's transformation into a temporary Chassid is noteworthy, this same-sex dancing (that promises no apparent change for future dealings between the groups) is ultimately less radical than if the wife or daughter of one of the Chassidim chose to participate in the ecstatic dancing.

The dance scenes I have referenced in this section reveal Pinski's interest in psychological motivations, his comparisons between the arts, and his awareness of the

³⁷⁷ This simple story in the style of a Chassidic tale is reminiscent of the ostensibly naive stories by Pinski's mentor I. L. Perets, who refashioned the Hassidic tale genre for modernist literary and political aims.

³⁷⁸ Dovid Pinski, “Der koyekh fun a nign,” in *Dovid Pinski tsum tsentn yortsayt*, ed. Moyshe Shtarkman and L. Rubinshteyn (New York: Yidish-natsionaln arbeter farband, 1969), 57. It is unclear when the story was initially written.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

role of dance in traditional religious life. With the exception of the ball scene in *Arnold Levenberg*, they have not included mixed-sex dancing, even though other boundary-crossings or mixed-sex encounters do occur. As we will see, in *Yankl der shmīd*, Pinski shows how, already in 1906, he incorporates psychology, the arts, and tradition into his dance scenes. He does so in a way that, more clearly than in his later works cited in this section, expresses the transgressive potential of mixed-sex dancing and the destabilizing force of sexual desire in a traditional Jewish context.

Wine, Women, and Song: *Yankl der shmīd*

At the end of Act I of Pinski's 1906 play *Yankl der shmīd* (Yankl the Blacksmith), the matchmaker Khaye Peshe dances to celebrate Yankl's engagement to Tamara, a gentle orphan. According to the stage directions, she "heybt on tsu patshn in di hent un tantst unter" (begins clapping her hands and dancing a little), while exclaiming "makht a vare, mazl tov!" (Make way, congratulations!).³⁸⁰ Khaye Peshe's spoken lines underscore the fact that dancing is a symbol of joy in Jewish culture. Dancing is a key part of weddings precisely because it brings joy to the couple. In this particular instance, the matchmaker rejoices in a successfully concluded match, especially since a penniless bride finds a groom even though she lacks a dowry. Nonetheless, this particular ritual celebration is actually quite strained, since most characters are scandalized by Yankl's proposal and doubt the success of the upcoming marriage.³⁸¹

Yankl has unconventionally demanded that a matchmaker pursue a bride of his own choosing. Not only does Yankl challenge the typical procedure for engagements, the

³⁸⁰ Dovid Pinski, *Yankl der Shmid*, in *Dramen* (Warsaw: J. Lidski, 1909), 34.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

match itself is surprising, since Tamara comes from a rabbinic family. Khaye Peshe characterizes Tamara as, “aza kosher kind, aza tayer kind, aza goldener nefesh” (such a kosher child, such a dear child, such a golden soul).³⁸² In stark contrast, Yankl is a blacksmith and the son of a lowly wagon driver. More importantly, he is full of animal passions and known to be overly fond of alcohol and women. Tamara’s uncle, Reb Aron, calls Yankl an “oysvurf” (scoundrel) and questions whether he can even be considered a Jew.³⁸³ Although Yankl is charming and good-looking, his rowdy ways render him a dubious marital prospect. Even Yankl describes himself as a “sharlatan” (charlatan) who acts as if he is possessed by a *dibuk* (restless spirit).³⁸⁴ He hopes Tamara will be a kind of ritual charm to keep away his darker impulses.³⁸⁵ Yankl and Tamara’s union would be unthinkable were it not for the fact that Tamara is dependent on the grudging financial support of her aunt and uncle. Pinski thus frames his play according to the economic and psychological concerns that characterize his work as a whole.

The play’s subsequent three acts are a test of Yankl’s ability to remain true to his marriage. Indeed, the entire play questions whether the celebratory dancing at the end of Act I should be joyful or ironic. Fittingly, Yankl’s choice of allegiance becomes clear through his own dancing later on in the play, in the scene that crucially resolves whether the “meydlnik” (lady’s man) Yankl can be reformed.³⁸⁶ Tamara explicitly tests Yankl’s willpower when she allows Rivke, a married woman who has left her husband, to live as a boarder in their home. Rivke obviously desires Yankl, and he is not blind to the

³⁸² Pinski, *Yankl der Shmid*, 11.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 20.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

presence of a woman whose vitality resembles his own disposition. Yet even though Yankl engages in improper drinking, flirtation, and dancing to celebrate the birth of his son, he does not show a preference for partnering with Rivke. In fact, his boorish behavior pushes her away, at the same time that he continues to treat Tamara with greater affection.

Tamara decides she can forgive Yankl's excesses (including flirtation with Rivke) specifically because the nature of his drunken dancing expresses exuberance rather than a fundamental challenge to his marital fidelity. Yankl engages in mixed-sex dancing, yet as his invitations to dance show, he would be equally, if not more, delighted to dance with Tamara herself. Although Yankl is tempted by Rivke, Tamara retains her primary position in his affections. Yankl's realization that his love of Tamara exceeds even the effects of inebriation allows him to overcome his wayward urges once and for all. Pinski explores the psychology of passion in his play, including a monologue in which Yankl expresses the frankly bestial nature of his desire,³⁸⁷ yet ultimately the play celebrates the triumph of the status quo and the domestication of the antihero.

Pinski wrote his four-act play *Yankl der shmide* in November-December 1906.³⁸⁸ According to Ben Furnish, "*Yankl der shmide* became the prototype for Pinski's 'problem' plays, in which the protagonists wrestle with their passions and learn important lessons from the experience."³⁸⁹ First published in 1910 in Warsaw in a collection of Pinski's plays (and republished in subsequent editions), *Yankl der shmide* was performed more often than Pinski's other dramatic works.³⁹⁰ It premiered in Warsaw at the Alysseum

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 30.

³⁸⁸ Zalmen Zylberweig, *Leksikon fun yidishn teater*, vol. 3 (New York: Farlag "Elisheva," 1959), 1775.

³⁸⁹ Furnish, "David Pinski," 244.

³⁹⁰ Zylberweig, *Leksikon*, 1775; Furnish, "David Pinski," 244.

Theater in 1907, with legendary actress Ester Rokhl Kaminska playing the part of Tamara.³⁹¹ The newly-founded Hirschbein Troupe performed the play in 1908 under the direction of Yankev Ben-Ami.³⁹² In 1909, the American debut came at New York's Thalia Theater, with Dovid Kessler playing the role of Yankl and Kaminska once again portraying Tamara.³⁹³ A German translation followed in 1910, as did performances in Germany.³⁹⁴ *Yankl der shmīd* was also performed in Hebrew by the Habimah Theater in Yafo in 1910 and by the Tsion Theater in Jerusalem in 1921.³⁹⁵ A Russian version was performed in Odessa in 1912.³⁹⁶

In 1938, director Edgar G. Ulmer released a film adaptation of Pinski's play, *Yankl der shmīd* (The Singing Blacksmith), with Moyshe Oysher in the starring role.³⁹⁷ In comparison to Cahan and Opatoshu, who had no direct involvement with the film adaptations of the works I discuss in this chapter, Pinski wrote the screenplay for Ulmer's film, along with Osip Dimov and Ben-Zvi Baratoff. Oysher was trained as a cantor and, as the film's English title implies, his character sings throughout the film. What is more, Yankl and Rivke dance together on several occasions during the film, as a way of expressing their mutual attraction. Pinski, or perhaps Ulmer, recognized the potential of dance to embody passion in the visual medium of film.

³⁹¹ Zylbercweig, *Leksikon*, 1775. In Furnish, "David Pinski," 244, claims that the premiere was 1906.

³⁹² Ibid., Zylbercweig, *Leksikon*, 1775.

³⁹³ Furnish, "David Pinski," 244.

³⁹⁴ Zylbercweig, *Leksikon*, 1776.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ For more about this film, see J. Hoberman, *Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film Between Two Worlds* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1991), 265-69 (p. 269 cites a review that praises the dances). For more about Ulmer's ethnic films, including my translations of quotes from Yiddish-language reviews, see Noah Isenberg, *Edgar G. Ulmer: A Filmmaker at the Margins* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 83-120.

In the play (as in the film), Yankl is governed by his physicality. He indulges in the pleasures of the flesh, and he works with his hands. He uses physical force to get what he wants, including shoving Khaye Peshe³⁹⁸ and Rivke when they do not act as he would like.³⁹⁹ Yankl's comfort with his own body, and willingness to use it as a tool, is a destabilizing force. Yankl fully recognizes the way in which his physical urges make it difficult for him to properly fit into Tamara's refined world, despite his affection for her. At the beginning of Act Two, he calls himself a "ber" (bear) in dismay after he accidentally wakes Tamara from a nap by walking past her and blowing her kisses.⁴⁰⁰ He knows he has not yet proven he has overcome his bestial nature.

Yankl finds it difficult to resist the thirsts of his body, a situation which complicates his marriage. In contrast to Yankl's physical presence, Tamara is identified with spirituality. In an example of the multiple places in the play that contrast the voice with the movements of the body, Yankl tells Tamara: "ayer kol iz mir geshtanen in mayne oyeren. ikh hob geklopt mit mayn hamer un gehert ayer kol – t'ir mir gloybn?" (Your voice is stuck in my head. Can you believe it? – when I'm pounding with my hammer, I hear your voice.)⁴⁰¹ Yankl's description of his longing for Tamara contrasts his earthy working man's persona with her ethereal qualities, here disembodied as a voice. Pinski portrays Yankl's physical motions in a frankly sensual manner, while nonetheless hinting at the traditional Jewish prohibition on men hearing *kol isha* (a woman's voice in song), due to its seductive potential.⁴⁰² Tamara does not deliberately seek to seduce Yankl, yet

³⁹⁸ Pinski, *Yankl der shmied*, 12.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁰² For more on *kol isha*, see Rachel Adelstein "Braided Voices: Women Cantors in Non-Orthodox Judaism" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2013).

her quiet voice inflames Yankl's passions and compels intense feelings from him. Yankl believes that her very immateriality can bring him to a higher spiritual plane. In contrast with his previous romantic dalliances, which he compares to matches lighting a powder keg and quickly burning out, Yankl hopes that Tamara will keep his fiery tendencies in check.⁴⁰³

Pinski does not, however, simply create an equivalency between Tamara and the voice. Instead, he portrays singing ambiguously throughout the play, both as a sign of dissolution and a token of redemptive labor. Rivke sings during her seduction scene after commenting to Yankl about her own beauty, although her attempt to unite song with the physical body does not actually lead to intercourse.⁴⁰⁴ Pinski recognizes the seductive potential of the voice, yet he ultimately reconciles song with Yankl's new, respectable life. In the play's conclusion, Yankl goes back to work in the smithy as his helpers sing working songs. Dancing, on the other hand, is always ambivalent. Although Pinski does not only associate dance with illicit sexual desire – in fact, the happy conclusion of the play is only possible because Yankl is even more interested in dancing with Tamara than he is in dancing with Rivke – in *Yankl der shmide*, Pinski never portrays dance as a joyously transformative experience for the characters.⁴⁰⁵ Instead, it is through singing and working that Yankl sublimates his excess physicality for the good of his family.

Pinski treats dance ambiguously, yet it fulfills a specific dramatic function during Act Three. Dancing is a sign of the maximum physicality that Pinski will allow onstage before other characters put a stop to it. The two moments of dancing in the drinking scene

⁴⁰³ Pinski, *Yankl der shmide*, 27.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 70, 78-79.

⁴⁰⁵ A marked contrast to the joyous dancing in "Der koyekh fun a nign," a story which does not address the psychology of sexual urges.

serve as checks on Yankl's carousing, since members of his family enter the smithy shortly after each dance and remind Yankl of his responsibilities. Dancing triggers an intrusion by the forces of order, which suggests it could be even more of an intimate betrayal than Yankl and Rivke's illicit kissing. Even more importantly, dancing shows that Yankl is ultimately capable of rehabilitation, since it reveals his improper boisterousness but does not necessarily cause an unforgivable transgression, even though it has the potential to lead to further physical lapses. When Yankl's father walks in on the revelry, Yankl shifts immediately from dancing with Rivke to demanding his father dance with him and talking about his new son. Yankl tells his father: "az du vest haynt nisht tantsn, vest zayn erger vi ikh veys nisht vos, host gerikht oyf aza eynikl?"⁴⁰⁶ (If you don't dance today, you'll be worse than I don't know what! Have you ever seen such a grandson?) Since dancing is an activity that can be performed in either a sexual or a family context, Yankl is able to move seamlessly – even in his drunken state – from flirting with Rivke to inviting members of the family to join him in dancing. Dancing thus exhibits Yankl's improper behavior and provides a way for him to show that he still wants to be domesticated.

Yankl flirts with Rivke in ways that threaten his marriage, yet he invites her to dance using language that closely resembles how he speaks both to her husband and to his own wife. Yankl urges Rivke, "kumt a tentsl."⁴⁰⁷ (Come have a little dance.) Similarly, Yankl implores her estranged husband Refoel: "kumt a tentsl, reb Refoel, kumt!"⁴⁰⁸ (Come have a little dance, Reb Refoel, come!) In comparison with these demands that

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 72.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 80.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 81.

both use formal forms of address, Yankl speaks more gently to Tamara and uses more familiar language: “vilst efsher a tentsl, Tamare? kum a tentsl. [...] zeyst, ikh ken nokh tantsn... kum, mir veln beyde tantsn... hobn mir nisht a tayeren zuneniuk?”⁴⁰⁹ (Perhaps you’d like a little dance, Tamara? Come have a little dance. [...] See, I can still dance... Come, we’ll both dance... Don’t we have a dear little son?) Yankl’s plea to Tamara to dance with him indicates a fondness for her that drunkenness cannot erase. It also underscores the social importance of dance as a sign of joy. It can be difficult to distinguish between appropriate and transgressive dance, although Yankl’s flirtatious antics are clearly problematic. Nonetheless, Yankl does not treat the specific act of dancing with Rivke as the introduction to a more serious liaison, since he indicates a greater affection for his wife.

Yankl’s desire to dance is incited by his consumption of alcohol, yet his altered state also protects him from his worst impulses. Both the drinking and the dancing are traditional Jewish forms of celebration, which Yankl has exaggerated to inappropriate extremes, due to his liveliness and bad habits. Indeed, Pinski’s dialogue and stage directions indicate Yankl’s inebriation, and Rivke finds that a dance with drunken Yankl may not be quite the fantasy she anticipated.

Rivke: geyt in shtub un shloft zikh oys.

Yankl (geyt tsu ir tsu un lakht zi on far di hent): kumt a tentsl.

Rivke: ikh khap un tants mit aykh.

Yankl: kumt a tentsl.

Rivke: drikt mir nisht azoy di hent, ir vet zi mir bald iberbrekhn.

Yankl: kumt a tentsl.

Di meydlekh: oy, tantst mit im, Rivke! tantst mit im, Rivke!

Rivke (tsu Yanklen): tantst nu, tantst, lozt mikh ober op, azoy kon ikh dokh nisht tantsn.

Yankl (lozt zi op, varft um mit di hent un tantst unter): akh – akh – akh... zingt, nakeves!

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 82.

Di meydlekh (hebn on tsu zingn di kamarinske).

Rivke (shtelt zikh far im mit di hent in di zaytn, varfndik mit di pleyste un dem buzem).

Yankl (hebt on tsu tantsn un dreyn zikh arum Rivken).

Rivke (tantst tsu der tir un loyft fun ir aroys mit a gelekhter).

Yankl (khapt an ander meyd, tanst mit ir, zingndik un kvitshendik).⁴¹⁰

Rivke: Go home and sleep it off.

Yankl (goes over to her and laughs, taking her by the hand): Come have a little dance.

Rivke: I've got a dance with you.

Yankl: Come have a little dance.

Rivke: Don't squeeze my hands like that, you'll soon break them.

Yankl: Come have a little dance.

The girls: Oh, dance with him, Rivke! Dance with him, Rivke!

Rivke (to Yankl): So dance, dance, but let me go, I can't dance like this.

Yankl (lets her go, drops his arms, and dances a little: Ah – ah – ah... Women, sing!

The girls (begin to sing the kamarinskaya).

Rivke (places herself in front of him with her hands akimbo, wiggling her shoulders and bosom).

Yankl (begins to dance and circle around Rivke).

Rivke (dances to the door and runs through it, laughing).

Yankl (grabs another girl, dances with her, singing and shrieking).

Drinking is an unruly force that leads Yankl to relapse into his old ways and, at the same time, an unattractive habit that saves Yankl from the worst consequences of giving in to temptation. Even though Rivke is determined to seduce the handsome, married blacksmith, his drunken antics are more forceful than she anticipated, which discourages her advances. Yankl's inebriation and focus on his own joy prevent him from pleasing her on the dance floor, since he grasps her hands too tightly. Indeed, when Rivke runs away from him, he is content to dance with another woman.

Yankl's transgression reflects a general concern with making and keeping proper boundaries. When his son is born, he wants to express his joy through his physicality, but has difficulty doing so in the correct place and measure. Yankl's father comments that

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 80.

Yankl is not working in the smithy, but instead “tantst gor” ([you] are just dancing).⁴¹¹ He instructs his son to work in the smithy and limit his dancing to the home. Yankl boisterously resists this attempt to limit his expressions of joy, saying that he will “umetum tantsn, hehehe...” (dance everywhere, hehehe).⁴¹² When, after a brief period of remorse, he returns to his revels, Yankl sings and announces “atsind bin ikh ober lustik! atsind vil ikh tantsn...” (But now I’m merry! Now I want to dance...)⁴¹³ Yankl’s lack of propriety regarding his very physical expressions of joy makes him vulnerable to an inappropriate flirtation and mixed-sex dancing. Nonetheless, because these acts stem from his overall joy at his increasing family, he repents his excesses, takes the initiative to evict the “yeytser-horete” (evil inclination incarnate) Rivke from his house, and Tamara is able to forgive him.⁴¹⁴

Pinski and Cahan both associate physical desire and temptation with dancing. Yet Yankl the Blacksmith and Jake (the former blacksmith) have very different attitudes towards their wives, both on and off the dance floor, which predict their very different life trajectories. Cahan’s Jake, in America, enjoys having a bachelor’s freedom to dance with Americanized women. It would be unthinkable for him to share these experiences with his wife Gitl, whom he scorns as a “greenhorn.” Pinski’s Yankl, in Europe, dances as a form of libidinal joy at having a son. He never denies his love for Tamara, even when Rivke tries to seduce him. Although his audacious flirtations wound Tamara, he never repudiates her. When dancing with Rivke, his outpouring of joy and physicality soon transforms the dancing into an activity she is unable to control, just as she is ultimately

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 72.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 79.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 78.

unable to prevent him from throwing her out of his home in the play's final act. Different from Jake, Yankl invites a variety of people to dance with him: his father, Rivke's husband, Rivke, girls who visit the tavern, and Tamara herself. While his flirtatious actions certainly threaten his marriage, Yankl never turns away from his wife completely, nor does he ever speak to Rivke as affectionately as he does to Tamara. Yankl's ultimate loyalty to his wife, which differs from the more threatening flirtations of Cahan's and (as we shall see) Opatoshu's antiheroes, creates a happy conclusion for Pinski's play. Opatoshu, in contrast, depicts characters who (unlike Pinski's Yankl) are unable to escape their animalistic impulses.

Yosef Opatoshu

Born in the Stupsk Forest near Mława, a shtetl in Poland, Yosef Opatoshu (1886-1954) immigrated to the United States in 1906 and became a member of the American Yiddish group *di yunge* (The Young Ones). This modernist movement “emerged in New York around 1907 as a protest against the utilitarian approach to Yiddish literature practised by Yiddish press and Jewish political movements.”⁴¹⁵ Even in this experimental literary milieu, Opatoshu's work stands out for the striking physicality he brought to Yiddish belles lettres. Opatoshu's grandson describes him as a sensual man in both his literary work and bohemian personal life:

However shocking for its time, the treatment of sexuality and lust in Opatoshu's writings was not an anomalous, wholly imaginative departure from his actual persona. [...] Women of all generations have told me that they found Yosef an

⁴¹⁵ Gennady Estraiikh, Sabine Koller, and Mikhail Krutikov, “Joseph Opatoshu's Search for *Yidishkayt*”, in Sabine Koller, Gennady Estraiikh, and Mikhail Krutikov, eds., *Joseph Opatoshu: A Yiddish Writer between Europe and America* (London: Legenda, 2013), 2. The most comprehensive study of *di yunge* remains Wisse's *A Little Love in Big Manhattan*.

extremely attractive figure – forceful, confident, lusty, flirty, but always appreciative and respectful.⁴¹⁶

Uniquely for a Yiddish writer, Opatoshu was able to support himself through his literary work, including newspaper publications (he wrote a weekly story for the newspaper *Der tog* [The Day] for forty years) and speaking engagements around the world.⁴¹⁷ His most popular works were translated into multiple languages, including German, and his personal papers include newspaper clippings from public readings in Vienna.⁴¹⁸ In works set in such varied locations as nineteenth century Poland, early twentieth century New York, ancient Judaea, and medieval Germany, Opatoshu explored themes and characters whose corporeality and seedy position on the margins of respectable society were more closely aligned with American literary modernism than with European models of Jewish life.

Dance was an important aspect of physical expression and interpersonal relationships in Opatoshu's work, which allowed the writer to encode interpersonal dynamics, (changing) gender roles, and add texture to his plots. Opatoshu displayed striking sensitivity in his use of the dance floor dynamic as a way of articulating desire between characters that crosses social boundaries. In an interview with Opatoshu on his 65th birthday, Jacob Patt gives “dancers” as an example of the varied characters Opatoshu brought to life in his works, along with figures including “horse-thieves,” “magicians,” “Lilly and her illegitimate children,” “Morris the drunkard,” “organ-grinders,” “street-

⁴¹⁶ Dan Opatoshu, “In New York Velder: Yosef/Joseph Opatoshu – Constructing a Multinational, 20th Century, (very) Modern Yiddish Identity,” in Sabine Koller, Gennady Estraikh and Mikhail Krutikov, eds. *Joseph Opatoshu: A Yiddish Writer between Europe and America* (London: Legenda, 2013), 25.

⁴¹⁷ Dan Opatoshu, “In New York Velder,” 26.

⁴¹⁸ Yosef Opatoshu Papers, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 436, Folder 404.

musicians,” “Rabbi Akiva,” and “Bar Kochba.”⁴¹⁹ This list emphasizes variety, as well as the generally unrefined nature of Opatoshu’s more contemporary characters.

Throughout his career, Opatoshu employed dance to convey a dissolute atmosphere and predatory (male) sexuality. He includes dance scenes in a wide variety of his works, both historical (*A tog in regnsburg*, *A Day in Regensburg*) and more contemporary (*Di tentserin*, *The Dancer*), both European (“Oyf yener zayt brik,” *On the Other Side of the Bridge*) and American (“Shmelts-top,” *Melting Pot*). His narration varies in terms of the detail of his dance descriptions, sometimes giving names of dances or describing dance choreography, at other times focusing on the social settings in which the dancing takes place. His portrayals of female sexuality range between chaste femininity (“Shmelts-top”), dangerous sexual aggression (*In poylishe velder*, *In Polish Woods*), boisterous youthful flirtation (*Di tentserin*), and the pathetic desperation of an aging woman (“A bal,” *A Ball*). Despite the (generally unrecognized) ubiquity and variety of Opatoshu’s dance scenes, his works tend to focus primarily on the satisfaction or thwarting of male desires, even when they take the perspective of a female dancer. As a token of Opatoshu’s naturalism, these desires tend to have a bestial quality.

Opatoshu frequently situates his dances in settings that challenge boundaries between Jews and Christians. Instead of focusing on the process of Americanization (like Cahan) or the challenges of living a morally upright (worker’s) existence (like Pinski), Opatoshu takes pains to make class and religious boundaries visible, especially in terms of describing how characters look at one another. In *Di tentserin* and *A roman fun a ferd ganef* (*Romance of a Horse Thief*, which will be discussed in the following section),

⁴¹⁹ Jacob Pitt, “Joseph Opatoshu,” trans. Adah Fogel, *The Jewish Spectator* (June 1952): 22.

Jewish and Christian characters dance in close proximity to one another. Interestingly, they do not necessarily engage with one another on the dance floor, unlike the German language works in Chapters 2 and 3 (where Jewish and Christian characters challenge social norms by dancing together). Opatoshu uses mixed-sex dancing to convey physicality and signal the porousness of social boundaries, without disturbing the ethnic sensibilities of his readers. Indeed, the language he uses to refer to non-Jewish characters is clear, blunt, and jarring – he uses the terms “shikse” and “sheygets,” which etymologically refer to abomination and socially refer to a distinct sense of group difference. Opatoshu hints at the transgressiveness of dance by having lower-class and socially-marginal Jews and Christians dance in the same location, even as social boundaries remain tacitly enforced.

In the opening chapter of *Di tentserin*, a novel about Jewish immigrant life in New York, Opatoshu describes the different ethnic groups crammed (each in their own section of third class) onto the ship *Vaterland* (Fatherland) on their way to America.⁴²⁰ The passengers in the second class peer down into the steerage and watch as the lower-class passengers entertain themselves with harmonica music. As will be seen in *A roman fun a ferd-ganef*, Opatoshu is very conscious of the way class and gender influence spectatorship, even when he does not explicitly note how his characters feel about being watched. Regina, a young red-haired Jewish woman, begins to dance nimbly, an act which does not fail to attract the attention of the male passengers. Rather than recount her precise choreography, Opatoshu takes care to note the way she draws the notice of the

⁴²⁰ Novershtern notes that while numerous Yiddish literary texts portray immigrants on board a ship to New York, Opatoshu’s scene is unique because it provides an opportunity for cultural contact between ethnic groups. *Ibid.*, 144.

men around her, while also acknowledging their inability to fully complement her.⁴²¹ Regina's dancing demands attention, and Opatoshu adds titillating details about her "laykhte, durkhzikhtike kleydl" (light, transparent little dress).⁴²² She steps lightly, nimbly, and with almost military precision. Meanwhile, in sharp contrast, a young man makes himself look ridiculous by trying to imitate her step and a man with a grotesque appearance decides to make himself the "director" of a spectacle he presumably lacks the skill to participate in as a dancer. The men feel compelled to (awkwardly) join in Regina's dancing, either out of a sense of communal exuberance or a desire to garner attention for themselves.

Opatoshu follows this dance sequence with a description of Hungarian dancers, whom Opatoshu explicitly identifies as gentiles, using derogatory terms for non-Jews.⁴²³ Opatoshu describes these characters differently from – and as more sexually threatening than – the Jewish characters in the previous dance scene. Opatoshu emphasizes the physical competence of the male dancer, comparing him to a "vint" (wind) and "ruakh" (evil spirit).⁴²⁴ While Regina's interlocutors are unable to successfully partner her, the Hungarian man boldly takes hold of his female partner's body and whirls around with her, as if he were a force of nature. His female dance partner moves in a "farshey't" (wanton) manner.⁴²⁵ While Regina is the object of obvious male desire, Opatoshu does

⁴²¹ Jessica Kirzane points out Opatoshu's anxiety about Jewish masculinity in his short story "Levone nekht." Jessica Kirzane, "Gender in Opatoshu's Intermarriage Stories in *Der Tog*." Association for Jewish Studies, Boston, December 13-15, 2015.

⁴²² Yosef Opatoshu, *Gezamelte Verk*, vol. XI (Vilna: B. Kletskin, 1930), 12.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.* The juxtaposition of the Jewish and Hungarian dancing becomes even more important in the third chapter, when one of Regina's Jewish admirers gets into a physical altercation with a Hungarian man who was ogling her while she slept. The young man's forceful reaction, an attempt to save the honor of a Jewish woman he had been fantasizing about, functions as a high-testosterone sequel to the two dance scenes. Volf

not describe her as consciously sexual, despite his lingering descriptions of her flimsy clothing and suggestive dance steps. In contrast to his lusty descriptions of the Hungarian dancers, Opatoshu presents his Jewish dancer in a manner that would excite readers without presenting too much of a challenge to conventional female behavior. Opatoshu's two dance scenes show the close proximity of the two ethnic groups, which suggests the way individuals from two different countries will be thrust into contact with one another in the American "melting pot," yet pays particular attention to Jewish life and concerns about Jewish masculinity.

In his 1922 short story "Shmelts-top," an explicit reference to Israel Zangwill's play about assimilation, *The Melting Pot*, Opatoshu employs physicality to contrast the virginal propriety of American Jew Miss Kaplan and the sexually desiring Italian men she teaches in night school. Miss Kaplan naively imagines that her students will view her as a mother or a sister, and is completely unprepared for the reality of being the subject of attention for a room full of men. Although she initially pronounces their names like opera music, she finds instead that she has ended up in a dance hall, where her unwilling body is on display for a group of men she finds intimidating and is unable to "civilize" or control. Even reading exercises remind her of their inconvenient physicality, as they "shvitshn iber a geveytlekh zats" (sweat over a typical sentence) or "krikhn durkh a zats" (crawl through a sentence).⁴²⁶ The way these grown men are made to fit into an educational environment designed for children is underscored by the small desks that force the Italians to sit "shtayf, nisht gekent a drey ton mit di fis, zey gehaltn vi a

saves Jewish honor by defending Regina from a potential assault and by changing the way Opatoshu discusses Jewish male physicality.

⁴²⁶ Opatoshu, "Shmelts-top," in *Gezamelte verk*, vol. 8 (Vilna: Vilner farlag fun B. Kletskin, 1929), 141. [140-143] Thanks to Jessica Kirzane for alerting me to this story.

klem.”⁴²⁷ (Stiffly, unable to turn a foot, held in place like a clamp.) While Miss Kaplan would rather relate to her students as children, Opatoshu emphasizes the problem of their corporeality and bodies, imperfectly restrained by Miss Kaplan’s program of civilization.

These men, like Opatoshu’s dancers in *A roman fun a ferd ganef*, communicate primarily with their eyes, a wordless exchange that greatly discomforts Miss Kaplan. Opatoshu portrays their desiring gaze as frankly ravenous: “fertsik por oysgehungerte oygn esn zikh ayn in ir”⁴²⁸ (forty pairs of famished eyes looked eagerly at [lit. eat into] her). Miss Kaplan endeavors to close off this nonverbal communication by covering her face with a book, literally using English to block unwanted sexual attention. Yet when Miss Kaplan’s colleagues decide to organize a ball to keep these men away from saloons and dance halls, they unthinkingly disrupt Miss Kaplan’s defensive tactics by instructing her to invite a student to dance. While Miss Kaplan’s act of asking a man to dance may appear to subvert gender hierarchies (in a way that might intrigue her students as a form of brash American womanhood, like Mamie in *Yekl*), she instead experiences this moment as a loss of power.

An older woman instructs Miss Kaplan to ask one of the Italians to dance, so that they “zikh filn heymish!” (feel themselves at home), without regard for the young woman’s likely feeling of discomfort.⁴²⁹ She is instructed to ask a male student to physically lead her around the room and take authority over her body, a complete subversion of the dynamic that she has fought to maintain in the classroom. Where Miss Kaplan’s invitation to dance is more a command than an invitation - “Mister Gabrielo

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 140.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 142.

Farelo, kumt far a tants!” (Mister Gabrielo Farelo, come have a dance!), Gabrielo Farelo speaks “mer mit di hent vi mit dem moyl” (more with his hands than with his mouth), an indication of his animal-like inability to communicate in English and greater comfort with physicality.⁴³⁰ When he dances with Miss Kaplan, his ability to dance well does not disguise the way he overwhelms her physically: “laykht vi a foygl hot zikh getrogn mit ir oyf di shpits-finger” (light as a bird he moved along with her on tiptoe).⁴³¹ Their moment of physical closeness on the dance floor emboldens Gabrielo to escalate the attentions he pays to his unwilling teacher, yet another example of a character misreading momentary physical closeness on the dance floor as a sign of emotional intimacy or a prelude to greater physical liberties.

Opatoshu addressed a Yiddish-speaking readership which, like Pinski’s theater-going public, demanded entertainment in a Jewish language, rather than aspirational works about upward mobility. Where German writers such as Kompert and Franzos were concerned with the “Jewish Question” or with proving Jewish participation in bourgeois society, Opatoshu focused on innovative ways of expressing Jewish male physicality, especially since (as a member of *di yunge*) he was more concerned with Yiddish modernism than Jewish politics. While Cahan targeted an English-speaking audience in *Yekl* and explicitly narrates the social stakes for characters who engage in mixed-sex dancing, Opatoshu tends to show, rather than tell, the social context and potential ramifications of such wayward dancing. At the same time, he was more free to (as he frequently does) titillate his readers by describing the way that the movements of female dancers shift their clothing and expose their bodies for visual delectation. His Eastern

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

European characters typically exist on the margins of respectability, and they tend not to be overly concerned about obeying social convention. Opatoshu uses dances to heighten the impersonal relationships and stakes of various relationships. More than simply emphasizing social codes, Opatoshu focuses on the way dance pairings convey allegiances, jealousy, and sexuality. This dynamic is striking in his depictions of socially-marginal Jews, yet perhaps even more unique when it comes to depicting encounters between members of different religious and ethnic groups. Opatoshu's dance scenes depict the permeability of social boundaries between Jews and Christians, as well as physical dynamics between characters. He depicts these dynamics with particularly drama in his novella about the Jewish underworld, *Roman fun a ferd-ganef*.

“Pas d’Espagne!”: *Roman fun a ferd ganef*

In a review of Yosef Opatoshu's 1912 novella *A roman fun a ferd-ganef* (Romance of a Horse Thief), Moyshe Nadir comments, somewhat disparagingly, on the author's writing style. He claims that Opatoshu repeats effective words multiple times, as if he were flirting with them: “dos vort “pasdespan”, lmoshel, (“tantsn a pasdespan”) gefint zikh a finf-zeks mol in bukh.” (The word “pas d’Espagne,” for instance (“dancing a pas d’Espagne”) can be found five or six times in the book.)⁴³² Nadir cites a Russian ballroom dance, the pas d’Espagne, as an example of Opatoshu's use of foreign terms. Based on Nadir's description, one would think that Opatoshu mentioned the dance multiple times, when in fact it is only once, as a command shouted out to wedding

⁴³² Moyshe Nadir, “Bukh-eyn-bukh-oys: ‘A roman fun a ferd-ganef un andere dertseylungen,’ fun Y. Opatoshu,” *Der groyser kundes* [n.d.]: 10. Yosef Opatoshu Papers, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 436, Folder 400.

musicians. This one, fateful pas d’Espagne takes place during a pivotal wedding dance scene, which casts aftershocks throughout the entire novella. A horse thief loses his chance to become respectable after he slights his love interest by publicly dancing with a married woman. Nadir overstates the number of times Opatoshu cites the name of the dance, but if anything he, like all other critics, understates the critical importance of the pas d’Espagne for the novella and of social dance for Opatoshu’s work as a whole.⁴³³

Opatoshu first published *A roman fun a ferd-ganef* in 1912 in *Shriftn* (Writings), a publication of *di yunge*. *Shriftn* was targeted at an elite Yiddish-speaking readership and published in editions of just 500 to 1,000 copies.⁴³⁴ The novella was reprinted in book form in 1917, and adapted into a film in 1971.⁴³⁵ Even in a modernist context, Opatoshu’s novella was extraordinary. He combined semi-autobiographical elements and a Galician setting with an antihero of a type that, according to Mikhail Krutikov, more closely resembles American frontier heroes than, “the quintessentially Old World Tevye and Menakhem-Mendl,” referring to two of Sholem Aleykhem’s most famous protagonists.⁴³⁶ Opatoshu’s description of healthy, illiterate Jewish criminals differed markedly from the

⁴³³ In fact, in the one English translation of the novella, the name of the dance has been replaced with a couple’s dance that is more familiar to a general public: the polka. While this translation decision spares a casual reader from the inconvenience of a foot note, an important consideration for the volume in which the translation was published, replacing a pas d’Espagne with a polka complicates a close reading of the dance’s structure. Where a polka is danced in a circle by a couple that turns together in close embrace, the pas d’Espagne emphasizes advancing and retreating motions between the two dancers, as well as making and removing eye contact, a choreography that mirrors the dynamic between characters in Opatoshu’s pivotal dance scene. For a complete English translation of the novella, see David Roskies, *Romance of a Horse Thief*, in *A Shtetl and Other Yiddish Novellas*, ed. Ruth Wisse (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986), 146-211.

⁴³⁴ Wisse, *A Little Love in Big Manhattan*, 41.

⁴³⁵ Although written by Opatoshu’s son David and featuring a star-studded cast, including Yul Brynner, Abraham Polonsky’s adventure film *Romance of a Horsethief* only loosely followed the plot of the Yiddish novella and contained no dancing. For more about physicality in the film, see Erens, *The Jew in American Cinema*, 313-14.

⁴³⁶ Mikhail Krutikov, *Yiddish Fiction and the Crisis of Modernity, 1905-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 66.

Yiddish literature of his time. Gennady Estraiikh, Sabine Koller, and Krutikov express a similar assessment: “Opatoshu’s heroes represented a new type of Jewish character: young, active, wilful, and energetic, ready to break established social norms and cultural conventions, and sometimes even the law. His shtetl stories are free of nostalgia and sentimentality.”⁴³⁷ Ruth Wisse states that *A roman fun a ferd-ganef* combines a fairly conventional love story with “a frankly lustful hero and a richer treatment of erotic desire than was customary in Yiddish prose.”⁴³⁸ Most critical assessments of the novella focus on the protagonist’s robustness and criminality, without acknowledging unsavory female characters. Opatoshu’s use of provocative dance scenes adapts American literary aesthetics for a work set in Poland, and enables him to describe women’s participation in the culture of his dissolute Jewish Underworld. The hero Zanvl is born to a family of Jewish criminals and engages in the family business, but his unhappy fate is truly sealed by his participation in mixed-sex dancing.

The pas d’Espagne was a ballroom dance with elements similar to a waltz. The name means Spanish step in French and most sources I have found describe it as a Russian dance, although a 1912 French dance manual says it was danced in France, and many contemporary references online are actually in Finnish (others refer to the pas d’Espagne as part of the klezmer repertoire).⁴³⁹ Despite this international appeal, it is much more difficult to find English, German, or Yiddish references to the pas d’Espagne than to dances such as the waltz, the Lancers, or the polka-mazurka in dance manuals or

⁴³⁷ Estraiikh, Koller, and Krutikov, “Joseph Opatoshu’s Search for *Yidishkayt*,” 2.

⁴³⁸ Wisse, *A Little Love in Big Manhattan*, 51-52.

⁴³⁹ See Barthélemy G. Bottallo, *Guide du bon danseur, par le professeur B. –G. Bottallo* (Paris: Imp. Jouve & cie, 1912), 114. Helen Winkler includes Dick Crum’s translation of the section on the Pas d’Espagne in her unpublished Yiddish dance handbook for the Edmonton International Folk Dancers, see Helen Winkler, “Yiddish Dance Workshop: Dances of the Jews of Eastern Europe” (workshop handbook, February 8, 2003), 30.

literary fiction. In fact, one of the very few literary citations I have found is in Opatoshu's first published work, his short story "Af yener zayt brik" (On the Other Side of the Bridge), where a married man dances a pas d'Espagne with his pretty boarder shortly before he begins an affair with her.⁴⁴⁰ Such a flirtatious connotation is hardly surprising, since the pas d'Espagne involves two partners turning towards and away from each other, often swinging their arms in a stylized "Spanish" style. This motion of turning away is very important, since in Yiddish folk dance, eye contact between partners and facing each other is crucial. Indeed, most communication in Jewish partner dances happens with the eyes, rather than with direct touch. In fact, turning a back on a partner is a key component of the *broygez tants*, the dance of anger, which demonstrates how turning one's back to a partner during a dance is a radical departure from the norms of Jewish social dancing. In the context of the novella, the pas d'Espagne is more closely identified with Warsaw than with Spain, yet cannot be fully separated from the practice of Hispanomania in European culture in general and Jewish culture in particular.

Scholars such as Claudia Jeschke note the popularity of Spanish themes in nineteenth century European ballet and social dance.⁴⁴¹ Dances such as the fandango and the bolero were celebrated for their exotic sensuality. In his 1828 dance manual *The Code of Terpsichore*, Italian dance theorist Carlo Blasis lists physical agitation, desire, gallantry, and impatience among some of the features of Spanish dances.⁴⁴² Eduard Reisinger says that "Feuer und Flammen" (fire and flames) are characteristics of the

⁴⁴⁰ Y.[osef] Opatoshu, "Oyf yener zayt brik," in *Oyfyener zayt brik* ([n.p.]: Melukhe-farlag fun amerike, 1929), 245-61. First published in 1910 in the second issue of *di yunge's* anthology *Literatur*, the story immediately won Opatoshu reknown.

⁴⁴¹ Claudia Jeschke, "Hispanomania in Dance Theory and Choreography," in eds. Claudia Jeschke, Gabi Vettermann, Nicole Haitzinger, *Les Choses espagnoles: Research into the Hispanomania of 19th Century Dance* (Munich: podium, 2009), 37-57.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 44.

fandango and of Spanish national character in his 1889 dance manual.⁴⁴³ He also describes the bolero as fiery⁴⁴⁴ and the fandango as “züggelos” (dissolute),⁴⁴⁵ “üppig” (lush), and “indecent.”⁴⁴⁶ In a similar vein, Albert Czerwinski argues in 1862 that Spanish dances are characterized by lively movements and gesticulations.⁴⁴⁷ He notes Moorish influence on Spanish dances⁴⁴⁸ and observes that in the sixteenth century, some writers claimed that provocative dances such as the Sarabande were invented by the devil.⁴⁴⁹

Polish-born American choreographer Nathan Vizonsky contrasts the emotional energy of Spanish dance with Eastern European Jewish folk dances, claiming in a 1930 Yiddish-language article “Vegn yidishn folks-tants” (about Jewish folk dance) that Jewish dance is not dominated by passion, but instead emphasizes gentle humor, biting satire, and deep tragedy.⁴⁵⁰ Yet immigration, urbanization, and acculturation challenged the make-up of Jewish dance. As we saw in Cahan’s novella *Yekl* and novel *The Rise of David Levinsky*, Yiddish-speaking Jews who moved to cities such as New York embraced mixed-sex social dance as a leisure pursuit and token of Americanization that often marked a sharp contrast with the dance practices in their native villages. It is clear from Opatoshu’s repeated descriptions of dance and references to specific dances in a variety of literary scenarios that he was interested in dance both as an art form and literary motif. In setting a novella full of American-style physicality and naturalism in Poland, Opatoshu

⁴⁴³ Eduard Reisinger, *Die Tanzkunst und die Tänze* (Vienna: C. Daberkow, 1889), 37.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁴⁴⁷ Albert Czerwinski, *Geschichte der Tanzkunst bei den kultivierten Völkern* (Leipzig: J. J. Weber, 1862), 59.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 64-65. Czerwinski claims that the bolero is “ein edler, bescheidener und dezenterer Tanz als der Fandango” (a nobler, more modest and decent dance than the fandango). *Ibid.*, 86.

⁴⁵⁰ Vizonsky, “Vegn yidishn folks-tants,” 29. Thanks to Karen Goodman for sharing her work on Vizonsky with me, including this article.

makes use of European local color in service of his aesthetic aims. He does so by including unscrupulous Jewish criminals (rather than American frontier characters) and also in his use of erotically-charged dance. Opatoshu's motivations for including the pas d'Espagne probably resembled those that inspired Russian dancers to adopt a Spanish-style dance in the first place: cosmopolitanism, passion, and sexual tension. Such elements are precisely what writers such as Cahan said were missing from European Jewish culture and Yiddish literature. Opatoshu inserts these elements into his literature through his sensual descriptions of dance.

Opatoshu includes three dance scenes in his novella. Each of these scenes prompts readers to ponder questions of propriety and impropriety, legality and illegality, border-crossing, transgression, liminality, and desire. The first scene takes place in a tavern, the second at a wedding, and the third at a brothel. Each scene illustrates Zanzl's inability to escape a life of crime. Zanzl's enjoyment of the tavern sets in motion a series of events that leads to his meeting with his friend's wife Beyle and their scandalous dance at the wedding, and his visit to the brothel is part of an episode that seals that his criminal fate, Beyle's widowhood (after her husband is fatally shot on a smuggling venture), and their forbidden sexual relationship.⁴⁵¹ Both the tavern and the brothel are explicitly coded as Underworld sites, where Zanzl carouses with his nefarious friends (such an ex-lover who works as a tavern maid) after engaging in illegal activity and where Jews and Christians mingle to an extent unimaginable in more respectable locations. While all three sites explore the ideas of space that form the crux of the chapter, I focus on the

⁴⁵¹ As a childless widow, Beyle must either marry or ritually divorce her late husband's brother, or else any children she has will be declared "mamzerim" (bastards born of an adulterous mother, who are legally forbidden to marry). Opatoshu makes this point explicit in his Yiddish text.

wedding dance scene in my discussion of *A roman fun a ferd-ganef*, with a particular emphasis on the pas d'Espagne, since it is the moment in which Zanol must publicly confront his dilemma about choosing between a respectable path and the life he has led, and proves he is unable to withstand the temptation of the Underworld. For Opatoshu, a naturalist writer, dance manifests the inner drives that compel characters towards an inescapable outcome. While Zanol initially romances a respectable young woman named Rokhl and flirts with the idea of turning away from a criminal path, he is unable to resist the lure of the tavern, his old friends, or a daring couple's dance with his friend's seductive wife Beyle.

In a scene at his sister's wedding, Zanol goes to the women's section so that he can see Rokhl, who promised to wear a white dress. Opatoshu's use of color in this scene is almost cartoonishly overdetermined, and the white dress underscores Rokhl's virginal status and her hope of becoming Zanol's bride. Beyle, in contrast to Rokhl, wears a colorful and sophisticated ensemble that immediately identifies her as a sexually experienced woman from Warsaw. Where Zanol and Rokhl do not openly interact with each other, for fear of drawing attention to their secret relationship, Beyle is forthright with Zanol and immediately takes control of the situation, demanding that the young man dance with her and choosing what their next dance will be, a pas d'Espagne.

- un itst, Zanol, varft arayn in kon un mir veln tantsn!
- ober, di vayber... veln dokh... – hot Zanol ongehoyn shtamel.
- veys ikh vos?! kh'vel zogn, az ikh bin ayers a mume. gut? – hot zikh Beyle tsulakht un a blits geton mit ire koylen-oygn.

Zanol hot ayngedorfn di klezmer af a tants, arumgenumen Beylen un zikh arayngetrogen tsvishn di porlekh. eltere vayber hobn a bisl krum gekukt, nor es iz dokh a khasene! ale hobn gekukt vi Beyle shvebt, trogt zikh laykht vi a yunger foygl, rirt koym on di podloge. Zanol hot zi laykht gehaltn, etvas zikh eyngeboyn un iz farshikert gevorn fun ir shmekedign buzem. er hot on alts fargesn. er hot nor gefilt vi er trogt zikh epes in a kishef-tants, un di perfumen

hobn alts mer un mer im geklapt in ponem, beroyst, un dos zaydene kleyd hot geredt, zikh geboyn un geshpet vi a makhne shlangen. Beyle hot a geshray geton tsu di klezmerim: padspan!⁴⁵²

“And now, Zanvl, go in the circle and we’ll dance!”

“But, the women... they will...” Zanvl began to stammer.

“You know what?! I’ll say that I’m your aunt! Good?” Beyle started laughing and her coal-black eyes flashed.

Zanvl paid the musicians for a dance, put his arms around Beyle, and led her through the other couples. Older women looked at them a bit askance, but a wedding’s a wedding! Everyone looked at Beyle as she floated, carried herself as lightly as a young bird, barely touching the floor. Zanvl held her lightly, bending over slightly, and became intoxicated from her fragrant bosom. He forgot everything. He only felt as if he was participating in a magic dance, and the perfumes struck him repeatedly in the face, intoxicated, and her silken dress spoke, curved, and hissed like a group of snakes. Beyle shouted to the musicians: pas d’Espagne!

Beyle’s dance with Zanvl is explicitly transgressive and seductive. Although they operate in a public space, Zanvl notices intimate details about Beyle: her bewitching scent, the way her dress sounds like snakes. Beyle presents an image that is strikingly sinister, exotic, and even phallic. Opatoshu’s description of Beyle’s foreignness and eroticism prepares Zanvl for a seductive dance, even before Beyle announces to the musicians what they will perform.

The sexual tension becomes even more noticeable when the couple actually dances the pas d’Espagne. The dance floor empties and everyone watches as Beyle and Zanvl separate, approach each other, and finally embrace.

keyner hot nisht getantst. Beyle iz geshtanen in eyn ek. Zanvl in tsveytn. Beyle hot ufgehoybn mit der rekhter hant ir shlep un di liakirkes mit di shvarste durkhzikhtige zokn hobn zikh gehoybn fun ort. zi hot genumen shtil mit-zingn, zikh farmosten tsum tants, un der himl-bloyer shal hot zikh gerukt iber dem halz, geblendt di oygn. zi hot a hoyb geton a fus, laykht afergevorfn di kurtse vayse halke, grandiez a boyg geton dem elastishn kerper, farshayt ufgetsoygn di akseln

⁴⁵² Yosef Opatoshu, *A roman fun a ferd ganef un andere ertseylungen* (New York: Literarisher farlag, 1917), 67.

un zikh getrogn ontkegn Zanzvlen, zikh getrogn ontkegn im mit blitsn in di shvartse oygn... ot hobn zey zikh arumgenumen.⁴⁵³

Nobody else danced. Beyle stood at one corner, Zanzvl at the other. Beyle lifted her train with her right hand and lifted her patent leather shoes and black, transparent stockings from their place. She hummed quietly, preparing to dance, and the sky-blue shawl slid on her neck, dazzling the eyes with its color. She lifted one leg, brushed aside her short white petticoat, made a grand bow with her elastic body, provocatively raised her shoulder and moved towards Zanzvl, moved towards him with her sparkling dark eyes... Then they took hold of each other in close embrace.

At Beyle's suggestion, the couple dances a racy pas d'Espagne, alone on the dance floor. Wedding musicians were paid by the dancers, rather than the hosts of the event, and only those dancers who paid for a particular dance had the right to participate. Opatoshu exploits the scene for maximum dramatic and visual effect. He allows the anticipation to build, using the dance choreography, by describing the characters separating, facing each other in preparation for the dance, approaching each other, and finally embracing. The fact that Beyle lifts her skirt is provocative, and reminds readers of the earlier tavern dance scene, in which a tavern maid lifted her skirts while dancing in an attempt to capture Zanzvl's attention. Opatoshu does not describe the specific dance steps, but he fully emphasizes the emotional and visual impact of the overall dance figure: separation, anticipation, and approaching.

Opatoshu's description is emotionally riveting, yet it would be difficult to identify as a pas d'Espagne from Opatoshu's description alone. Since dance plays a largely symbolic role in the novella, Opatoshu does not focus on ethnographic detail. The elements of separation and approaching, while maintaining eye contact, are also features of more traditional Jewish dances. Opatoshu presents the pas d'Espagne as daring and

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

exotic at the same time that he has erased the most foreign elements of the choreography itself: the Spanish-styled hand gestures and partners who turn away from each other.⁴⁵⁴ His dance choreography, like Wisse's characterization of the romantic plot trajectory, is thus erotic without truly breaking with convention.

Opatoshu's use of eye contact and spectatorship in this scene enhances the theatricality of this moment and intensifies the emotional drama. Characters do not speak about their desires, but instead they communicate their feelings through an elaborate network of looking and reacting to what they see. Throughout the wedding scene, Opatoshu links characters through sight, as they gaze and are conscious of being observed. Beyle and Rokhl perform their own advancing and retreating motions with their eyes as they silently fight over Zanol, one can even say that their darting and more prolonged looks dance around each other. At the same time, Zanol, thanks to his confusion and inability to act decisively, is passed between the two women. He looks at Beyle and flushes; he turns to Rokhl and goes pale. Indeed, even his physical appearance is completely determined by these two women, each of whom knows precisely what she wants from him, in contrast with his own weak will. Like a mirror that simply reflects the woman he faces, Zanol's blushes mimic Beyle's colorful attire while his pallor copies Rokhl's white dress.

Zanol's fellow criminals respect him for his strength and aggression as a horse thief, yet the young man loses his agency when confronted with the two rival women. The seductress Beyle pushes him into a female space and a feminine role by prevailing

⁴⁵⁴ As a point of comparison, in his historical novella *A tog in regnsburg*, Opatoshu depicts a dancer who engages with representatives of different social classes (a characteristic of the Dance of Death) in his description of the Jew's Dance, but only includes two dancers in his Dance of Death. See Yosef Opatoshu, *A tog in regnsburg* (Paris: Farlag di goldene pave, 1955), 96.

upon him to dance in a room full of women. She treats him like a naughty boy and chooses their dance. Even when they dance together, Opatoshu describes her physical presence in much more positive and self-controlled terms. Her dancing body is light, graceful, and seductive. Zavl's motions are most notable for their awkwardness; confronted with his conflicted feelings and guilt, he repeatedly stands up and sits down but is ultimately unable to muster the courage to talk to and clarify matters with his beloved Rokhl. Zavl's inability to apologize to his slighted sweetheart underscores his overall unsuitability to be the husband of such a respectable girl. In fact, he remains incapable of addressing her articulately for the duration of the novella, which chronicles the overall deterioration of Zavl's moral character, social standing, and economic status.

The shape and form of *pas d'Espagne* choreography, which involves advancing and retreating, facing and turning away, and stylings with a foreign, cosmopolitan flare, is a useful organizing principle for the pivotal role of dance in Opatoshu's novella. Dance both adds to a disreputable ambiance and aids in seedy flirtation, while in the case of Opatoshu's particularly obvious wedding dance scene, it pushes the plot and character development forward while mirroring, in the very steps and figures, the struggles and interpersonal dynamic of the characters. Zavl resists, yet cannot escape from, the allure of the Underworld and his criminal buddies much in the same way he is unable to refuse Beyle's invitation to dance. The structure of the dance itself recapitulates Zavl's struggle and failure to give up the life of crime into which he was born (especially since Opatoshu includes dance scenes in his descriptions of Underworld settings). Zavl pulls away, yet ends up embracing both Beyle and the Underworld she represents. In the review I cited at the beginning of this section, Moyshe Nadir's biggest compliment about Opatoshu is that

he knows his scoundrels. I would add that he knows them well enough to know that they should dance.

The three primary texts I discuss in this chapter span geographic distances, genre choice, and medium. Cahan's novella *Yekl*, Pinski's play *Yankl der shmied*, and Opatoshu's novella *Roman fun a ferd-ganef* were all written by writers who were born in Eastern Europe, immigrated to America, and wrote literary texts that embraced a shocking degree of physicality and interrogated ideas of Jewish masculinity. Later on, all three texts were adapted into films. In addition to themes of Jewish culture and masculinity, all three texts look at the role of dance in challenging, and sometimes wrenching apart, existing relationships. In all three texts, a man threatens his established romantic relationship by dancing with another woman. He faces a choice between a more modern or socially liberal woman he meets in connection with his workplace, and a more proper woman associated with the domestic sphere. That is to say, the dance floor is, more specifically than in the other chapters of this dissertation, a place between the public realm of economic engagement and the private sphere.

The three principle male characters, each of whom is referred to in the title of the literary text, represent Jewish antiheroes; robust, physically active, illiterate working men who reveal, by their very contrast with the historical ideal of the Torah scholar, the influence of American masculine norms on Yiddish writers. In contrast to the German authors discussed in Chapter 2, who consider the pathetic character of the *shlimiel* and the cruelties of social exclusion, these characters perform their masculinity in an aggressive, destructive manner that leaves them emotionally stunted and unable to

function in relationships, as revealed in the stories. By carousing with dancing women, these men slight respectable, pious women who do not dance and, according to social conventions, would be more suited to a pious, scholarly man.

At the same time, however, as we have seen in the previous chapters, Jewish women do not necessarily want a pious man, instead preferring to enjoy the company of a nimble dance partner. Throughout this dissertation, the male authors I have discussed differ in terms of how they present characters' understanding of the transient utopian quality of the dance floor, although they typically treat the dance floor as a site that leads to illicit romance, with disastrous consequences when characters try to continue these dalliances after the dancing ends. *Yankl der shmied* differs from this model in a way that connects Pinski's play with the prose works in Chapter 5. When Yankl manages to save his relationship, it is because both he and his wife consider his boisterous dancing to be a momentary lapse rather than a permanent shift of affections, a sign that both spouses do not think dancing necessarily determines future social interactions. Although Pinski focuses on marriage and romantic relationships, rather than on a young woman's maturation, he recognizes the impermanence of flirtation on the dance floor. As we will see in the following chapter, women writers depict the dance floor, not as a place that invites long-lasting romantic partnership, but instead as an opportunity for self-development.

CHAPTER 5: EXPRESSING THE SELF

The previous chapters focused primarily upon the works of male writers, in both German and Yiddish, who explore the dance floor as a site of disruption, misreading, and disciplinary function. Their female characters fit specific types, in order to fulfill a more general political or aesthetic goal: a romantic prize, an exotic victim, or a symbol of a particular life path. The final chapter examines three works by women writers in which the dance floor is a space of personal development, self-expression, and resistance, one in which rebellious flirtation is part of the transient experience of the party rather than the main event, and dance is a way of negotiating a traumatic incident.

In this chapter, we see what happens when characters do not misread the transitory nature of dance, but instead use dance as a way of negotiating their specific (traumatic) experiences as women. They offer cautious or resistant responses towards dance floor dalliances, and focus their energies on their personal expression rather than romance. When flirtation occurs (as it often does), it is a function of the larger mood of the dance floor rather than the main event. These women do not lose their heads or hearts when the music stops, and they carve a space for themselves that is not dependent on their choice of a romantic partner. The protagonists of these three stories face outside social and economic forces which threaten their hard-won sense of self, but the consequences that they face also tend to be less melodramatic and tragic than in the texts by male writers. All three stories problematize the institution of marriage and treat it as a threat to a woman's autonomy, even as they acknowledge the temptations and potential economic benefits of romantic relationships.

The three early twentieth century texts that form the crux of this chapter: Fradl Shtok's 1919 short story "Der shlayer" (The Veil), Clementine Krämer's 1920 novel *Esther* (also published under the title of *Die Tänzerin*, The Dancer), and Kadya Molodowsky's 1942 novel *Fun lublin biz nyu-york: togbukh fun Rivke Zilberg* (From Lublin to New York: Diary of Rivke Zilberg) all articulate the dance floor as a space

where characters can resist normal social constraints in the context of modernity and early twentieth century culture. Dancing, and the ability to maintain a sense of autonomy on the dance floor, are also important ways for characters to express themselves. While this paradigm holds true for both female and male characters, the texts I focus upon are concerned primarily with how young women negotiate the space of the dance floor. More than simply a space that provides moments of autonomy for young Jewish woman, the dance floor gives characters agency that is not dependent on their choice of a partner.

As we have seen, the literary dance floor is a seemingly-utopian space that offers characters a respite from their everyday lives. For the male authors discussed thus far, dance is an opportunity to reveal social problems, often through didactic plots that punish characters for wayward dancing. Those who misinterpret the magic of the dance floor as a permanent state suffer negative consequences, typically because their community is unable to accept a challenge to the system of arranging marriages. At the same time, authors do not criticize the institution of marriage as such, but instead interrogate whether young people have a say in when and with whom they marry. In most cases, young women find romantic love irresistible and tend not to oppose marriage to the right man. Even writers Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and Yosef Opatoshu, whose marriages were unconventional, do not focus on the mechanics of Jewish marriage law and its specific impact on women. Leopold Kompert's novella, *Die Jahrzeit* (The Yortsayt), comes closest to addressing the problem of *agunes* (abandoned wives,), but he does not explicitly use the term or describe the legal implications for a woman who essentially has no husband but is forbidden to remarry. Instead, it is Shtok, Krämer, and Molodowsky

who focus more deeply upon the ramifications of Jewish marriage law and the social expectation of marriage for Jewish women.

For much of human history, marriage was primarily an economic institution. Families typically arranged marriages, keeping in mind goals such as consolidating property and sealing social bonds between families, securing a daughter's financial security, and providing a son with exclusive sexual access to a woman who would bear him legitimate children. While spouses might share fondness and even love, companionate marriage is a modern phenomenon. Within this context, it is not surprising that Jewish marriage law centers upon the groom giving the bride an object of value (typically a ring) and declaring her his wife. Although progressive for its time, since a bride nominally consented to the marriage and received a marriage contract that guaranteed her financial security in case of divorce, marriage law was nonetheless patriarchal, since only the husband could initiate a divorce by giving his wife a *get*.

A man who did not give his wife a *get*, whether due to abandonment, mental illness, malice, or dying without witnesses, left his wife an *agune*.⁴⁵⁵ An *agune* could not remarry under Jewish law; any future romantic relationship she had was considered adulterous and any future children would be *mamzerim*, legal bastards, unable to participate in Jewish communal life or even marry Jews. Communal leaders have used various methods to temper this heartbreaking situation; reformers have sharply modified the law, traditionalists have worked to declare marriages retroactively invalid, endorsed additional contracts that impose excessive fines on men who do not cooperate in giving divorce

⁴⁵⁵ Bluma Goldstein, *Enforced Marginality: Jewish Narratives on Abandoned Wives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 2. Chapter 1 of this monograph focuses on Jewish family law.

documents, worked with civil authorities to jail husbands who withhold the *get*, or even adopted vigilante tactics in order to obtain *gets*.⁴⁵⁶ Most of these measures were nonexistent in early twentieth century European Jewish communities, a time when migration and war separated couples and made it difficult to determine the whereabouts of husbands.⁴⁵⁷ Literary texts such as Chaim Grade's *Di agune* (The Agunah, 1961) and Isaac Bashevis Singer's "Taybele un Hurmiza" (Taybele's Demon, 1962) dramatize the *agune*'s plight. Recent studies by scholars such as ChaeRan Freeze and Bluma Goldstein put the *agune*'s liminal state in social and historical context.

Even when the characters I discuss in this chapter do not explicitly consider Jewish marriage law, the specific burdens that marriage imposes on women are an important backdrop to my discussion. Any women who enters into a traditional Jewish marriage faces the risk of becoming an *agune*, and a character such as Manya in "Der Shlayer," who flirts with a traveling musician, is dancing around precisely the sort of unreliable man who could leave her an abandoned woman, like her mother. Esther, in *Esther*, faces a threat of a different kind, with a man who attempts to oppose his will on her body by dancing with her without her consent and convincing her mother to promise Esther's hand in marriage. Krämer's novel explores the threat marriage poses to a woman's autonomy while, at the same time, disavowing the double standard about a modern career woman's sexual behavior. In a similar vein, but on a different continent, Rivke in *Fun lublin biz nyu-york* experiences courtship and marriage as a loss of her identity, akin to the process of assimilation into American culture. While several characters in

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid, 4-8.

⁴⁵⁷ For more historical context, see ChaeRan Y. Freeze, *Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2002), 230-36.

Molodowsky's novel criticize the notion that a young woman's only option for economic survival is to find a nice boy and marry him, Rivke is unable – and perhaps unwilling – to stand up to familial pressure and the forces of Americanization. While her circumstances differ markedly from Manya's reality, both young women end up similarly trapped.

The three writers I focus upon in this chapter are certainly not the only women writers to express an ambivalence towards marriage, or even wedding dancing. Already in 1771, in her epistolary novel *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim* (The History of Miss Sophie von Sternheim), German writer Sophie von La Roche reveals an intricate web of intrigue that traps her heroine at a courtly ball, forcing her into a loveless fake marriage. In the same novel, La Roche sympathetically portrays a widow who refuses to remarry. According to Simon Richter, the character of the Widow von C— shows how “the author is able to entertain the possibility of complete female independence that is based on rejection of the violence of marriage.”⁴⁵⁸ Nineteenth century writer Fanny Lewald also questioned courtship norms and arranged marriages in works such as *Clementine* (1843) and her novel of Jewish emancipation *Jenny* (1843). In *Die Jüdische Mutter* (The Jewish Mother, translated as *A Jewish Mother in Berlin*, 1930/31), Gertrud Kolmar reminds readers of the widowed protagonist's alienation from her late (non-Jewish) husband through her depictions of the seedy underbelly of Weimar Berlin, including a scene in a gay bar where the protagonist dances with a transvestite. While it would be simplistic to claim that all women writers or only women writers consider marriage critically, these authors tend to be more creative than their male counterparts when it comes to imagining the autonomy of their female characters.

⁴⁵⁸ Simon Richter, *Missing the Breast: Gender, Fantasy, and the Body in the German Enlightenment* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2006), 152.

In Yiddish literature, criticism of marriage is, if anything, more explicit. Gysia, the protagonist of Celia Dropkin's short story, "A tentserin" (A dancer, 1959), is tragically unable to reconcile her fantasies of dancing with the realities of married life and motherhood. Both forms of familial obligation weigh her down, literally and figuratively, until the only form of dance she can experience is one into madness. While Gysia views dancing as a form of escape, dancing can also be a way for a character to explore more traumatic emotions. Esther Singer Kreitman underscores her protagonist Dvoyre's unhappiness about her arranged marriage through a wedding dance she refers to as a *sheydim tants* (dance of demons), an image Kreitman repeats in the novel's title, *Der sheydim-tants* (The Dance of Demons, 1936, also published in English and German translation as *Deborah*). Kreitman portrays a *mitsve-tants* dance as a new torture for a young woman straining at the boundaries of her social confines. The bride denies her connection with the other dancers, calling them a "khevre fremde yidn" - a group of Jews she does not know.⁴⁵⁹ Dvoyre's adverse reaction to her wedding dancing underscores the way dance typically celebrates and affirms a marriage, and stresses Dvoyre's unwillingness to participate in the marriage itself. Crucially, in contrast to *maskilic* memoirs or male writers like Leopold Kompert (see Chapter 2) who also use dance to decry traditional matchmaking practices, Kreitman attacks Jewish marriage rituals *specifically* because of the way they constrain a woman's autonomy. Where acculturated male writers imagine companionate love as a possible (or utopian) solution to the problem of Jewish marriage, their female counterparts question whether any kind of marriage can replace a woman's ability to make her own decisions.

⁴⁵⁹ Esther Kreitman, *Der sheydim-tants* (Warsaw: Farlag Kh. Bzshoza, 1936), 242.

Fradl Shtok

Born in Skala, Galicia, Fradl Shtok (1890-ca. 1952) immigrated to New York in 1907 and began participating in the literary circle of *di yunge*.⁴⁶⁰ She won acclaim for her poetry, and was one of the first poets to write a sonnet or sonnet cycle in Yiddish.⁴⁶¹ As Norma Fain Pratt notes how her verse: “explored the institution of marriage and the relationships between men and women. Erotic, exotic, turbulent, and audacious, her poetry challenged the passivity of women in love relationships.”⁴⁶² In a theoretical essay entitled “Vos iz poezie” (What is poetry?), Shtok emphasizes the importance of physicality and the body for poetry, claiming poetry should have an effect “oyf di organishe taylen fun kerper, un farurzakhen an unmitelbaren oysgus fun energie, bavegung.”⁴⁶³ (on the organic parts of the body, and induce an immediate outpouring of energy, of movement.) While there is no archive of Shtok’s papers to contextualize her creative process, this theoretical work suggests she perceived a continuity between the physicality of her literary themes and the impact on her reader.

⁴⁶⁰ Jules Chametzky et al., *Jewish American Literature: A Norton Anthology* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 290. Ruth R. Wisse takes a different approach than most other scholars in assessing Shtok’s literary reception and relationship to her male colleagues in *di yunge*: “Her work was featured in many publications of the Yunge, as were her theoretical discussions of art. Nevertheless, respectfully as her contributions were received, she is not mentioned socially as one of the group, which may be part of the reason she later turned from Yiddish to English.” Wisse, *A Little Love in Big Manhattan*, 16.

⁴⁶¹ For a discussion of Shtok’s poetry and Yiddish canon formation, see Kathryn Hellerstein, “Canon and Gender: Women Poets in Two Modern Yiddish Anthologies”, in *Women of the Word: Jewish Women and Jewish Writing*, ed. Judith R. Baskin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 146-48. For more about the poetics of Shtok’s poetry, including the musicality of her love song “Serenade” (Serenade), see Kathryn Hellerstein, *A Question of Tradition: Women Poets in Yiddish, 1586-1987* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 38-39.

⁴⁶² Norma Fain Pratt, “Culture and Radical Politics: Yiddish Women Writers in America, 1890-1940,” in *Women of the Word: Jewish Women and Jewish Writing*, ed. Judith R. Baskin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 122.

⁴⁶³ Fradel Shtok, “Vos iz poezie?”, in *Fun mentsh tsu mentsh: a zamlbukh far poezie*, ed. M[oyshe] L[eyb] Halpern ([New York]: Farlag Nyu-York, [1915]), 21.

In 1919, Shtok published her one book in Yiddish, *Gezamelte dertseylungen* (Collected Stories) a collection of thirty-eight short stories, which received mixed reviews. Shtok was particularly angered by a condescending review in *Der tog* by Aaron Glanz (Leyeles).⁴⁶⁴ Shtok published a novel in English, *Musicians Only* (1927), which was neither critically nor commercially successful. For decades it was believed that Shtok died around 1930 in a mental institution.⁴⁶⁵ More recent scholarship challenges this tragic narrative of Shtok's life, revealing that Shtok corresponded with Abraham Cahan in 1942, published a story in that same year in the *Forverts*, and lived in California under the name of Frances Zinn.⁴⁶⁶ Even more enigmatically, I recently located a play manuscript by Shtok dated from 1923 (four years after she was believed to have stopped writing in Yiddish) in the Marwick Collection at the Library of Congress. Entitled *Der amerikaner* (The American), this play comprises the longest known text in Shtok's own handwriting. I am not aware that it was ever published or performed. These new biographical discoveries invite a reexamination of Shtok's literary production.

Shtok frequently employs dance as a literary motif and plot element. Her stories typically introduce an ordinary character, put this character into a reality that facilitates dreams or fantasies of a different (often Viennese) reality, and reveal how a lasting escape from the mundane is impossible. In Shtok's story "Kalines" (Winter Berries, 1919), the young protagonist Reyzl fantasizes about Austro-Hungarian court life and "tantsn mit a

⁴⁶⁴ For more about Glanz's 1915 article "Kultur un di froy" (Culture and the Woman) which professes the need for women to inspire male creativity, see Hellerstein, *A Question of Tradition*, 30-31.

⁴⁶⁵ Chametzky et al., *Jewish American Literature*, 291.

⁴⁶⁶ Joachim Neugroschel, ed. and trans., *No Star Too Beautiful: An Anthology of Yiddish Stories from 1382 to the Present* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 463; Helene Kenvin, "Fradel Shtok: Author and Poet," under "Skala Luminaries," on the Skala ShtetLinks page from JewishGen, updated April 23 2008, available from <http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/SkalaPodol/FradelShtok.html>, accessed January 25, 2013. See also Hellerstein, *A Question of Tradition*, 433. Thanks to Kathryn Hellerstein for making me aware of this source.

kavalier in dem vunderbaren samet-klayd” (dancing with a cavalier while wearing a wonderful velvet dress).⁴⁶⁷ She associates dance with foreignness, aristocracy, and individualism, all of which are outside of her personal experience as a daughter of a poor family. In order to cope, Reyzl retreats into a dream world where such luxuries are possible. In a review, critic Shmuel Niger uses “Kalines” as an example of how dreamers are the essence of Shtok’s entire literary corpus.⁴⁶⁸ Shtok associates dance with dreams and momentary escape from reality.

In Shtok’s short story “A tants” (A Dance, 1919), set in New York, working class immigrant Jews momentarily forget the hardship of their lives when they participate in wedding dancing. The protagonist Meyer remembers his European youth, when he dreamed of taking dancing lessons and yearned to move to Vienna. He feels an outpouring of emotion on the dance floor: “iz im dos harts nokh amol yung gevorn, zikh tsuvaksn biz tsum halz un nokhgezungn di klezmer: rakhto-rakhta, rakhta-ri-ram.”⁴⁶⁹ (He felt his heart become young again, expand within him, and repeat after the musicians: rakhto-rakhto-rakhto-ri-ram.) The wedding is a collective experience, and all around him, other guests share in a collective nostalgia. Yet despite these pleasurable memories, Shtok points to the darker side of dancing: Meyer worries that he will overexert himself on the dance floor, and as he walks home from the wedding, he regrets attending a party when he has so many financial troubles at home. In “A tants,” and in “Der shlayer” (as will soon be seen), characters risk losing themselves on the dance floor.

⁴⁶⁷ Shtok, *Gezamelte dertseylungen*, 259. For an English translation of this story, see Fradel Shtok, “Winter Berries,” in *Beautiful as the Moon, Radiant as the Stars: Jewish Women in Yiddish Stories*, ed. Sandra Bark, trans. Irene Klepfisz (New York: Warner Books, 2003), 21-28.

⁴⁶⁸ Sh[muel] Niger, “Di dertseylungen fun Fradel Shtok,” *Tsukunft* (October 1920): 608.

⁴⁶⁹ Fradel Shtok, *Gezamelte dertseylungen* (New York: Farlag “nay tsayt,” 1919), 19.

Shtok juxtaposes between the rich fantasy lives of her characters and the cold, mundane reality of their ordinary lives. Her subtle, deceptively simplistic stories demonstrate quiet social criticism and an ironic distance from her characters. Shtok's seemingly-objective contrast between desire and lived experience agitates the reader and gives her work an unacknowledged force. Unlike the programmatic fiction of Leopold Kompert or Karl Emil Franzos, Shtok does not overtly criticize any individuals or groups for their actions. Shtok also differs from the naturalist Yosef Opatoshu, who gives character flaws that lead them, inevitably, towards an unwelcome fate. For Shtok, social occurrences appear like unquestioned acts of nature. Using an objective tone, she explains how characters interact with the reality they face. In his review of Shtok's short story collection in *Di naye velt* (The New World), critic Moissaye Olgin characterizes Shtok's portrayal of the options available to her characters as pessimistic, an attribute which he views as both distinctive and a strength of her work.⁴⁷⁰ Cynically commenting on her socially-conscripted characters, Olgin compares their experience attending a dance and wearing fine clothes to a worm wearing a butterfly's wings. Although this description sounds jarring, and the review is frequently classified as unfairly negative, Shtok focuses intensely upon both her characters' desire to escape from social strictures and the fleeting form this escape takes. Both of these elements are crucial to understanding how Shtok describes dance.

⁴⁷⁰ Moissaye Olgin, "Pesimizm," *Di naye velt* (January 9, 1920): 16.

Flirting with Disaster: “Der Shlayer”

Originally published in her 1919 collection of short stories, “Der shlayer” is one of Shtok’s best-known texts, especially because it has been anthologized in an English translation.⁴⁷¹ As is typical for Shtok stories that have been translated into English, “Der shlayer” focuses upon a young woman’s first profound experience of desire, and the way she interacts with her traditional Eastern European village. Since her mother is an *agune*, the protagonist Manya is normally not allowed to attend amusements and celebrations. For once, however, her mother relents to allow her to attend her cousin Beyle’s wedding, so she can take care of the bride’s veil and myrtle garland (essentially acting as a Galician maid-of-honor). At the wedding, Manya, momentarily escapes her marginal social position by participating in the communal festivities and flirting with a wedding musician. Throughout the story, Shtok describes the music and musicians as objects of Manya’s desire, but it is unclear until the very end how far Manya will act on this desire. Although Manya relishes the freedom to experiment, while dancing, with social interactions that are normally forbidden to her, when the wedding ends, she quietly returns to her normal life.

Dancing is a risky pursuit for Manya, because it involves flirtation with a potentially dangerous suitor. She has led an extremely sheltered life, and it is unclear whether she has the emotional tools to handle her first foray into romantic banter. Her mother Zlate attempts to shield her daughter from society and, implicitly, to protect her from replicating her own broken marriage, through the use of force: stepping on her foot

⁴⁷¹ Fradel Shtok, “The Veil,” in *Found Treasures: Stories by Yiddish Women Writers*, ed. Frieda Forman et al., trans. Brina Menachovsky Rose (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1994), 99-104.

to teach her not to take an extra piece of cake, binding her to the safe domestic environment by requiring her to sew instead of allowing her to attend village entertainments, and finally fastening her absent husband's coat tightly around the girl's neck so that the burden of parental behavior resembles a chokehold. Yet Zlate's refusal to allow her children to hold their heads up (*keyn kop ufheybn*) or attend social celebrations means that Manya does not have any opportunity to become socially savvy before she enters into her first flirtation.⁴⁷² For Manya, the wedding represents a heady, completely new experience that transports her away from her solitary everyday burdens into an environment full of community, dance, flirtation, and music.

Despite Zlate's best attempts to shield her daughter from society, Manya longs to hear the klezmer musicians up close. In fact, Shtok uses their music as a narrative motif to introduce Manya's awakening desires. The musicians keep her up at night when she hears them pass through the town playing a sad melody. It is as if they personify her restless yearnings. She is particularly intrigued by the unnamed flutist. He plays a suggestively-shaped instrument, and has a foreign, dangerous appeal. A German-speaking student from Vienna, he ran away from home to spite his father and become a klezmer musician. Although the flutist participates in a sanctioned community event, his presence is thrilling. The fact that he has quarreled with his father could even serve as a form of wish-fulfillment, since he had the opportunity to choose to leave home rather than be abandoned by a parent. From the moment her friend Leytse tells her about him, Manya seems fascinated with him. The feeling appears to be mutual; although Manya does not initially look directly at him herself, she observes him staring at her. Yet the

⁴⁷² Shtok, *Gezamelte dertseylungen*, 106.

flutist's rebellious background, and his itinerant profession, imply that even if he and Manya share an attraction for each other, their encounter at the wedding is unlikely to lead to a more stable and lasting bond. Yiddish literary texts such as Sholem Aleykhem's novel *Stempniu* (1888) and Isaac Bashevis Singer's ghostly short story, "Der toyter klezmer" (The Dead Fiddler, 1982), support the notion that klezmer musicians make capricious and licentious husbands. Although it would be understandable if Manya sought out an escape from her restrictive home life, she risks letting her intoxicating new environment cloud her judgment. She faces the risk that, out of innocence or a desire for escape, she might test out a more lasting romance with a man who seems likely to be an unreliable suitor, or might even be the sort to abandon his wife and leave her an *agune*.

The music and musicians influence Manya's perceptions of those around her. When they first play for the bride, Manya is transfixed by the flute. The instrument (and, implicitly, the man playing it) grow in her esteem, and Manya wants to impress them. She feels embarrassed that the other guests react to the music in an undignified or emotional way, even though the specific purpose of the ritual (the *kale baveynen*) is to bring the bride to tears. Even when he performs a specific ritual function, the flutist challenges Manya's ties to her community and traditions, especially since the music influences her to remember each of the guests' social foibles and personal limitations. Meanwhile, Manya feels as if the musicians are smiling behind their mustaches. Manya tests the villagers with sincere traditional religiosity and the musicians with worldly disdain. Manya sets herself, as observer, somewhere in between, and it is unclear how she will ultimately choose to situate herself.

Even the ritual context of this musical performance questions the institution of marriage. During the *kale baveynen*, the *badkhen* sings a “semi-improvised and formulaic song” about how the bride was leaving her happy childhood behind to take on the heavy burdens of married life.⁴⁷³ Musicians accompany the *badkhen*’s song with sad music in a minor key. Manya does not listen to the *badkhen*’s words, but instead to the instruments. She imagines words to go with the instrumental melodies, and finds herself agreeing with their grim pronouncements about marriage: “...zi hot derfilt, az es iz take emes vos men zogt, az der trumeyt trubet: ‘dir vet oykh azoy zayn, dir vet oykh azoy zayn...’ dos fiddle veynt: “oy, vestu farshvartst vern!” un der bas beyzert zikh: ‘davke azoy, davke azoy’ ...”⁴⁷⁴ (...And she sensed that it was really true what they said, as the trumpet sounded: “this too for you, this too for you...” The fiddle cried: “oh, you will go through hard times!” The bass scolded: “just like that that, just like that”...) Ironically, Shtok’s narrative warns of the dangers of marriage at the same time that it articulates the musicians’ appeal and the pleasures of flirtation. The musicians are worldly, exciting, and good at their craft. She seems to trust their authority about the ways of the world. Manya cannot help but identify them with the social world and sensual delights she is usually forbidden from experiencing.

Manya’s interactions with the flutist intensify during the wedding dancing, since she exchanges flirtatious glances with him while dancing *Les Lanciers*. Sometimes called a “Lancers quadrille,” this European social dance with set dance figures was typically performed by eight couples in a square, although some descriptions (such as in Yosef Opatoshu’s *A roman fun a ferd ganef*), eight couples dance together. Shtok does not

⁴⁷³ Feldman, *Klezmer*, 148.

⁴⁷⁴ Shtok, *Gezamelte dertseylungen*, 110.

describe the precise dance choreography in any detail, or even mention the other dancers (presumably a group of women). Instead, she focuses entirely on how Manya and the flutist interact with each other, implicitly allowing her heroine to replace an appropriate female dance partner with a male outsider.

un dortn, ineveynik, hot zi vider gornisht gehert, nor zayn fleyt; gekukt hot zi af im nisht, nor gefilt, vi er kukt af ir.

az zi hot getantst lansier, hot zi zikh geboygn mit eydlkayt in tants far im, vos hot geshpilt af der fleyt.

ir iz oysgekumen ale mol tsutsugeyn tsu di klezmer – a krantsn-fraylayn darf akhtung gebn, az ale zoln tantsn, hot zi nisht-vilndik a kuk geton af im. hot zi gezen katshanen-hor, mit shvartse oygn, un di untershte lip a dike – un derfilt, vi er hot zikh ongeboygn tsun ir noent, tsu-noent:

– fraylayn... zi tantsn vunder sheyn...⁴⁷⁵

And there, inside, she again heard nothing except for his flute; she didn't look at him, just felt him looking at her.

When she danced Les Lanciers, she gave the flutist a refined bow as she was dancing.

She kept finding reasons to go to the musicians – a garland maiden should make sure everyone dances. When she unintentionally looked at him, she saw chestnut-brown hair with black eyes and a thick lower lip, and felt him bow close to her, too close:

“Fräulein... You dance wonderfully.” [German in original - Fräulein, Sie tanzen wunderschön]

Shtok focuses on Manya's subtle emotional universe and reveals the role of dance in her first, tentative but nonetheless magical, flirtation. Manya does not touch the musician or formally dance with him, yet his musical accompaniment nonetheless guides her body around the dance floor. Their eye contact creates a greater sense of intimacy, and Manya interacts with him as if they were actually partnered on the dance floor. She bows to him in the course of her dancing, and she keeps finding excuses to go speak to him. Indeed, her sense of responsibility for encouraging wedding guests to dance implies that she also wants to contribute to the musicians' task of setting the tone for the dancing. Shtok

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 111.

suggests that Manya and the flutist's interactions – both intentional and unintentional – are a form of dance.

Manya enjoys the flutist's attention on the dance floor, at the same time that Shtok reminds readers that he is a questionable beau. The flutist does not follow the cultural norms or linguistic practices that are familiar to Manya, since he speaks to her in German and stands too close to her. Manya's friend Leytse tells her that the flutist has been asking about her and admiring her as a "fayn meydele" (fine girl); if this is true, it implies he might be angling for a more serious attachment with Manya than a few shared words and glances.⁴⁷⁶ Manya is so delighted by his attentions and the general festivities that she revises her earlier harsh judgments of the other wedding guests, and basks in the feeling of community. Ultimately, her ties to the community and attachment to her family are a stronger influence on her behavior than her daring flirtation with a dashing musician. She revels in the wedding, but returns to her normal life. Unlike the characters in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation, who court inappropriate lovers and therefore disaster, Manya resists the temptation to continue her flirtation off the dance floor.

In "Der shlayer," Manya celebrates the utopian possibilities of wedding dancing, but recognizes that they are temporary pleasures. Accustomed to her premature burdens as the oldest child, Manya uses her responsibilities as garland maiden as an excuse to avoid going too far into the pleasures of the celebration, since she repeatedly returns to her cousin to check she is properly attired. Just as she is charged with maintaining the symbols of the bride's virginity, so too Manya must safeguard her own virtue. It is to Shtok's credit that she acknowledges Manya's social, economic, and emotional

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

vulnerability, but does not develop a predictable romantic plot. Although Manya experiences the “sweet madness” of the party, dancing, and a flirtation, she takes care not to get lost in the dance. The flirtation on the dance floor never lead to a real romantic entanglement; it simply makes Manya happy and enhances her feeling of connection with those around her.

Where Manya will presumably look back on Beyle’s wedding as a fond memory, the protagonist of the next story I discuss looks upon her cousin’s wedding with horror. The social dance scene in Krämer’s *Esther* can be understood as the inverse of Manya’s Les Lanciers, since instead of engaging in a willing flirtation during a formulaic dance, a young girl is forced into a free-form dance against her will. At the same time, both stories engage deeply with the issues of a woman’s self-expression and the social options for Jewish women in traditional villages.

Clementine Krämer

Clementine Sophie Krämer (née Cahnmann, 1873-1942) was born in Rheinsbischofsheim in Baden, Germany. Interestingly, her mother was born in Mühringen, a town near Berthold Auerbach’s hometown of Nordstetten, which was also the home of Auerbach’s character the Jäger.⁴⁷⁷ According to Krämer’s nephew and biographer, Werner J. Cahnman, his “Tante Clem” spent much of her childhood in rural areas and it can be said that “the people she knew best were the Jewish traders and peddlers of the southwest German villages and the peasants among whom they gained

⁴⁷⁷ Werner J. Cahnman, “The Life of Clementine Kraemer” (Unpublished manuscript, 1963), 1. Clementine Kraemer Collection, Leo Baeck Institute (New York), AR 2402, Folder 47.

their livelihood.”⁴⁷⁸ Krämer moved to Munich after her marriage to Max Krämer, who came from a wealthy family, and she became active in the Jüdischer Frauenbund (League of Jewish Women).⁴⁷⁹ Krämer wrote prolifically in a variety of genres, and published in both the Jewish and general German press.⁴⁸⁰ Although her work was popular during her lifetime, she was largely forgotten until recently. Elizabeth Loentz describes Krämer as leading a literary double life.⁴⁸¹ She published programmatic middlebrow literature on political topics (such as feminism and pacifism) in the Jewish press. She also wrote Bavarian regional fiction for a more general audience. Despite this general division, in works such as her Jewish novel *Esther*, Krämer includes local color elements (such as dancing) in texts which describe how rural Jews urbanize and acculturate.

Krämer was sympathetic to the concerns of upwardly mobile Jews, yet her attitudes towards Yiddish and the use of *Judendeutsch* were largely negative.⁴⁸² Although it may seem counterintuitive to include her in a chapter with Yiddish writers, her frequent use of dance motifs, especially in the context of embourgeoisement, makes her work an important contribution to this chapter. In fact, as will be seen in my discussion of *Esther* the following section, her characters use a Yiddish word to describe a young girl’s grace when dancing. Like Shtok, her literary works (and dance scenes) reveal the relationship between German and Yiddish culture in the process of Jewish modernization.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁸⁰ Elizabeth Loentz, “The Literary Double Life of Clementine Krämer: German-Jewish Activist and Bavarian ‘Heimat’ and Dialect Writer,” in *Nexus: Essays in German Jewish Studies* 1, ed. William Collins Donahue and Martha B. Helfer (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011), 110.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² See *ibid.*, 120, for a discussion both of Krämer’s negative attitudes towards Yiddish and the role of regional dialects in both *Esther* and *Der Weg des jungen Hermann Kahn*. Cahnman notes that his aunt taught Eastern European Jewish girls but despaired of the Yiddish they spoke; Cahnman thinks it would have strengthened their self-respect to have learned about Yiddish literature. See Cahnman, *The Life of Clementine Kraemer*, 15.

Krämer uses the dance motif throughout her work, including in her two serialized Jewish novels of education and maturation, *Der Weg des jungen Hermann Kahn* (The Way of Young Hermann Kahn, 1918) and *Esther* (1920). Focusing on a male and female perspective respectively, the two novels respond to the “Jewish Question” and the ability of village Jews to acculturate in the German metropolis.⁴⁸³ In both works, dances underscore gendered paths to acculturation. Dance scenes in *Esther* have rightly received greater attention, since the protagonist is a professional dancer (as will be discussed in greater detail in the following section). Kerry Wallach carefully and convincingly discussed the role of theater dance in the village girl’s transformation into a New Woman and professional dancer in Munich.⁴⁸⁴ In *Der Weg des jungen Hermann Kahn*, on the other hand, Krämer uses dance to showcase the challenges to a young Jewish doctor’s masculinity and hopes for social acceptance.

In contrast to the dance scenes in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, where male characters set the terms of masculine rivalry on the dance floor, Hermann is humiliated by a politically-engaged Jewish woman. Salomea Fingerhut, a student from an Eastern European background, scorns Hermann because he does not share her ardent Zionist views. When they attend a Zionist ball, she first declines his invitation to dance and then shows him her full dancing card: “Salomea zog die Tanzkarte aus der Tasche, und es fand sich, dass sie schon über und über mit Namen und Studentenzirkeln beschrieben war. ‘Wenn ein Tanz eingeschoben wird’ machte sie gnädig, ‘dann – vielleicht.’”⁴⁸⁵ (Salomea

⁴⁸³ I am grateful to Elizabeth Loentz for drawing my attention to Krämer’s stories, particularly those that use dance. For discussion of *Esther* as Bildungsroman, see Kerry Melissa Wallach, *Observable Type: Jewish Women and the Jewish Press in Weimar Germany* (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2011), 48.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴⁸⁵ Krämer, *Hermann Kahn*, *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 1918, no. 11 (15 March 1918): 130.

took her dance card out of her bag and it became apparent that it was entirely inscribed with names and student circles. “If a dance gets squeezed in,” she made herself gracious, “then – maybe.”) Salomea is socially involved in Zionist circles and she even takes part in the ball’s opening pageant, dressed as the Queen of Sheba, so it stands to reason that she would be in demand as a dance partner. Yet Krämer suggests that Salomea would have danced with Hermann if she felt inclined to do so, since Salomea does not hesitate to rearrange her dance schedule so that she can dance with another man, Lieutenant Bäumke. Salomea adds to Hermann’s humiliation through her choice of partner, since Bäumke is Hermann’s friend and he is not even Jewish. Despite her Jewish nationalist views and the Zionist theme of the ball, Salomea openly ogles her Christian dance partner: “Und ihr Auge blieb bewundernd hängen an der prachtvollen Gestalt Bäumkes.”⁴⁸⁶ (And her eyes kept hanging, adoringly, on Bäumke’s splendid form.) Salomea’s behavior reveals her ideological inconsistency, since she does not allow her politics to disrupt her obvious attraction to Bäumke. Salomea’s actions lead Hermann to reevaluate his process of acculturation, and he soon pursues a non-Jewish partner of his own, Marie Louise von der Uhlenberg. In this novel, as we will later see in *Esther*, Krämer depicts the dance floor as a tumultuous setting for Jews in the process of acculturation. It is, moreover, a space that offers women the ability to control their own bodies and desires, at the same time that it can be the site of trauma and humiliation.

Krämer emphasizes the importance of a woman’s choice of dance partner – and her decisions about interactions on the dance floor. In the 1916 short story “Bel Paré,” set in the liminal space of a masked *Fasching* (carnival) ball in Munich, the male protagonist

⁴⁸⁶ Krämer, *Hermann Kahn, Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 1918, no. 12 (22 March 1918): 142.

is surprised when his beautiful dance partner refuses to give him a “Busserl” (little kiss).⁴⁸⁷ He assumes that the flirtatious setting, and the intimacy of their shared use of regional dialect, will lead to greater physical favors, yet she continues to resist his advances. Much to his consternation, when she dances with her next partner, he observes how “ihr Tänzer ihr allemal wenn sie ‚drehen‘ einen Kuß auf die entblößte Schulter gibt. Und nimmt wahr, daß sie es gerne gefallen läßt.” (Every time they “turned,” her dance partner gave her bare shoulder a kiss. And he noticed how gladly she allowed it.) Several days later, he learns by accident that her attentive dancing partner was actually her husband. In *Esther*, as in “Bel Paré,” Krämer sympathizes with female characters who seek to avoid unwanted advances on the dance floor. What is more, she demonstrates that a woman is under no obligation to satisfy a man’s desires, no matter how freely she may dance in other situations or with different dance partners.

Self-Expression and Escape: *Esther*

Krämer published two versions of her second Jewish novel in 1920, both as serials in the Jewish press. The short novel appeared as *Esther* in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* (General Journal of Jewry, April to June) and as *Die Tänzerin* (The Dancer) in the *Israelitisches Familienblatt* (Israelite Family Paper, September to November). The two versions are nearly identical, with some changes to the second version to remove religious associations with the biblical book of Esther. Wallach

⁴⁸⁷ Clementine Krämer, “Bel Paré,” in *Münchener Bilderbogen*, ed. Richard Rieß (Konstanz: Reuß & Jutta, 1916), 53.

suspects that the typewritten draft entitled *Esther* in Krämer's papers reflects changes made for the second printing, and speculates that the title was changed by the editors.⁴⁸⁸

Esther depicts a Jewish woman who leaves her small German village to become a dancer on the Munich stage. Throughout the novel, protagonist Esther Stein dances in her own innate style. Without formal lessons, she engages with the music, translating it into physical movement. Her cousin Alfred Oppenheim considers her untaught grace and rhythm to be a viable marketable skill. When she decides to leave her village, he advises her to consider a career as a professional dancer. After her initial audition for a ballet company goes poorly, she strikes out on her own and becomes a successful stage performer who dances according to her own choreography. In fact, with the exception of an episode in childhood when she tries to convince her brother to dance with her (presumably a *schottische*) at a wedding, she seems reluctant to perform any formalized dances. Esther's insistence on dancing in her own way is not only an expression of her own self-determination, it is also a way for her to regain autonomy after a childhood trauma: a forced partner dance at a family wedding, and her mother's attempt to marry her off to the man who accosted her. By depicting a forced partner dance as a physical violation akin to rape, Krämer both criticizes the institution of arranged marriages and, more profoundly, articulates the critical importance of a woman's physical agency.

Throughout the novella, Esther eschews set choreography in favor of her own invented dances. These dances are a deeply personal activity. When Esther dances, Krämer claims it is as if she is returning home to her "Allerinnerstes" (innermost self).⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁸ Wallach, *Observable Type*, 44-45. Wallach uncovered these published versions of Krämer's short novel; even Cahnman was unaware that *Esther* was ever published. I quote from the version in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*.

⁴⁸⁹ Clementine Krämer, *Esther*, *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 1920, no. 18 (30 April 1920): 202.

Her improvised steps allow her to communicate with her accompanist and develop her own relationship to the music: “Was auch der Spieler gibt, sie formt es in ihrer Weise. Was er auch bringt, ob Mozart, Chopin oder Liszt, sie leiht das rhythmische Ornament. In immer neuer Art übersetzt sie den Ton in ihre Sprache des Schreitens.”⁴⁹⁰ (Whatever the musician gave, she formed in her own manner. Whatever he brought, whether Mozart, Chopin or Liszt, she borrowed the rhythmic ornament. In a continuously new style she translated the note in her language of steps.) Esther refashions the classical music into a more primitive rhythmic form that helps her express herself. It is as if the music were a language to be translated through her body. Esther started improvising dances in childhood, when she transformed Jewish emotional qualities into circular dance figures.

Esther’s momentous childhood dance takes place at a Jewish wedding in a rural German village. The wedding guests maintain certain vestiges of traditional Jewish customs – some of the older Jews still speak Yiddish, although most avoid it – yet they participate in mixed-sex partner dancing as a matter of course. The young people arrange themselves in pairs to dance a *schottisch*, with the bride and groom at the head. This arrangement honors the bridal couple, and implicitly emphasizes marriage as a social institution. As the old people and children sit chatting and watching, Esther decides to join the dance: “Nach einer Weile faßte Esther ihren Bruder Isak um und wollte es den Großen nachtun. Aber der Kleine stand steif wie ein hölzerner Grabstein. Da probierte es Estherchen in einer ecke für sie allein. Einige stießen sich an und schauten ihr gern zu.” (After a while, Esther embraced her brother Isak and wanted to emulate the grownups. But the little boy stood stiff like a gravestone. So Estherchen attempted it in a corner for

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

herself. Several people nudged each other and watched her with pleasure.) Although Esther dances off to the side and onlookers find her behavior charming, her first foray onto the dance floor challenges the established norms of the dance floor: she is younger than the other dancers, her chosen dance partner is her brother rather than a suitor, and she is content to practice the dance on her own when she is unable to convince her brother to join her. Through her dancing, Esther innocently subverts notions that dance is primarily a courtship practice.

Esther's unconventional dancing brings her closer to her community, both physically and emotionally. In her enthusiasm, she moves closer to the dancers, and begins dancing around them: "Kaum hatte die Musik begonnen, da schritt das Kind noch dem Takt mit Maß dem Paar entgegen und umtanzte es bald in engerem Kreis, bald in weitem Bogen."⁴⁹¹ (The music had scarcely begun when the child stepped, keeping time with measured steps, towards the couple and danced around them in a tight circle, soon after in a wide curve.) Esther's movements encircle the dancing couple, almost as if she is embracing them. As she dances, her movements correspond to the music and to her distance from the other dancers, a kind of free-form improvisation that enables her to engage with her environment and those around her: "War sie fern, so streckte sie die Arme weit von sich. Wenn sie näher kam, hielt sie mit spitzen Fingerchen den Saum des weißen Mullkleidchens, das sich taktmäßig bauschte und bog."⁴⁹² (When she was far away, she stretched her arms far away from herself. When she came closer, she held the hem of her little white cotton dress, which billowed and bent in time.) Esther dances with her whole body, and even with her dress. Her harmonious movements, and sweet

⁴⁹¹ Clementine Krämer, *Esther*, *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 1920, no. 15 (18 April 1920): 166.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*

interactions with the other dancers, charm her onlookers. They identify her with Jewish emotional values, that can best be described through the Yiddish word “Chein” (kheyn in standard Yiddish), which even the most acculturated among them is reluctant to translate into German: “[...] die Juden meinen, man könne es nicht übersetzen. Und die große, tiefe, reiche deutsche Sprache sei dafür nicht reich genug. Es bedeute die Liebenswürdigkeit des Leibes und der Seele, und Anmut und Grazie und noch vieles mehr.”⁴⁹³ ([...] Jews are of the opinion it is untranslatable. And the great, deep, rich German language isn’t rich enough. It means loveliness of the body and soul, and charm and grace and still much more.) The Jewish girl’s dancing is so graceful that her charm defies the parameters of the German language and can only be described using the Jewish vernacular.

Esther’s fanciful movements are interrupted when a grown man, Lipemann Schurmann, forcibly tries to dance with her. Krämer acknowledges the sudden shift in the dancing: “Da aber – wie sie alle sich wundernd stehen – tritt einer aus dem Kreis der schauenden vor, umfaßt das Kind und zerrt es mit sich in der Runde, schwingt es über den Boden hin frei in die Luft und will ihm eben einen Kuß aufdrücken, als die Musik noch zur rechten Zeit verstummt.” (Yet then – as everyone stood marveling – a man came forward from the circle of observers, embraced the child and wrenched her with him in the circle, swung her over the ground and up in the air and even wanted to plant a kiss on her, but the music broke off at the right time.) Lipemann forcefully takes hold of the little girl’s body, and even attempts to kiss her. Where she once had full control over her circular dance figures, now she is entirely at his disposal. The incident is clearly a

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

violation, and Esther reacts with horror. Krämer underscores the traumatic nature of the assault by the fact that she does not mention Lipemann's name until an incident years later, suggesting either that Esther forget his name (as a result of her distress) or that she was manhandled by a complete stranger whose name she did not know. Lipemann's behavior towards Esther is physically aggressive and unsettling intimate. Krämer describes his behavior in harsh terms, without suggesting that he attempts to fit his movements to the music, except for the fact that he releases Esther when the music stops. Krämer underscores the extent of Lipemann's inappropriate behavior, since his dirty boots stain Esther's new white dress and it is impossible to remove the marks. While it is unclear what contortions Lipemann makes to get mud from his boots on his unwilling dance partner's dress, this final indignation symbolizes how she carries the emotional toll of the encounter with her for years to come.

Esther escapes from the dance floor and seeks solace with her parents, who react in opposite ways. Her father treats her kindly and encourages her dancing: "Der zieht sie sogleich auf seine Knie, streichelt ihr in seiner liebevollen Art die heißen Bäckchen und fragt sie laut vor allen, wo sie Tanzstunde genommen habe und ob sie einmal Vortänzerin werden wolle."⁴⁹⁴ (He pulled her straightaway on his knees, caressed her hot cheeks in his affectionate way and asked her loudly in front of everyone, where she took dance lessons and if she wanted to become a dance leader one day.) He supports his daughter emotionally and praises her dancing abilities, suggesting that one day she might lead other villagers in dancing. Years later, when bemoaning her father's premature death and

⁴⁹⁴ Clementine Krämer, *Esther*, *Allgemeine Zeitungs des Judentums* 15 (18 April 1920): 166.

her own arranged marriage, Esther feels certain he would not have forced her into an intolerable match, a belief confirmed by the sympathetic way he treats her.

Esther's mother's Fradel disapproves of Esther's dancing, which identifies her as the kind of parent who will force her daughter into an unwelcome marriage. Cahnman considers Esther's conflict with her mother to be a token of the general difficulty she faces in establishing herself as a modern woman and professional dancer:

Here the breakaway of the hero, who is a dancer, from the subservient role in which a girl used to be cast in the Jewish tradition, is sharply accentuated. To the tension between Jew and Gentile is added the lack of comprehension between mother and daughter and even the violent inner contradiction between occupational goal and emotional urge, as soon as the female factor enters the equation.⁴⁹⁵

In Krämer's novel, it is Esther's mother (rather than her father) who represents the patriarchal community structures which challenge her ability to make decisions about her own life and body. Fradel dismisses her daughter's desire for physical autonomy on the dance floor, saying she would prefer for her daughter to shift her mental energy "auf das Putzen und Waschen und Strümpfestopfen" (in the direction of cleaning and washing and darning stockings).⁴⁹⁶ Worse yet, Fradel undermines her daughter's effort to distance herself from Lipemann, an act which adds to Esther's discomfort: "Lachend macht sich derweil Esthers Tänzer an Frau Fradel. Einer bemerkt: dies sei ein alter Brauch, daß man sich an die Mutter halte, wenn man die Tochter wolle freien. Und Estherchen hört dies auf des Vaters Knien. Und versteht. Und erschauert."⁴⁹⁷ (Laughing, meanwhile, Esther's dance partner got to work on Frau Fradel. Someone commented that it was an old custom to stick to the mother if one wants to court the daughter. And Estherchen heard this from

⁴⁹⁵ Cahnman, *The Life of Clementine Kraemer*, 22.

⁴⁹⁶ Clementine Krämer, *Esther*, *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 1920, no. 15 (18 April 1920): 166.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

her father's knees. And understood. And shivered.) Even as a child, Esther is terrified of the possibility that Lipemann intends to follow up his assault on the dance floor with actual conjugal rights, and the prospect that her mother could be complicit. Krämer draws a direct connection between Fradel's unsympathetic behavior at the wedding and her decision, years later, to try to force Esther to marry Lipemann. Even as a young girl, Esther recognizes the impropriety of Lipemann's actions and the possibility that his friendliness towards Fradel suggests underlying desire for the prepubescent Esther. She cannot think of the wedding without remembering the extremely unpleasant incident.

Much as Esther fears, Lipemann eventually pursues her hand in marriage, with her now-widowed mother's full approval. Other villagers take it for granted that the match will take place. Yet Esther still recoils in horror from the time when Lipemann "sie frech in seine Arme hatte nehmen wollen" (brazenly wanted to take her in his arms).⁴⁹⁸ She flees the forced marriage by moving to Munich and becoming a dancer. Rather than submit to Lipemann's unwanted advances, Esther uses her career path as a modern dancer allows her to reclaim her body and control over her future. Nonetheless, Lipemann persists in sexualizing Esther's dancing body. He follows her to Munich and interrupts one of her performances by publicly calling her a strumpet (*Dirne*), an act that reprises his previous disruption of her dancing.⁴⁹⁹ Yet in this urban context and surrounded by her new friends, including a doting non-Jewish pianist, Esther is better equipped to withstand his abusive treatment. The press coverage helps her career. Instead of marrying Lipemann, she begins an affair with the pianist. Yet even this romance does not interfere with Esther's larger goals: she continues to pursue her dance career and

⁴⁹⁸ Krämer, *Esther*, *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 1920, no. 16 (16 April 1920): 178.

⁴⁹⁹ Krämer, *Esther*, *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 1920, no. 19 (7 May 1920), 214.

bodily autonomy. When the pianist leaves for Vienna, expecting her to follow, she stays behind in Berlin and begins a relationship with an eligible Jewish bachelor who ultimately learns to accept her artistic ambitions and physical autonomy. Krämer's Bildungsroman shows a Jewish woman's journey from a traditional Jewish village to a bourgeois partnership with an appropriate suitor. Although this plot trajectory is in certain respects conventional, she also provocatively claims that a woman artist should have the same right to have a bohemian life as her male counterpart.

In the context of Weimar Munich, a young woman like Esther has the opportunity to achieve economic stability and cultural capital as a dancer, even though she started out with almost no marketable skills or dancing credentials. Her surprising success wins her the necessary financial independence to maintain full control of her life and career. She falls in love with a well-to-do man, but she does not find it economically necessary to marry him. In fact, Krämer ends her story abruptly, without even revealing if they actually marry. For most women, and for literary characters such as Rivke in Molodowsky's *Fun lublin biz nyu-york*, this feat would be impossible. They find it impossible to resist the social expectations regarding marriage, or the material benefits of a partnership. Such women struggle to find a critical space for themselves, even as they submit to outside pressures.

Kadya Molodowsky

Kadya Molodowsky (1894-1975) is the best known of the primary writers discussed in this chapter. She is arguably the most famous Yiddish woman writer, which is not surprising considering her long and prolific literary career and fine poetic verse,

which combines Jewish erudition with a modern aesthetic.⁵⁰⁰ While Molodowsky published several volumes of poetry that rightly deserve attention, she also wrote short stories, novels, plays, essays, an unfinished autobiography, and children's literature. This section focuses on her use of dance in her later, American prose, which tended to emphasize women's agency, community, and Americanization.

Alisa Braun writes that, "Molodowsky distinguished herself in the United States through the sharpness of her satire and the critical eye that she cast on Jewish life in the country."⁵⁰¹ Nonetheless, critical attention to this prose has been lacking. Molodowsky satirizes New York Jewish life in her first major prose work, the 1942 novel *Fun lublin biz nyu-york*. This fictional diary provides an engaging portrait of a 20-year-old war refugee's life in New York, yet little has been written about it.⁵⁰² Molodowsky's one short story collection, *A shtub mit zibn fenster* (A house with seven windows, 1957), has also received relatively little attention, although it has been fully translated into English.⁵⁰³ Possible reasons for the direction of the Molodowsky scholarship include the

⁵⁰⁰ See: Irena Klepfisz, "Di Mames, Dos Loshn/The Mothers, the Language: Feminism, Yiddishkayt, and the Politics of Memory," *Bridges* 4 (Winter-Summer/5754): 34; Kadya Molodowsky, *Paper Bridges: Selected Poems of Kadya Molodowsky*, trans. Kathryn Hellerstein (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 17-51; Alisa Braun, "Kadya Molodowsky (Kadye Molodovski) (10 May 1894 - 23 March 1975)," *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, ed. Joseph Sherman, vol. 333: Writers in Yiddish (Detroit, Mich.: Gale, 2007), 188-89, 194.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁵⁰² See *Ibid.*, 191. Braun notes the presence of dance halls in her very useful paragraph on the novel in her entry on Molodowsky, although the dances take place more commonly at family gatherings, weddings, a Purim gathering, and in colorful metaphors, rather than in actual dance halls. For discussion of the lukewarm to negative reception of Molodowsky's 1953 play, *A hoyz af grand strit* (A House on Grand Street), which was loosely based on *Fun lublin biz nyu-york*, see *ibid.*, 192. Hellerstein also discusses the novel in the context of Molodowsky's authorial voice in her American poetry and prose, see Kathryn Hellerstein, "Finding Her Yiddish Voice: Kadya Molodowsky in America," *Sources – Revue d'Etudes Anglophones (Université d'Orléans)* 12 (2002): 51-55. Anita Norich is currently working on an English translation of the novel.

⁵⁰³ See Braun, "Kadya Molodowsky," 192.

vastness and skill of her poetry or the fact that women writers in Yiddish have received much more attention for their poetry than their prose.⁵⁰⁴

One of the few discussions of Molodowsky's prose work can be found in Irena Klepfisz's essay "Di Mames, Dos Loshn/The Mothers, the Language: Feminism, Yidishkayt and the Politics of Memory." Klepfisz discusses texts Molodowsky printed in *Svive* [Environment], the literary quarterly she edited,⁵⁰⁵ noting Molodowsky's concern with finding a viable place for Yiddish in American Jewish culture:

Svive represented her activism to counter the insidious American culture, which she accurately perceived, as destroying it. In her editorials and essays, Kadya raged against American materialism, moral corruption, literary commercialism and assimilation, and steadfastly promoted Yiddish – which by implication was *the* antidote to all these evils – as the true medium of Jewish consciousness, morality and identity.⁵⁰⁶

Klepfisz argues that Molodowsky advocated the Yiddish language as a tool for preserving Jewish life.⁵⁰⁷ She immigrated to the United States in the 1930s, several decades after writers such as Opatoshu and Shtok. Unlike them, she had already established a literary career for herself in Europe. Molodowsky's prose works describe traditional Jewish life in pre-war Eastern European communities and the problems of Americanization. Their mood is often poignant, or at times sentimental or anachronistic.⁵⁰⁸ The protagonist in *Fun lublin biz nyu-york* looks back wistfully at her war-torn city and fantasizes about joining her Lubliner boyfriend in Palestine, even as she ultimately submits to the pressures of American materialism and marries a New Yorker.

⁵⁰⁴ See Klepfisz, "Queens of Contradiction," 48-49 for a discussion of gender and the reception of women's prose.

⁵⁰⁵ Ten issues of *Svive* were published in the 1940s followed by a hiatus until 1960, when Molodowsky began publishing it again for the next thirteen years. Klepfisz, "Di Mames, Dos Loshn," 34.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

As will be seen, Molodowsky 's dance scenes in *Fun lublin biz nyu-york* differ significantly from several of her other American prose works. In these other texts, dance is a way of conveying participation in a Jewish community and, at the same time, undermining economic hierarchies. Both functions are evident in an undated, typewritten draft Molodowsky wrote of her article "Trayne – di muter fun vilner gaon, rabi eliyahu" (Trayne – Mother of the Vilna Gaon, Rabbi Eliyahu), for a series of portraits of famous woman for the *Forverts*. Trayne is rewarded with a son who becomes a brilliant and respected rabbi, precisely because she dances at the wedding of a poor couple.

zi flegt kumen oykh af khasenes (oreme khasenes) un tantsn af derfreyen khosnkale. eynmol hot zi zeyer a sakh getantst af a khasene un dos iz geven tsufil far ir gezunt, hot men ir gefregt tsulib vos tut zi dos, un zi hot geenfert: af fardinen a mitsve. – un tsulib dem iz bay ir geborn gevorn ir zun, vos iz gevorn der vilner gaon. azoy dertseylt men.⁵⁰⁹

She also used to come to weddings (poor weddings) and dance to give joy to the newlyweds. Once she danced a lot at a wedding and it was too much for her health, people asked her why she did it, and she answered: to earn a mitzvah – and because of that she bore a son, who became the Vilna Gaon. So people say.

Trayne's commitment to dancing at the weddings of poor people shows her concern for the feelings of even the most marginal members of society, a responsibility that is worth even risking her own physical well-being. Her selfless act wins her the best possible boon for a pious Jewish woman: a son who will become a great rabbi. Interestingly, even though Molodowsky wrote her portraits of famous women under a pseudonym, Rivke Zilberg, that she borrowed from the protagonist of her earlier novel, Molodowsky portrays dance very differently between these two texts. In fact, Molodowsky's use of the

⁵⁰⁹ Kadia Molodowsky (1894-1975) Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 703, Folder 70. Even after conversation with Vilna Gaon scholar Eliyahu Stern, the provenance of Molodowsky's account remains unclear.

dance motif in *Fun lublin biz nyu-york* is a significant departure from the dance scenes in most of her other works, which celebrate the way dance binds a community together. While *Fun lublin biz nyu-york* is not unique in lamenting the breakdown of Jewish values and culture in the United States, it is noteworthy that dance contributes to the sense of rootlessness and isolation in the novel and the criticism of American materialism. Typically Molodowsky uses dance to show social cohesion, yet in *Fun lublin biz nyu-york*, dance reveals the breakdown of the community.

In a more typical example that is similar Trayne's self-sacrificing behavior, in Molodowsky's short story "Hinde di gertnerke" (Hinde the Gardener, dated Dec. 1954), an old woman scrimps and saves to dedicate a new Torah scroll to her community. With her daughter married off and no son to inherit, she decides to give to the community in a way nobody expects, since it is usually wealthy men who sponsor the creation of these meticulously handwritten ritual objects. Hinde's neighbors initially scorn her, assuming she is a miser, yet the town eventually celebrates her pious deed. Molodowsky compares their celebration to a wedding and a bar mitzvah and thus replacing a son's life cycle events, publicly acknowledges her great deed.

di klezmerim zaynen gegangen foroys un men hot geshpilt un Hinde hot getantst antkegn der khupes-toyre. zi hot gepatsht mit di shvere, oysgehorevete hent, un oysgefreyt zikh ale freydn, vos zi hot farmitn dos gantse lebn. [...] mit ir tsuzamen hot getantst reb Khayim der soyfer un zayn vayb Pelte; Velvl der katsev, vos hot oysgehert azoy fil loshn-hore af Hinden, iz itst gekumen tantsn mit ir, un di vayber vos hobn zi baredt hobn mitgetantst mit ir, keday tsu lindern zeyere kharotes, un di mazel-tovs vos men hot opgegebn hinden hobn gekent shteyen far a hundert khasenes.⁵¹⁰

⁵¹⁰ Kadya Molodowsky, *A shtub mit zibn fenster* (New York: Matones, 1957), 46.

The musicians lead the way and they played and Hinde danced opposite the Torah canopy. She clapped with her heavy, callused hands and delighted in all the joys she had gone without her entire life. [...] Reb Khayim the Torah Scribe and his wife Pelte danced together with her; Velvl the Beggar, who had heard so much gossip, came to dance with her now, and the women who had talked about her danced with her, in order to alleviate their remorse, and the mazel tovs people gave Hinde would have served for a hundred weddings.

Hinde dances with members of her community, even men, in sheer joy rather than sexual tension. Her celebration outshines the simultaneous celebration of a wealthy man who has also dedicated a scroll. Molodowsky emphasizes class, rather than gender, divisions in her text: in the end sympathetic workers Hinde and Reb Khayim celebrate together, with no explicit reference to separate-sex dancing. The joyous dancing draws the community together, and their celebration specifically honors the contributions of long-suffering laborers.

In an American context, the dance floor brings together immigrants who may have differing attitudes towards finances and community. Celia, the protagonist of Molodowsky's short story "A futerne mantel" (A Fur Coat, dated Dec. 1954), is a capable working woman who is past the typical age of marriage. She is content with her orderly and pleasant life, and enjoys dressing up with the annual *Landsmanshaftn* ball, for immigrants from her home town. When she meets Jack at the annual ball, Molodowsky indicates that he is domineering and stingy, since he insists she sit next to him, and asks her (as they are dancing) how much she paid for her dress.⁵¹¹ Celia allows herself to get caught up in a courtship, and the couple marries. At first Celia is happy to be married, to be a matron with an orderly domestic sphere and a husband with whom she

⁵¹¹ Ibid., 29.

can entertain guests. Yet Jack refuses to let her host, since he would rather save his money. When, a year later, Jack objects to the nice fur coat Celia buys with her own money for the annual ball, she decides she has had enough. Celia returns, without regrets, to the tidy apartment and sympathetic roommate she had before she married.

Molodowsky posits that a woman's control over her own (economic) decisions is more important than marital status. She questions whether the financial security of marriage (especially in a materialist American context) can truly replace friendship or community, even if a community itself emphasizes marriage. Unfortunately, this means that women – like Celia, in “A futerne mantl,” and Rivke, in *Fun lublin biz nyu-york* – may feel they have little option other than to succumb to the pressure to marry.

Caught in an American *karahod*: *Fun lublin biz nyu-york*

Written between 1939 and 1941, the novel *Fun lublin biz nyu-york* chronicles the fictional diarist's first ten months living in America (from Dec. 15, 1939 to October 6, 1940), on New York's Lower East Side.⁵¹² Over the course of the novel, which was initially serialized in the *Morgn zshurnal* (Morning Journal), Molodowsky uses the motif of dance to develop a nuanced and devastating critique of American Jewish culture.

Writing an enthusiastic review in the *Morgn zshurnal*, presumably to encourage readers to pay attention to the upcoming serial, the reviewer (and theater critic) Alexander Mukdoyni claims it had been a long time since he had read “aza geshmak-humoristishe, aza mekhaye-dig vitsige un in der zelibiger tsayt aza tif-tragishe beshraybung fun dem leben fun a grin-meydl, fun a meydl a flikhtling, vos iz gelofn fun eyropayishen gehenem

⁵¹² Hellerstein, “Finding Her Yiddish Voice,” 51-52.

glaykh in dem amerikaner gan-eydn arayn” (such a tastefully humorous, such a refreshingly funny and at the same time such a deeply tragic description of the life of a greenhorn, of a refugee girl who ran from hell in Europe right into the American paradise).⁵¹³ While the extreme specificity of this comment inadvertently tempers the praise, this statement captures how Molodowsky juxtaposes humor and romance with pathos and frustration, oppositions that she frequently underscores in the novel through the motif of dance. The serialized novel was apparently well-received, and it appeared in book form in 1942.⁵¹⁴ Interestingly, however, while Mukdoyni considers the journey from Lublin to New York to be a path from European hell into American paradise, the protagonist sees something hellish about American culture, particularly in regards to dance.⁵¹⁵

Molodowsky’s fictional diarist, Rivke Zilberg, is notable for the fact that, until the end of the diary, she does not dance. Still in the year of mourning for her mother, who was killed in the German assault on Lublin, the war refugee refuses invitations to dance from several male admirers, including a successful businessman who offers to pay \$25 (more than Rivke earns in a month) for the privilege of dancing with her at a Purim ball. Her instance on following this traditional year of mourning sets her apart from her American environment. In fact, Rivke’s refusal to dance is the most persistent symbol of

⁵¹³ Dr. Mukdoyni, “Fun lublin biz nyu york,” *Morgn zshurnal*. Undated clipping found in Kadia Molodowsky (1894-1975) Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 703, Folder 162.

⁵¹⁴ As far as Mukdoyni was aware, the serialized novel “hot zikh shtark oysgenumen bay di leyener” (was a great hit with readers). Dr. Mukdoyni, “Vi a grine grint zikh oys,” *Morgn zshurnal*, May 20, 1942, in section “Bikher un shrayber.” Clipping found in Folder 162 of the Kadia Molodowsky (1894-1975) Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Mukdoyni’s tone in this review is more critical than in the piece he wrote to encourage readers to follow the serial. He appears to overlook Molodowsky’s biting portrayal of America, since he claims, when discussing the realism of the ending, that America is difficult for Greenhorns, but once they get less green they can appreciate what America has to offer.

⁵¹⁵ Kadya Molodowsky, *Fun lublin biz nyu-york: togbukh fun Rivke Zilberg* (New York: Papirene brik, 1942), 219.

her European identity. She acquires a job, an English vocabulary, and an Americanized name (Ray) long before she accepts an invitation to dance.

It is not until the penultimate journal entry, shortly after the announcement of her engagement with Red, that she allows Red's father to dance with her and, finally, dances with Red (something he has wanted to do for almost the entirety of the novel). The order of this dance allows her to transition from a dance partner who speaks Yiddish (even though he dances like an American), to dancing with her American-born fiancé. Yet despite having this opportunity to practice, Rivke's style still strikes Red as old-fashioned, a testament to her European upbringing. He tells her, "Du darfst zikh lernen tantsn di 'modern' tents" (You need to learn modern dances).⁵¹⁶ Rivke has otherwise successfully integrated into American culture, at the expense of her own identity, and the only thing remaining is for her to alter her dance moves accordingly.

Throughout *Fun lublin biz nyu-york*, dance is an important motif for drawing contrasts between the blasé, carefree attitude of American Jews and the horrors experienced by their counterparts in Europe. Molodowsky rarely allows a character to participate in or watch dance without a reminder of the suffering and uncertainty abroad. Rivke, especially, cannot forget; even after her year of mourning has ended, her sensitivity towards the suffering of her relatives leads her to refuse to participate in dancing. She writes: "ven men hot ongehoybn tantsn, bin ikh avek, khotsh es iz shoy'n nokh der mames a"h yortsayt, nor Zshanet iz mir geshtanen far di oygn."⁵¹⁷ (When people began dancing, I went off, even though the anniversary of my mother's, may she rest in peace, death had passed. It was just that Janet stood before my eyes.) It is cruelly

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 276.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 271.

ironic that Rivke sees her niece Janet in front of her, since the young girl has gone blind from a head injury. While Rivke's choice to abstain from dancing out of solidarity, rather than mourning practice, comes late in the novel, Molodowsky's narrative choices imply that dance represents a betrayal of those left behind in Europe. It is telling that reviewer A. Golomb dismissively lists dance among the norms followed by young American men in the novel, along with sandwiches, hotdogs, girlfriends, and movies.⁵¹⁸ Even more significantly, Rivke never mentions having danced in Lublin, although she frequently compares her experiences in America with parallel, more intimate experiences in her hometown. Instead, her references to dance are usually tinged with feelings of alienation.

Early in the novel, Rivke has a visceral trauma reaction when she watches her American cousin Marvin practice dancing, in the style of legendary band leader Benny Goodman, accompanied by the radio. His lighthearted antics remind her of her mother's death and the fact that she does not know what has happened to the rest of her family in Europe.

Marvin hot bashlosn zikh oyslernen tantsn azoyvi Beni Gudman. er shtelt on di radio un shtelt zikh antkegn tantsn ken es nemen a sho nokkhanand. er dreyt di radio un tantst. mir hot ongehoybn vey ton der kop derfun. az er tantst dermon ikh zikh bald, az mayn mame iz geshtorbn fun a bombe, az ikh veys nit vu mayn bruder iz ahingekumen, er tantst avade avade nisht itster, un vos mitn tatn iz gevorn veys ikh oykh nit. ikh volt avek ek velt, abi nit zen Marvins tantsn, nor vu zol ikh geyn?⁵¹⁹

Marvin decided to master dancing like Benny Goodman. He puts on the radio and places himself facing it, dancing, which can take hours at a time. He turns the radio and dances. My head began to ache from it. When he dances, I quickly remember that my mother died from a bomb, that I don't know what became of my brother (certainly he doesn't dance now), and I also don't know what happened to my father. I would go to to the end of the earth if it meant I could avoid seeing Marvin's dancing, but where should I go?

⁵¹⁸ A. Golomb, "Shtiler, a mentsh iz untergegagn (vegn Kadie Molodovskis roman 'Fun lublin biz nyu york')," *Afn shvel* 13-14 (May-June 1942): 10.

⁵¹⁹ Molodowsky, *Fun lublin biz nyu-york*, 15.

Rivke narrates a poignant culture clash. It is unclear from the description whether she reacts more to the sound of the radio (perhaps even a war report, which Marvin ignores) or to the obliviousness of Marvin's dancing while his European family experiences unknown horrors. As Rivke notes, she has no news of her brother's condition or whereabouts, but he is definitely not dancing. Even if one accepts Sh. Niger's claim that Rivke is self-absorbed, and interprets the scene as her wish to languish in her suffering about her family (or look down upon her cousin), it is clear that the act of dancing serves as a trigger for her to remember her family's distress.⁵²⁰

In his review, Niger observes that Molodowsky depicts almost all of the young people in the novel as vulgar, superficial, or immodest.⁵²¹ Such an attitude can be seen in situations where young people break into spontaneous, joyous dance at the home of Rivke's aunt and uncle. In one instance, Rivke and the older Lubliners read a newspaper report of the situation for the Jews in Poland with interest, yet are interrupted when Rivke's cousins and their friends come in to celebrate, by dancing, that Marvin's picture was printed in a different newspaper. Not only does the episode demonstrate the differences between the press items that interest Rivke and those that draw the attention of the other young people (including Red), it also crystallizes a romantic rivalry between Rivke and Red's ex-girlfriend Ruth.

az "Red" iz arayn, hot zikh Rut ongetsundn. zi iz epes gevorn vi oyser zikh. zi hot ongehoybn tantsn mit Marvinen, mit Edin, un dernokh gerufn "Redn", er zol mit ir tantsn.

"Red" hot zikh mit ir a tsvaymol a drey geton un zikh avekgezest.⁵²²

⁵²⁰ Sh. Niger, "Fun lublin biz nyu-york," *Der tog* (May 16, 1942): 4. Clipping in Kadia Molodowsky (1894-1975) Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 703, Folder 162.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵²² Molodowsky, *Fun lublin biz nyu-york*, 144.

When Red came in, Ruth lit up. She became somewhat beside herself. She began dancing with Marvin, with Eddy, and afterwards called to Red that he should dance with her.

Red spun her twice and sat down.

Ruth uses the collective dancing as a ploy to dance with Red. From Rivke's perspective, Ruth can barely disguise her ardent feelings for the man Ruth almost married. Although Red clearly signals his disinterest, within the realm of politeness, by only half-heartedly dancing with her, the fact that he speaks to Ruth in English, a language Rivke does not understand, increases her sense of alienation.⁵²³ At the same time, Red's insistence that Ruth must be too tired to dance repeats the sort of condescending lack of empathy that complicates his relationship with Rivke.⁵²⁴

When Red later learns that Italy has entered the war, he celebrates by dancing jubilantly. He assumes now that Rivke will stay in America and marry him, since there is no longer any question that she might leave for Palestine to join Leyzer, the man she had planned to marry when she lived in Lublin. Red focuses solely upon how the news impacts his own happiness rather than any sense of empathy for Rivke or consideration of the larger consequences of Italy joining the war. In fact, the manner of his dancing, from one woman to another in succession, resembles Ruth's dance during Marvin's celebration. Rivke observes that: "er hot getantst mit Selman, mit der tante un mit Misis

⁵²³ Compare this scene, for instance, to the discussion of *Yekl* in Chapter 4, where Mamie insists on speaking English with Yekl even though Gitl cannot understand the language.

⁵²⁴ Interestingly, Yoel Entin seems not to recognize Red's limitations in his review of Molodowsky's novel. He writes: "zi hot lib 'Redn' un er iz es take vert oykh. an interesanter bokher, mit a tifer, shtarker natur." (She loves Red, and he's really worth it too. An interesting young man with a deep, strong nature.) See Yoel Entin, "A poeme in proze ('fun lublin biz nyu-tork – tog-bukh fun Rivke Zilberg' – fun Kadie Molodovski)," *Yidische kempfer* (May 15, 1942): 11. Clipping in Kadia Molodowsky (1894-1975) Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 703, Folder 162.

Shor” (he danced with Selma, with my aunt and with Mrs. Schorr).⁵²⁵ The similarity between his style of dance and Ruth’s previous choreography emphasizes the affinity of these two Americanized characters, in contrast to Rivke’s sensitivity. In case this point could not be underscored enough, Rivke learns of her niece’s injury within the same paragraph.

Molodowsky most profoundly uses dance as a metaphor for the differences between Red and Rivke when they go to the movies. Red’s engagement with the dance on screen reminds Rivke of their differences:

in di movis hobn mir gezen eynem a shvartsn tantsn. er hot zeyer sheyn getantst, un ikh hob gehert, vi “Red” hot di gantse tsayt tsugetupet mit di fis. zet oys, az “Red” ken oykh tantsn dem zelibkn tants. ikh vel keynmol nit kenen azoy tantsn. dos heyst den getantst? dos iz dokh geshprungen, vi khalile glaykh in gehinem arayn. un efsher vel ikh zikh oykh oyslernen shpringen glaykh in gehinem arayn? ver veys?⁵²⁶

At the movies we saw this black man dance. He danced very nicely, and I heard Red tapping his feet the whole time. It seems as if Red can also dance the same dance. I will never be able to dance like that. That’s called dancing? No, that’s jumping, like God forbid right into hell. And maybe I’ll also master jumping right into hell? Who knows?

Rivke does not generally mind the movies or even imitating movie actors, since she actually uses lines she learns from a seductive movie character to charm Red when they first meet. Instead, there is something particular about dance itself and Red’s willingness to move his body in time with the music that leads her to assume he can perform the same dance and for her to associate it with going to hell. While it is outside the scope of this chapter to discuss the racial aspects of this quote, Rivke clearly identifies the African American dancer, and Red, with a form of dancing she dismisses as primitive jumping,

⁵²⁵ Molodowsky, *Fun lublin biz nyu-york*, 213.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 219.

rather than as a skill worthy of respect and emulation. Rivke's uncertainty about being able to keep up with American technique on the dance floor, in comparison with her beau, parallels her anxieties about her performance in the work force. In both cases, she denigrates a skill she doubts she can master.

At times characters who seem intimidatingly, or traitorously, well-adjusted to the American work force appear to dance harmoniously with their environment as they labor. Their easy acclimation to the daily grind contrasts with the values and lived experience of the greenhorn protagonist. Rivke narrates this feeling of estrangement when she watches a more experienced employee demonstrate sewing a glove in the factory where Rivke has just started working.

Shoyrli, az ikh kuk, fleyst zi zikh nokh mer. azoy vi zi tantst mit der mashin. aroyf di elenboygns un arop. links un rekhts. Shoyrli iz nit Shoyrli. di mashin iz nit keyn mashin. es iz poshet a geyeg aza un ikh vel es keynmol nit kenen, neyn. ikh vel beser forn keyn erets yisorel, trogn mit Leyzern tsuzamen tsi gl un laym, un nit arumtantsn do mit der mashin.⁵²⁷

Shirley, as I watch, works even harder. As if she is dancing with the sewing machine. Her elbows go up and down. Left and right. Shirley isn't Shirley. The sewing machine isn't a sewing machine. It is simply a race and I will never know how, never. It would be better if I went to the land of Israel to carry bricks and lime alongside Leyzer, rather than dance around here with the sewing machines.

Rivke is intimidated by Shirley's expertise with the sewing machine. In contrast with Rivke's meticulous work at her last job, doing embroidery by hand, her colleague's labor is a race that blurs the boundaries between human and machine. It is as if Shirley engages in a dance with the sewing machine itself. The fast pace leaves Rivke feeling as if she will never be able to master the skill. Not for the first time, she wonders if she would be better off joining Leyzer, in Palestine. Yet although Leyzer understands her in a way that

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 199.

her American relations and admirers could not, she seems unable to muster the drive to save up money for a ticket and never even notifies her family about Leyzer's existence. Despite her insinuations that she is far less materialistic than her American contemporaries, Rivke realizes that she would have a difficult future doing menial labor in the Middle East with a fellow Yiddish-speaker. Instead of prioritizing joining Leyzer, she learns to "dance" with the sewing machine.

Interestingly, Molodowsky presents Rivke's struggle to gain a foothold in America as a kind of dance. Rivke describes the circular structure of her attempt to find employment through her network of fellow Lubliners, as a *karahod*, a common circle dance. She first goes to her mother's friend, Mrs. Rubin, whose husband runs a gloves factory. Mr. Rubin says he doesn't have any openings and suggests she get a letter from a Lubliner rabbi to recommend her to another prominent Lubliner, the vice president of an organization for refugees, Mr. Shamut. When Mr. Shamut finally suggests a solution to Rivka (after several visits to his office), it is that she seek a position in the factory of a Lubliner who has made his fortune in America – ironically the same Mr. Rubin who sent her on the circular path in the first place. Rivke compares the dizzying situation to a *karahod* composed of her various Lubliner interlocutors: "far di oygn hot zikh mir gedreyt a karahod: Rabi Finkl, Mister Shamut, Pinkhes Hersh mit der ugerke..." (A *karahod* spun before my eyes: Rabbi Finkel, Mr. Shamut, Pinkhes Hersh with the Pickle...) ⁵²⁸ The description implies that they dance around with each other as she watches. At the same time, one could argue that Rivke has "danced" with each Lubliner

⁵²⁸ Ibid., 39.

in turn, only to return to the reluctant Mr. Rubin in the end.⁵²⁹ As seen by the fact that she refers to Mr. Rubin's ridiculous nickname from Lublin, "Pinkhes Hersh with the Pickle," Rivke acknowledges the absurdity of the situation. Although the *karahod* is a European, and her "partners" are all Lubliners, Rivke's experience shows how alien she finds her experience in America and how she would prefer to process the political upheaval at home, and mourn her mother, without also navigating the foreign customs and bureaucracy. In fact, throughout the novel Rivke repeats the dizzying circular structure of the *karahod* to convey her sense of displacement.⁵³⁰

In case there was doubt about Molodowsky's intentions in this episode, she juxtaposes Rivke's general feeling of being caught in a bureaucratic *karahod* with two other episodes involving dance. When Mr. Shamut describes Mr. Rubin to Rivke, he initially refers to the factory owner's Lubliner identity in a way that uses an unexpected form of mixed dance to convey familiarity and dominance. Mr. Shamut tells the story of Mr. Rubin as a boy, Pinkhes Hersh, who was so enthralled by the idea of dancing a polka-mazurka with a girl that his sister caught him practicing the dance in the kitchen with a pickle.

zitst men un vart af der ugerke. dos fleysh vert kalt un Shimen Dovid iz hungerik, un Pinkhes Hersh mit der ugerke iz nito. git a shprung zayn shvesterl Tsipke un khapt zikh arayn in shpaykhler un derzet... vos meynt ir? vi Pinkhes Hersh halt in hant an ugerke un tantst mit ir... a polke mazurke. un grod in der rege, ven Tsipke iz arayn hot Pinkhes Hersht [sic] zeyer eydel gehaltn di ugerke un hot zikh gedreyt mit ir arum der fas. Tsipke hot di mayse tseklungn iber der gantser shtot, az Pinkhes Hersh hot getantst mit a zoyerer ugerke a polke mazurke. nokh der mayse hot Khanke Mostovlianski nit gevolt a kuk ton in zayn zayt, un di gantse shtot hot im a nomen gegebn "Pinkhes Hersh mit der ugerke".⁵³¹

⁵²⁹ As will be seen shortly, the term *karahod* refers to the circular shape of the dance, including a dance comprised of a circle of couples.

⁵³⁰ The symbolism of circular structures is repeated in Rivke's last entry, where she comments upon the circular structure of her life. See Molodowsky, *Fun lublin biz nyu-york*, 277.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

Everyone is sitting and waiting for the pickle. The meat is getting cold and Shimen Dovid is hungry, and there's no sign of Pinkhes Hersh with the pickle. His little sister Tsipke jumps up and goes to the pantry and sees... What do you think? Pinkhes Hersh holds a pickle in his hand and dances with it... a polka-mazurka. And exactly at the moment that Tsipke came in, Pinkhes Hersh held the pickle in a very refined manner and spun around around a barrel with it. Tsipke repeated the story that Pinkhes Hersh danced a polka-marzuka with a pickle around the entire city. After the incident, Khanke Mostovlianksy didn't want to even look at him, and the entire city gave him the name "Pinkhes Hersh with the Pickle."

The sight is so ridiculous that the story spreads throughout the town and gives Pinkhes Hersh a nickname he is unable to escape until he immigrates to the United States, makes his fortune, and becomes a boss. As a consequence of Pinkhes Hersh's innocently ridiculous behavior, he is unable to achieve his original goal of dancing with an actual girl, Khanke Mostovliansky.⁵³²

From a socio-cultural standpoint, Mr. Shamut's story shows the existence of partner dances in Lublin, since a young man intended to dance a polka-mazurka with a young woman. The story also suggests the transformative power of American capital, since becoming a factory owner gives Mr. Rubin the respect he lacked as Pinkhes Hersh. At the same time, one sees the way a dance, and being witnessed dancing in an awkward way, has the potential to cause shame and damage reputations. Even though Mr. Rubin has established himself, Mr. Shamut still indulges in the nostalgic recollection of this embarrassing story – to Mr. Rubin's potential employee. Mr. Shamut's desire to control the narrative and establish his own position of power is clear, not only from his telling of an embarrassing story, but also from his refusal to allow Rivke's friend Mrs. Schorr to interrupt his narrative. By telling the story, Mr. Shamut provides a reminder of the

⁵³² Perhaps her discomfort with his unusual behavior is amplified because in Yiddish the word for pickle, "zoyere ugerke," is feminine, which means Pinkhes Hersh dances in the pantry with another "her."

Lubliner connections that led Rivke to seek his help and disguises his inability to provide immediate assistance to her (it still takes months for Rivke to get the job working for Mr. Rubin). Mr. Shamut's lack of concern for Mr. Rubin's reputation is a way of displaying, at a deeper level, that he has power over Mr. Rubin and can compel him to offer a pretty greenhorn a job.

Yet Mr. Shamut's story is only one of Rivke's encounters with dance during her bureaucratic *karahod*. The second moment takes place at a family wedding, which occurs between the meeting with Mr. Shamut (where he tells her the story and about the potential job) and her meeting with Mr. Rubin to find out if the job exists (he claims there will be an opening when, eventually, one of his employees gets married and stops working). The wedding makes explicit the other circular "dance" in which Rivke is involved, one implied by her male "partners" – her courtship by two American boys and tension with two female rivals. While Rivke's cousin Selma dances with her brother Marvin, Selma's boyfriend Eddy flirts with Rivke, claiming he likes her better than anyone. Rivke refuses to engage with him and also declines to dance, using the excuse of mourning for her mother. Instead of flirting with Eddy, she instead shares a drink with his friend Red, whom she meets at the wedding and later marries. Rivke's manner of flirtation with Red combines techniques she learned in America; the bravado of a movie actress and Eddy's English phrase: "I like you more than anyone."⁵³³ Although, for the moment, Rivke's refusal of Eddy and seduction of Red give her power over these American men, ultimately she is unable to escape the process of Americanization that their courtship represents.

⁵³³ Molodowsky, *Fun lublin biz nyu-york*, 42-43.

Molodowsky's narrative structure resembles the circle dance itself, with characters who appear in Rivke's bureaucratic *karahod* reappearing throughout the novel. Later in the novel, at a Lubliner Purim ball, Rivke sees both Mr. Shamut and Mr. Rubin, and they awkwardly discuss whether she has a job yet. Red wants to dance with Rivke, but she demurs, and he dances with Selma instead. The combination of the Old World tradition of self-help with American capitalism becomes strikingly clear when the Lubliner men donate money to dance a *karahod* with women of their choice, a fundraising strategy that could have been borrowed from the popular 1939 film *Gone with the Wind*. One of the guests of honor, Mr. Edelshteyn pays the extravagant sum of 100 quarters to dance with Rivke.⁵³⁴ Yet Rivke stands by her principles and refuses to dance. The incident underscores the belief in the novel that it is easier for a girl to get married in America than to find a job; men are more willing to pay to court or dance with women than to hire them as employees. While Rivke effortlessly charms admirers with her Old World looks and manners, she must work harder to earn a living as an immigrant woman.

Ironically, Mr. Edelshteyn's public admiration of Rivke prevents her from seeking him out as a potential employer. Red jealously tells her not to ask him for a job, a view supported by the very relatives who initially pressured Rivke to focus on finding a job instead of going to school. It is precisely because Mr. Edelshteyn wanted to dance with her that asking him for work is unthinkable. When Mr. Edelshteyn later offers her a job

⁵³⁴ Interestingly, the program booklet (located in the YIVO library) for a Purim ball held by the United Lubliner Relief on March 5, 1938 lists an officer named Edelshtayn. A certain Mr. Beigelman is credited with contributing a sum of \$25, one of only three individuals to give more than \$10. While it would be a stretch to argue that Mr. Beigelman or the real Mr. Edelshtayn was the inspiration for Rivke's wealthy admirer, it is certainly clear that \$25 represented an unusually large donation for a Purim ball – especially since the fictional Mr. Edelshteyn seems to contribute spontaneously.

on his own, one that will pay her twice her weekly salary at the glove factory, Red tells her she has to choose between the job and him. Although Rivke wants to take the job so that she can send more money for Janet's medical care in Europe, she ultimately submits to the social pressure and refuses the job. Rivke's willingness to allow Red to limit her income foreshadows her final transformation. Rivke Zilberg, who enjoys the job at the gloves factory that she worked hard to get and perform successfully, becomes Mrs. Ray Levitt, who sells sandwiches in the lunchroom owned by her husband's parents and (at least according to Golomb's prediction) dreams of Leyzer when she closes her eyes.⁵³⁵ In her final entry, Rivke returns to the circular motif of the *karahod* when she notes: "alts vos ikh leb itst iber hot nit keyn onheyb un hot nit keyn sof."⁵³⁶ (Everything I experience now has no beginning and no end.) Dashed around circular bureaucracies throughout the novel and dismayed by a sense that she will never belong, she still meditates on alternative realities. Most poignantly, she reflects upon the way Leyzer preserves Rivke Zilberg in his imagination, even as she herself goes forward into a new existence, having capitulated to American materialist culture.

Rivke experiences courtship and marriage as a loss of her identity, akin with the process of assimilation into American culture. Molodowsky repeatedly traps Rivke between the escapism of swing and the empty nostalgia of the *karahod*, the two dances amplifying the cultural choices of two different generations of American Jews. While several characters in Molodowsky's novel criticize the prevailing notion that marriage is a young woman's only option for economic survival, Rivke is unable – and perhaps unwilling – to stand up to familial pressure and the forces of Americanization. As a

⁵³⁵ Golomb, "Shtiler, a mentsh iz untergegangn," 10.

⁵³⁶ Molodowsky, *Fun lublin biz nyu-york*, 277.

refugee, Rivke has been spared her mother's fate of being buried under rubble, yet Molodowsky raises the provocative question that her life in the American paradise might, instead, be a form of jumping into hell.

The project of this novel, like most of the other texts in this chapter, is less to entertain with a romantic plot or sweeten a message with entertainment than to give a heroine autonomy, provide deep insight into her state of mind, or complicate the institution of marriage. It is perhaps because partner dance often means a man leading and a woman following that women writers question the overwhelming power of dance as a decisive factor in creating lasting relationships, and instead use dance as a vehicle for expressing values, thoughts, and character traits.

In this chapter, I analyze texts by three women writers who complicate notions of the dance floor as a place of heterosexual courtship. Between the choreographed set dance Les Lanciers in "Der shlayer," Esther's solo dance and the couples who dance the *schottisch* in *Esther*, and the circular *karahod* in *Fun lublin biz nyu-york*, the three primary texts I discuss reflect a full variety of traditional social dance forms in the Jewish communal context. What is more, Manya in the short story "Der shlayer," Esther in the short novel *Esther*, and Rivke in the novel *Fun lublin biz nyu-york* each adopt a different strategy for negotiating the dance floor and the men they meet there. Manya flirts with a klezmer musician and the life choice he represents, but the literal chokehold of the community (imposed by her mother) remains rigidly enforced. Esther's horror at a traumatic encounter on the dance floor leads her to reject an arranged marriage and leave the mother and community that encourage it for the Munich dance halls where she

overcomes the attempted limitations on her autonomy by dancing her own free-spirited dances, an unusual but fortuitous career option. Rivke avoids dance for most of the novel, a sign of mourning for her mother and rejection of light-hearted American materialism, yet ultimately submits to a new American identity through dancing and marriage to an American man. These three women must balance between their own autonomy and maternal expectations, at the same time that they navigate between traditional values and the allure of the big city.

Shtok, Krämer, and Molodowsky provide important alternative voices for understanding modern Jewish literature in general and the dance trope in particular. So many of the dance scenes in my corpus and in literature more broadly look to dance in service of courtship ritual and marriage plot. While study and increased appreciation of the marriage plot remains an important way to understand the role of women in world literature and add women's voices to literary studies, these voices nonetheless remain limited. Marriage plots are limited by who is allowed to marry, what is considered a good marriage, and the expectation that marriage is the tidy and proper way to conclude a story. While they can be immensely enjoyable to read and offer many scholarly angles, my project complicates these elements by discussing Jewish themes and transgressive love. In this final chapter, the three writers I discuss go even further, by challenging the notion that a female character should accept romance as the goal and providing an alternative to plots in which characters inevitably get swept up in the mood of the dance floor. In fact, Esther's plot trajectory takes the reader from nineteenth century social dance, typically led by a dance master or a male lead, to twentieth century theater dance,

in which female choreographers (such as Judith Berg or Dvora Lapson) played a more prominent role.

The three protagonists I discuss in this story successfully decouple dancing from courtship and romance. These characters recognize broader possibilities on the dance floor, and greater opportunities for themselves. Both Esther and Rivke associate dance with the workforce, a sign of greater economic options for women. In contrast to the female characters in Chapters 2, 3, and (to some extent) 4, who are socially constrained to specific social settings, the working women in Chapters 4 and 5 have more diverse options for meeting and interacting with men. These changing social norms have interesting implications for the study of mixed-sex dance. In a secular context, social dances lose their universality as a place for young people to meet and flirt; there are simply more opportunities for mixed-sex sociability. In a religious context, where (ultra) Orthodox communities have tended to become larger, more insular, and have more extensive communal infrastructure, the taboo on mixed-sex dancing is strictly enforced. In the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, literature and popular culture texts continue to invoke the motif of mixed-sex dancing, although they tend to refer either to historical narratives or the punchline of a joke.

EPILOGUE: “WHAT COMES FROM MEN AND WOMEN DANCING”

In 1964, Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick had a problem. As lyricist and composer, respectively, for the forthcoming Broadway musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, they were busy creating what they called their “bête noire number 1.”⁵³⁷ This song would convey the character of Perchik (the appealing firebrand who was the musical’s resident political radical) and would furthermore push the narrative forward. *Fiddler on the Roof* was adapted from Yiddish writer Sholem Aleykhem’s collection of short stories about the impact of modernization on an Eastern European Jewish family in the fictional village of Anatevka. In the story “Hodel,” upon which this part of *Fiddler on the Roof* is based, Sholem Aleykhem describes the political and religious debates Perchik and his future father-in-law Tevye engage in before Tevye later learns that Perchik and Tevye’s daughter Hodel intend to marry.⁵³⁸ While Sholem Aleykhem was renowned (and beloved) for his narration of vernacular speech, a Broadway musical demanded more spectacle and a greater dramatic focus on the two lovers. Perchik would need to demonstrate the challenge he represented to village traditions, but in a form that would enthrall the musical’s audience.

Bock and Harnick labored to create a song that would strike the right balance, yet this undertaking proved to be quite a challenge. In her cultural history of the musical, Alisa Solomon reports:

⁵³⁷ Alisa Solomon, *Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2013), 194.

⁵³⁸ Scholars such as Naomi Seidman note how, despite the apparent modernity of Perchik and Hodel’s love match, Tevye grew fond of his future son-in-law at their first encounter, before introducing him to Hodel. Such an introduction resembled traditional Jewish matchmaking practices, where potential spouses were introduced to each other by their parents or a matchmaker. See Seidman, *The Marriage Plot*, 229-30.

They wrote about a dozen different songs—some of them duets with Hodel—but couldn't hit the mark. Perchik ended up sounding too propagandistic (“You’ll hear a rumble and the earth will shake / And Romanovs will crumble and the chains will break”) or too cornball (“A dairy farmer’s daughter / And a cigarette maker’s son / Met in a tiny village / And there became as one”). Or too propagandistic *and* too cornball (“When we’re free to be free / What a world that will be”).⁵³⁹

Finally, after these multiple attempts, the artistic duo came up with an appropriate song, “a satisfying argument song in which Perchik schools Hodel in how he’d behave ‘if I were a woman’ (‘I’d want to know why / I had to take orders / from men not a quarter as smart as I’).”⁵⁴⁰ While contemporary viewers might bristle at Perchik’s attempt to explain to Hodel how she should act as a woman, when the show was initially performed for audiences in Detroit, it received applause and a few laughs.⁵⁴¹ Yet much to Bock and Harnick’s surprise and chagrin, director Jerome Robbins cut the number entirely. As Solomon continues: “‘Are you out of your mind?’ Harnick said. ‘It works!’ Robbins answered with the impassivity of a mechanic explaining some minor engine trouble: ‘I know it works. But it’s a four-and-a-half-minute number and the show is very long. I think I can accomplish the same thing in thirty seconds of dance and it may even be stronger. Let me try it.’”⁵⁴² In staging this now-famous dance scene, Robbins repeated many of the same tropes as the literary texts we have seen in this dissertation.

In Act I, Scene 6 of *Fiddler on the Roof*, Hodel and Perchik argue about village customs. Perchik disparages communal norms that prevent boys and girls from touching or even looking at one another, “Do you know that in the city boys and girls can be

⁵³⁹ Solomon, *Wonder of Wonders*, 194.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 195.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

affectionate without [the] permission of a matchmaker? They hold hands together, they even dance together—new dances—like this.”⁵⁴³ Perchik forcefully proves his point to Hodel: according to the stage directions he “seizes her and starts dancing,” which leaves her “Startled” and “Bewildered.”⁵⁴⁴ Yet as Perchik pulls Hodel along through the choreography of a couple’s dance he learned in Kiev, the audience witnesses them falling in love. As they conclude, Perchik declares, “There. We’ve just changed an old custom.”⁵⁴⁵

Perchik’s primary accomplishment as a radical is his introduction of mixed-sex dancing to Anatevka. Perchik privately teaches Hodel to dance, and then he scandalizes the other villagers by publicly dancing with Hodel at her sister’s wedding. What is more, he inspires other couples (including Hodel’s parents and the village rabbi) to attempt partner dances of their own, since he pushes the rabbi to admit that dancing is “not exactly forbidden.”⁵⁴⁶ Yet even if the rabbi is unable to prevent mixed-sex dancing, another force of order steps in: as “the dance reaches a wild climax,” the constable and his men enter with clubs and begin the pogrom that ends Act I.⁵⁴⁷

Yet even in the face of this violence, Anatevka does not forget the dramatic change in social norms that mixed-sex dancing represents. When Perchik is later arrested for his political activities, the villagers conclude that: “that’s what comes from men and women dancing.”⁵⁴⁸ In fact, even some theater-goers found the behavior Perchik incited to be too audacious: Irving Howe complains in his notoriously harsh review of *Fiddler on the Roof*

⁵⁴³ Joseph Stein, Jerry Bock, and Sheldon Harnick, *Fiddler on the Roof* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1964), 53.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 102

that the Yiddish press was only critical of the musical in regards to the rabbi's participation in mixed-sex dancing.⁵⁴⁹

Perchik's dance with Hodel is probably the most famous example of (breaking) the taboo on mixed-sex dancing in Jewish culture. Yet as we have seen, it is certainly not the first, or the only, instance in which this motif was employed for the purposes of entertainment or plot and character development. Probably unbeknownst to Robbins, nineteenth and twentieth century German and Yiddish authors similarly recognized the dramatic potential of mixing-sex dancing in texts that explore German-Jewish masculinity, sexualized stereotypes of Jewish women, physically robust antiheroes, and dance as a site of female autonomy. Just as Robbins consciously chose dance to illustrate Perchik's character, relationship to Hodel, and the forces of change he represents, so too did the German and Yiddish authors I have discussed in this dissertation employ dance as an enjoyable form of social criticism that plays a key dramatic function in plot arcs and character development. Robbins's instinctive move to use dance to push his story forward represents an unintentional continuity in narrative technique, in keeping with the striking utility of dance for literary production.

Yet as *Fiddler on the Roof* makes clear, the motif of mixed-sex dancing continued to resonate throughout the twentieth century and even into the twenty-first century. Many of these references stem from a particular Jewish joke, which has even made its way into German translation, depicting a young man's conversation with his rabbi shortly before his wedding:

⁵⁴⁹ Irving Howe, "Tevye on Broadway," *Commentary*, November 1, 1964, accessed March 2, 2017, <https://proxy.library.upenn.edu:4865/articles/teveye-on-broadway/>. Howe also criticized the rabbi's participation in the dancing, in addition to his negative views of many other aspects of the musical.

»Rabbi, heute Abend nach der Trauung, darf ich da endlich mit meiner Frau tanzen.« - »Du weißt doch, dass das Gesetz es nicht erlaubt. Männer tanzen mit Männern, Frauen mit Frauen - verheiratet oder nicht.« - »Aber danach, da darf ich doch meine Frau lieben?« - »Natürlich, wie es in der Heiligen Schrift steht: Seid fruchtbar und vermehret euch.«

Der Bräutigam: »Was ist erlaubt? Nur liegend, oder dürfen wir's auch im Sitzen tun?« - »Kein Problem.« - »Sie auf mir, ich unter ihr?« - »Erlaubt.« - »Auf dem Küchentisch?« - »Unbequem, aber von mir aus.« - »Oralverkehr?« - »Geht in Ordnung, wenn er nicht den gottgefälligen Zeugungsakt ersetzt.« - »Und im Stehen?« Der Rabbi haut mit der Faust auf den Tisch und brüllt: »Auf keinen Fall!« - »Wieso nicht?« - »Das könnte zum Tanzen führen.⁵⁵⁰«

“Rabbi, tonight after the wedding, may I finally dance with my wife?” “As you know, the law forbids it. Men dance with men, women with women – regardless of marital status.” “But afterwards, I can still make love to my wife?” “Naturally, as the Holy Scripture says: Be fruitful and multiply.”

The groom: “What is allowed? Only lying down, or can we also do it sitting up?” “Uncomfortable, but okay with me.” “Oral intercourse?” “Fully in order, as long as it doesn’t replace the divinely-ordained act of procreation.” “And standing up?” The Rabbi pounds his fist on the table and bellows: “Absolutely not!” “Why not?” “It could lead to [mixed] dancing.”

This joke, in its various orally-transmitted versions, points to a popular consensus about the taboo of mixed-sex dancing in Jewish culture. As the twist of the joke makes clear, mixed-sex dancing is a violation of sexual taboos, here made publicly visible. Such dancing is a prelude to (or possibly greater transgression than) sexual intercourse. This joke is also ubiquitous in the (American) Jewish community, where it can be used to point to other forms of cultural mixing and modernization. Although the joke makes fun of the logic behind rabbinic prohibitions, it is popular among religiously-engaged Jews who use the punchline to signal their awareness of communal norms.

⁵⁵⁰ Josef Joffe, *Mach Dich nicht so klein, Du bist nicht so gross! Der jüdische Humor als Weisheit, Witz und Waffe* (Munich: Siedler, 2015), 109. Thanks to Jan Kühne for sending me this reference. While there are numerous examples of this joke in Jewish humor anthologies, I have chosen this example to show the continued German connection to this motif. There are also Mormon and Baptist variants of this joke, expressing the relationship between dancing and sexual taboos in a variety of religious cultures.

According to one post on a blog supporting potential converts to Orthodox Judaism, “If you really want to pass as orthodox, you have to be able to appropriately use ‘mixed dancing’ in a conversation to evoke the most humor possible. You may think that you can be orthodox without this skill, but that simply is not true.”⁵⁵¹ Satirical Orthodox blogger Heshy Fried elaborates further: “Whenever something is banned or restricted in the frum [Orthodox] community, people like to jokingly say that it could lead to mixed dancing.”⁵⁵² Although Fried claims the term is outdated, he still considers it much more effective than any of the more contemporary alternatives he lists in his post. As these two anecdotal accounts suggest, jokes about mixed dancing are an effective tool for poking fun at communal restrictions and for showing cultural awareness of a social taboo. In December 2015, when a user of the website *reddit* asked the internet if the reason why his Jewish girlfriend didn’t have a trash can in her kitchen had anything to do with her religious beliefs, one respondent (no-dice-ma) claimed facetiously that trash cans were forbidden because they could lead to mixed dancing.⁵⁵³

In addition to this continued cultural usage, contemporary Jewish literature continues to reference mixed-sex dancing. Authors intuit the efficacy of the trope even if they are unaware of its literary history. In Helene Wecker’s recent novel *The Golem and the Jinni*, which is set on the Lower East Side in 1899, the title characters go out to a

⁵⁵¹ CrazyJewishConvert, “Orthodox Inside Jokes: Mixed Dancing Makes Babies,” on *You’re Not Crazy: Becoming Orthodox Without Questioning Your Sanity*, Sept. 8, 2011, accessed Feb. 16, 2017.

<http://crazyjewishconvert.blogspot.com/2011/09/orthodox-inside-jokes-mixed-dancing.html>

⁵⁵² Heshy Fried, “‘It could lead to mixed dancing’ is antiquated and needs to be replaced,” *Frum Satire*, Aug. 20, 2013, accessed Feb. 16, 2017, <http://www.frum satire.net/2013/08/20/it-could-lead-to-mixed-dancing/> For more of Fried’s commentary on mixed dancing (including a more explicit version of the joke), see Heshy Fried, “10 things that could lead to mixed dancing,” *Frum Satire*, April 22, 2013, accessed Feb. 16, 2017, <http://www.frum satire.net/2013/04/22/10-things-that-could-lead-to-mixed-dancing/>.

⁵⁵³ ukconnor, “Question about Judaism,” *reddit*, Dec. 6, 2015, accessed Mar. 8, 2017, http://www.reddit.com/r/Judaism/comments/3vquel2/question_about_judaism/?ref=search_posts

dance hall. Similar to the texts I discuss in this dissertation, the evening's festivities have fateful consequences. The scene is initially magical, since it is the first time the female Golem and male Jinni act in public as if they were courting. Yet events take a different, dramatic turn, and Wecker chooses the moment of the dance hall to violently reveal their supernatural identities to the Golem's unsuspecting co-workers, since the Golem becomes enraged on behalf of one of her companions and the Jinni must use his powers to reign in her superhuman strength.⁵⁵⁴ Wecker suggests a connection between the sexual energy of the dance floor and behavior that violates social norms, both because the Golem's first appearance with the Jinni at the dance hall ends in a violent incident and because she goes on her rampage at the dance hall in order to punish a young man who has impregnated her co-worker but refuses to marry her. While Wecker may not have been familiar with the *Dorfgeschichten*, ghetto tales, and shtetl literature we have examined, her work nonetheless invokes the same powerful force of the mixed-sex (and here mixed-supernatural-creature) dancing.

Mixed-sex dancing offers dancers a utopian promise, yet typically leads directly or indirectly to misfortune in literature. What "comes from men and women dancing" is rarely an unambiguous happy end, but rather suicide, divorce, and loneliness. Such consequences can be seen as punishment for wayward dancing – and they reveal the growing pains of the process of acculturation. To be clear: while mixed-sex dancing implicitly simulates intercourse or can be viewed as a form of foreplay, the authors I discussed are most deeply concerned with the transgression of religious, class, and cultural boundaries due to the tremendous upheaval that went on in the process of

⁵⁵⁴ Helene Wecker, *The Golem and the Jinni* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2014), 294-304. Thanks to Meira Wolkenfeld for this reference.

modernization, urbanization, acculturation, and Emancipation. Mixed-sex social dance was a key sign of this process, especially because it challenged traditional boundaries between the sexes.

More than simply signifying sexual deviance, mixed-sex dancing stands in for the behaviors Jewish communal leaders find objectionable. Starting around 1800, balls and dancing lessons became symbols of Jewish participation in European society. Literary dance scenes depict the different ways Jewish men and women achieved social mobility, especially since these new courtship practices challenged traditional matchmaking patterns. Dance scenes entertain readers, and facilitate plot and character development. In these popular literary texts, formulaic plot sequences often replicate the dance choreography; characters find themselves trapped within dance squares or pushed along in a circle.

Writing between 1843 and 1942, the five German and five Yiddish writers I discuss in this dissertation often rely on familiar character types to comment upon the “Jewish Question” and gender roles. Nineteenth century German writers deploy the character types of the physically awkward Jewish man and the beautiful Jewish woman to decry their limited options for social improvement and mobility. When these characters enter into a romance on the dance floor, they typically encounter a bitter fate, since there was no solution to their impossible social predicament. Turn-of-the-century American Yiddish writers experimented with American-style physicality and the atmosphere of dance halls, even in works set in European villages; their works reflect the way immigration disrupted Jewish community structures. Writing for a Jewish audience, they had greater freedom to depict morally-ambiguous Jewish characters, including physically robust male antiheroes

and their seductive female dance partners. By the early twentieth century, women writers (in both Yiddish and German) are less reliant upon stereotypical character types and formulaic marriage plots. Their female protagonists challenge the connection between dancing and courtship, since they use the dance floor as an opportunity to express themselves. World literature proves that the trope of dance is not unique to German-Jewish and Yiddish literature, yet as we have seen, the trope of Jewish mixed-sex dancing charts the particularities of the Jewish “dance” with modern European culture.

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