

Sir Toggenburg of the Shtetl: Friedrich Schiller in the East European Jewish Imagination

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The German writer Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) was arguably the most important non-Jewish writer for East European Jews. Although these readers revered him even more than they did his contemporary Goethe, they often treated Schiller’s works as middlebrow fiction that was most appropriate for women— as exemplified by ‘Friedrich Schiller’, a 1919 short story by Galician-born American Yiddish writer Fradel Shtok which describes the inner life of a young Jewish woman in Galicia who develops an increasingly elaborate fantasy about her favourite German writer as her quiet life is rocked by the forces of modernity. Shtok suggests that an obsession with Schiller comports with a Jewish girlhood in a refined family. As such, this story provides a new perspective on how German literature was viewed—and reclaimed—by Yiddish-speaking Jews.

In *My Journey Through Galicia*, Chone Gottesfeld (1890–1964) recalled, when he returned from Warsaw to his home town of Skala (Skala Podolskaya) in Galicia, how his prematurely-aged friend Zalmen was once a romantic figure: ‘He used to be called “the lover” because he fell in love with lots of girls and serenaded them with German sayings [*psokim*] by Friedrich Schiller’.¹ Gottesfeld’s use of a Jewish term for legal rulings implies a correspondence between Schiller and traditional Judaism. His account further suggests that, for East European Jews, Schiller was not solely or primarily identified as a leading author of Weimar classicism or as ‘the poet of freedom’. He was, additionally, the stuff of fantasy whose words could be deployed in the service of Jewish courtship.

In an episode from his 1960 memoir *What I Remember from My Life*, Gottesfeld similarly described how Schiller features in his youthful encounter with the Milnitser Rebbe’s well-educated daughter:

The rebbe’s daughter [...] told me she was learning German. She declaimed a poem by Friedrich Schiller for me. [...] If I were a [gymnasium] student, I thought, I would take

her by the hand. I would touch her beautiful hand and say: ‘How good it is to stand next to you.’ But I was only a *beys-medresh-bokher* [religiously-educated boy], I was embarrassed even to look at her...

I wanted to recite her a passage [*psak*] from Avrom Mapu’s novel *Ahavas tsion* in Hebrew and translate it into German to show her that I also knew some German.² But my tongue cleaved to my palate [Ps. 22:15], stuck in place, my heart pounded, my eyes did not rest a moment. They just wanted to keep looking at her. But I was embarrassed to stand there not taking my eyes off her.³

Here German plays a vital role in flirtation, as young people sought to impress each other with their knowledge of literature. Gottesfeld imagined how a gymnasium-educated version of himself might behave. Knowledge of Schiller was associated with prestigious non-Jewish education, the secular learning available to well-to-do girls, comfortable relations between girls and boys, and desire. As a boy in a traditional Jewish learning environment, Gottesfeld lacked the confidence even to share an excerpt from a Jewish novel with a girl who seems perfectly willing to talk to him. He noted his inability to speak with a quote from psalms, sharply contrasting his Jewishly educated awkwardness with the urbanity of a gymnasium student. His discomfort underscores the strict gender segregation of traditional Jewish society and the way German literature could be a tool of courtship, of a piece with hand-holding and stolen conversations.

This chapter examines the role of German writer Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) in the East European Jewish cultural imagination.⁴ It centres upon a 1919 short story by Yiddish modernist writer Fradel Shtok (1887–1990), who like Gottesfeld was born in Skala, although she spent most of her life in the United States.⁵ The story, ‘Friedrich Schiller’, describes the inner

life of a young Jewish woman in Galicia who develops an increasingly elaborate fantasy about her favourite German writer. Elka's imagined interactions with Schiller offer her a sense of escape and control, giving her the opportunity to rework her encounters with men in the ways that are most pleasing to her. The recurring Schiller fantasy is a source of comfort and stability to Elka as her quiet life is rocked by the forces of modernity and political upheaval. Shtok suggests, ironically, that an obsession with the German author Schiller emerged naturally from Jewish girlhood in a refined family. As such, this story gives us a new perspective on how German literature was viewed—and reclaimed—by Yiddish-speaking Jews.

Fradel Shtok's Life and Reception

Fradel Shtok was for decades one of the most enigmatic figures in American Yiddish literary history and has been a subject of fascination by feminist scholars in particular. One of the best-known Yiddish women writers to have written in the United States, she is the author of some of the most sensitive Yiddish-language portrayals of Jewish women in Galicia. For years Shtok was regarded almost as a tragic heroine, a passionate woman who was driven from Yiddish publishing and quite literally to mental illness by the sexism of the Yiddish literary establishment. Since 2002 and especially since 2021 new archival findings have revealed that she continued writing in Yiddish much longer than had been believed and that she was only institutionalized towards the end of a very long life.⁶ Stepping back from the dramatic accounts of her life that have frequently overshadowed assessments of her oeuvre, it is now possible—the result in part of this new scholarship—to appreciate the content of her work, including the way she understood Jewish attitudes towards German literature.

Shtok wrote poetry, prose, a theoretical essay on poetry, one known drama, and an

English-language novel, but her short stories about young Jewish women in Galicia have received particular attention. Yiddish literary critic Melekh Ravitsh acknowledged the Galician setting for many of Shtok's stories, characterizing her collection of stories somewhat problematically as an 'album of Galician girls with their longing for Vienna, love of waltzes and their sentiment for Friedrich Schiller's pale face and his obsession with Amalia, her face eternally framed with a white lace collar.'⁷ This description demonstrates the way Shtok's contemporaries often framed her work in the context of her gender, yet it also suggests that her story 'Friedrich Schiller' and the Habsburg context of her work made a particular impression on Ravitsh, who was born in eastern Galicia and had lived in Vienna. While I and others have previously alluded to the influence of German literature on her work, this subject has not been discussed in depth.

Most of what is known about Shtok's childhood comes from a rather sensational newspaper account written by Yankev Glatshiteyn in 1965. He described an orphan who could recite Goethe and Schiller by heart.⁸ She immigrated to the United States in 1907 and published her poetry in publications of the modernist literary group Di Yunge. Twelve of her poems were included in Ezra Korman's anthology of Yiddish poetry by women, and eleven in Moyshe Bassin's poetry anthology, making her both the only poet to be well-represented in both collections and the only woman to have more than three poems in the latter anthology.⁹ Shtok was also one of the first writers to compose sonnets in Yiddish.

In 1916 she began publishing short stories in the Yiddish press,¹⁰ and in 1919 she published her only book, *Gezamlte ertsehlungen*.¹¹ These stories provide brief snapshots into the lives of ordinary Jews and how they struggle to escape (even in fantasy) from the confines of their daily experiences. Several of her characters dream of going to Vienna or imagine being part

of the Habsburg court, yet are forced to confront the harsh reality of their financial hardships.¹² Shtok recognized how her characters were trapped by their circumstances and depicted their plight with compassion, even if her voice remained detached and her tone at times ironic.

Part of the power of Shtok's work comes from the way she revealed the thoughts of her characters while narrating in third person. Allison Schachter viewed Shtok's use of the narrative technique of free indirect discourse as a key feature of both her modernism and of her contribution as a woman writer. In Schachter's reading, Shtok engaged in a 'rich intertextual dialogue with Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, offering a feminist counterpoint to Flaubert's dramatization of Emma's deadly materialism' in stories such as 'Friedrich Schiller', since Shtok explored the inner lives of young women confronting modernity but unlike Flaubert she took the desires of her characters seriously and did not view death as the only possible conclusion for these longings.¹³ Schachter's argument put Shtok in conversation with broader literary studies discussions. Yet what is known most concretely about Shtok's non-Yiddish reading tastes is her love of Goethe and Schiller.

'Friedrich Schiller' and 'Silken Jews'

'Friedrich Schiller' is the third story in Shtok's *Gezamelte ertsehlungen*.¹⁴ It introduces a refined, rabbinic family consisting of a father (Itsik), son (Asher), and daughter (Elka), and narrates the decline of their rarefied domestic space in the face of a rapidly shifting modern world. Although pedigreed, the family is not wealthy, yet their lack of affluence does not prevent them from being exemplary: Itsik is said to study Talmud better than the rabbi, Asher also has a reputation as a scholar, and Elka excels at domestic arts. While Shtok centres Elka's participation in this refined lifestyle, her actions are very much in accord with her father and brother: 'All

three were anxious, proud, and soft-spoken'¹⁵ Initially they are so modest that the siblings do not even sing in the same room, the family members barely speak to one another, and the father refuses to remarry after his wife's death because he thinks no woman is good enough for him. These characteristics are tokens of Shtok's sometimes ironic detachment from her characters, which critic Moissaye Olgin compared to a scientist looking at specimens down a microscope.¹⁶ The family members are often defined by what their neighbours say about them, which gives a sense of their status in the community and indicates how well, in the beginning at least, they adhere to the attributes of *zaydene yidn* (silken Jews), a term that reflects both refinement and religious erudition.¹⁷

Shtok's description of Elka provides a perspective on the daily life and accomplishments of a young woman from a refined family, a perspective that has tended not to be the focus of Yiddish literature. It suggests that Elka's activities comport with her interest in Schiller. Elka excels at embroidery and singing, properly prepares the Sabbath bread for her family each week, sings German and Polish songs beautifully (including Schiller's 'Sir Toggenburg'¹⁸), and knows Schiller's works by heart. Elka's actions seem to exist in harmony with each other: 'When she plaited the challah, her fingers made the same graceful movements as when she was braiding her hair', a comparison that hints at a larger continuity between Elka's scrupulous ritual observance and her maintenance of her own person.¹⁹ Elka's dreams of Schiller accompany her throughout her days, but she finds them particularly fitting for her quiet Sabbath mornings, probably because she associates Schiller's lyric with cultivation and pleasure, and because this is a time when she has fewer distractions. Crucially, Elka's fantasies do not interfere with her participation in the role considered appropriate for her gender and social position, however wayward her thoughts might seem. At least outwardly, Schiller's work—and Elka's

Schiller fantasy—fit seamlessly into her quiet, pious world. Elka even thinks of him as the *zaydener Schiller* (silken Schiller), attributing to him the kind of refinement held dear by her family.²⁰ Shtok suggests that the Christian German Schiller could be a component of a traditionally prestigious Jewish home, a view that can only be taken by focusing on the perspective of a woman who does not outwardly rebel, rather than the frequent scholarly and literary emphasis on men or rebels.

Yet by the end of the story, Asher has run off to Switzerland to become a musician and Elka has been persuaded to marry her cousin Arn, a man who is more interested in cattle dealing than in holy texts and is, in addition, a Zionist. Arn has only become a possible matrimonial partner thanks to his flight from Russia due to rumours of war (probably the First World War), and the family pressures Itzik to arrange the match because Elka has no dowry. Elka does not experience challenges to her quiet Schiller veneration because of parental discovery and disapproval, but instead due to external pressures on the Jewish family.

Schachter viewed Elka's Schiller fantasy as an 'aesthetic project' comprised of her own refashioning of the literature she reads: 'Elka absorbs the imaginary world of Schiller's poetry and opera, the romantic scenarios, the dramatic settings, and the ardor. She transforms them into a fantasy world that colors her everyday life. The romantic components of his work become the material of her own aesthetic project.'²¹ Schachter noted that Elka's familiarity with Schiller's work is a gendered source of prestige akin to her father's knowledge of Jewish texts, yet Schachter's argument is primarily focused upon the female modern artist rather than what this text reveals about the significance of German literature for East European Jews. Her emphasis was on Elka as 'author', rewriting Schiller in her fantasies, rather than on the German literature itself or how it was understood by the Jewish scholarly elite and fitted into women's reading

practices. Nonetheless, the texts Elka mentions—Schiller’s drama of the Spanish court *Don Carlos*, his play *Turandot*, about a cruel Chinese princess, and his crusader ballad ‘Sir Toggenburg’—are works that might seem especially foreign or even hostile to traditionally-religious Jews.²² As I will demonstrate, ‘Friedrich Schiller’ reflects the incredible popularity of the writer among East European Jews.

German, Yiddish, Gender

Schiller’s eastern European reception among Jews was deeply connected to the role of German in Jewish language, politics and educational practices. In a speech at the Jewish Public Library in Montreal in 1977, Rokhl Korn (1898–1992), who grew up in a Polish-speaking family in rural Eastern Galicia, compared the reading materials of her parents: ‘my father would sometimes study the holy books, and sometimes chatted about the Rambam. My mother kept a few German books on her shelf and some illustrated monthlies.’²³ While Korn’s intention was to demonstrate how unpretentious her family was, the sharp distinction between her father’s religious books, presumably written in a Jewish language, and her mother’s German-language books points to a larger gender divide in the reading practices of ordinary Jews in Polish lands. Scholars and literary critics have noted the importance of presumed-female readers for the development of modern Yiddish literature,²⁴ yet the place of German-language leisure reading in Jewish eastern Europe deserves deeper examination—particularly with regard to female audiences. Although Schiller was not a middlebrow writer, East European Jews often treated his works as middlebrow fiction: as sentimental, romantic leisure reading that was most appropriate for women. This designation carved out a specific, gendered place for Schiller among East European Jews and helps explain the importance of German-language pleasure reading for this

milieu.

While this (gendered) aspect of Jewish attitudes towards German has tended not to be the focus of scholarly attention, it comports with recent research in the field. As Marc Volovici noted in his study of the role of German in Jewish national and language politics, ‘German has held a momentous and multifaceted place in the history of European Jews, serving as a catalyst of secularization, emancipation, and assimilation in various Jewish communities within and without German-speaking areas.’²⁵ He stressed the aspirational qualities of German in the Jewish cultural imagination, noting that: ‘In the eyes of both Jewish proponents and opponents of the Enlightenment, German had the capacity to radically transform the world-view of Jews and outlook of Jewish societies.’²⁶ Volovici’s account was, above all, an intellectual and political history, which drew on debates by luminaries such as Martin Buber about the meaning of German for Jews. Yet focusing on the role of Schiller in eastern Europe reveals the German language in an intimate and domestic context, particularly as he was read by young people exploring new, cosmopolitan ideas of romantic love and especially by young women who were permitted greater access to modern languages even in a deeply religious environment—as exemplified above by the Milnitser Rebbe’s daughter or by the fictional Elka. I contend that although Schiller was the German writer par excellence, who has been understood in the context of European liberalism and was not especially sympathetic towards Jews,²⁷ he was transformed and domesticated by east European Jewish readers into a symbol not simply of their own cosmopolitan reading tastes, but also of a certain type of education deemed both refined and feminine.

The interplay of Yiddish and German has been a source of considerable scholarly interest, in part because of the juxtaposition of the German Jewish *Bildungsbürgertum* (cultured

bourgeoisie) with a Yiddish culture that is often associated with radical politics, on the one hand, and traditional religious observance on the other.²⁸ As I have noted in an earlier work, these two divergent strands seem together to embody the breadth of Jewish modernity, although they may ultimately be closer together than popular accounts often suggest.²⁹ Nonetheless, much of this research emphasized German (Jewish) voices and the way that well-known figures such as Moses Mendelssohn and Franz Kafka translated or interpreted an east European Jewish language in light of the concerns of their respective eras.³⁰ These accounts tend to emphasize male protagonists, or the way women who wrote in German, such as Else Lasker-Schüler and Nelly Sachs, engaged with Yiddish literature.³¹ One reason why the voices of female Yiddish-speaking cultural figures tend to be overlooked in these discussions of the modern German-Yiddish encounter may have to do with the importance of Weimar Berlin in recent scholarship on the topic.³² With the exception of art historian Rachel Wischnitzer, few Yiddish-speaking women seem to have been involved in Yiddish intellectual projects in this milieu.³³ Yet memoirs and literary texts reveal a deep-seated interest in German literature among well-read Yiddish-speaking women, especially prior to marriage. The author they mention reading, time and again, was Schiller.

German literature in general, and Schiller in particular, was an important part of female education in Jewish eastern Europe during the long nineteenth century. In her book *Reading Jewish Women*, Iris Parush examined women's education and literacy in Jewish eastern Europe—in short, the conditions by which reading Schiller became possible. She contended that it was precisely because women's education was neglected by religious authorities who were focused on male religious scholarship that 'the secular education of girls passively or quietly became acceptable', with the ultimate result that women were able to transmit modern ideas into Jewish

communities.³⁴

Unlike traditional male learning, which was both a religious practice and a form of social prestige, female education and reading were ‘treated as an alternative to idleness or as a youthful pastime, meant to be terminated immediately upon marriage’.³⁵ Parush contended that communal authorities seemed largely unconcerned about the subversive potential of ‘central themes of the sentimental novels for women, such as the critique of traditional matchmaking practices in favor of the ideal of romantic love’³⁶—even though such topics became a major rallying cry for social change in emerging modern Yiddish literature.³⁷ Rachel Manekin notes that although the Habsburg Empire was relatively slow to offer higher education opportunities to women, ‘beginning in the early twentieth century, some affluent Orthodox Jewish parents, including Hasidim, allowed their daughters to attend secondary schools and even universities’.³⁸ While the study of literature and modern languages was not necessarily considered problematic in religious homes, Manekin demonstrates in the case of Anna and Leonora Kluger that young women whose hasidic parents refused to let them pursue a higher education might even challenge them in the Austrian courts. Yet even the public outcry about this case underscored the perception of Schiller’s important role in secular educations.³⁹

For wealthy families, female education was a sign of aristocratic distinction; less affluent families sent their daughters to secular schools in hopes that foreign language instruction would be an asset in business.⁴⁰ Foreign language instruction was a cornerstone of secular education for girls, and even women from devout families would read classic works of German, French, or Polish literature. In this context, Schiller became a symbol both of girl’s secular education and of the influence of concepts such as romantic love that were foreign to traditional Jewish communities. Elka’s fascination with Schiller is simply a heightened (fictional) example of a

broader cultural phenomenon. Memoirs and literary accounts reveal that Schiller was arguably the most important non-Jewish writer for east European Jews, and his influence exceeded even that of his contemporary Goethe, the most celebrated German writer and the subject of particular veneration by German Jews.

Friedrich Schiller in the Jewish Imagination

Schiller is a towering figure in German literary history who (along with Goethe, Lessing, and Kant) holds an important place in the German Jewish commitment to *Bildung* (self-cultivation through education).⁴¹ Since the late eighteenth-century Berlin salons, *Bildung* has been particularly associated with Jewish women.⁴² Upwardly-mobile German Jews viewed *Bildung* as a way of gaining respectability and of escaping from the so-called ‘ghetto’ (traditional Jewish community life), an attitude that juxtaposed the refinement of German (and Schiller) with the much-maligned ‘jargon’, Yiddish.⁴³ Jonathan Hess noted how, in the context of German Jewish esteem for *Bildung*, it is not surprising that ‘the collected works of Goethe and Schiller came to assume such a revered place on the bookshelves of middle-class Jewish families in imperial Germany, or that... Jews played such a decisive role in the cultivation of Goethe and the German classics.’⁴⁴ Yet while Hess placed his emphasis on Goethe in the context of German-speaking Jews, it was Schiller who appeared more frequently in the writings of east European Jews.

Hermann Makower (1830–1897) recalled the books read by his father, who lived in Santomysl (Zaniemyśl), then part of Prussian Poland: ‘His favorite poet was Schiller, whose onomatopoetic genius he admired. At a very early time, I learned poems from him and had to declaim them while standing on a table, in order to learn how to stand firmly and freely.’⁴⁵

Makower's father's appreciation of Schiller was shared by many Jews, as George Mosse explained: 'Friedrich Schiller, in particular, was perceived as an advocate for cosmopolitanism and equality, a spokesman for humanitarian ideals.'⁴⁶ Shulamit Magnus, similarly, described Schiller as 'the most eminent playwright of the Goethe era, who championed human and political rights and the ideals of inner, intellectual, and political freedom, harmony, and equality'.⁴⁷ Both Mosse and Magnus acknowledged Schiller's particular resonance for east European Jews, such as Makower's father (or the fictional Elka). As Mosse noted, east European Jewry viewed Schiller as an even more prominent writer than Goethe: 'Schiller played a greater role than Goethe as the prophet of freedom and equality—a poet who touched the emotions. Those longing for a secular *Bildung* in eastern Europe talked about "Schiller-Goethe," reversing the order in which they were usually listed.'⁴⁸ Writing in 1922 about the fondness of educated east European Jews for Schiller, Samuel Meisels observed that: 'Schiller was the echo of their own thoughts and feelings.'⁴⁹ As a result of Schiller's associations with European culture, freedom, and emotions such as love,⁵⁰ he appears repeatedly in memoir accounts and literary fiction about east European Jews, their reading habits, educational choices, and courtship practices. Some of the most prominent of these accounts were written in German, although he also appears in Yiddish and Russian ones. They refer to a number of Schiller's ballads and plays, such as his drama *Don Carlos*, which depicts intrigue in the sixteenth-century Spanish court and features 'the character of the politically progressive Marquis Posa', a figure who was particularly revered by young men in the family of memoirist Pauline Wengeroff (1833–1916) and⁵¹ who is probably referred to in Shtok's story 'Friedrich Schiller.'

Several writers of German-language regional fiction about traditional Jewish communities (a genre known as *Ghettogeschichten*, ghetto tales) wrote about Schiller's

significance for religious Jews as a way of generating sympathy for their appreciation of ‘universal’ values. In his sentimental 1891 short story ‘The Bookbinder from Hort’, Galician-born Austrian nobleman Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836–1895) deploys Schiller in the service of philosemitism.⁵² Set in Hungary in the liberal moment after the 1848 revolutions, the story depicts a Jewish bookbinder, Simcha Kalimann, who is defined by his love of freedom, hard work, and fondness for European literary classics. Kalimann invokes Schiller on several occasions, including the play *Don Carlos* and poem ‘Das Lied von der Glocke’.⁵³ The story even ends with a Schiller verse, delivered as a wedding toast by an illiterate man who has apparently been influenced by Kalimann in his taste in poetry. Although Sacher-Masoch mentions other European writers, only Schiller receives these repeat references, suggesting that Jews who appreciated him are the kinds of people who should have a place in liberal society. Characteristic for Sacher-Masoch’s writings about Jews, this story uses Jewish folkways as a form of exotic local colour while contending that Jewish values comport with those of his acculturated Jewish and non-Jewish readers.⁵⁴

While Sacher-Masoch’s references to Schiller underscored his liberal view that Jews could appreciate the universality of classic literary works, other writers contrasted Schiller’s writings with the Jewish legal texts that governed traditional Jewish life. Jewish writer Karl Emil Franzos (1847/48–1904) invokes Schiller’s works in several stories in his semi-autobiographical short story collection *The Jews of Barnow*, and in ‘Schiller in Barnow’, all set in his hometown of Czortków (Chortkiv).⁵⁵ In ‘Chane’, Franzos presented Schiller’s work as an improvement on the Talmud. His character, Nathan Silverstein, a Jewish man whose wife Chane has fallen in love with a Christian, seeks guidance in the Talmud about how to respond to his wife’s wayward affections. Nathan sympathizes too much with Chane’s position, trapped in an arranged marriage

to a man she does not love, to view her as deserving punishment for what he feels Jewish law unfairly characterizes as deceitful behaviour. Instead, Nathan discovers a ‘higher law’ in a book of Schiller’s poetry from his youth that he is now, finally, able to understand:

Schiller’s poems [...] came into his hands again at this dark hour of his life... [...] Each poem made a deep impression on him. It was so different from all that he had found in it before. Whether better or worse he did not stop to inquire; but the influence must have been good, for his heart felt relieved of the load that had oppressed it.⁵⁶

Reading Schiller’s poetry comforts Nathan and gives him the sentimental education he needs to resolve his dilemma: He decides to grant Chane a divorce because he now regards it as a sin for them to have married without love, even if now she will forsake Judaism to marry a Christian, and despite the fact that Nathan has realized he loves her. In this didactic story by a writer who was sharply critical of arranged marriages,⁵⁷ a Jewish man could come to view the accepted practice of Jewish matchmaking as a sin and deem love matches—even exogamous ones—as a supreme value. In a twist on Gottesfeld’s later invocation of Schiller’s *psakim*, here Franzos suggests that Schiller would make the ideal *posek* (authority on Jewish law). Franzos’s story, although clearly diverging from east European Jewish norms, nonetheless reflects the frequent identification of Schiller with romantic ideals.

As I have shown, Schiller features in both fictional and memoir accounts by east European Jews. Although Schiller’s appeal transcended gender and educational boundaries, the ways young people approached these texts might differ according to gender, as did the response they received from their parents. Wengeroff recounted in her memoirs how her brothers-in-law endeavoured to secretly study Russian, natural history, and German alongside religious works. This subversive program of education is described as symbolizing the incursion of modernity

into a pious Jewish home in Brest-Litovsk (Brest), then part of the tsarist empire. The young men hide works by Schiller and German idealist novelist Heinrich Zschokke inside volumes of Talmud: ‘Outwardly, they remained tranquil and appeared, as usual, to be busy with Talmud, but an alert observer could often discover under the large Talmud folios a volume of Schiller’s or Zschokke’s works. [...] Schiller’s Marquis Posa served as a model for all the young men.’⁵⁸ Wengeroff described an episode from 1842 in which the young men and their tutor approached Schiller as they would a passage from Talmud: they ‘disputed a sentence in *Don Carlos*, screaming loudly. In order to prevent being taken unawares, they read and spoke in exactly the same sing-song which they used to learn Talmud.’⁵⁹ Much to their chagrin, Wengeroff’s mother listened closely enough to hear that that their speech had more to do with the Marquis Posa than with Talmudic language. Presumably she would not have been so disappointed in their literary tastes had they been girls. While young Jewish men (covertly) read Schiller and even interpreted him in the way they had been trained to study Talmud, he seems to have openly been a cornerstone of the secular educations of young women.

Education, Gender Divides, and Love Discourse

The fictional Elka’s love of Schiller reflected an eastern Europe reality: Schiller was a crucial component of Jewish girls’ education and his name appears repeatedly in memoirs. Wengeroff described how she learned German and Russian in a private girl’s school in the mid-nineteenth century and recalled that girls sang and recited by heart the first volume of Schiller’s poetry. Her account suggests a reverence for Schiller, whose poetry she contrasts with a traditional Jewish environment Wengeroff viewed as stifling:

Schiller’s poetry pierced the stifling, dark atmosphere of the ghetto like a breath of

spring, and the Jews marveled at all the magnificence and beauty, which so suddenly appeared before them... When the Jewish youth first began to read foreign works, they began with Schiller, who enchanted them and through whom they perfected their knowledge of German. The men studied Schiller by heart; so did we young girls, and soon Schiller was an indispensable part of the curriculum of the cultured Jew: he studied Talmud and Schiller—indeed, the latter with the same method as Talmud. Each important verse was dissected individually and debated loudly; questions and possible answers followed one another [and] were discussed until a satisfying solution and the profound meaning that was said to lie behind the words was found.

At that time, many translations into Hebrew appeared, published by the best Jewish poets, who all tried their hand at Schiller. The reason for this popularity is the nature of Schiller's poetry, its intellectual character, and the gravity and pathos of his idealism, which viewed everything through the lens of the ethical.⁶⁰

Wengeroff described Schiller as a token of a new-found Jewish cosmopolitanism. His works were appreciated in universal but also intense, quasi-religious terms and approached differently by various readers: girls recited his poetry, religiously-educated young men studied his works like the Talmud; maskilic poets translated his writings into Hebrew. Although Wengeroff's account attests to the fact that Schiller's appeal for East European Jews was not limited to young women, German was more likely to be part of girls' curricula and thus their reading Schiller would not be considered subversive or a sign of maskilic tendencies viewed by religious traditionalists as too modern.

Y. Y. Trunk (1887–1961) described in his memoirs *Poyln* how the daughters of the wealthy Austrian-born Kalisher Rebbe 'allowed his daughters to attend a secular school where

they learned German and Polish and read Schiller and Mickiewicz. These cultivated and proud daughters acted more like ladies than rabbinic daughters.’⁶¹ Here reading Schiller is a sign of sophistication, worldliness, and high status. In a similar vein, Trunk wrote that prominent timber dealer, Reb Jacob Engelman, hired tutors for his daughters, who gave them a refined polish at the same time that their brothers were learning religious subjects:

Among those teachers in Reb Jacob’s ‘court’ were persons who later would play a role in the maskilic world of the Enlightenment, but they did not sway Reb Jacob’s daughters in that direction. They read Schiller and Mickiewicz and went for walks in the outlying fields beyond the whole Hasidic and scholarly bedlam around Reb Jacob’s residence. There, in the fields, Reb Jacob’s daughters walked amid the wheat and rye and declaimed Schiller’s poems. All this lasted until their wedding days, when the girls were harnessed into the yoke of Judaism... And Schiller’s poetry evaporated together with the girls’ youth.⁶²

Trunk’s evocative quote underscores how privileged young women were given the space to read and valorise European literature, with particular emphasis on Schiller. In fact, given how frequently his name is invoked in memoirs, one might even argue that references to Schiller also symbolized an education in modern languages or literature more generally. Studying European literary works was not seen as inconsistent with a religious lifestyle, as long as the young women gave up their literary interests upon marriage (although Parush also notes the case of David Ettinger’s mother, who continued to read Schiller’s poetry as a married woman, and Wengeroff mentioned bringing her Schiller volumes with her to her marital home).⁶³

Although Parush emphasized the space given to women to receive a secular education, studying Schiller could also be controversial. In her study of education for Jewish girls in the

tsarist empire, Elyana Adler noted how a private tutor in Minsk complained in a newspaper about girls being taught to read Schiller before they had the linguistic skills and maturity to understand the work. Citing such writers who were dismissive of girls learning Schiller, Adler commented: ‘The anxiety of these writers seems to have stemmed from a concern that the women were enjoying the romantic tales without grasping their deeper messages.’⁶⁴ While Adler complicated Parush’s account of girl’s secular education, she underscored how East European Jewish accounts of Schiller frequently stressed the emotional rather than philosophical qualities of his writing. I contend that this Jewish ‘middlebrow’ reading of Schiller that identified him with Romantic literature instead of (like Schachter) insisting upon a ‘philosophical’ reception rooted in his writings on aesthetic education should be taken more seriously.⁶⁵

Yiddish and other literature depicted concerns over women’s reading of entertaining fiction. Leisure reading and secular education created a disparity between the romantic ideals of young women and the scholars chosen by their parents. This was a frequent trope in Jewish literature. Shtok also depicted an emotional mismatch between Elka and her husband, Arn, yet in a twist on the usual plot Arn is unsuitable for her because of his crass interest in trade rather than because he is an unworldly scholar. In the disconcerting final scene of the story, the desperate Elka fantasizes about Schiller as Aron proprietorially fondles her neck and speaks about his business deals. Shtok contrasts his brash physicality with Elka’s immateriality (and her vision of Schiller). Her demeanour is reminiscent of the way scholars are often depicted in Jewish literature. Shtok did not use the theme of marriage to attack Jewish matchmaking customs; instead she suggested that Elka might not view her Schiller fantasy as clashing with her father’s ideas about her matrimonial future. Nonetheless, the Schiller texts Shtok invoked show how far girls’ reading tastes might stray from the insular world of east European towns, and suggest

provocatively that these works might still be part of a traditional Jewish life.

‘Friedrich Schiller’ and the Question of Love in Yiddish

The text of Schiller’s famous 1797 ballad ‘Sir Toggenburg’ is far removed from Jewish concerns. It tells of a Swiss knight who returns from the crusades to find that his sweetheart has just become a nun. He waits outside the convent for years hoping only to see her and maintains his vigil even in death. When Adrian Daub invoked ‘Sir Toggenburg’ as his example of how a ballad is a genre that ‘lives in translation’ across different media, he mostly provided examples of musical settings and artistic renderings of this poem from non-Jewish German culture:

the poem changed little, but what could be done with it culturally at any given moment was itself astonishingly broad. ‘Toggenburg’ intersected with Victorian medievalism, Nazarene neoclassical art, with a burgeoning *Lied*-culture, with popular entertainments and emerging art music. In between, it made appearances in schoolbooks and case studies by Siegmund Freud, in the Westerns of Karl May, and in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch’s *Venus in Furs*.⁶⁶

‘Sir Toggenburg’ was not a text that translated obviously into a Jewish context. It depicts the unrequited love of a crusader for a nun: both crusaders and nuns are deeply Christian occupations, and crusaders notoriously massacred Jews on various occasions. Furthermore, unrequited love is very much part of the medieval Christian concept of courtly love, which would have seemed foreign to traditionally-religious Jews.⁶⁷ The romantic thrust of Schiller’s ballad may have been opaque to traditional east European Jews, at least until they became familiar with non-Jewish ideas of romance.⁶⁸ Indeed, an antisemitic 1831 adaptation of ‘Sir Toggenburg’ in a mocking pseudo-Yiddish suggests, by implicitly contrasting a Jewish man with

the crusader of the original ballad, that Jews were unable to muster romantic sentiments and that their attempts to do so would be absurd.⁶⁹ While the satirical poem was designed to mock Jews, the tensions it suggests between ‘Sir Toggenburg’ and traditional Jewish culture were not entirely inaccurate. It is the very foreignness of Schiller’s poem that makes it appealing for Shtok’s protagonist in ‘Friedrich Schiller’, since she can associate the poem both with refinement and with intriguing, unfamiliar details about the men she encounters.

Shtok’s story provides a new perspective on one of the major questions of emerging Yiddish literature (how to make Yiddish suitable for writing about love) and offers a German answer (Schiller). The three classic Yiddish writers, Mendele Moykher Sforim, Sholem Aleichem, and Y. L. Peretz, all famously wrote about the difficulty of translating love and romance into a Jewish context. The development of Jewish romantic tropes is the basis of Naomi Seidman’s *The Marriage Plot*, a book that brilliantly articulates Jewish approaches to romance but does not focus on plots as foreign to traditional Jewish life as ‘Sir Toggenburg’. In his autobiographical novella *Of Bygone Days*, Mendele Moykher Sforim famously describes traditional Jews as being unable to understand or appreciate the concept of romantic love: ‘Love is not the kind of thing the Jewish mind can grasp. Love and lovers are not to be found among Jews... Love, that fragile soap-bubble that bursts at the slightest puff of wind, was unknown to our ancestors.’⁷⁰ He and his fellow Yiddish literary pioneers emphasized the ways in which Jewish romance literature differed from that of other groups, because they felt the contexts of the Jews were unique.⁷¹ Mendele Moykher Sforim, Sholem Aleichem, and Y. L. Peretz all depicted romantic love and desire as potentially at odds with the modern Yiddish literature they were working to develop.

Yet writings about romantic yearnings do animate Yiddish literature, even if they

sometimes had an uneasy place in the Yiddish canon.⁷² Critic Shmuel Charney (writing as Shmuel Niger) noted how thwarted dreams are a characteristic of Shtok's work.⁷³ Her haunting stories are animated by the longing of ordinary Jews. In the case of 'Friedrich Schiller', this longing takes the form of Elka's increasingly elaborate Schiller fantasy. Indeed, Rokhl Oyerbakh (Rachel Auerbach) referred to Elka as 'the greatest defender of her own dreams' in Shtok's oeuvre.⁷⁴ Although Schiller was often considered a suitable subject for schoolgirls' lessons, he was both a logical and subversive object of desire. On one hand, Schiller was already the subject of veneration among educated Jews, and his writings about freedom and emotion were very compelling. The fantasy of Schiller could be framed as the fantasy of a particular type of education or of acculturation writ large. On the other hand, pious Jewish girls were not supposed to marry Christian writers. The idea of a Jewish girl privately fantasizing about Schiller in the guise of a crusader is transgressive, even if this private trespass is unlikely to ever become known. This notion suggests the problem of secularly educated Jewish women who experienced an intellectual mismatch with the religiously educated men their parents expected them to marry, a frequent theme in literature.

Elka's Schiller fantasy reflects this tension between romantic love and marriage, forbidden and sanctified. Her version of Schiller is surprisingly integrated into the rhythms of her life (especially her sabbath daydreams), yet she focuses particular attention on the idea of Schiller-as-Sir-Toggenburg dying bloodied in the field, a surprisingly brutal revision of the story by a quiet, pious young woman, since in the original ballad he dies alone and without violence. By that same token, on multiple occasions Elka imagines him dying and then quickly stops herself and pictures them getting married in a church, a choice that removes the morbid thought of two lovers united in death and replaces it with the equally if not more subversive idea of this

sheltered Jewish girl getting married in a church. While Schachter labels this fantasy ‘frivolous and absurd, a tragic poetic scene abruptly transformed into a simple church wedding’, Elka’s mental feint points to her difficulty negotiating this exotic love discourse in her deeply Jewish milieu.⁷⁵ Perhaps, like the classic Yiddish writers, Shtok was attempting to create a Jewish romantic hero, yet through the lens of Schiller worship.

Judaizing ‘Friedrich Schiller’

While Elka’s behavior is outwardly modest, her elaborate Friedrich Schiller fantasy merges the writer himself with the hero of his ballad ‘Sir Toggenburg’. Elka makes interesting modifications of the ballad in her own private retelling. Beyond the fact Schiller is the knight and she is the nun (that is to say, both she and the writer are characters in his poem), in her version he lies dying and bloody in a field, with her at his side: ‘She always saw him, Schiller, lying bloodied somewhere in a field as she bent over him, dying with him, quietly...’ Although Schachter does not directly compare Elka’s fantasy to Schiller’s ballad, this brutal refashioning of ‘Sir Toggenburg’ could be explained by Schachter’s contention that Elka is rewriting Schiller in her fantasies and responding to a stifling home environment. Then, as if to mask the violence of her fantasy, Elka switches from the image of quietly dying in the field with Schiller to the refrain ‘No, they got married somewhere off in a church’.⁷⁶ It seems almost as if the tidy ending in marriage rather than death is a protective gesture, the masking of dark fantasies with more conventional aims. Elka’s correction also indicates the replacement of a tragic, romantic ending with one that seems more proper for traditional Jewish views of love (even if in a Christian house of worship), since it is focused on marriage rather than on lovers who are united only in death.

Elka was raised in a Jewish scholarly milieu, and even her exotic fantasy of medieval Christian characters should not be read as a desire to convert or leave the fold. Instead, Elka reworks Schiller and his ballad to suit her tastes and help her mentally process her various encounters with men, especially those she considers modern or somehow foreign. Schiller the quiet, faithful knight of her fantasy can also be read as an extension of the values Elka has learned at home and thus as a fitting hero for her imagination: he is a 'silken' hero dressed in courtly brocade, an exotic twist on the refined traits Elka has been taught to value in men. Furthermore, Schiller's poem about a crusader and a nun becomes a regular part of a Jewish girl's sabbath daydreams, thus domesticated for her own cultural milieu.

In 'Friedrich Schiller', German is, like embroidery lessons, treated as inseparable from traditional female upbringing and a sense of aristocratic refinement. Schiller emerged in a manner that suggested he was both Jewish and foreign. These characteristics repeated themselves in the men who flavour Elka's fantasy life. Men she encounters from afar and cannot interact with out of a desire to maintain proper decorum appear as elements of her fantasy. Yet while the aristocratic count's son in his riding-costume, the young student who follows her singing beautiful German love songs and brazenly calling out endearments, and the bicycle-riding teacher who teaches her brother to read musical notation seem louder and less religious or Jewish than the scholar her family would probably prefer for her to marry, they all carry the allure of aristocracy, culture, or music. Elka borrows the teacher's music notebook from her brother and sniffs the pages, but the only response she can muster for her sensuous appreciation of the notebook is to imagine Schiller rising from his field and riding off on a bicycle like the teacher. While she might like to run away and study music in Switzerland like her brother, Elka represses these desires and infuses them in her fantasies. Schiller is a malleable, recurring figure in her

imagination who allows her to pleurably contemplate (and adapt) the men around her without taking the risk of actually talking to these men herself.

When Elka is married off to her cousin Arn, ‘the Russian’, his loud voice, physicality, and comfort with commerce are disturbing to her and her father. While Elka indulges in aristocratic fantasies, the realities of commerce distress her. Despite Arn’s close blood ties, which her family gave as a rationale for the wedding, this Jewishly uneducated Zionist represents the upheaval in the world around her and the destruction of her quiet home life. At the same time, Elka silently resists the expectation that, as a married woman, she should turn from her literary pursuits and focus on her husband. While she never engages in open rebellion, Elka resists the reality of her mismatched marriage. She can only bear her husband’s clumsy attempts at affection by retreating into her Schiller fantasy. In Oyerbakh’s reading, her unwillingness to accept reality elevates her into ‘the sad, tragicomic symbol of feminine Don Quixotism’.⁷⁷ Like Malka in Y. L. Peretz’s 1904 short story ‘Downcast Eyes’, Elka fantasizes about a high-status non-Jewish man even when she is caressed by her Jewish husband, yet unlike Peretz’s moral condemnation of Malka for her attraction to a Polish nobleman, Shtok treats the Schiller fantasy as a constant comfort to Elka that is very much connected with her traditional Jewish upbringing (and the kind of education discussed by Parush), a rarefied world that is threatened by those very forces of war and commerce that have pushed Arn into her life.

Conclusion: Female Perspective on Male Love Interest

In ‘Friedrich Schiller’, Shtok depicted the fantasies of a Jewish woman whose desire for love was focused on a man who might seem far above her reach: the Christian, German, and leading figure of Weimar Classicism, Friedrich Schiller. Yet in her imagination, he is a malleable

figure who seems to embody every form of exoticism that touches her life, including knighthood, courtly attire, bicycle-riding, gentile nobility, and flirtation. She pictures him lying vulnerably bloodied and dying in a field, a violently melodramatic rewriting of the ballad ‘Sir Toggenburg’. She imagines him marrying her, regardless of confessional differences or the fact that in her fantasy she has just played the role of a nun, a change to the ending that removes the unfulfilled longing of Schiller’s original. He is hers to shape and form, a famous Christian man stripped of threat and instead, despite his exoticism, assimilated by her into her refined Jewish life and fashioned into a source of comfort who accompanies her into her mismatched marriage.

Elka’s imagining of Schiller for her milieu does not simply relate to his attributes as a ‘silken Jew’ who appears in her fantasies as a regular part of her sabbath mornings, although his quiet demeanour seems closer to that of her father than that of the boorish cattle dealer she marries. His prominence in her education and affections reflects Schiller’s leading role in the secular education of Jewish girls and the European reading of maskilim, since in this context, where German was held in high cultural esteem, Schiller was the most beloved German writer for east European Jews. The fictional Elka lends credence to Jewish memoirists, who considered Schiller a key component of their literary and sentimental educations. While Shtok’s portrayal of a refined Jewish family in the face of changing times was ironic, it reflected Schiller’s oversized place in the hearts of many Jews. Yet beyond the way scholars have acknowledged how invocations of Schiller signalled Jewish openness to lofty ideas like freedom, texts such as Shtok’s ‘Friedrich Schiller’ and Gottesfeld’s memoirs demonstrate Schiller’s crucial place in emerging Jewish discourses of courtship and romantic love. Often reading Schiller as middlebrow romance or even quasi-Jewish writer, Jewish young people (including young women) imagined him as a fantasy figure who could help them negotiate a traditional

community in flux.

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¹ C. Gottesfeld, *Mayn rayze iber Galitsye* (New York, 1937), 51.

³ C. Gottesfeld, *Vos ikh gedenk fun mayn lebn* (New York, 1960), 114; abridged Eng. trans: *Tales of the Old World and the New*, trans. J. Richman (New York 196)], see 52-64. For the cultural significance of *Ahavas tsion* for Jewish discussions of romantic love, see N. Seidman, *The Marriage Plot, or, How Jews Fell in Love with Love and with Literature* (Stanford, CA, 2016), 34–37; 78–80.

⁴ On Schiller and his reception, see P.-A. Alt, *Schiller: Leben, Werk, Zeit*, 2 vols (München, 2000); J. L. High, N. Martin, and N. Oellers (eds.), *Who Is This Schiller Now?: Essays on His Reception and Significance* (Rochester, NY, 2011).

⁵ The United States Social Security Death Index gives her birth date as 2 July 1887 and her death date as April 1990 at the age of 102, thus suggesting an even greater longevity than has been acknowledged in previous scholarship ('Fradel Shtok': Family Search website, 'Search', 'Records', 'United States, Social Security Death Index', visited 23 Sept. 2023). My thanks to Joseph Galron-Goldschläger for drawing my attention to this source.

⁶ See J. Neugroschel, 'Fradel Shtok (1890–after 1942)', in *No Star Too Beautiful: An Anthology of Yiddish Stories from 1382 to the Present*, ed. and trans. J. Neugroschel (New York, 2002), 463; H. Kenvin, 'Fradel Shtok: Author and Poet' (13 Sept 2015): JewishGen website, 'Discover', 'Kehilalinks', 'Ukraine', 'Skala-Podol'skaya (Skala)', visited 25 Mar. 20w3; S. Gollance, 'A Dance: Fradel Shtok Reconsidered' (3 Dec. 2017): *In geveb* website, visited 25 Mar. 2023; A. Schachter, *Women Reading Jewish Modernity, 1919-1939* (Evanston, 2021), 30–4.

⁷ M. Ravitch, "'Gezamlte ertsehlungen"' fun Fradl Shtok', *Bikher velt*, 1923, no. 2, cols. 64–6:65.

⁸ Y. Glatshteyn, 'Tsu der biografye fun a dikhterin', *Tog-morgn-zhurnal*, Section 2, 19 Sept. 1965, pp. 14, 6. For a summary of the biographical information in this article, see N. F. Pratt 'Fradel Shtok: Memory and Storytelling in the Early Twentieth Century', in *Di Froyen: Women and Yiddish, Tribute to the Past, Directions for the Future*

(New York, 1997), 85-8.

⁹ *Yidishe dikhterins: antologye*, ed. E. Korman (Chicago, 1928); *Antologye: finf hundert yor yidishe poezye*, ed. M. Bassin, 2 vols. (New York, 1917); see Hellerstein, ‘Canon and Gender: Women Poets in Two Modern Yiddish Anthologies’, in I. R. Baskin (ed.), *Women of the Word: Jewish Women and Jewish Writing* (Detroit, 1994), 136–52, esp. 146-8.

¹⁰ N. F. Pratt, ‘Culture and Radical Politics: Yiddish Women Writers in America, 1890-1940’, in Baskin (ed.), *Women of the Word*, 111–35: 122. .

¹¹ F. Shtok, *Gezamlte ertsehlungen* (New York, 1919); see also ead., *From the Jewish Provinces: Selected Stories*, trans. J. D. Finkin and A. Schachter (Evanston, IL, 2022).

¹² Gollance, ‘A Dance’.

¹³ Schachter, *Women Reading Jewish Modernity*, 35, see also 36.

¹⁴ F. Shtok, ‘Friedrikh shiler’, in *Gezamlte ertsehlungen*, 25–33; Eng. trans.: ‘Friedrich Schiller’, in *From the Jewish Provinces*, 38–41.

¹⁵ Shtok, ‘Friedrikh shiler’ (Yid.), 25; ead., ‘Friedrich Schiller’ (Eng.), 38.

¹⁶ M. Olgin, ‘Pesimizm’, *Di naye velt*, 9 Jan. 1920, 16–17:16. For different assessments of Olgin’s review, see Gollance, ‘A Dance’; Schachter, *Women Writing Jewish Modernity*, 35. For more about Shtok’s use of irony, see Pratt, ‘Fradel Shtock’, 86.

¹⁷ Schachter suggests that the use of hearsay casts doubt upon the truth of these claims (*Women Writing Jewish Modernity*, 37).

¹⁸ F. Schiller, ‘Ritter Toggenburg’, in id. (ed.), *Musen-Almanach für das Jahr 1798* (Tübingen, 1798), 105–9; Eng. trans.: ‘Sir Toggenburg: A Ballad of Schiller’, trans. H. B. H., *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 25 (1829), 80–1.

¹⁹ Shtok, ‘Friedrikh shiler’ (Yid.), 25; ead., ‘Friedrich Schiller’ (Eng.), 38.

²⁰ Shtok, ‘Friedrikh shiler’ (Yid.), 27. Schachter and Finkin translated *zaydener* as ‘delicate’ (see Shtok, ‘Friedrich Schiller’ (Eng.),)39.

²¹ Schachter, *Women Writing Jewish Modernity*, 37. For the full analysis, see pp. 36–45.

²² Elka refers to Schiller’s ‘young marquesses’ [*yunge markizen*], which likely includes his famous Marquis de Posa in *Don Carlos* (Shtok, ‘Friedrikh shiler’ (Yid.), 27). Schachter and Finkin translated *markizn* as ‘noblemen’ (see Shtok, ‘Friedrich Schiller’ (Eng.), 39). 39. She tells her friend Babtsi about Turandot (Shtok, ‘Friedrikh shiler’

(Yid.), 27; ead., ‘Friedrich Schiller’ (Eng.), 39).

²³ ‘Rokhl Korn Speaks on the Destiny of the Jewish Poet’, *Literarisher ovnt lekoved rokhl korn tsum dershaynen fun ir bukh ‘farbitene vor’ / Literary Evening in Honor of Rokhl Korn, upon the Publication of Her Book ‘A Changing Reality’*, audio recording (13 Nov. 1977): ‘Yiddish Book Center Audio’, Soundcloud website, visited 16 Apr. 2023; transcript ‘Destined to Create: Speech by Rokhl Korn’ (Yid., n.d.): Yiddish Book Center website, visited 16 Apr. 2023; Eng. Trans. ‘Destined to Create: Speech by Rokhl Korn’, trans. Michael Yashinsky (n.d.), Yiddish Book Center website, visited 16 Apr. 2022.

²⁴ See e.g. N. Seidman, *A Marriage Made in Heaven: The Sexual Politics of Hebrew and Yiddish* (Berkeley, Calif. 1997), 11-39.

²⁵ M. Volovici, *German as a Jewish Problem: The Language Politics of Jewish Nationalism* (Stanford, Calif., 2020), 2.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ See M. B. Helfer, *The Word Unheard: Legacies of Anti-Semitism in German Literature and Culture* (Evanston, Ill., 2011), 23–56; N. Oellers, ‘Goethe und Schiller in ihrem Verhältnis zum Judentum’, in H. O. Horch and H. Dunkler (eds.), *Conditio Judaica*, vol. i: *Judentum, Antisemitismus und deutschsprachige Literatur vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, (Berlin, 1988), 108–30; H. O. Horch, ‘Friedrich Schiller, die Juden und das Judentum’, *ASCHKENAS* 16 (2006): 17–36.

²⁸ See A. Elyada, *A Goy Who Speaks Yiddish: Christians and the Jewish Language in Early Modern Germany* (Stanford, Calif., 2012); S. L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore, Md., 1986); J. A. Grossman, *The Discourse on Yiddish in Germany: From the Enlightenment to the Second Empire* (Rochester, NY, 2000).

²⁹ S. Gollance, *It Could Lead to Dancing: Mixed-Sex Dancing and Jewish Modernity* (Stanford, Calif., 2021), 7.

³⁰ See e.g. N. Seidman, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation* (Chicago, 2006), 153–98; D. Suchoff, *Kafka’s Jewish Languages: The Hidden Openness of Tradition* (Philadelphia, 2012), esp. 46–54.

³¹ See e.g. S. J. Spinner, *Jewish Primitivism* (Stanford, Calif., 2021), 94–120; A. Blau, ‘Claims of Language: Translation as a Mediation of Jewish Identity and the Yiddish Reception of Nelly Sachs’, *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 52, no. 1 (January 2007): 3-22. One exception is Bertha Pappenheim’s translation of early modern

Yiddish (see A. Gilman, *A History of German Jewish Bible Translation* (Chicago, 2018), 220–30; see also M. Johnson, ‘Glikl’s Circulation: Editing, Translating, Value’, in M. Gamper, J. Müller-Tamm, D. Wachter, and J. Wrobel (eds.), *The Value of Literary Circulation/ Der Wert der literarischen Zirkulation* (Stuttgart 2023), 291–301.)

³² See e.g. Barry Trachtenberg, *The Holocaust and the Exile of Yiddish: A History of the Algemeyne Entsiklopedye* (Boston, Mass., 2022); M. Caplan, *Yiddish Writers in Weimar Berlin: A Fugitive Modernism* (Bloomington, Ind., 2021); R. Seelig, *Strangers in Berlin: Modern Jewish Literature Between East and West, 1919-1933* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 2016); G. Estraiikh and M. Krutikov (eds.), *Yiddish in Weimar Berlin: At the Crossroads of Diaspora Politics and Culture* (London, 2010).

³³ On Wischnitzer, see C. Richter Sherman, ‘Rachel Wischnitzer: Pioneer Scholar of Jewish Art’, *Woman’s Art Journal* 1/2 (1980): 42–46; *Th Milgroym Project: Translations, Articles, Commentary*, special issue of *In geveb* (9 Feb. 2018–10 Dec. 2019): *In geveb* website, visited 26 Mar. 2023.

³⁴ I. Parush, *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society*, trans. S. Sternberg (Waltham, Mass., 2004), 71.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 175.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 245.

³⁷ See Seidman, *The Marriage Plot*.

³⁸ R. Manekin, *The Rebellion of the Daughters: Jewish Women Runaways in Habsburg Galicia* (Princeton, NJ, 2020), 135.

³⁹ Manekin quotes a 1910 criticism of the anticipated Supreme Court verdict in the Viennese law journal *Das Recht*: ‘Assuming that it was not school books that were torn up, but rather the works of a Friedrich Schiller or an Adam Mickiewicz, or even a volume by Zola—one does not even dare think of one of the great godless philosophers—will the brutal repression of the thirst for knowledge appear in a friendlier light?’ (‘Der Fall Klüger’, *Das Recht*, 7 (1910), 111–12: 112; cited in Manekin, *The Rebellion of the Daughters*, 158).

⁴⁰ Parush, *Reading Jewish Women*, 40.

⁴¹ For Schiller and German Jewish *Bildung*, see P. Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews: A Dual Identity* (New Haven, Conn., 1999), 26–7; P. Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans: Masters and Victims in Modernist Culture* (New York, 1978), 95, 117, 186; G. L. Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism* (Bloomington, Ind., 1985), 6–8; Horch, ‘Friedrich Schiller,’ 18–22.

⁴² For a gendered analysis of *Bildung*, see M. A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York, 1991), 8–10; 56–58; for salons and *Bildung*, see D. Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (Syracuse, NY: 2005), 7.

⁴³ Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews*, 27; S. E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800–1923* (Madison, Wis., 1982), 7–9.

⁴⁴ J. M. Hess, *Middlebrow Literature and the Making of German-Jewish Identity* (Stanford, Calif., 2010), 12–13.

Marion Kaplan also notes the ubiquity of Goethe and Schiller’s collected works in middle-class German Jewish homes in the context of a discussion of women’s role as cultural mediators (Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 120). For an account that claims Schiller’s preeminence for German Jews, see S. M. Bolkosky, *The Distorted Image: German-Jewish Perceptions of Germans and Germany, 1918–1935* (New York, 1975), 93.

⁴⁵ ‘Hermann Makower’, in *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland: Selbstzeugnisse zur Sozialgeschichte*, ed. M. Richarz,, 3 vols. (New York, 1976–82), i. 444–5; Eng. trans.: ‘Hermann Makower’, in *Jewish Life in Germany: Memoirs from Three Centuries*, ed. M Richarz, trans. S. P. Rosenfeld and S. Rosenfeld (Bloomington, 1991), 148–55: 150.

⁴⁶ Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, 44.

⁴⁷ S. S. Magnus, *A Woman’s Life: Pauline Wengeroff and Memoirs of a Grandmother* (Oxford, 2016), 53.

⁴⁸ Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, 44, see also S. Meisels, *Deutsche Klassiker im Ghetto* (Vienna, 1922), 18. Speaking mostly of eastern Europe, Oskar Frankl states that as the ‘poet of freedom’, Schiller was the most popular poet among Jews: ‘what people could be more excited by dreams of freedom and the ideas of freedom than the Jews, who for centuries lived in dungeons [*Kerker*], in the Ghetto?’ (O. Frankl, *Friedrich Schiller: In Seinen Beziehungen zu den Juden und zum Judentum* (Leipzig, 1905), 59–60; see also *ibid.* 60–6)1. In contrast with east European Jews, German Jews focused more attention on Goethe (see Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism*, 44–6; see also S. Meisels, *Goethe im Ghetto: Kleine Beiträge zu einem großen Thema* (Vienna, 1932), 29). For Schiller’s popularity in Hebrew, see A. Feinberg, ‘Schiller’s *Wilhelm Tell* in Bialik’s Translation’, in J. Schulte, O. Tabachnikova, and P. Wagstaff (eds.), *The Russian Jewish Diaspora and European Culture, 1917–1937* (London 2012), 11–24; esp. 11–12.

⁴⁹ Meisels, *Deutsche Klassiker im Ghetto*, 16.

⁵⁰ Magnus notes that Schiller’s play *Kabale und Liebe* championed romantic love over arranged marriage, suggesting that this topic may have appealed to east European Jews (Magnus, *A Woman’s Life*, 53).

⁵¹ Ibid., see also P. Wengeroff, *Memoiren einer Grossmutter: Bilder aus der Kulturgeschichte der Juden Russlands im 19. Jahrhundert*, 2. Vols., 2nd edn. (Berlin, 1913), 1. 134; Eng. trans.: *Memoirs of a Grandmother: Scenes from the Cultural History of the Jews of Russia in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. S. S. Magnus, 2 vols. (Redwood City, Calif., 2010–14), i. 180–1.

⁵² L. von Sacher-Masoch, ‘Der Buchbinder von Hort’, in *Jüdisches Leben in Wort und Bild* (Mannheim, 1891), 71–84; Eng. trans.: ‘The Bookbinder from Hort’, in *Jewish Life: Tales from Nineteenth-Century Europe*, trans. V. L. Lewis (Riverside, Calif., 2002), 59–68..

⁵³ For Yiddish versions of ‘Das Lied von der Glocke’, see A. B. Kilcher, *Geteilte Freude: Schiller-Rezeption in der jüdischen Moderne* (Munich, 2007), 35–43.

⁵⁴ On Sacher-Masoch’s ghetto tales, see e.g. D. Biale, ‘Masochism and Philosemitism: The Strange Case of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 17 (1982): 305–23; B. Hyams, ‘The Whip and the Lamp: Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, the Woman Question, and the Jewish Question’, *Women in German Yearbook* 13 (1997): 67–79; S. Spinner, ‘Anecdotal Evidence: Local Color and Ethnography in the “Shtetl” Stories of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch’, *Studia Rosenthaliana* 41 (2009): 65–79.

⁵⁵ K. E. Franzos, ‘Nach dem höheren Gesetz’ (1873), in *Die Juden von Barnow: Geschichten*, 4th expanded edn. (Stuttgart, 1887), 53–110; Eng. trans.: ‘Chane’, in *The Jews of Barnow: Stories*, trans. M. W. MacDowall (Edinburgh, 1882), 59–112; id., ‘Esterka Regina’ (1872), in *Die Juden von Barnow*, 203–59; Eng. trans.: ‘Esterka Regina’, in *The Jews of Barnow*, 173–235; id., ‘Das Christusbild’ (1869), in *Die Juden von Barnow*, 279–316; Eng. trans.: ‘The Picture of Christ’, in *The Jews of Barnow*, 257–98; id., ‘Schiller in Barnow’, in *Aus Halb-Asien: Kulturbilder aus Galizien, der Bukowina, Südrußlan und Rumänien*, 2 vols. (Leip^g, 1876), i. 69–90; Eng. trans.: ‘Schiller in Barnow’, in *The German-Jewish Dialogue: An Anthology of Literary Texts*, ed. R. Robertson (Oxford, 1999), 110–20; see Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 29–30; Horch, ‘Friedrich Schiller’, 20; Kilcher, *Geteilte Freude*, 89–97.

⁵⁶ Franzos, ‘Nach dem höheren Gesetz’, 86–7; id., ‘Chane’, 103–4; see also Frankl, *Friedrich Schiller*, 60; Kilcher, *Geteilte Freude*, 92–7.

⁵⁷ On Franzos’s ghetto fiction, see P. Ernst (ed.), *Karl Emil Franzos: Schriftsteller zwischen den Kulturen* (Innsbruck, 2007); C. Steiner, *Karl Emil Franzos, 1848–1904: Emancipator and Assimilationist* (New York, 1990).

⁵⁸ Wengeroff, *Memoiren einer Grossmutter*, i. 134; ead., *Memoirs of a Grandmother*, i. 180.

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- ⁵⁹ Wengeroff, *Memoiren einer Grossmutter*, i. 135; ead., *Memoirs of a Grandmother*, i. 180.
- ⁶⁰ Wengeroff, *Memoiren einer Grossmutter*, ii. 30–1; ead., *Memoirs of a Grandmother*, ii. 43–44;. See also Parush, *Reading Jewish Women*, 175–7.
- ⁶¹ Y. Y. Trunk, *Poyln: zikhroynes un bilder*, 7 vols. (New York, 1944), i. 88; Eng. trans.: *Poyln: My Life within Jewish Life in Poland. Sketches and Images*, trans. A. Clarke (Toronto, 007), 55; see also Parush, *Reading Jewish Women*, 75, 174–75.
- ⁶² Trunk, *Poyln* (Yid.), 203–4; id., *Poyln* (Eng.), 131–2; see also Parush, *Reading Jewish Women*, 174–5; Manekin, *The Rebellion of the Daughters*, 58.
- ⁶³ Parush, *Reading Jewish Women*, 175; Wengeroff, *Memoiren einer Grossmutter*, ii. 97; ead., *Memoirs of a Grandmother*, ii. 85.
- ⁶⁴ E. Adler, *In Her Hands: The Education of Jewish Girls in Tsarist Russia* (Detroit, 2010), 119.
- ⁶⁵ Schachter, *Women Writing Jewish Modernity*, 37.
- ⁶⁶ A. Daub, *What the Ballad Knows: The Ballad Genre, Memory Culture, and German Nationalism* (New York, 2022), 6.
- ⁶⁷ Daniel Boyarin comments that ‘courtly love with its conventions (honored in the breach perhaps?) of chaste adultery would have seemed silly and immoral to Jews like Rashi, just as romantic notions of “love at first sight” did to their nineteenth-century descendants. In the process of “modernization,” Westernization, and embourgeoisement, the “inability” of Jews to appreciate romance was considered a mark of the great deficiency of their culture’ (D. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley, Calif., 1997), 43). For the possible influence of courtly love discourse on a Jewish text emphasizing marriage, see D. Biale, *Eros and the Jew: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (Berkeley, Calif., 1997), 63.
- ⁶⁸ Seidman, *The Marriage Plot*. On Jewish and non-Jewish attitudes towards love in a German context, see C. Bailey, *German Jews in Love* (Stanford, Calif., 2022).
- ⁶⁹ I. V. Stern, ‘Dichter Itzig Feitel Stern: Nouch Ritter Toggenborrig, dien der Schiller gemacht hett’, in *Gedichter, Perobeln unn Schnoukes* (Meissen, 1831), 7–10. Written in the first person (unlike Schiller’s poem), this mocking satire describes a Jewish man whose desired bride has married another man, yet still he spies on her.
- ⁷⁰ Mendele Moykher-Sforim, *Shloyme reb khayims: a bild fun yidishn lebn in der lite* (New York, 1927), 61; Eng. trans.: ‘Of Bygone Days’, In *A Shtetl and Other Yiddish Novellas*, ed. R. R. Wisse, trans. R. P. Scheindlin (Detroit,

1986), 249–358: 324

⁷¹ Sholem Aleichem, ‘Stempenyu’, in *Ale verk*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1948), iii. 5–113: 7; Eng. trans.: ‘My First Jewish Novel, *Stempenyu*’, trans. D. Kennedy (n.d.): Yiddish Book Center website, visited 26 Mar. 2023. On Sholem Aleichem’s appeal to women to read Jewish Writers instead of ‘foreign’ writers such as Schiller, see Parush, *Reading Jewish Women*, 202. For criticism of portrayals of women wanting domestic bliss instead of love, see I. L. Peretz, ‘Vos felt undzer literatur?’, in *Di verk fun yitskhok leybush perets*, 13 vols. (New York, 1920), x. 25–35: 32; Eng. trans.: ‘What Our Literature Needs’, trans. N. Halper, in *Voices from the Yiddish: Essays, Memoirs, Diaries*, ed. E. Greenberg and I. Howe (New York, 1975), 25–31: 29.

⁷² See e.g. K. Hellerstein, ‘The Art of Sex in Yiddish Poems: Celia Dropkin and her Contemporaries’, in S. E. Jelen, M. P. Kramer, and L. Scott Lerner (eds.), *Modern Jewish Literatures: Intersections and Boundaries* (Philadelphia, 2011), 189–212.

⁷³ S. Niger, ‘Di ertseylungen fun fradel shtok’, *Tsukunft*, 25 (1920), 608–10: 608; see Gollance, ‘A Dance’.

⁷⁴ R. Oyerbakh, ‘Fradel shtok’, *Tsushdayer*, 2 (1930), 39–45: 45; Eng. trans. R. Auerbach, ‘Fradel Shtok’, trans. A. Norich, D. Mazower, and F. Jones (7 Dec. 2023): In geveb website, visited 15 Jan. 2024. Oyerbakh refers to Elka by her nickname, Eltsi.

⁷⁵ Schachter, *Women Writing Jewish Modernity*, 38.

⁷⁶ Shtok, ‘Friedrikh shiler’ (Yid.), 26; ead., ‘Friedrich Schiller’ (Eng.), 38.

⁷⁷ Oyerbakh, ‘Fradel shtok’ (Yid.), 45; ead., ‘Fradl Shtok’ (Eng.).