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Exegetical Poetics: Tanakh and Textuality in Early Modern Yiddish Literature

Author
Wamsley, Rachel Alexandra

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Exegetical Poetics: Tanakh and Textuality in Early Modern Yiddish Literature

By

Rachel Alexandra Wamsley

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Committee in charge:

Professor Chana Kronfeld, Chair
Professor Robert Alter
Professor Naomi Seidman
Professor Simon Neuberg
Professor Elaine Tennant

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines Yiddish literature (1500-1950) as an alternative, even transgressive, vehicle for the transmission of the Hebrew Bible and classical rabbinic interpretation. In biblical works for popular audiences—which included women, children, and even non-Jews—Yiddish enjoyed a relative freedom from literary and doctrinal regulation. Through this freedom to improvise on the biblical canon, I argue, early Yiddish literature discloses hermeneutic and poetic practices inadmissible in contemporary Hebrew literature: humanist textual criticism, ambiguous or subversive midrash, the vivid portrayal of non-Jewish subjectivities. By reading this cultural palimpsest as a single multilingual and transnational history, I access those unsanctioned and clandestine practices in Jewish biblical transmission suppressed in the Hebrew sources.

At the same time, the material evidence offered by my work with early Yiddish and Hebrew books sheds light on the entanglement of religious authority and textual transmission. Recent scholarly attention has focused on the social history of the printing house (in contrast to the printing press) as the site of an evolving textual culture in the early modern period. With the emergence of this industry, Jewish exegetes relied, perhaps for the first time, on a professional class of textual stewards—printers, correctors, pressmen and censors—for the reproduction and dissemination of their work. These print professionals often represented a diverse (and at times ambiguous) range of religious confessions: rabbis thus entrusted their religious writings to humanist master-printers, and baptized Jews worked as copyists, correctors, and censors of Hebrew books. Rather than segregating material practices of print from the religious stakes of textual transmission, the dissertation interprets early modern Yiddish literature as the dynamic confluence of rabbinic exegetical poetics and emergent cultures of print.

In three textual case studies, I investigate this encounter and its literary incarnations in Yiddish over the course of the modern period. In the first chapter, "*Shmuel Bukh* and Early Modern *Mouvance,*" I excavate an exemplary instance of the interaction of rabbinic intertextuality and humanist print in the Old Yiddish biblical epic, *Shmuel Bukh,* as it was textually destabilized in the collaborative, culturally diverse printing houses of the Italian Renaissance. I argue that those houses and their competitive marketing of humanist textual practice were the model for the dominant Jewish printing house in sixteenth century Poland, Cracow's Prostitz press. The Cracow editions of *Shmuel Bukh* (1578, 1593) reflect a revision of

rabbinic exegetical tradition in favor of humanist textual criticism. The introduction of these secular editorial practices came to reshape the transmission of Yiddish biblical genres in Eastern Europe.

The second chapter, "Dialogue, Drama and the Survival of *Midrash*," continues this line of inquiry by tracing the descent of vernacular renderings of the Scroll of Esther in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Beginning with the Prostitz press and its experiments in Yiddish prose genres, such as *Di Lange Megile* (1589), vernacular prose reiterations of the Scroll of Esther depart from the protocols of midrashic transmission employed by their historical predecessors, medieval compendia. As editorial practices modernize over the course of the seventeenth century, Yiddish renditions of the Esther story reclaim a classical midrashic hermeneutics as a means of declaring their own intertextuality. As a result, retelling Scroll of Esther becomes an ambiguous ritual opportunity, permitting for experimental oral and textual exercises such as the Purim play. The *Akhashveyrosh-shpil* (1697) represents the zenith of this proliferation of textual, dramatic, and liturgical re-imaginings of the Esther story.

The third chapter, "Itzik Manger and the Historical Imagination," examines the ways in which modernist poet Itzik Manger crafted his claims to poetic and exegetical authority based on surviving witnesses to these early modern Yiddish genres. In his poetry, balladic retellings of biblical narrative occasion the use of traditional editorial and paratextual gestures, drawn from Yiddish early print. Similarly, Manger's literary-historiographical essays retrieve and romanticize early modern textual stewardship as the guarantor of literary and historical continuity with the biblical, rabbinic and folk-cultural past. The legacy of early modern textual transformation thus surfaces in literary modernism as a formal and intellectual opportunity to lay claim to the authority and autonomy of the early modern editor.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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פּערל ברכה, בכורה מײַנע, דיר ווידמע איך דאָס דאָזיקע בוך. ביסט מיר טײַער ווי גאָלד, זיס ווי האָניק, אַן אמתער פּערל וואָס שײַנט ווי די זון און לייַבט ווי די לבֿנה. אַן דיר, חלילה, וואָלט דאָס לעבן געווען ענג, וויסט און פֿינצטער. מײַן ליבשאַפֿט צו דיר איז אין-סופֿיק, און אייביק.

PREFACE

Chone Shmeruk opens his essay "Di altyidishe literatur: ire onheybn, meglekhkaytn un primere kontaktn"[1] with an evocative reading of Yiddish-Hebrew bilingualism in the *Mahzor* of Worms (1272). Amid the very letters of the first word of the *Tefilat Tal* ['Prayer for Dew,' a part of the *Musaf* prayer service on the first day of Passover], a rhymed Yiddish blessing appears: גוט טַק / אִים בְּטַגְּא / שְׁ וֵיר דִיש מַחְזוֹר אִין בִּיתֹ הַכְּנֶסֶתֹ טְרַגְּא [May a good day befall the one who carries this *mahzor* to synagogue] (f54r).[2] In Shmeruk's estimation, this blessing is of crucial importance not only for its historical value as the earliest dated instance of written Yiddish, but also for its symbolic significance:

> דער גראַם איז אַ מין צירונג אין די אָרנאַמענטירטע אותיות, און נאָר ווי אַזאַ צוגאָב האָט ער מן-הסתּם געקענט באַקומען אַן אָרט אין דער זאַמלונג פֿון פֿאַרהייליקטע טעקסטן. און אויך דאָן איז דער יידישער גראַם פֿאַרשריבן געוואָרן נאָר אין די חללים פֿון די אותיות פֿונעם העברעִישן וואָרט, וואָס איז יאָ אַ באַשטאַנדטייל פֿון דער תּפֿילה. ס׳באַקומט זיך אַז די גראַפֿישע פּאָזיציע פֿון דעם ערשטן יִידישן דאַטירטן ליטעראַרישן דאָקומענט שפּיגלט אָפּ אין אַ גרויסער מאָס און במשך פֿון אַ לאַנגער תּקופֿה דעם מעמד און די מעגלעכקייטן פֿון יִידיש און פֿון דער יִידישער ליטעראַטור אין דער אַרומנעמיקער און פֿילפֿאַרביקער קולטור פֿון דעם צווייִשפּראַכיקן יִידישן קיבוץ אין אַשכּנז. (3)

For Shmeruk, the "graphic position" of the Yiddish blessing serves as a direct reflection of the cultural function of Yiddish literary creativity in this period, and for a long time thereafter. Only in this form, as incidental "decoration," could Yiddish assume a place in the interstices of the sacred and already established canon of Hebrew-Aramaic literature. Furthermore, the graphic position of the Yiddish blessing in Shmeruk's reading is not only ornamental, but also entirely determined by the shape of the Hebrew letters amid which it is situated. By projecting this configuration outward to the larger cultural context of bilingual Ashkenaz, Shmeruk goes onto suggest that early Yiddish literary creativity was itself a form of marginalia, flourishing only at the periphery of the Ashkenazic literary tradition in Hebrew, filling in the *bloyzn*, the "gaps" or "empty spaces," which the Holy Tongue had left blank:

> דאָס אָרט וואָס איז באַשטימט געוואָרן פֿאַר דער ברכה אויף יִידיש שפּיגלט אויך אָפּ די באַגרענעצטע מעגלעכקייטן, וואָס די יִידישע ליטעראַטור האָט געקענט פֿון אירע אָנהייבן אָן אין די ליידיקע „בלויזן" וואָס זענען פֿאַר איר איבערגעבליבן אין גערעם פֿונעם קולטור-לעבן ביִ יִדן. [...] די יִידישע

1 Ch. Shmeruk, *Di altyidishe literatur: ire onheybn, meglekhkaytn un primere kontaktn.* Trans. Avrom Novershtern. New York: Alveltlekher yidisher kultur-kongres, 1976.

2 The *mahzor* resides in the National Library at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem: 4º 781/1-2. For more thorough bibliographic information and a complete digital facsimile, see the library's description: "Mahzor Worms." *Jewish National and University Library: David and Fela Shapell Family Digitization Project.* Web. 14 Apr. 2015. <http://www.jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/mss/worms/about_eng.html>.

ליטעראַטור, נישט געקוקט אויף איר שפּעטערדיקער אַנטוויקלונג און וווּקס,
האָט דעריבער אין דעם דאָזיקן קולטור-גערעם לכתּחילה ניט געהאַט קיין
מעגלעכקייט צו באַפֿרידיקן אַלע גייַסטיקע אָדער עסטעטישע באַדערפֿענישן
און פֿונקציעס אין דעם צווייַשפּראַכיקן קיבוץ פֿון וועלכן זי איז
אַרויסגעוואַקסן. (3-4)

Accordingly, early Yiddish was not simply ornamental in function, but defined in negative relation to the role already assumed by Hebrew-Aramaic in religious and cultural life. As a corollary to this principle, Shmeruk asserts that within such a cultural frame, Yiddish was necessarily unable to satisfy the intellectual and aesthetic needs of the larger culture *on its own*. Only as marginal complement to the Hebrew canon could Yiddish play an occasional role in Ashkenazic literary culture. That is, it could serve only a limited and ancillary function, within contours already strictly defined by the Hebraic literary expression which predated it.

Shmeruk's insistence on the constrained nature of early Yiddish literary creativity (its strictly marginal and thus complementary function) is in part historically motivated. Writing in the 1970s, Shmeruk was, here as elsewhere in his substantial body of scholarship, intent on revising the claims of Yiddishist literary historiographers of the early twentieth century, such as Israel Zinberg and others, who portrayed early Yiddish literature as an ideological alternative to Hebrew, one 'the folk' adopted in cultural rebellion against rabbinic authorities and the Holy Tongue.[3] In reaction, Shmeruk is intent on clarifying the *co*-operation of Yiddish and Hebrew-Aramaic, where Yiddish functions as a marginal accessory, rather than an aesthetic or ideological competitor. This critique serves as a powerful indictment of the romantic and political naïveté of an earlier generation of historians who hoped to see their own Yiddishist or Marxist ideals evident in the distant Ashkenazic literary past. At the same time, Shmeruk's academic agenda decisively shapes (indeed, limits) his reading of the Worms *Mahzor* and thence of early Yiddish more generally.

While this interpretation of the *Mahzor's* Yiddish blessing offers a graphic concretization of Shmeruk's academic-political critique, and would seem a much-needed corrective to our vision of Hebrew-Yiddish bilingualism in medieval Ashkenaz, there is more to his metaphor than meets the eye. The graphic position of the blessing in the Worms *Mahzor* easily lends itself to an image of Yiddish as marginalia, a notion Shmeruk glancingly addresses when he compares the Yiddish rhyme to the calligraphic ornamentation on the Hebrew letters which surround it. Yet in unpacking the symbolic significance of this image, Shmeruk confines his interpretation to the idea that the cultural purpose of early Yiddish was entirely defined in terms of *negative space*. Yiddish could only be where Hebrew was absent, could only address those "aesthetic or intellectual" needs Hebrew neglected. Even further, Shmeruk does not suggest that Hebrew was *unable* to meet these needs, only that it did not deign to do so. Such a wholly negative articulation of Yiddish-Hebrew literary dynamics fails to take stock of the marginalia metaphor's broader implications. True, margins are by definition peripheral, not central, often (or at least initially) vacant background against which the main text stands forth. This is even more true for the blank spaces around and between individual letters, whose shape is determined only in the negative, that space which is, in Shmeruk's language, "left over." Yet the Worms *Mahzor* was

3 See Shmeruk's explanation of this literary-historiographical trend (6) and his main interlocutors (n.6). See especially I. Zinberg, "Der kamf far yidish in der altyidisher literatur." *Filologishe Shriftn* 2 (1928): 69-106.

produced in a medieval scribal culture in which margins and the interstices of words and letters served purposes far more diverse, imaginative, and ambitious than those Shmeruk describes.

As a number of contemporary studies of medieval marginalia and manuscript illumination make clear, the embellishment of marginal, interlinear, and interstitial space in medieval manuscripts served a powerful aesthetic and interpretive function in its own right.[4] Michael Camille observes in his study of marginal images in medieval manuscripts:

> The word margin—from the Latin *margoinis,* meaning edge, border, frontier—only became current with the wider availability of writing. Once the manuscript page becomes a matrix of visual signs and is no longer one of flowing linear speech, the stage is set not only for supplementation and annotation but also for disagreement and juxtaposition [...]. (21)

The patterns, images, and language which proliferated in the empty spaces could elucidate, emphasize, qualify, and even undermine the meaning of the "body text." And by the time the Worms *Mahzor* was completed, this tendency to see marginal space as an opportunity for other voices to assert themselves on the page had only become more firmly entrenched:

> By the end of the thirteenth century no text was spared the irreverent explosion of marginal mayhem. As well as the traditional tools of liturgy—Bibles, Missals and Pontificals [or *mahzorim*!], and books owned by individuals for use in private devotion, mostly Psalters and the increasingly fashionable Books of Hours—secular compilations, such as Romances, and legal works, such as the Decretals, were filled with visual annotations. (22)

As this account suggests, while formal illumination was usually the work of professional artisans, marginal comments and doodling were also a means by which an individual could personalize a manuscript, imposing his or her will upon it and shaping it according to personal taste. These empty spaces might be better viewed, then, not as incidental chinks or left-over blanks, but imaginative opportunities for the reader to become a rewriter.

In this light, Shmeruk's metaphor of Yiddish literary marginality could be fruitfully expanded to address those moment in which Yiddish does not merely supplement its Hebrew-Aramaic counterparts, but in fact revises them. Through these Yiddish interventions, perspectives other than those espoused by doctrinal or liturgical orthodoxy find a way into the text, into the canon, and into history. At the same time, precisely because Yiddish appends itself in this early period to canonical sacred literature (often in the form of interlinear gloss or marginalia on the Hebrew Bible and its descendant exegetical genres), its contributions are not segregated from the 'high' literature of the Jewish tradition, but rather inextricably fused with it.

4 See M. Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art.* Essays in art and culture. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992; M. Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion in Medieval Jewish Art & Literature.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997; A. Taylor, *Textual Situations: Three Medieval Manuscripts and Their Readers.* Material texts. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

In the centuries after the blessing was added to the Worms *Mahzor,* Yiddish literature continued to expand in this capacity, spilling off the Hebraic page and into free-standing genres of its own: epic poetry, prose paraphrase, liturgical song, popular drama. Yet even as the material textuality of early Yiddish literature began to evince greater independence from the Holy Tongue, its intertextual entanglement with the Tanakh and the exegetical practices of the rabbinic tradition only grew deeper and more complex.

In this study I examine the Yiddish literature of early modern Ashkenaz as an alternative, even transgressive, vehicle for the transmission of the Hebrew Bible and classical rabbinic interpretation. While Shmeruk introduces the potent metaphor of the *bloyzn* to point up the limitations of early Yiddish literature, the narrow margins constraining its composition, my research discloses how, thanks to this very cultural configuration, early Yiddish literature enjoyed a relative freedom from linguistic and doctrinal regulation. By inhabiting neglected, negative spaces, defined only by what the Holy Tongue was not, early Yiddish literature freely deploys hermeneutic and aesthetic practices absent from contemporary Hebrew commentary. Reading early Yiddish as illuminating marginalia surrounding the Hebrew canon lays bare its unruly, impetuous improvisation upon the Tanakh and rabbinic interpretation, exposing unsanctioned and clandestine practices in Jewish textual transmission long-absent from the Hebrew sources. Each of the following chapters focuses on a different Yiddish literary genre – epic, drama, and lyric – as it engages in a textually empowered rereading of both the Tanakh and the rabbinic tradition.

At the same time, the material evidence offered by my work with early Yiddish and Hebrew books sheds light on the historical interdependence of religious authority and textual transmission. The dissertation opens with an extended reflection on the problem of textual instability for scholars of literature, such as Paul Zumthor and Bernard Cerquiglini, who have often attributed it to the material constraints imposed by a text's mode of transmission, whether in manuscript, print, or oral memory. Turning to account of early modern material culture and history of the printed book by Elizabeth Eisenstein and David McKitterick, and the literary functions of anonymity and authority in rabbinic exegesis by Daniel Boyarin, David Weiss Halivni, and Jacob Neusner, I offer a theoretical reconsideration of the intersection of materiality and exegesis, which sees formal and material convention as the guarantor of a text's religious authority. Such a theory seeks to account for the cultural upheavals engendered by technological revolution without resorting to the philosophical dead-end of material determinism. This turn to material texts and the institutions of their production further contextualizes early Jewish print amid an array of non-Jewish textual cultures. Recent scholarly attention has re-focused on the social history of the printing house (in contrast to the printing press) as the site of an evolving textual culture in the early modern period, as in the studies of Anthony Grafton, Brian Richardson, and, in a Jewish context, Elchanan Reiner and Marvin Heller. With the emergence of this industry, Jewish exegetes relied, perhaps for the first time, on a professional class of textual stewards – printers, correctors, pressmen and censors – for the reproduction and dissemination of their work. These print professionals often represented a diverse (and at times ambiguous) range of religious confessions: rabbis thus entrusted their religious writings to humanist master-printers, and baptized Jews worked as copyists, correctors, and censors of Hebrew books. Rather than segregating material practices of print from the religious stakes of textual transmission, I interpret early modern Yiddish literature as the dynamic confluence of rabbinic exegetical poetics and emergent cultures of print. In three textual case studies, I investigate this encounter and its literary incarnations in

Yiddish over the course of the modern period.

The first chapter, *"Shmuel Bukh* and Early Modern *Mouvance,"* explores an exemplary instance of the interaction of rabbinic intertextuality and humanist print in the Old Yiddish biblical epic, *Shmuel Bukh,* as it was textually destabilized in the collaborative, culturally diverse printing houses of the Italian Renaissance. I argue that those Italian printing houses and their competitive marketing of humanist textual practice were the model for the dominant Jewish printing house in sixteenth century Poland, Cracow's Prostitz press. Yet, this Italian print practice was itself the result of a confluence of literary and textual aesthetics: humanist traditions of textual renovation had already prioritized a philological and comparative approach to manuscript traditions, while dominant aesthetics in the plastic arts of the Italian Renaissance demanded that signs of imperfection and fragmentation be erased in the exhibiting of works of art. This humanist aesthetics of restoration appears in the editorial interventions of the Prostitz corrector in the Cracow editions of *Shmuel Bukh* (1578, 1593). I demonstrate how the corrector compared prior editions with the biblical original and its rabbinic intertexts to introduce decisive, but often invisible interventions. The corrector's tendency to privilege the literal meaning of the biblical original over and against rabbinic exegetical tradition further bespeaks a humanist textual archaeology, which seeks to recover through corrupt witnesses a pristine original. The introduction of these secular editorial practices, I argue, come to reshape the subsequent transmission of Yiddish biblical genres in Eastern Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The second study, "Dialogue, Drama and the Survival of *Midrash*," continues this line of inquiry by tracing the descent of vernacular renderings of the Scroll of Esther. Beginning with the Prostitz press and its experiments in Yiddish prose genres, such as *Di Lange Megile* (1589), vernacular prose reiterations of the Scroll of Esther depart from the protocols of midrashic transmission employed by their historical predecessors, medieval compendia. As editorial practices modernize over the course of the seventeenth century, Yiddish renditions of the Esther story reclaim a classical midrashic hermeneutics as a means of declaring their own intertextuality. In classical rabbinic literature, the anonymous attribution of individual midrashic exegeses served as the formal marker of the consensus of the collective, whereas individual attributions served as a rhetorical strategy for qualifying and limiting interpretive authority. By contrast, medieval midrashic compendia largely neglected this formal dialogism in favor of encyclopedic anthologization. Early modern Yiddish biblical dramas, I argue, retrieved the dialogism of classical midrashic attribution, precisely in order to fragment the exegetical authority of its performers, and thus to preemptively disavow the subversive contents of its biblical rereading. As a result, retelling the Scroll of Esther becomes an ambiguous ritual opportunity, permitting for experimental oral and textual exercises. The *Akhashveyrosh-shpil* (1697) represents the zenith of this proliferation of textual, dramatic, and liturgical re-imaginings of the Esther story. In analyzing the interaction of midrashic dialogism and ritual parody in this seventeenth-century drama, I revise the Bakhtinian account of 'comic dismemberment' in order to disclose the formal consonance of parody and exegesis, whose innate affinity, I argue, accounts for the Purim play's capacity for skeptical piety and reverent mockery.

The third chapter, "Itzik Manger and the Historical Imagination," examines the ways in which modern Yiddish poet Itzik Manger crafted his claims to poetic and exegetical authority based on surviving witnesses to these early modern Yiddish genres: biblical epic and Purim play. In his poetry, balladic retellings of biblical narrative occasion the use of traditional editorial and paratextual gestures, drawn from Yiddish early print. Similarly, Manger's literary-

historiographical essays retrieve and romanticize early modern textual stewardship as the guarantor of literary and historical continuity with the biblical, rabbinic and folk-cultural past. By adopting a romantic, biological model of literary historiography, Manger's neo-folkist theory of Yiddish genre portrays Jewish literary genres as 'genetically' related and dialectically self-perpetuating. Out of this genetic entanglement of pre-modern and modernist literary genres, I suggest, emerges Manger's preoccupation with early modern material texts (in manuscript and print) and their reproduction and dissemination by empowered textual stewards: printers, correctors, editors, and anthologists. This process of transmission may transform and refashion the traditional texts of the early modern Yiddish canon, but the material continuity of their reproduction serves to vouchsafe their genetic continuity with the literary past. Early modern textual transformation is thus romanticized in Manger's literary modernism as a formal and intellectual opportunity, by which the modern poet may lay claim to the authority and autonomy of the early modern editor.

CHAPTER ONE: SHMUEL BUKH AND EARLY MODERN *MOUVANCE*

INTRODUCTION

In 1644 *Mizmor le-Todah*, a verse retelling of the biblical books of Genesis, Exodus, and four of the Megillot, was printed in Amsterdam. In its introduction the author, David b. Menahem ha-Kohen, opines that midrashic sources should not be used in Yiddish paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible. Instead, he argues, if the biblical text is to be belletristically presented in Yiddish, it should be translated literally, without rabbinic additions.[1] This polemical stance marks a late, extreme iteration of a current of biblical literalism on the rise in Yiddish poetry since the mid-sixteenth century. The Yiddish biblical epic, a fusion of Tanakhic narrative, rabbinic exegesis, and German chivalric poetry from which *Mizmor le-Todah* derived, had always depended on a diverse intertextual pallet, which has recently led Chava Turniansky to observe that "the most important common characteristic of these poems is the extensive use of extra-biblical, mainly midrashic sources, in order to enrich and enlarge the biblical story. However, each poem has its own balance between biblical and extra-biblical material" (27). Yet rather than viewing this balance as a result of the individual poet's stylistic idiom, Turniansky understands it as part of the historical evolution of the entire genre, a broad movement from midrashic reliance to biblical literalism. Essential for our purposes is that the editors of the Old Yiddish epic, those print professionals tasked with reproducing and often renovating the texts they had inherited, had begun nearly a century ago to insist on the difference in interpretive authority among its diverse intertexts. And the distinction between the Yiddish epic's biblical and midrashic antecedents came to be emphasized most forcefully of all: "Old Yiddish biblical epics went a long way—not always a direct one—from the poems based entirely on the midrash, through poems that combined, in diverse proportions, the biblical with the extra-biblical sources, to poems relying mostly or completely on the biblical text" (Turniansky, 28). By the time we arrive at David b. Menahem's prologue, this powerful current in Old Yiddish biblical epic, which departed from the elaborative tradition of midrash in favor of an unmediated, if poetic, engagement with the biblical source, has reached its apex.

The shifting intertextual dynamics of early Yiddish biblical epic were not, however, solely a product of contemporary trends in Jewish exegesis and translation. In the late Middle Ages, the earliest composers working in this genre produced texts which thoroughly fused the biblical and midrashic. By contrast, the literalism which characterizes the latest iterations of Yiddish biblical poetry appears in its most striking forms only in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. This shift in intertextual preference (from the midrashic source to the Hebrew bible itself) coincides with a radical shift in the means by which Yiddish literature of all sorts was reproduced and transmitted. Where early examples of Yiddish biblical poetry survive in manuscripts that often seem to have been produced at the request of private individuals,[2] and it is only in the mid-sixteenth century that these biblical epics begin to be printed and distributed for a wider commercial audience. Rather than being produced by an individual (most likely

1 See Samuel ben Isaac Aripul, *Mizmor Le-Todah.* Venice: Giovanni di Gara, 1576. For partial translation see M. Heller, *The Seventeenth Century Hebrew Book: An Abridged Thesaurus.* Brill's Series in Jewish studies. v. 41. Leiden: Brill, 2011. 599, and C. Turniansky, "On Old-Yiddish Biblical Epics." *International Folklore Review* (1991): 26-33.

2 See, for example, the description of *Shmuel Bukh* manuscripts *H* and *P* below.

Jewish) copyist working independently, the Yiddish biblical epic in the later sixteenth century was a product of the early modern print shop and the collective labor of its many (not necessarily Jewish) artisans. And because these were anonymous texts whose earliest composers were often no longer living, the responsibility for their ultimate shape as printed books fell not to an author, but to the editors and correctors working in the print shop, who were free to do with the text as they saw fit. And unlike the independent copyist, about whom we usually know nothing, the editors of the early modern printing house are often known to us and it is sometimes possible to see their education, literary specialization and editorial disposition develop over the course of their careers. Seen in this larger context of personal and professional biography, technological change, and collaborative labor, the biblical epic and its shifting intertextuality was marked not only by Jewish literary or religious sensibilities, but also by the practices of textual stewardship characteristic of early modern print.

Yet great many questions remain unanswered as to the root causes of this shift from midrashic embellishment to biblical literalism. What factors elevated yet further the already high premium placed on the biblical original? What caused the precipitous decline in the belletristic value of rabbinic exegesis? Or, we might strike at a deeper stratum: what is at stake in the use of a sacred intertext? When is poetic license granted, or withheld? By whom? In its unavoidably aggregate intertextuality, the Old Yiddish biblical epic is per force situated at the crux of this question. Yet it seems that the answer given at the beginning of the sixteenth century had failed to suffice by the middle of the seventeenth, by which time the reprinting (much less original composition) of biblical epics had ceased and the genre as a whole became extinct. That the most extreme versions of the exclusivist biblicism sketched by Turniansky above coincided with the cessation of the genre as a whole in the first half of the seventeenth century serves as a suggestive indication of the importance of an ideal fusion of biblical and midrashic materials to the success and survival of the genre. This chapter will map the confluence of textual, literary, and religious currents in early modern Ashkenaz which gave rise to a reconceived understanding of biblical reception, its vernacular poetics, and textual politics.

Unfortunately, a work like *Mizmor le-Todah* is of limited aid in this endeavor. While it represents the genre's endpoint, the 1644 edition mentioned above was a first printing and thus sheds only tangential, retrospective light on what came before. A more popular and prestigious work, however, which survived in multiple editions produced over a long period in many diverse locations would provide us an ideal baseline from which to gauge and assess fluctuations in the reception and literary adaptation of biblical narrative. The crowning achievement of the genre, *Shmuel Bukh,* meets these criteria and exceeds them, in that over the course of its transmission (approximately 1530-1612), the text remained remarkably stable and consistent.[3] Due to *Shmuel Bukh*'s very stability, the exceptional moments of emendation, omission, and redaction stand out with startling clarity. In this light, such interventions tacitly voice the shifting aims and means of editorial practice in Yiddish biblical literature. But because *Shmuel Bukh* survived in nine iterations, an exhaustive study of their interrelation is beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, I will focus on the cultural and intellectual climate in which a single edition was produced, the

3 For printed editions relevant to this essay, see *Sefer Shmuel [Shmuel Bukh].* Augsburg: Hayyim Shahor, 1544; ———. [Mantua], 1562; ———. Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1578; ———. Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1593; ———. Ed. Mordecai ben Jacob Töplitz, Prague: Jacob ben Gershon Bak, 1609; ———. Ed. Nathan ben Eliezer Michelbach, Basel: Konrad Waldkirch, Mordecai ben Naphtali of Porentruy, 1612.

first Cracow edition of 1578, known as *k*. As we will see by comparison with its antecedents in manuscript and print, *k* is perhaps uniquely positioned to address the transformations in sixteenth-century Yiddish biblicism and its bearing on editorial practice.

Given that merely a century had elapsed between the zenith of the genre's popularity and our impassioned biblical literalist, David b. Menahem, it is not so surprising that the shifting biblical sensibilities of *Shmuel Bukh*'s editors should be visible over the three and a half decades separating the editio princeps (*A*, Augsburg 1544) from our edition *k*, nor that they should tend toward an ever greater reliance on and adherence to the biblical text. The following account will attempt to contextualize this trajectory amid the conflicting or compounding dynamics of early modern Yiddish literary production. How did the persistence of textual (and thence, literary) instability in print serve to define the role of the editor, especially with reference to earlier models of textual stewardship like that of scribe or exegete?[4] What, then, were the exegetical and religious implications of print practice in the eyes of sixteenth-century Ashkenazic intellectual elites? Finally, did such an editorial mode raise the stakes of belletristic vernacular renderings of biblical literature, and if so, how? This study will thus seek to understand Yiddish literary biblicism not only as an outgrowth of rabbinic exegetical trends or of belletristic fashion, but as an implicit editorial enactment of the politics and poetics of literary transmission and textual stewardship.

I. OLD YIDDISH BIBLICAL EPIC: AN OVERVIEW

The Old Yiddish biblical epic seems to have emerged as a genre over the course of the fifteenth century, though there have in general survived very few exemplars from this precise period. The earliest appearance of Old Yiddish poetry on biblical themes is the so-called Cambridge MS of 1382.[5] There, three short poems (none exceeding twelve leaves) re-narrate episodes involving biblical characters and events, though much leavened with midrashic material prevalent during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The three poems are taken, in recent scholarship, to be the progenitors of a biblical verse tradition in Yiddish that matured over the next century and a half into the genuine epics of the early sixteenth century.[6] The fifteenth century witnessed the appearance of yet more extensive narrations of biblical episodes, such as

4 It is important to note that many differences evident in two printed editions of the same work cannot be directly ascribed to the editors. As was the case with scribal transmission, textual variation was all but unavoidable in the era of movable type, and in some cases it is well-nigh impossible to distinguish between a typesetter's error and the conscious decision of an editor or corrector. In exploring particular examples of textual variation over the course of this essay, I will mainly avoid instances that evince a strong likelihood of being typesetter's errata, and focus on occasions when more substantially literary rewriting separates an edition from its antecedent.

5 For a critical facsimile edition, see L. Fuks, *The Oldest Known Literary Documents of Yiddish Literature (c. 1382)*. Leiden: Brill, 1957.

6 While we have yet to determine with any precision the exact sources from which these *midrashim* were drawn, likely candidates include Jacob b. Meir (Rabbenu Tam)'s *Sefer ha-Yashar*, the *Mahzor de Vitry*, and a host of additional works ranging from Late Antiquity to the High Middle Ages, such as *Midrash Rabbah*, *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, *Yalkut Shimoni* and others (Turniansky, "On Old Yiddish Biblical Epics," 27). For the thorough elaboration of this use of midrashic sources, see D. Sadan. "The Midrashic Background of 'the Paradise' and Its Implications for the Evaluation of the Cambridge Yiddish Codex (1382)." *The Field of Yiddish: Second Collection*. Ed. Uriel Weinreich. The Hague: Mouton, 1965. 253-62. For a more recent assessment of the Cambridge Codex, see "Introduction," *Early Yiddish Epic.* Ed. and trans. Jerold C. Frakes. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014; J. Frakes. *Early Yiddish Texts, 1100-1750.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 8-10.

the popular *Akedat Yitshak* (also known as *Der Yidisher Shtam*), a verse retelling of the Binding of Isaac, and various early manuscript versifications of the Scroll of Esther.[7] By the first half of the sixteenth century, the poem on biblical themes had evolved into a full-fledged epic, comprehensively adapting entire biblical books (often of the Former Prophets) into a verse form that aligned them with German *Heldenepos* such as *Das Nibelungenlied*.[8] At the same time, biblical retelling was widespread in early modern German literature, in the form of plays and poetry dramatizing events from the Old and New Testaments (Paul Rebhun's dramas on the trials of Susannah or the Wedding at Cana being notable examples). Surviving works from this phase of the genre include adaptations of the Books of Samuel, Kings, Joshua, Judges, Daniel, Ezekiel, Jonah, Job, Psalms, and the Five Scrolls. Turniansky further surmises that these represent at best an incomplete portrait of the Old Yiddish biblical epic, and does not hesitate to suggest that the surviving works stand on their own as sufficient evidence of "intense and continuous efforts to present the Yiddish reader with epic poetry on all the books of the Bible" (27). Implicit in these efforts was a unification of an aesthetically-minded verse tradition with the exegetical practices of rabbinic literature, which would render the entirety of biblical narrative in language at once belletristic and interpretively lucid.

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7 Both of these genres survive their medieval origins and persist far into the early modern period. Verse renderings of the Binding of Isaac (known in Hebrew as *akedot*) appear in both Hebrew and Yiddish from the early Middle Ages on, and are still evident in modern secular Hebrew literature. Similarly, the Scroll of Esther continued to be adapted into verse throughout the modern period, especially in the context of dramatic genres like the Yiddish and Hebrew *purim-shpil*. On the literary treatment of the Binding of Isaac in Jewish literature, see S. Spiegel, *The Last Trial: On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice: The Akedah.* 1st paperback ed. A Jewish Lights classic reprint. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishers, 1993. For an introduction to the *purim-shpil* in the Middle Ages and early modernity, see E. Bützer, *Die Anfänge der jiddischen Purim Shpiln in ihrem literarischen und kulturgeschichtlichen Kontext.* Jiddische Schtudies, v. 10. Hamburg: Buske, 2003.

8 *Shmuel Bukh* and *Das Nibelungenlied* have been linked in literary-historical research for formal reasons since at least the mid-nineteenth century. Max Weinreich writes that this similarity in strophic form was first noted by the nineteenth-century Lutheran theologian and Hebraist Franz Delitzsch, and further elaborated by the Germanist Rudolf Hildebrand (96-7). He then embarks on a detailed comparison of the strophic forms of the two epics (98), and establishes that the stanza used in *Shmuel Bukh* is identical to that of *Das Nibelungenlied* with one exception: where the *Nibelungen* strophe is composed of seven half-lines with three stresses and an eighth half-line with four, *Shmuel Bukh's* final line has only three (i.e. all eight half-lines of the *Shmuel Bukh* strophe have three stresses). He goes on to point out that this stanza should more rightly aligned with the German *Hildebrand-Strofe,* with which it is indeed identical even in respect to the final half-line (98). He asserts that this form was widespread in early modern German poetry, and that while Delitzsch and Hildebrand may not have been entirely accurate in their claim *Shmuel Bukh* was composed in the *Nibelungen* strophe, the *Nibelungen* and *Hildebrand* strophes are nevertheless merely variations of one same strophic type characteristic of all medieval German heroic poetry. Weinreich concludes with the following: "One fact is plain as day: *Shmuel Bukh* and the other biblical poems which we [Jews] composed in 'the *Shmuel Bukh* melody' derived their form from the German heroic poems of the Middle Ages" (99). See Weinreich, *Bilder fun der yidisher literatur-geshikhte.* Vilna: Farlag Tomor fun Yoysef Kamermacher, 1928. Contemporary scholars of early modern Yiddish agree that the formal characteristics of the *Shmuel Bukh* are strongly reminiscent of the medieval German epics, *Das Nibelungenlied* among them, but reject Weinreich's claim that *Shmuel Bukh* was composed as early as 1300. See J. Baumgarten. *Introduction to Old Yiddish Literature.* Trans. and ed. Jerold Frakes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; W. Dreeßen. "Midraschepik und Bibelepik: biblische Stoffe in der volkssprachlichen Literatur der Juden und Christen des Mittelalters im deutschen Sprachgebiet." *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 100 (1981): 81-97. 88; Frakes. *Early Yiddish Texts.* 218; ibid. *Early Yiddish Epic.* 15-18.

The verse form which came to characterize these late epics seems to have derived from the adaptation of the Books of Samuel, known generally by the Yiddish name, *Shmuel Bukh*. The colophons of its early editions imply this by informing the reader that they are to be sung to the "melody" [*nigun*] of the *Shmuel Bukh:* "The melody of the Book of Samuel, which all Israel knows" [דען ניגון בַּון דעם ספר שמואל דען קאן כל ישראל] [sic] (*A*, 1544, ff. 101^{v}-102^{r}).[9] The origin and nature of this melodic accompaniment remains unclear: it may have derived from the German epics, or alternately, from the liturgical tropes used in the reading of the Tanakh.[10] *Shmuel Bukh*'s fifteenth-century deployment of this secular German verse form (whether best termed *Nibelungen-* or *Hildebrand-Strophe*) proved a watershed in Old Yiddish biblical epic, ushering in a transformation of the genre which extended far beyond the bounds of prosodic schemata and end-line rhyme. Where the fourteenth-century poems of the Cambridge MS adopted some aspects of European poetic form (such as end-line rhyme), the *Shmuel Bukh* makes use of a verse form specifically characteristic of the German *Heldenepos*. Along with its formal poetics came the heroic epic's focus on military adventure, feats at arms, courtly love, and political intrigue. The ethical and social lexicon of medieval Germanic chivalry also began to characterize biblical figures, with the use of words like דעגן [warrior], העלד [hero], and הערציג [duke] (cf. Turniansky, 30; Falk 117-130). Even the material culture of the early modern period is imposed upon the biblical source, so that the Israelite warriors do battle against the Philistines armed with muskets in *Sefer Yehoshua* (Cracow, 1594; see Turniansky 31, Baumgarten 139). While the generic conventions of the *Heldenepos* doubtless played a significant role in the development of the Yiddish biblical epic, contemporary Jewish life and literature also inflected these representations of biblical heroes. References to the liturgical practices of post-biblical Jewry appear in the description of times of the day, and biblical feasts are transformed into

9 Debates over how exactly Old Yiddish biblical literature was transmitted have long colored the scholarly treatment of these texts. In the first decades of the twentieth century, early Yiddish specialists like Max Erik and Israel Zinberg relied for their accounts on the concept of the medieval *Spielmann*, a wandering bard and oral composer, which L. Landau had imported into the study of Yiddish from German literary historiography. This romantic figure had already been rejected by German scholars by the 1920s, but it persisted in Yiddish scholarship well into the middle of the century. Chone Shmeruk finally definitively refuted this notion based on a thorough investigation of the 1382 Cambridge Manuscript. (See Ch. Shmeruk, "Tsi ken der keymbridzsher manuskript shtitsn di shpilman-teorye in der yidisher literatur?" *Di Goldene Keyt* 100 (1979): 251-71.) There, he acknowledges that elements of medieval German literature were certainly known to Jews of the period. At the same time, he strongly resists any attempt to "assign the obviously German epic a central place within the framework of Yiddish literature" (259) [באַשטימען אַ צענטראַל אָרט פֿאַר דער דאָזיקער בפֿירוש דייַטשער עפּיק אין די ראַמען פֿון דער ייִדישער ליטעראַטור]. Whether or not this last is precisely accurate, I will proceed here on the assumption that the Old Yiddish biblical epic, especially as it appeared in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, was not the result of oral composition, nor even primarily intended for public performance. For more recent treatments of the *Spielmann* and Shmeruk, see R. A. Peckerar, "The allure of Germanness in modern Ashkenazi literature: 1833-1933" [diss]. University of California, Berkeley, 2009; and Z. Stern, "From Jester to Gesture: Eastern European Jewish Culture and the Re-Imagination of Folk Performance" [diss]. University of California, Berkeley, 2011.

10 See, for example, Turniansky, "On Old Yiddish Biblical Epics," 26. While the term '*nigun*' was applied equally in this period to secular and sacred melodies (e.g. to both Germanic folk tunes and to the melodies of medieval *piyyutim*), it would come to describe in modern Yiddish and Hebrew a specifically liturgical tune. Its use in the case of the biblical epics seems particularly fitting, given its liminal status in this period. For a complete analysis of the use of the term in early modern Ashkenaz, see D. Matut, *Dichtung und Musik im frühneuzeitlichen Aschkenas.* Leiden: Brill, 2011.

traditional Ashkenazic meals (Turniansky 31). A work like *Shmuel Bukh* thus re-imagines the biblical Kingdoms of Israel and Judah as a post-biblical, and specifically Ashkenazic cultural moment.[11]

As this conjunction of diverse cultural materials suggests, the Old Yiddish biblical epic was a sophisticated exercise in intertextual composition, eclectically sampling from biblical, rabbinic, and non-Jewish chivalric antecedents. In this connection, Turniansky proposes that the maturation of the genre was accompanied by a shift in intertextual focus from the post-biblical literary patrimony of midrash to the biblical source itself: "The foothold of the oldest poems in the biblical text is insignificant, almost nil. All three poems in the *Cambridge Codex* rely almost entirely on the midrash" (27). By contrast, "[I]n the epics on the Books of the Former Prophets the presence of the biblical text—in Yiddish translation—is quite evident," and eventually grew so preponderant, in fact, that these two literary traditions, biblical and post-biblical, come to be aligned with two distinct intertextual methods in the epics: "either an almost exclusive drawing from the midrash [...] or a strict adherence to the biblical text" (27-28). As noted above, this increasingly exclusive focus on the biblical intertext coincided with the extinction of the genre as a whole in the first half of the seventeenth century, leaving the modern observer to wonder whether the waning popularity of the biblical epic was not in part due to its becoming *too* biblical.

Attempting to illuminate the genre's early preference for midrashic intertexts, Wulf-Otto Dreeßen has argued that the emergence and refinement of the biblical epic in Yiddish stemmed from a "separatist" impulse which arose in the wake of the historical traumas of the mid-fourteenth century, that is, an urge to make this literature distinctively Jewish and to resist its similarity to and cultural entanglement with analogous Christian biblical epics.[12] While such an urge may have been mainly satisfied by modulating the degree of borrowing from the chivalric aspects of non-Jewish epics, Dreeßen suggests that Jewish distinctiveness was also expressed in

11 Turniansky has claimed that, "the transference of the biblical event into contemporary reality and the anachronistic effects thus created should not be seen as a conscious, intentional, and sophisticated act of the poet, intended to evoke the responses they would in the modern reader. In order to do so, a certain amount of historical consciousness is needed, based on a quite solid knowledge of the past rather than the present, which the poet and his contemporary readers very probably lacked" (31). While this description of historical naïveté in the biblical epics may be broadly accurate, a more thorough investigation of this phenomenon is certainly called for, especially in light of Y. H. Yerushalmi's the transformation of Jewish historical memory and the resulting historiographic experimentation in the late Middle Ages and early modern period (not so coincidentally, the heyday of the Old Yiddish biblical epic). (See Y. H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor, Jewish History and Jewish Memory.* The Samuel and Althea Stroum lectures in Jewish studies. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982.) Furthermore, literary anachronism is hardly particular to this time and place, since it is a robust feature equally typical in early modern non-Jewish textual practice and rabbinic exegetical thought, especially in its midrashic manifestations. It is also a characteristic device of modern literary adaptations of biblical narrative in Yiddish (as we will see in Chapter 3). That literary anachronism persists so stubbornly in Jewish biblical literature from late antiquity through the twentieth century, despite the apparent emergence of a uniquely "modern" historical consciousness, should give us pause. Perhaps historical naïveté is not as potent an explanation as one might hope.

12 Dreeßen distinguishes between Jewish (that is, Yiddish) and non-Jewish epic adaptations of material from the Hebrew Bible with the terms "*Midraschepik*" and "*Bibelepik*," respectively. Though a useful distinction, it is not of pressing significance here, where I use "biblical epic" for the genre to which *Shmuel Bukh* belongs. As noted, Old Yiddish biblical epics vary in their intertextual composition, from quite rigid biblical literalism to a near-complete reliance on midrash.

terms of exegetical stance vis-a-vis the biblical original. He aligns contemporary Christian poetry on Old Testament themes with an allegorical, universalizing, and ahistorical variety of biblical exegesis, which became especially pronounced when confronted with Jewishly specific historical and cultural references in the biblical sources:

> Certain biblical texts could hardly be understood by Christians in a literal sense, particularly those which took as their theme the danger posed by the Exile to a life lived in accordance with Jewish standards (e.g. Esther, Joseph, and Daniel), and which provided the Jewish [reader] paradigms for coping with this situation. Instead, such texts had to be 'decoded' allegorically, tropologically, or typologically.[13] (84)

A similar argument has been made by scholars of the medieval Germanic biblical epic, such as D. H. Green in his monograph on the twelfth century *Millstätter Exodus*.[14] There he concludes that by consistently generalizing the particulars of biblical history, the Millstatt author was able to open up space for an allegorical, supersessionist interpretation of those events (132), effectively de-Judaizing the biblical account. In Dreeßen's estimation, the Old Yiddish biblical epic resists such Christian hermeneutic strategies in part by deploying distinctively Jewish exegetical practices, which generated intensively midrashic, historically specific, and culturally particular retellings of biblical narrative. Such an explanation dovetails neatly with Turniansky's characterization of the early examples of Old Yiddish biblical poetry, with their preference for dense midrashic elaboration and freedom to depart from the literal wording of their biblical sources. From this line of reasoning, one could infer that, as the instantiating historical anxieties of the genre retreated over the course of two centuries, the commitment to midrashic mediation as a sign of Jewish religious and cultural separatism became similarly attenuated.

Taken together, these arguments present a compelling picture of the cultural and historical concerns underlying the biblical epic in Old Yiddish. Dreeßen's conclusions especially offer us a historically situated and psychologically suggestive account of the intertextual practies evident in the composition of the Old Yiddish biblical epic at the inception of the genre. Still, the consistency with which biblical literalism is subsequently adopted in the Yiddish epics of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries makes it difficult to attribute such a dramatic shift in intertextual practice solely to the gradual dissipation of late medieval cultural anxieties. (And, as we will see in the textual variation in later editions of *Shmuel Bukh,* this biblical literalism is evident not only in explicit paratexts like those of David b. Menachem, but also in the dwindling role played by midrashic materials in the epics themselves.) And this difficulty increases yet further when we reflect on the fact that the sixteenth century was marked, at least for Ashkenazic literary professionals, by precisely the kinds of persecution that had generated Dreeßen's cultural separatism two and a half centuries before. (The burning of the Talmud in Paris in 1242 and

13 «Besonders solche Bibeltexte, deren Thematik von den Gefahren des Exils für ein Leben nach jüdischen Normen bestimmt ist (z. B. Esther, Josef, Daniel) und die den Juden Leitvorstellungen für die Bewältigung dieser Situation bereitstellten, konnten von Christen kaum im Literalsinn verstanden, sondern mußten allegorisch, tropologisch oder typologisch 'entschlüsselt' werden.»

14 D. H. Green, *The Millstäter Exodus: A Crusading Epic.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1966.

again in Rome in 1553 serves as a graphic reminder of certain ways in which Jewish-Christian relations had not evolved in the intervening centuries.) I do not seriously intend to suggest that cultural circumstances of the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries were identical. Neither should any rough similarity between them necessarily have manifested as literary affinity. Instead, I propose to frame the question this way: How did biblical literalism come to eclipse the separatist affinity for midrashic interpolation? I will return to this problem later on, but for now the question remains whether biblical conservatism did not, late in the life of the genre, become a literary value in its own right, independent of the onetime relevance of midrashic inheritance.[15]

II. SHMUEL BUKH

The work known as *Shmuel Bukh* is a prime example of a Yiddish biblical epic at the peak of the genre.[16] Written in Hebrew characters rendering the Yiddish of the late Middle Ages, it is a detailed recounting of the biblical books I and II Samuel that balances between the literary and the exegetical: painstaking in its rendering of the biblical account, it is still suffused with rabbinic intertexts and the rhyme scheme, epic formulae, and literary flourishes of the German *Heldenepos*. More distantly, *Shmuel Bukh*'s generic origins may also be sought in the early Christian German epics narrating Old Testament events (such as the *Millstätter Exodus*, or the *Vorauer Bücher Mosis*). Though there is a relative dearth of testimony as to its historical reception,[17] at least fifteen copies survived into the twentieth century, representing six distinct printed editions and three manuscripts. The editions were published within a century of one another (1544-1612), spanning a geographic region from Basel in the west to Cracow in the east to Mantua in the south, essentially the entirety of sixteenth-century Ashkenaz. In addition to these, a single edition of *Shmuel Bukh* was printed in Latin letters in Ingolstadt in 1562 by the baptized Jew Paulus Aemilius.

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15 There strong reason to suppose that the non-Jewish compositional practices widespread in early modernity may also have played a role in the transmission and adaptation of biblical narrative and midrashic exegesis in early Yiddish epic. The interpretive and compositional strategies known as *auctoritas* and *amplificatio* were applied by non-Jewish adaptors to both the Greek and Latin classics and the biblical canon. Further, because these compositional practices bridge the eras of scribal and print transmission, they offer a long-lived parallel to Yiddish biblical poetry and its evolution over time. At the same time, *auctoritas* and *amplificatio* may, like midrashic embellishment and biblical literalism, be viewed as a continuum along which an adapted text could move. While this comparative perspective calls out for a thorough study of its own, I will mention it here only to indicate occasions where further exploration is needed.

16 A concise introduction to this work appears in Jerold Frakes, *Early Yiddish Texts.* 218-19. For a treatment of *Shmuel Bukh* in its generic context, see Jean Baumgarten, *Introduction to Old Yiddish Literature.* 141, 146-47. See also: M. Weinreich, *Bilder Fun Der Yidisher Literatur-Geshikhte.* Vilna, 1928. 68-111; N. Süsskind, “Das Smuel Buch; eine jüdisch-deutsche Umdichtung der zwei Bücher Samuelis im Stile der mittelhoch-deutschen Heldendichtung.” [diss]. New York University, 1942; *Das Schemuelbuch des Mosche Esrim Wearba: ein biblisches Epos aus dem 15. Jahrhundert.* Eds. Felix Falk, and L. Fuks. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1962.

17 For a clue to *Shmuel Bukh's* significance for later biblical epics, see Süsskind's remarks on the afterlife of the *Shmuel Bukh* melody. He notes that the melody was referenced in print as late as 1686 in the preface to a rhymed paraphrase of the the biblical book of Jonah, but goes on to speculate that while "the book of Jonah could still be recast into the *Smuelbuch* stanza in 1686[,] the style of the *Smuelbuch*, its spirit of medieval chivalry was long dead" (3). If nothing else, this conjecture serves to alert us to the extent of *Shmuel Bukh*'s significance, especially as regards the propagation of Germanic verse forms in Ashkenazic vernacular literature. For an exhaustive study of the relationship between early modern German song and its reception in Yiddish folk music, see also D. Matut.

Shmuel Bukh scholarship has been troubled by the difficulties of dating and authorship that naturally accompany a text that gives so many conflicting clues as to its own origins. (Though these controversies will not delay us long, they warrant a few moments' pause.) There are several names associated with the production of *Shmuel Bukh*, apart from those of the printers in the later editions. The two most intact manuscripts credit a variety of personages, though it is never completely clear who was responsible for which aspects of *Shmuel Bukh*'s production. The end of the Paris manuscript asserts that it is the work of one Zanvil, the writer (or copyist): "This book is at an end, Zanvil is the writer" [דש בוך הוט איין ענדא זנויל דר שריבר זייט]. Immediately following, however, comes this note: "My name is Moshe Esrim ve-Arba / I made this book with my [own] hand" [משה עשרים וארבע בין איך גינגט/הון דש בוך גימכט מיט מיינר הנט].[18] The Hamburg manuscript mentioned yet another figure, who asserts: "I wrote this book with my hand / Leyb of Regensburg is my name" [דש בוך הון איך גישריבן מיט מיינר הנט/ליווא בֿון רעגנספוק בין איך גננט]. While Max Weinreich concluded that these three are all copyists, Jean Baumgarten follows the suggestion of Zalman Rubashov (later Zalman Shazar, third president of Israel) that Moshe Esrim ve-Arba, an emissary from the Jewish communities of the Holy Land during the late fifteenth century, was in fact the original author (151). This difference in opinion naturally leads to considerable dispute in dating the work. Rubashov claims that Moshe Esrim ve-Arba wrote *Shmuel Bukh* in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, whereas Weinreich estimates that *Shmuel Bukh*'s original composition dates back much further, prior to 1349 (108). Weinreich makes such a bold claim in part because the work itself reads much like the Middle High German romances of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and also because he believes the composition of such a dense, complex and sophisticated epic to have been impossible after the traumatic social upheavals suffered by Ashkenazic Jewish communities of the mid-fourteenth century (107). Jerold Frakes rejects Weinreich's dating, but also refrains from endorsing Rubashov's authorial attribution, though Frakes too supposes a date of composition in the last half of the fifteenth century. I would suggest that this great uncertainty around dating the work speaks to the fact that *Shmuel Bukh* gives a high medieval stylistic impression, while circumstantial bibliographic evidence points entirely to its early modern origins. In this sense, *Shmuel Bukh* bears a close resemblance to the many other vernacular literary works which may well have been composed in the High Middle Ages but are attested only in the early modern period. (The Arthurian epic *Erec* by the twelfth century German poet Hartmann von Aue is a good example of a *Heldenepos* with this sort of transmission history.) It is eminently possible, though not absolutely necessary, that *Shmuel Bukh* was composed late, in an intentionally archaizing style, gesturing toward a high medieval literary past.[19]

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18 This appellation, "Esrim ve-Arba," is not likely to have been a surname. *Esrim ve-arba* [lit. 'twenty-four'] refers to the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible, and came metonymically to stand in for it, so that in Yiddish the contracted form '*svarbe'* is simply another term for the Tanakh itself. When used as a nickname for this Moshe, the term may have advertised his biblical erudition or simply have alluded to the fact that he was here occupied with the transmission of a biblical epic.

19 Prior to Turniansky's account as given above, Max Weinreich had already claimed the *Shmuel Bukh* author incapable of intentional archaism. In his *Bilder*, however, this assertion serves to support his argument for an early fourteenth-century dating of *Shmuel Bukh* (a conclusion no longer held as valid by most contemporary scholars): “But here we have before us a work, which was created in a time when literary models of the past played no role if they were not contemporaneously in fashion: there were no proponents of archaism. That is to

III. SHMUEL BUKH'S TRANSMISSION HISTORY

Because I am occupied here with talking about the poetic and political stakes of textual transmission, it is worth taking a moment to consider the critical vocabulary available for the description and historical contextualization of this process. The transmission history of *Shmuel Bukh* is a fitting example of Paul Zumthor's *mouvance*:[20]

> that character of a work– to the extent that we can consider something to be a work before the era of the printed book – which results from a quasi-abstraction, insofar as those concrete texts which constitute the work's real existence present through the play of variants and reworkings something like a ceaseless vibration and a fundamental instability. (507)

In this conception, the literary "work" as we understand it is merely an abstraction from many concrete exempla, i.e. texts. *Mouvance* names that vibration and instability in a work characterized by the unpredictable variation of its individual texts. Such a concept—mouvance as the degree of instability generated in a "work" by the variation of its constituent texts—might be usefully applied to any literary work whatsoever. But Zumthor is in pursuit of a notion pertinent to the textual variability of medieval poetry, and suggests therefore that mouvance is especially characteristic of the medieval work. From Zumthor's perspective, mouvance is the textual outcome of medieval scribal culture, whose embodied, human reproduction of texts inevitably resulted in variability (e.g. scribal errata, or manuscript collation).[21]

This perspective on scribal culture is widely espoused in other critical approaches to the history of textual transmission. Bernard Cerquiglini, for example, describes the "joyful excess" (21) of medieval scribal culture: the euphoria of a newly textual culture which reproduces texts in an ecstasy of (re)writing, reveling in variation rather than policing it.[22] As a corollary, Elizabeth Eisenstein's dominant account of the birth of print culture has long claimed that this joy-in-excess died with scribal transmission and that the printing press put an end to textual variability by rapidly producing and disseminating a single work in a multitude of identical

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say: the Yiddish poet could happen to create a Yiddish epic poem in the style of a German heroic lay only then, at a time when the neighboring German people still turned for entertainment to that poetic genre" (107) [אָבער דאָ האָבן מיר פֿאַר זיך אַ ווערק, וואָס איז געשאַפֿן געוואָרן אין אַ צייַט, ווען ליטעראַרישע מוסטערן פֿון דער פֿאַרגאַנגענהייט האָבן קיין ראָלע ניט געשפּילט, אויב זיי זיינען ניט גלייַבציטיק אין דער מאָדע קיין בעלנים אויף אַרכאַיזירן זיינען ניט געווען. הייסט עס דער יידישער דיכטער האָט געקענט אויספֿאַלן צו שאַפֿן אַ יידישע פּאָעמע בנוסח פֿון אַ דייַטשן העלדן-ליד בלויז דאָן, ווען דאָס שכנישע דייַטשע פֿאָלק האָט זיך נאָך געקוויקט מיט דעם דאָזיקן פּאָעטישן זשאַנר]. If *Shmuel Bukh* is, as I am inclined to believe, an early modern text and not a medieval one, we must inquire into the Yiddish epic's capacity for archaism, and its self-conception as both a member of a literary genre and a representation of Jewish history.

20 P. Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992.

21 Beyond the scribal nature of medieval literary transmission, the compositional techniques of *auctoritas* and *amplificatio* are also highly relevant to Zumthor's account here, as well as that of Cerquiglini below. The possibility that early Yiddish biblical poetry was hospitable to such a great proportion of midrash due precisely to the ubiquity of these compositional paradigms remains a promising opportunity to link Jewish and non-Jewish literary adaptation in this period.

22 B, Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

copies.[23] Finally, Walter Ong has advanced the related claim that the technological transition from manuscript to print established the notion of a final, closed text.[24] The history of European textual transmission has thus been long conceived in terms of a deep and relatively abrupt technological divide between the age of manuscript and the age of print. In the context of Jewish historiography, Talya Fishman has recently considered the transmission of the Talmud in light of these shifting modalities of European textuality.[25]

Recent attempts have been made to soften the hard line that has been drawn between the cultures of manuscript and print, both by contesting the particulars of the historical account and by incisively critiquing its technological determinism. In his analysis of early modern print practice, David McKitterick argues contra Eisenstein that "neither in manuscript nor in print could the concept of standardization be termed or understood as an absolute" (100) and provides evidence that "[d]espite claims otherwise, the process of printing was inherently unstable, not only in the well-documented habits of correction during press-runs but also in every stage that preceded them. The stability of the final published text depended on a visual sleight of hand in which most of the slippery manufacture was concealed" (118).[26] Adrian Johns likewise considers Eisenstein's characterization of print a logical misstep, which erroneously ascribes to chirographic and print technologies the power to generate highly distinctive textual cultures, so that these technologies themselves assume a universal and abstract character: "In [Eisenstein's account], printing itself stands outside history. The press is something 'sui generis,' we are told, lying beyond the reach of conventional historical analysis. Its 'culture' is correspondingly placeless and timeless" (19).[27] In place of this abstract, universalizing characterization of print technology, Harold Love installs a historically particular orientation by refuting the chronology of technological rift and revolution Eisenstein proposes.[28] Love argues in contrast that scribal and print production enjoyed a long period of coexistence in a single textual culture. McKitterick echoes this sentiment when he writes of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that "we frequently find less a revolution than an accomodation; the ways in which printing, *ars artium conservatrix*, was not so much compromised as extended and even partly defined by the employment of older techniques having their roots in the manuscript tradition" (3). Finally, and with a radical particularism, Joseph Dane has rejected the entire notion of 'print culture' as a myth, an academic fiction: "what exists is not print culture at all but rather the modern scholar's invocation of print culture. What exists is not an abstraction such as printing, something instanced by select examples; *what exists are those examples themselves*, particular actions and products of what we

23 E. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979. Though Eisenstein herself may not have applied this thesis as uniformly to the transmission of vernacular literature, her claims have generated a wave of scholarly reaction against the idea that the *technology* of print produced a decisive shift in the cultural norms governing textual transmission. Taken together, these two perspectives offer a more balanced view of the interaction between technological innovation and literary practice.

24 W. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word.* New York: Routledge, 1991.

25 T. Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud: Oral Torah as Written Tradition in Medieval Jewish Cultures.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

26 D. McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript, and the Search for Order, 1450-1830.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

27 A. Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

28 H. Love, *The Culture and Commerce of Texts: Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998.

call the printing press and the institutions surrounding it" (10, italics mine).[29] Taking the objections of Johns and Love to their logical, though extreme conclusion, Dane thus implies that no distinctive cultural penumbra was generated by the printing press, its material output (the books, broadsides, pamphlets, etc.), or its institutions (the printing house, the book market). The gap between material, bibliographic evidence and the literary and cultural inferences drawn by modern scholars is too great to be closed: yet paradoxically "it is just the wrestling with such details [...] that will make bibliographical procedures both meaningful and finally accessible" (9).

In this chapter, the term "print culture" appears only rarely, most often in citations of others. Dane has cautioned that younger scholars tend to replicate the logic of their predecessors, even as they seek to revise it. While I am loath to be caught up in such a cycle, I believe a more nuanced approach to the cultural consequences of textual transmission is nevertheless required. Dane and Love's resistance to a narrative which characterizes the advent of print as a "cataclysmic historical displacement" (19) or "revolution" (13-14) has sensitized me to the fact that the technology of movable type and the press itself may not have resulted in the kind of upheaval described by Eisenstein and other, and that the culture(s) of chirographic textual production and print cannot be casually opposed. Nevertheless, the social circumstances of Jewish textual production were, at least initially, greatly altered in the institution of the printing house, which was not structurally or socially identical to other earlier and contemporaneous contexts (the medieval monastic scriptorium being both the most obvious and yet most mythical example). The print shop, in both Germany and Italy of the fifteenth century, was an enterprise owned and operated almost exclusively by non-Jews. The great Jewish printers of the incunable era were peripatetic, dependent on the generosity of non-Jewish colleagues for the use of their presses, work-spaces, and often, laborers.[30] Books in Hebrew and Yiddish were no longer produced in the privacy of an exclusively Jewish cultural context like the *yeshiva* (Talmudic academy), but were published in non-Jewish printing houses, and resulted from a close intellectual, material, and economic collaboration between Jews, Jewish apostates, and non-Jews.[31] Jewish literary production (especially of its most sacred texts, e.g. the Talmud) had never in its history occurred in such intimate cooperation with non-Jews. This shift, though perhaps too unavoidable and un-self-conscious to be called a revolution, engendered an accommodation between Jewish and non-Jewish texts whose mechanized, collaborative production blurred the cultural differences between them more than ever before.[32]

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29 J. Dane, *The Myth of Print Culture: Essays on Evidence, Textuality, and Bibliographical Method.* Studies in Book and Print Culture. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.

30 The great Soncino printing house was similarly peripatetic, but because it was Jewishly owned, it is the one notable exception to the above characterization. Excluding Eastern Europe, where independent Jewish presses were permitted by law, the overwhelming majority of sixteenth-century Hebrew books were produced in printing houses owned and primarily operated by non-Jews.

31 Moshe Rosenfeld has suggested that Yiddish print initially resulted from the efforts of Christian Hebraists and baptized Jews, who turned to Yiddish as a pedagogical tool in teaching the Hebrew alphabet to Christians. Jewish printers, he argues, only later came to take advantage of the economic opportunity offered by printing Yiddish books (118). See M. Rosenfeld, “The Origins of Yiddish Printing.” *Origins of the Yiddish Language: Papers From the First Annual Oxford Winter Symposium in Yiddish Language and Literature, 15-17 December 1985*. 1st ed. Winter Studies in Yiddish, v. 1. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1987.

32 See, for instance, M. Heller, “And the Work, the Work of Heaven, Was Performed on Shabbat.” *The Torah U-Madda Journal* 11 (2002): 174-85.

By bracketing the historical significance of technological change, bibliographic critiques by Dane and others have thus coincided with a shift in focus away from the mechanical attributes of the printing press or its revolutions and toward its artisanal context, the print shop. Such a reorientation has given us powerful and enlightening social histories of print that privilege human agents over mechanical methods. In many of these narratives, the editor (or "corrector") is given pride of place as prime textual mediator, a print professional with a finger in every pie: literary partner to the author, scholarly consultant to the printer, supervisor and manager of the compositors and press-men, and paratextual marketer to the reader. Anthony Grafton documents the broadly-defined and pivotal role played by correctors in early modern print transmission, who were endowed with the power to alter and revise largely unfettered by authorial oversight.[33] Brian Richardson likewise charts the rise of the editor as an imaginative, impetuous textual custodian, who inherited a degree of intellectual freedom at least equal to (and probably surpassing) that of the medieval scribe:[34]

> From the earliest days of the circulation of vernacular texts in manuscript, scribes would often deliberately adapt the language or even the contents of their exemplars according to personal tastes[: ...] their methods provided the natural model for editors when texts began to circulate in printed as well as in handwritten form. (19)

In Richardson's view, this continuity between scribal and print practice accounts for "a feeling evident from time to time among both printers and editors that a work in print was not something definitive but an open text which readers might continue to edit for themselves." He concludes that "print culture did not introduce suddenly the 'sense of closure' or finality which, as Walter Ong has suggested, it encouraged in the long term" (25). Thus, the relative (in)stability of an early modern literary work has more and more been credited to the human agents of textual reproduction, rather than its mechanization.

Let us return to mouvance. I have digressed in this fashion first to point out that mouvance is a notion relevant not only to the medieval manuscript, but also to the early modern printed book, and by extension to the unstable and intertextually variegated *Shmuel Bukh*, whether composed in the fourteenth century, copied in the fifteenth, or reprinted in the sixteenth. Second, we have reason therefore to understand mouvance not as an accident of technology, but as a feature of textual cultures perpetuated, sanctioned, and even promoted by its human agents. In other words, the mouvance which characterizes *Shmuel Bukh* is not mere mechanical error; its textual variations are in fact evidence of the productive literary agency of its custodians. The term "mouvance" offers us an opportunity to contextualize *Shmuel Bukh* amid the historical transition from manuscript to print, and to recognize its kinship with other literary products of a

33 A. Grafton, *The Culture of Correction in Renaissance Europe.* London: The British Library, 2012. Grafton devotes a substantial chapter of this study to the efforts of early modern authors to exert some measure control over the process by which their works were transformed into printed books. While he acknowledges that these efforts were at times successful, he is also inclined to see the quantity of surviving authorial complaints about the autonomy of the printer as evidence that authors in this period worried a great deal over their lack of control.

34 B. Richardson, *Print Culture in Renaissance Italy: The Editor and the Vernacular Text, 1470-1600.* Cambridge studies in publishing and printing history. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

European textual culture whose practices traversed boundaries of language, genre, and thematic content.

While *Shmuel Bukh* evinces many affinities with the larger textual culture amid which it was transmitted, I would point out that the *Shmuel Bukh* exempla that have come down to us display editorial practices quite distinct from those traditionally used in the (contemporary) transmission of its most prevalent intertexts, that is, rabbinic exegetical works and the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, the varying degrees and quality of mouvance are evident in the printed editions of *Shmuel Bukh,* suggesting a shift in editorial practice over the course of its transmission, especially where biblical and rabbinic intertexts were concerned. Instead of relying on technological explanations for these variations, I will argue that evolving editorial practice in *Shmuel Bukh* tradition resulted from a confluence of competing conventions governing textual transmission, restoration, and correction, and that these in turn emerged in contact with the diverse cultural contexts of its (re)production. At the same time, I do not take *Shmuel Bukh*'s mouvance to be an isolated phenomenon in Jewish print. Instead, I see it as representative of an early modern intellectual sea-change in Ashkenazic textual stewardship in both Hebrew and Yiddish.

Before wading into those deeper waters, an overview of the history of *Shmuel Bukh'*s transmission will be instructive.[35] The manuscripts and printed editions belong to two related, but independent textual traditions, so that all three are believed to derive from a single, likely already corrupt source, while the seven printed editions descend directly from one another in a kind of chain, each linked directly to the preceding.[36] Each of the three manuscripts known to us was produced during the sixteenth century, making them generally contemporaneous with the printed editions and thus offering no particular aid in resolving the difficulties of dating and authorship discussed above. The first and most extensive manuscript, *P*, held at the Bibliothéque Nationale in Paris, is dated around 1530 and lacks any clue as to its place of origin. In the absence of explicit testimony as to its provenance, Felix Falk claims the language is Alemannic-Frankish (*Das Schemuelbuch Des Mosche Esrim Wearba,* v. 1, 16). Nathan Süsskind contests this interpretation and instead maintains that the original author of *Shmuel Bukh* composed in Alemannic High German. However, Süsskind claims, the copyist of *P*, unfamiliar with this dialect, "corrected" many of the rhymes (12), which could account for the influence of Frankish detected by Falk. Süsskind's line of reasoning suggests that while *Shmuel Bukh*'s archetype might have been of Alemannic origin, *P* almost certainly would not have been. The copyist identifies himself as Zanvil the writer, followed by the verses about Moshe Esrim ve-Arba, as described in detail above.

Although badly damaged and less extensive than *P*, the manuscript *H*, of the Hamburg Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, is held to be linguistically closer to the archetype. It is also the older text; Falk dates it approximately to the first quarter of the sixteenth century, based on the watermark that occurs in a range of manuscripts in Venice, Florence, and Munich from the

35 While much of the material under discussion here derives from Felix Falk's assessment in the critical edition of the *editio princeps,* a brief yet highly reliable summary of the current state of *Shmuel Bukh* scholarship appears in the following article by Wulf-Otto Dreeßen, “Schmuelbuch.” *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon.* v. 8. Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1992.

36 This is the *stemma* proposed by Frakes in his *Early Yiddish Texts*, 218-20. While this account does not enjoy universal scholarly consensus, my exploration of *Shmuel Bukh's* later Polish editions does not appear to substantially contradict it.

turn of the century until around 1538 (v. 1, 18).[37] On these grounds Falk also ventures a place of origin, northern Italy (though a Central European origin also seems possible, given the paper's appearance in Munich). Other than the watermark, this claim is based on the identification of the copyist, Judah Leib b. Israel of Regensburg [ליווא בון רעגנשפוק], and his patroness, a lady Freidln. Falk identifies her as the same Freudline b. Yekutiel who commissioned a Yiddish book of customs in Venice in 1550. Whether or not *H* is of Northern Italian origin, no special connection has been established between this manuscript copy and the later Italian edition of *Shmuel Bukh*.

Finally, a manuscript fragment, *N*, is attested in the bibliographic literature as part of the library of Rabbi Nathan Porges of Leipzig, although no one has been able to discover its whereabouts since the first decades of the twentieth century when it was described and transliterated by Wilhelm Staerk.[38] L. Fuks dated it very tentatively to the sixteenth century, but was unable to do more because Staerk's transliteration makes any substantial analysis of its orthographic and thence phonological features impossible.

The editio princeps,[39] *A,* appeared in Augsburg in 1544, and is widely supposed to be the fruit of a collaboration between the baptized Jew, Paulus Aemilius 'the Roman' and the great peripatetic Jewish printer, Hayyim Shahor (Shvarts).[40] Their partnership was dissolved around this time, leading Falk to argue that Paulus Aemilius had no connection to the production of this edition, though he was certainly involved in the printing of the Yiddish biblical epic *Melokhim Bukh* [The Book of Kings] in Augsburg the year before (likely still in collaboration with Shahor) and would go on to print a High German translation of *Shmuel Bukh* later in his career (Falk v. 1, 21). Others have argued that because the Yiddish translation of the Jewish prayerbook, 1544 Ichenhausen *siddur* attests Shahor's presence there, it is likely he had already departed Augsburg after his falling-out with Paulus Aemilius, who must have printed, or finished printing, *A* on his own.[41] This edition varies considerably from both *P* and from *H*, so much so in fact that Falk insists it must be based on an antecedent text now lost to us (v. 1, 20).

There then elapses a period of almost two decades from which no editions have survived or are attested. Paulus Aemilius' translation (or perhaps transliteration) of *Shmuel Bukh* into German appeared in Ingolstadt in 1562, printed in Romanized script, evidently to be marketed to a non-Jewish readership. While the textual similarity to *A* is not insignificant, this edition is arranged in numbered stanzas, given biblical chapter headings, illustrated with woodcuts and adorned with marginalia that cite biblical chapter and verse. Its substantial leather cover and iron clasp have survived and might suggest that it once belonged to a person of means who was willing to invest in a respectable binding.[42] Its paper is of a much higher quality than the other

37 Chava Turniansky claims, in contrast, that *H* dates from the fifteenth century. See her introduction to *Yiddish in Italia: Yiddish Manuscripts and Printed Books From the 15th to the 17th Century.* Milano: Associazione italiana amici dell'Università di Gerusalemme, 2003.

38 W. Staerk, *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums.* 1918.

39 Three copies of this edition are extant: one held at the the British Museum, another at the Frankfurt Stadtbibliothek, and a third in the Universitätsbibliothek of Jena. Steinschneider records the existence of a fourth held in a private library in London, which Falk was unable to locate. See Frakes, *Early Yiddish Texts*, 219.

40 For a professional biography of Shahor, see A. Habermann, *Perakim be-toldot ha-madpisim ha-ivrim ve-inyene sefarim.* Jerusalem: Reuven Mas, 1978. 103-30.

41 This view is espoused, for example, in Rosenfeld, "Origins of Yiddish Printing," 115.

42 I have not made an attempt to date the current binding, as this lies outside my competence. It is also very possible that the book was rebound at least once over its lifetime, and so we cannot take the present binding as

editions. Occasional portions of the text are printed in red ink instead of black, a feature widespread in later sixteenth century imprints. In sum, it gives an impression that is startlingly different from our Hebrew-alphabet editions and represents a visibly distinct commercial and cultural endeavor.[43]

Around the same time, an edition of *Shmuel Bukh*, *m*, appeared, lacking a year or place of publication. It is believed to have been printed between 1562-64 in Mantua. This conclusion is partially founded upon the claim of the eighteenth-century bibliographer Johann Christoph Wolf that the type was of Mantuan origin, and Steinschneider follows Leopold Zunz in estimating the date of publication during the early 1560s (Falk, v. 1, 22). Wolf's claim for the Mantuan origin of *m* is made more credible by the presence of a respectable number of printers likely to have produced a Yiddish biblical epic in the early 1560's. Falk notes that Elijah Levita (Bahur)'s Yiddish translation of Psalms was reprinted in Mantua in 1562 from the 1545 Venetian edition, asserting that it may have been the work of the Jewish printer from Padua, Joseph Ashkenazi. Falk then further directs our attention to the printing of a epic based on the Book of Judges in rhymed stanzas in Mantua in 1564 by the non-Jewish printer Filippo (22). Chone Shmeruk has offered an alternative to these two printers, instead associating this edition of Psalms with another Mantuan, R. Shalom b. Abraham (*Yiddish in Italia*, 172). Further supporting the Wolf's hypothesis, Turniansky points out that Mantua was already the origin of two Old Yiddish biblical epics in manuscript (on the Books of Joshua and Judges, written in 1511), and another in print in the 1560s (also adapting the Books of Judges, but a work distinct from its predecessor). Finally, A. Romer-Segal has reported that five copies of *Shmuel Bukh* and seven of *Melokhim Bukh* were held by Jewish family libraries in Mantua at the end of the sixteenth century (790).[44] This contextual evidence strongly suggests that Mantua is a likely candidate for the origin of a mid-sixteenth-century *Shmuel Bukh*. The Mantuan edition is of special interest to us here because it marks a distinct departure from *A*, which cannot, according to Falk, be attributed to its use of a different source text. Instead, Falk proposes that the editor of the Mantuan edition did not reproduce *A* with absolute fidelity, but altered it with the addition and omission of stanzas, in addition to which he "smoothed out" the form and language of the text (v. 1, 22). Falk further hazards to suggest that the editor of *m* made use not only of *A*, but also of the manuscript tradition, so that this edition represents our earliest portrait of a highly self-conscious and programmatic editorial intervention in *Shmuel Bukh*'s textual transmission. Although Falk relied

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any indication of the original valuation of the work, either by printer (who would have sold it in an unbound "block") or its first owner, who may have had it bound as his or her tastes and finances permitted. It is nevertheless worth observing that this book has come down to us in a form so materially distinctive from its Hebrew-character counterparts.

43 Despite the claim in Paulus Aemilius' introduction that it is a "translation in our high German language" (f. 2r), Bettina Simon has advanced the argument, based in no small part upon this edition in linguistic comparison with the others, that there was no such language as "Old Yiddish," but merely German written with Hebrew letters. She is not the first to have done so, and specialists in early Yiddish were quick to definitively refute these claims (see, for example, Frakes' scathing review). While I am neither qualified to take issue with Simon nor inclined to accept her assertions, I would only point out that this edition demonstrates the linguistic, literary, social and technological porosity of Germanic-Ashkenazic cultural boundaries in this period. See B. Simon, *Jiddische Sprachgeschichte: Versuch einer neuen Grundlegung.* Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1988; and J. Frakes,"Review of *Jiddische Sprachgeschichte.*" *The German Quarterly* 63 (1990), 288-9.

44 See A. Romer-Segal, "*Sifrut yidish ve-kahal koreha be-meah XVI: Yetzirot be-Yidish be-reshimot ha-'zikuk' mi-Mantova, 1595." Kiryat Sefer* 53 (1978): 779-90.

on the copy of this edition held at the Hamburg Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, it is believed to have been destroyed by fire during the Second World War, and I have yet to discover any evidence to the contrary. Fortunately, Falk's textual apparatus survives and consistently indicates that all subsequent editions of *Shmuel Bukh* descend directly from *m*, inheriting or even amplifying its editorial orientation.

The Cracow editions, *k* and *k*^{I} of 1578 and 1593 respectively[45] will occupy us here at length, because they both bring us as near as possible to *m's* substantial textual renovations, but also because the historical and social conditions of their production provide us with a powerful and relatively lucid exemplary account of Yiddish print transmission in this period. These editions represent our first opportunity to unambiguously identify the printers of *Shmuel Bukh*, thus opening a window onto the textual culture in which *Shmuel Bukh* flourished. It is via these editions and the great Prostitz printing house that produced them that all subsequent editions of *Shmuel Bukh* were imbued with the distinctive editorial disposition of *m*, a compelling demonstration of the way in which the practices characteristic of Hebrew and Yiddish print in Italy were exported to the rest of Ashkenaz.

A Prague edition, *p*, was printed in 1609 by Jacob b. Gerson of the Bak printing dynasty.[46] Falk suggests that it inherited its orthographic profile from the Cracow editions (most likely *k*^{I}), and that the work of its editor is very close to that of the Prostitz editions (v. 1, 23-24). The relation is, in fact, not only textual but personal, as well. The accomplished corrector Mordecai b. Jacob of Töplitz had been employed at the Prostitz press in the 1580s and is responsible for its Yiddish translation of Proverbs.[47] He relocated to Prague toward the end of the sixteenth century and printed two additional Yiddish translations from Hebrew, the biblical Book of Job and the penitential prayers recited during Rosh ha-Shanah, Yom Kippur, and the Days of Awe.[48] Finally, he is acknowledged on the title page of *p* as the one who produced this edition, linking the Bak printing house with that of Prostitz, with which he is associated (see Falk, v. 1, 24). It seems possible that Mordecai b. Jacob corrected and typeset *k*^{I} in 1593 when he still resided in Cracow and that he was then a natural choice of typesetter for the Bak edition sixteen years later. It may even be possible that Jacob b. Gershon Bak's decision to print his own edition rested on Mordecai's prior experience typesetting this work.

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45 To the best of my knowledge, *k* survives in an unicum copy at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and has never been thoroughly described in the bibliographic literature. I had the good fortune to work closely with this edition, and shall consider it extensively in this chapter, where it will shed a bright light on the exegetical predilections and literary tastes of *Shmuel Bukh*'s later editors. *k*^{I}, on the other hand, is preserved in two copies, one in the Bodleian and another at the Staatsbibliothek in Vienna. It is on this latter copy which Falk relies for his description. It is, in essence, a reprint of *k*, by the same Prostitz printing house, although from a later stage in the press's history.

46 An unicum, it resides at the Hamburg Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek.

47 *Sefer Mishlei.* Trans. Mordecai ben Jacob of Töplitz. Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1582. In this same year, the Prostitz press printed an edition of *Melokhim Bukh*, of which Mordecai b. Jacob could also have been the corrector (though he is nowhere credited in the Prague edition of this work in 1607, despite its direct descent from the aforementioned Cracow edition). See *Sefer Melokhim [Melokhim Bukh]*. Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1582.

48 *Sefer Iyyov.* Trans. Mordecai ben Jacob of Töplitz. Prague: Jacob ben Gershon Bak, 1597; and *Selihot.* Trans. Jacob ben Elijah ha-Levi of Töplitz. Prague: Jacob ben Gershon Bak, 1602. For a more extensive description of these works, see Ch. Shmeruk, *Sifrut yidish be-Polin: Mehkarim ve-iyunim historiyim*. Jerusalem: Hotsa'at sefarim a. sh. Y. L. Magnes, Hebrew University, 1981.

The last edition of *Shmuel Bukh*, *b*, was printed in Basel in 1612,[49] where it was quite significantly revised by one Nathan b. Eliezer Michelbach, who modernized both language and content to such an extent that Falk recommends we view it as a distinct adaptation (v. 1, 25). It was probably the result of the partnership between the Jewish printer Mordecai b. Naphtali of Porentruy and Konrad Waldkirch, a non-Jewish printer primarily of Latin books, but whose press released approximately twenty works in Hebrew and Yiddish around the turn of the seventeenth century.

IV. A SOCIAL HISTORY OF *Shmuel Bukh k*: COLLABORATION IN ITALY

This brief history of *Shmuel Bukh*'s incarnations discloses both its textual and geographic instability, as well as suggesting the widely varied cultural contexts of its production. Yet I am concerned here with the Polish edition, *k,* because it crystallizes the collision of vernacular literature and biblical exegesis in Ashkenaz, unstable textuality across manuscript and print, and the specific intellectual culture of *m's* Italy, marked by humanist textual criticism and, later, (Counter-)Reformation reassessments of biblical authority. How does this Polish edition reflect a shift in intertextual disposition toward biblical literalism and away from midrashic amplification? To what extent were the editors of this edition inclined, whether by professional training or intellectual preparation, to privilege the authority of the biblical text over its later midrashic interpretations? These questions situate *k*'s immediate textual and social environments at the crux of this discussion, and so I begin by telling the story of its printers, their provenance and intellectual parentage.

The first Cracow edition of *Shmuel Bukh* was printed in 1578 by Isaac b. Aaron Prostitz (d. 1614), most likely under the supervision of the house editor, Samuel b. Abraham Boehm (d. 1588).[50] By this time, Boehm and Prostitz had been working together for nearly two decades and were in the process of building their house into one of the most intellectually innovative and commercially successful Jewish presses in Europe (rivaled perhaps only by the Bak press in Prague). Both were veterans of the Italian Hebrew print industry and had reaped the benefits of its flowering. Boehm was also the descendant of a great family of scholars and literary professionals: his maternal grandfather was none other than the Hebrew grammarian, poet and translator, Elijah ha-Levi Ashkenazi Levita (Bahur), and like others of his family,[51] Samuel had

49 Falk mentions four surviving copies of this edition, in the Bodleian, the Frankfurt Stadtbibliothek, the private library of Zalman Schocken in Jerusalem, and the Preußischer Staatsbibliothek in Berlin. It is upon this last exemplar that Falk bases his description. However, my research has revealed that this copy has been missing since the end of the Second World War.

50 This surname פיהם in Hebrew characters is transliterated variously as Boehm, Boem, Böhmen, and Böhm.

51 Two other grandsons of Levita were at work in the Hebrew book trade at this time, Samuel Boehm's elder brothers, Joseph and Elijah, sons of Isaac Boehm of Rome and Levita's daughter, Hannah. They are best known in Yiddish literature as the typesetters of the first edition of Levita's famous *Bove Bukh* (Isny, 1541). It seems that they had accompanied Levita when he relocated to Germany late in life at the invitation of the Christian Hebraist Paulus Fagius. After being baptized at an unknown date, they returned to Italy (Rosenfeld, "Origins of Yiddish Printing," 113; M. Weinreich, "Di ershte oysgabe fun Bove-bukh un ire zetser." *YIVO-bleter* 2 (1931): 280-84, changing their names to Vittorio and Giovanni Battista (Solomon) Eliano, after their grandfather (cf. M. Leone, *Saints and Signs: A Semiotic Reading of Conversion in Early Modern Catholicism.* Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010. 245, n. 115; though also, C. Roth, *The History of the Jews of Italy.* Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946. 290-91). Giovanni Battista continued to work in the print industry, turning to the production of didactic Catholic works, and largely abandoning his early affiliation with Hebrew printing. Vittorio, on the

entered the burgeoning industry of Hebrew printing in Italy, where he apparently flourished by virtue of his thorough education in Tanakh, Talmud and Kabbalah.[52] Prostitz, on the other hand, was a newcomer. Born in Prossnitz, Moravia (date of birth unknown), he apprenticed in the printing houses of Italy, the most impressive institutions of Hebrew print in his day, and by 1568 had completed his professional education in Venice.[53] We might surmise that Boehm and Prostitz chose their profession based on the tremendous flowering of the Italian Hebrew book trade in the early decades of the sixteenth century, when they were both young men. It was a new and exciting industry, fattened by Christian Hebraism and embellished by rapid technological and text-critical innovations. Yet what had seemed a promising career quickly withered in the face of changing political and ecclesiastical policy.

Between 1553 and their departure for Cracow in 1568, Prostitz and Boehm witnessed first-hand the installation of the apparatus of censorship crafted during Paul IV's papacy in one Italian city after another, beginning with Rome and Venice. This period was marked by the confiscation and public burning of Hebrew books, especially the Talmud. Ironically, Italian Hebrew print had come to dominate the industry with its magnificent Bomberg editions of the Babylonian Talmud, and in retrospect it is as though the pride of that accomplishment was equalled only by the dismay of its revocation but a few decades later. Whatever the case, both Boehm and Prostitz suffered for their mistimed entrance into the Italian Hebrew print industry, the fruits of their labor consumed in the doctrinal fires of the Counter Reformation.

As a native Italian, Boehm had experienced the upheavals of papal censorship more immediately than his partner. In the mid-1560s Boehm fled Venice, apparently due to the Talmud

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other hand, reappears in Italy in the late 1550's in Cremona, working as a learned corrector of Hebrew books in Christian printing houses, and as an expurgator for the Inquisition. It is all but certain that he and his younger brother Samuel found themselves at work in the same printing houses (that of Vincenzo Conti in Cremona, and of Giorgio di Cavalli in Venice), collaborating on the same projects. Samuel Boehm alone among his brothers did not convert to Christianity, and in fact abandoned the Italian print scene and all his family when he departed for Poland to work in Prostitz's press.

52 The works that Boehm edited and whose production he oversaw display a remarkable range, from halachah to biblical exegesis to the writings of Sephardic kabbalists. Boehm worked as a *magihah*, which in current usage means 'proofreader,' but might more accurately be interpreted as the Hebrew rendering of 'corrector.' As Anthony Grafton has recently demonstrated (*Culture of Correction*, 10-13, 23-29), the role of the corrector in the printing houses of early modern Europe was a far more wide-ranging and significant responsibility than that of a mere proofreader. Rather, the early modern corrector served a function more akin to that of the present-day editor, overseeing virtually every aspect of a book's progress through the press, work which demanded not only decisions regarding textual emendation and details of typography and page layout, but also studied reflection and authoritative determinations on the final content of the work. The very choice of Hebrew works to print, then, serves as an index to the fields in which Boehm was competent.

53 B. Friedberg, *Toldot ha-defus ha-ivri be-polanyah: Me-reshit hivasdo bi-shenat 294 ve-hitpathuto ad z'manenu.* Tel Aviv: B. Friedberg,1950. See also Majer Balaban's immensely useful history of the Prostitz press, which includes a transcription of its printing license and other pertinent legal sources: M. Balaban, “Zur Geschichte der hebraischen Druckerein in Polen.” *Soncino-Blätter: Beitrage zur Kunde des jüdischen Buches* 3.1 (1929): *Sonderdruck* 1-50. On the history of Hebrew and Yiddish in printing during this period, see M. Heller, *The Sixteenth Century Hebrew Book: An Abridged Thesaurus.* Brill's series in Jewish studies. v. 33. Leiden: Brill, 2004; ibid. *Studies in the Making of the Early Hebrew Book.* Studies in Jewish history and culture, v. 15. Leiden: Brill, 2008; and also, D. Amram, *The Makers of Hebrew Books in Italy: Being Chapters in the History of the Hebrew Printing Press.* London: The Holland Press, 1963; Ch. Shmeruk. *Sifrut Yidish be-Polin*; and M. Steinschneider, and David Cassel, *Jüdische Typographie und jüdischer Buchandel.* Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrmann Verlag, 1938.

controversy there. By 1566 he was working in Cremona as a corrector of Hebrew books (*Sefer Mitsvot Katan*) at the press of Vincenzo Conti (Heller, *The Sixteenth Century Hebrew Book,* 124). Yet only three years later in 1559 the Talmud was also publicly burned in Cremona, which Boehm likely witnessed (as evidenced by his probable association with Conti's *Arba'ah Turim* [Four Columns], 1558, and his printing of the Zohar, 1559).[54] By his own account, the uncertain status of Hebrew printing in Italy motivated his peripatetic career: he writes in the prologue to *Derekh Emunah* [Way of Faith] (Padua, 1562) that he fled Cremona due to the upheavals there (i.e. the burning of Hebrew books), and upon his arrival in Padua was idle for a time (Heller, *Sixteenth Century Hebrew Book*, 535). From Cremona Boehm moved to Padua, where he partnered with Lorenzo Pasquati in producing the first Hebrew book released by that press (*Derekh Emunah*, mentioned above). Once the ban on the printing of Hebrew books (though not the Talmud) was lifted in Venice in 1563, Boehm returned from his western exile and seems to have remained there five years, working first in Gryphio's house (releasing another edition of *Arba'ah Turim* and subsequently *Tur Yoreh De'ah* **[**He Who Teaches Knowledge**]**, 1564) and then in di Cavalli's (*Tur Even Ha'azer* [The Stone of Help], 1565, and *Shulhan Arukh* [Set Table], 1567).[55] In 1567 he apparently returned briefly to Padua and Cremona where he released two works (*Derashot ha-Torah* [Interpretations of the Torah] and *She'elot u-teshuvot* [Questions and Responses] of Joseph ben Solomon Colon,[56] respectively) before leaving Italy permanently for Poland. This brief professional biography portrays an uncertain, freelance career dependent upon temporary economic alliances and the good will of local authorities, frequently destabilized by the vicissitudes of politics and industry.[57]

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54 *Zohar.* Eds. Vittorio Eliano, and Hayyim ben Samuel ibn Gattino. Cremona: Vincenzo Conti, 1559.

55 The *Shulhan Arukh* is one of the most authoritative and widely accepted codifications of Jewish religious law ever printed. It first appeared in Safed in 1563, and has continued to be published until the present day, usually accompanied in Ashkenazic communities by the glosses of R. Moses Isserles (Rema) which offer alternative rulings based on Ashkenazic custom. Although the *Shulhan* is substantially based on Caro's *Arba'ah Turim* and other, related halachic compendia, it has outstripped all of these in stature thanks to its monumental codification of halachah for a diverse array of Jewish communities. Boehm's involvement with the Shulhan Arukh would continue for the remainder of his career. Having printed this work four and perhaps five or six times over the course of his life, Boehm would achieve such professional success due in no small part to his intimate knowledge of the Shulhan, expertise that would not only make possible his own further achievements, but also those of Prostitz and his press. The literary and textual significance of the *Shulhan* for the Prostitz press will be explored in the next section. Editions relevant to this essay include: *Shulhan Arukh.* Venice: Meir ben Jacob Parenzo and Alvise Bragadin, 1564; ———. Ed. Samuel Boehm, Venice: Giorgio di Cavalli, 1567; ———. Venice, 1577; ———. Venice: Giovanni Gryphio, 1567; ———. Salonika, 1567; ———. Venice, 1574; ———. Venice, 1597; ———. Ed. Moses ben Israel Isserles (Rema). Cracow: Prostitz, 1570; ———. Cracow: Prostitz, 1583; ———. Cracow: Prostitz, 1593.

56 Shem Tov ben Joseph ibn Shem Tov, *Derashot Ha-Torah.* Padua: Lorenzo Pasquato, 1567; ibid. ———. Salonika, 1525; ibid. ———. Venice, 1547; and Joseph ben Solomon Colon, *She'elot u-teshuvot.* Ed. Samuel Boehm. Cremona: Vincenzo Conti, 1567. This latter book belongs to the rabbinic genre known as responsa, or *she'elot u-teshuvot* (literally, 'questions and answers,' and often abbreviated *shu"*t) which take the form of an individual legal decisor's ruling on specific halachic questions. Although this genre may seem quite distinct from the halachic compendia Boehm was often tasked with editing, prior responsa were often consulted not only by other rabbis faced with similar cases, but also in the very process of compiling halachic rulings for monumental halachic compendia, like the *Arba'ah Turim* or the *Shulhan.* Taken together, these works demonstrate Boehm's fluency in contemporary halachic literature and its variety of early modern genres.

57 Professional biographies of this sort are not characteristic only of early modern Jewish printers. The life of the sixteenth century German humanist and reformer Sebastian Franck is a good example of the ways in which religious confession, changing political atmosphere and intellectual culture could shape the prospects of a print

Prostitz first made Boehm's acquaintance in Venice while employed by two Christian printers who at times lent their presses to the production of Hebrew books: Giovanni Gryphio (1564-67) and Giorgio di Cavalli (1565-67). During this period they must have conceived the plan to establish their own, exclusively Jewish printing house in Poland. The Gryphio press went under in 1567 and Prostitz took the opportunity to buy its Hebrew print apparatus, type, frames, and other ornamentation before departing for Eastern Europe. But material tools of the trade were not the only legacy of Italian print that accompanied Prostitz and Boehm to Cracow.

Boehm especially had come of age during an intellectual moment when Jewish exegesis and the achievements of humanist hermeneutics were free to interact with and enrich one another, as they had done in the Hebrew and Yiddish oeuvre of his grandfather. Arthur Lesley has described the way in which Italian Jews of the late medieval and early modern period incorporated humanist values into their own project of Jewish cultural renewal.[58] While rejecting Latin and the literature of Greek and Roman antiquity, Italian Jews substituted Hebrew grammatical and literary education as the foundation of their reform. Believing Hebrew to be of more ancient and perfect lineage than the pagan classics, these Jewish humanists envisioned their literary inheritance unlocking the secrets of the Bible and its interpretation, so that "[a]rmed with this necessary linguistic education, [contemporary Jewish] factions will no longer be satisfied merely to allegorize the biblical text, like the philosophers; to disregard it, like the Talmudists; or to reduce it to occult meanings, like the kabbalists. They will rather search in the Hebrew Bible for solutions to contemporary problems" (48-49).[59] Eschewing rabbinic and medieval exegetical practices as obscure and textually corrupt, this "biblicist hebraism" elevated the Hebrew of the Tanakh as the undefiled font of social and cultural wisdom. In so doing, late medieval Jewish humanists like Profiat Duran (c. 1350-1415) proposed that Jewish cultural reform be based in a program of Hebrew education, on the grounds that "[t]he original perfection of Hebrew, as revealed in the Bible, is still available to the Jews, in spite of their own current debasement and their corruption of the language. By dedicated study of Hebrew grammar, as exemplified in the Bible, Jews can revive their studies, their behavior, and their community, to repair the faults that prolong their exile" (49). In this vein, Lesley argues that the Italian Jewish adaptation of humanist cultural values worked by analogy rather than wholesale imitation, so that "Italian Jews were pursuing a resolutely independent religious and learned program, which they articulated by selectively adapting to their own intellectual heritage the literary, linguistic, and political arts that they could appropriate from humanism" (59). A century later, the intellectual endeavors of learned and socially prominent Italian Jewish humanists like Elijah Levita were still animated by precisely these hopes for Hebrew grammatical and literary scholarship. The literary and cultural spirit of Renaissance humanism, obsessed as it was with the literature and culture of classical antiquity, manifested in Jewish contexts as an emphatically biblicist hebraism.

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professional, Jewish or not. See *Sebastian Franck (1499-1542).* Wolfenbutteler Forschungen 56. Ed. Jan. D Muller. Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993.

58 A. Lesley, "Jewish Adaptation of Humanist Concepts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Italy." *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy.* Ed. David B. Ruderman. New York: New York University Press, 1992. 45-62.

59 As we will see in the following pages, these concerns with retrieving a pristine biblical original are equally typical of non-Jewish humanists in early modernity, Desiderius Erasmus, Martin Luther and Lorenzo Valla among them.

Lesley tackles this complex knot of Italian Jewish and Renaissance humanist interaction by attending to the literary legacy of contemporary Jewish poets, historians, philologists, and political thinkers. Yet such a top-down approach neglects another significant means by which a learned editor like Samuel Boehm would have been inculcated with humanist concepts, and more specifically, a humanist attitude toward textual stewardship. Beyond his family ties to a newly Jewish variety of Renaissance humanism, Boehm also achieved fluency in humanist literary and textual practice via its tremendous impact on the Italian print industry in general and the role of editor/corrector in particular. Brian Richardson describes the editor of Boehm's day as having "acquired a sometimes aggressive confidence in [his] part in the fabric of print culture, indeed of vernacular literary culture in general, in the Italian Renaissance" (*Print Culture in Renaissance Italy,* 182). This confidence derived in no small part from the high market value of editing, which relied increasingly on the work of humanist textual critics:

> From the beginning of printing in Italy and throughout the Cinquecento, printers who wished to attain eminence in their craft needed a network of editorial contacts among local intellectuals. [...] The strong humanist tradition in Italy meant that the reading public was justified in looking for respectable standards of scholarship in the printing of the Latin and Greek classics or in legal, philosophical, theological and medical works. Printers of such texts would therefore draw attention to their collaboration with men of letters. (4)

As an empowered textual custodian, the editor was able to widely disseminate works which bore his intellectual stamp, so that "By shaping what was committed to print and by influencing its interpretation, then, [he] controlled the images of past and present writing which reached the reading public through the new medium [of print]. Since their readers included new writers, editors were also helping to shape what was yet to be written" (183).

At the same time, the marketability of a well-edited book was itself the product of a humanist literary and textual value-system, a founding philological impulse, which long preceded print and the explosion of the book market in the late fifteenth century. In John D'Amico's terms:[60]

> Some form of textual renovation was implicit in the nature of humanism. Concern for language, which was the heart of the humanist pedagogy, led to an emphasis on the word as the door to reality. [...] Meaning was connected to and dependent upon the integrity of the word, and the wrong word led to falsehood. In order to properly understand a text, one had to discover the actual words of the author; this usually meant extracting them from the corrupt manuscripts. (8)

60 J. D'Amico, *Theory and Practice in Renaissance Textual Criticism: Beatus Rhenanus Between Conjecture and History.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Yet textual renovation (or, indeed, restoration) in the period often did not mean the rigorous comparison of manuscript sources (however foreign such a sensibility may seem to modern observers), and in fact favored editorial speculation and conjecture (D'Amico, 10-11). Perhaps paradoxically, it was the very liberty required in this imaginative textual exercise that so augmented the editor's confidence: "Renaissance critics were not engaged in a scientific enterprise but in creative (even romantic) archaeology. While manuscripts were artifacts that revealed the past, their corrupt state also concealed it. Editors felt required to make an imaginative leap beyond them in order to extract valid readings" (11-12). That the Renaissance editor understood his work as part of a project of humanist textual recovery on the one hand and literary creativity on the other further accounts for the freedom he enjoyed and the power he exercised over the eventual form of the text. As we will see, *Shmuel Bukh,* too, shows the signs of a markedly humanist textual renovation in Prostitz editions like *k*. Boehm's humanist credentials were all the more salient when one considers his niche-market. The target audience of Hebrew (and perhaps also Yiddish) books in Renaissance Italy consisted not only of Jews, but also included a growing contingent of Christian Hebraists, who turned to rabbinic hermeneutics, Jewish biblical exegesis and Kabbalah as part of their humanist re-encounter with Scripture. Italian Hebrew books, then, were designed to meet the needs of two different consumers: Jews seeking to study Hebrew texts as a part of Jewish custom and religious practice, and Christians seeking historically relevant, linguistically reliable aids in their general understanding and text-critical restoration of the Old Testament. (Elijah Levita, naturally, exemplifies the rare reader who gracefully transcended such crude categories, although we could add many other Italian Jewish humanists to this list.)

Ironically, since it was in itself a pacific encounter, the confluence of Jewish exegesis and humanist textual criticism in Italian printing houses would become an incendiary combination as the doctrinal debates of the (Counter-)Reformation around Scriptural authority grew ever more heated. Ultimately, both disciplines became the object of ecclesiastical censorship in Italy. In 1553, due apparently to the efforts of Cardinal Carafa (later Pope Paul IV), copies of the Talmud were confiscated in Rome and burned on Rosh ha-Shanah.[61] On May 29 of the following year, the papal bull *Cum sicut nuper* was issued, asserting the authority of the Church in the administration of the censorship of the Talmud and all Hebrew books. During the subsequent half-decade book burnings and confiscations continued in other Italian cities (Venice, that capital of Hebrew printing, among them), culminating in the addition of the Talmud to the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* in 1559. It was only in 1564, after Paul IV had been succeeded by Pius IV, that the ban on the publication of the Talmud was temporarily (and only partially) lifted,

61 A detailed but elegant account of the Italian Talmud controversy of these years appears in Amram 252-73. For rather more modern histories of this episode, see especially K. Stow, "The Burning of the Talmud in 1553, in the Light of Sixteenth Century Catholic Attitudes Toward the Talmud." *Bibliothéque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 34 (1972): 435-59; A. Raz-Krakotzkin, "Censorship, Editing, and the Reshaping of Jewish Identity: The Catholic Church and Hebrew Literature in the Sixteenth Century." *Hebraica Veritas?: Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe*. Eds. Allison Coudert and Jeffrey S. Shoulson. Jewish Culture and Contexts. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. 125-55.; and F. Parente, Parente, Fausto. "The Index, the Holy Office, the Condemnation of the Talmud and Publication of Clement Viii's Index." Trans. Adrian Belton. *Church, Censorship, and Culture in Early Modern Italy.* Ed. Gigliola Fragnito. Cambridge Studies in Italian History and Culture. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 163-93.

though the bureaucratic apparatus for the censoring of Hebrew books continued to function. In Venice, which had once monopolized the Jewish book trade with its fine editions of the Talmud, the printing of Hebrew books in general resumed in 1563.

Lest one assume, however, that the new stringency of the Church's policy toward Hebrew books resulted from a primarily antisemitic campaign, it is important to recall that these developments must also be seen in the light of the Counter-Reformation's aim not only of limiting Jewish access to Hebrew sources, but of quelling the rising tide of heresy, which by the mid-sixteenth century had come to include many varieties of Christian Hebraism and Reformed biblicism. In this light, the ban on the Talmud and the censoring of Hebrew books was aimed not solely or even primarily at diminishing Jewish access, but at explicitly affirming the heretical nature of these works in Christian hands.[62] Thus, despite the fact that the Jewish communities of Italy were not the primary target of ecclesiastical censorship, Italian Jews, and most especially those who lived by their labor as printers, correctors, compositors, and typesetters of Hebrew books, were among the individuals most seriously and directly affected by it.

The early 1550s saw not only the banning of the Talmud in Italy, but also the censoring and prohibition of many other books and authors, among them the most celebrated voices of humanist textuality in negotiation with medieval biblical hermeneutics. To give only one example, the works of the Dutch Catholic humanist Desiderius Erasmus were banned in this period, not because he himself had espoused or propagated a heretical approach to Scripture, but rather because his biblical hermeneutics presaged the more radical doctrine of *sola scriptura* which would become one of the most textually extreme and divisive tenets of reformed Christianity.[63] With his emphasis on historical contextualization and resistance to the metaphysical and allegorical hermeneutic strategies of his medieval predecessors, Erasmus' approach to Scripture was pervaded by humanist textual criticism, philology and historicism: “If for Erasmus interpretation aims at understanding a meaning with which not only the reader but also the author would feel at home, the means of reaching this understanding include not only knowing languages and comparing translations [...] but also locating passages in their historical and textual contexts” (73).[64] By means of these textual strategies, Erasmus rejects “the fashion of the allegorizers [who] freely exploit the accommodative power of allegory in their exegetical practices by utterly neglecting the historicity of the text they interpret: its belonging to another time and place” (70-71). The Erasmian turn to a humanist arsenal, above all philology and history, in the pursuit of biblical interpretation marked an early step toward shrugging off the centuries' accumulation of patristic and medieval commentary in favor of text-critical

62 It was, in fact, a dispute between rival Christian printers of Hebrew books in Venice that had attracted the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities in 1553. See Raz-Krakotzkin, 130, and Amram above, especially 254-64.

63 *Sola scriptura* (Latin, “by scripture alone”) refers to the Protestant doctrine which understands the Bible as a salvific authority above and beyond all other individuals, works or institutions. One of its underlying premises is that no doctrine be held or confessed which is not readily apparent in scripture. Much like Erasmus, this doctrine rejected the ornate edifice of allegorical, metaphysical exegesis erected around the biblical text during the Catholic Middle Ages. Unlike Erasmus, however, it subordinated the writings of the Church Fathers and the decisions of the papacy to the unvarnished word of scripture, relying instead on the confessional disposition of individual readers and consciences in direct dialogue with the biblical text. (See, “Sola scriptura.” *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011.)

64 K. Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition: Chapters in the Ancient Legacy & Its Humanist Reception.* Yale Studies in Hermeneutics. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

investigation wedded, as we saw earlier, to a “dangerously” imaginative reading practice in the eyes of ecclesiastical authorities.

Many features align the historicist biblical hermeneutics employed by figures like Erasmus with Jewish humanists' efforts at cultural and intellectual reform. They were united in their zealous biblicism, a return to the biblical original (whether in Hebrew, Latin, or Greek) as the primary means of establishing a reliable text on which a sound tradition of commentary might be based. Consequently, both tried to divest themselves of the trappings of Aristotelian metaphysics and medieval allegorizing. Indeed, in the case of the early Yiddish biblical epic, the elimination of the elaborative gestures of midrash seems of a piece with this humanist pursuit of a 'pristine' biblical ideal. Most important for the purposes of textual transmission, both Jewish and non-Jewish humanist biblicism understood the biblical texts and commentaries at hand, whether manuscript or print, to be corrupt descendants of an ideal, perfect, and original text which could be accessed only by rigorous philological inquiry and the imaginative acrobatics of a learned, ingenious textual critic.[65]

Counter-Reformation censorship eventually achieved an economic strangle-hold on the Venetian print industry in general and the Jewish book market in particular. Paul Grendler has shown that by the second half of the sixteenth century the output of the Venetian printing presses had fallen by as much as a third, greatly reducing their contribution to the book market of the whole Italian peninsula.[66] At the same time, the number of presses in operation also declined. The closure of a press like Gryphio's exemplifies this downward trend. Chone Shmeruk has also pointed out the virtual extinction of Yiddish printing in northern Italy by the end of the sixteenth century, which he attributes to the assimilation of Ashkenazic (Yiddish-speaking) Jews into the Italian Jewish populace (*Italia*, 180). Yet such an analysis fails to contextualize Yiddish printing in two much larger historical developments: the economic decline of Italian printing in general, and the cultural suffocation of Italian Jewry in the ghettoes of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[67] Italian Yiddish literature, situated at the precarious intersection of print censorship and Jewish ghettoization, was thus especially vulnerable to these trends. In a prescient apprehension of their situation, Boehm and Prostitz departed Italy in 1567-68, thus taking their leave in the first decade of this long period of cultural and economic decline.

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65 By contrast, modern conceptions of textual instability, such as Zumthor's *mouvance,* represent a concerted effort to avoid the pitfalls of this fantasy, both in their refusal to privilege 'originals' as a pristine textual ideal and in their skepticism about the capacity of philology to facilitate such a return.

66 P. Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540-1605.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.

67 Robert Bonfil has presented a more nuanced picture of this “baroque” period for Italian Jewry by arguing that the ghettoization that eroded the social and cultural mobility of the majority of Italian Jews was paradoxically accompanied by the enhancement of intellectual and economic opportunity for a wealthy, privileged Jewish elite. See R. Bonfil, “Change in the Cultural Patterns of a Jewish Society in Crisis: Italian Jewry at the Close of the Sixteenth Century.” *Jewish History* 3:2 (1988): 11–30. Not all scholars of Italian Jewish life in this period are in agreement with Bonfil's assessment. (See, for instance, David Ruderman's characterization in D. Ruderman, Ruderman, David. “Introduction.” *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy.* Ed. David Ruderman. New York: New York University Press, 1992. 24-27). Despite this difference in interpretation, the overwhelming picture of the Italian (and especially Venetian) Jewish book market after the suppression of the Talmud is one of commercial and cultural enervation. For print professionals like Boehm and Prostitz, this withering of economic opportunity seems to have proved sufficient motivation for their inherently risky relocation to Poland.

V. A SOCIAL HISTORY OF *Shmuel Bukh k*: AUTONOMY IN POLAND

In migrating to Poland, Boehm and Prostitz brought the sensibilities of the Italian Renaissance print industry to Cracow. The relocation was both cultural and geographic. On the one hand, Boehm and Prostitz were now operating under the legal authority of the Polish government, which, though Catholic, was much less committed to Counter-Reformation policies regarding Hebrew books than its Italian counterparts. On the other hand, Jewish rabbinic culture in Poland was substantially more conservative than that in Italy, and as we shall see, this was reflected both in its exegetical orientation and in its attitude toward the importation of foreign literature (often from Italy and the rest of the Mediterranean.) The eventual treatment of midrash and biblical narrative in the Polish Prostitz editions of *Shmuel Bukh* was informed by this new cultural configuration and the demands it placed on both Boehm and Prostitz as print professionals, Jewish intellectuals, and Italian newcomers.

On October 15, 1568, Prostitz, identified now as "the Italian Jew," acquired from King Sigismundis II Augustus I of Poland a license to establish a printing press in the university city of Cracow.[68] The press was a socially and intellectually ambitious enterprise, intended to reverse and resist the Counter-Reformation textual policies, that had so hobbled Hebrew print in Italy. Once the press was licensed, Prostitz and Boehm began work in this vein, printing select tractates of the Talmud. As veterans of the Venetian Hebrew print industry, they were well aware that printing the Talmud could secure a press's reputation in the Jewish book market and further that the growing scarcity of unexpurgated Italian editions heralded a ripe commercial opportunity, increasing the value and cultural significance of their contribution. The liberty granted a Jewish press in Poland would allow them to distinguish themselves and their house with an edition of the Talmud to rival Bomberg's legacy in Italy. The Talmud had not been banned in Poland, where Sigismundis II maintained a delicate but enduring policy of religious tolerance.[69] Nevertheless, the Prostitz press was promptly stymied in its enterprise by the Catholic clergy of Cracow, who leveled the same charges at the Talmud as those brought during the controversy in Italy: that it was a heretical work that blasphemed against the Christian religion. All copies of the Prostitz Talmud and all the Hebrew print apparatus were confiscated by the Cracow district official [*starost*], Stanislaus de Mirow Miskowski, on November 2, 1569. The work of the press was effectively halted for a year until Prostitz prevailed in renewing his license on November 15, 1570. His print equipment was returned, but the prohibition on printing the Talmud remained, and the two partners turned in another direction to make their mark on the

68 Balaban 10, 47.

69 Soon after his death, in the 1570s especially, Poland saw policies of religious tolerance explicitly legislated in the Confederation of Warsaw, which made it not only the responsibility of the populace but also that of the king to ensure peace between the adherents of all religious creeds. As a result, the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth came to serve as a refuge for religious minorities of all stripes, Jews among them. Much like Prostitz and Boehm, many of these sectarians were fleeing Italy, which was most powerfully affected by Counter-Reformation policy, so that Poland (and Cracow particularly) became a haven for unorthodox Italian intellectuals, both Jewish and Christian. See G. H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation.* 3rd ed. Sixteenth century essays & studies, v. 15. Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992; and E. M. Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism: Socianism and Its Antecedents.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945. On the Confederation, see Williams 696-98 and Wilbur 363. For further background on religious toleration in early modern Poland, see Williams, ch. 29.2-4 and Wilbur, ch. 26.

Hebrew book trade.[70] In this instance, their timing could not have been better. As we will soon see, profound change was at work in the intellectual underpinnings of textual transmission in Ashkenaz, and would come to radically redefine both the legal and text-critical practices of Eastern European Jewry. Prostitz and Boehm, ushering into print a hermeneutic tradition once confined to manuscript, would come to mechanize the textual and exegetical revolution in Ashkenaz.

Surely no work could rival the Talmud in religious authority, or in contemporary controversy; yet Prostitz's next enterprise effectively defined and publicized the press, just as an edition of the Talmud would have done. Furthermore, it engendered a religious and textual controversy of its own, one perhaps just as significant and threatening in its own way to the rabbis of Ashkenaz as the doctrine of *sola scriptura* was to the theologians of the Counter-Reformation. This work was Joseph Caro's *Shulhan Arukh* ('Set Table'), the monumental codification of Sephardic *halachah* (Jewish law), which the Prostitz press was the first to publish with R. Moses b. Israel Isserles (Rema)'s *Mappah* ('Tablecloth'). The inclusion of these glosses on Ashkenazic rite and custom would turn out to be a momentous event in the history of Hebrew print and Jewish exegesis, which redefined the process and nature of halachic decision-making thereafter.

Just before departing Italy, Boehm had participated in a Venetian printing of the *Shulhan*. When Boehm first produced his edition in 1567, it had been printed only once before in 1564-65 by the Venetians Meir b. Jacob Parenzo and Alvise Bragadin. In many senses, Boehm was borne along from the very beginning by the tremendous success of this work. He reprinted it for the second (or possibly third[71]) time in 1570-71 at the Prostitz press after his relocation to Cracow, and it was this edition which first included the Rema's glosses. The Prostitz press reissued it again in 1577-80 and 1583-84, and for the last time in 1590 soon after Boehm's death. Yet the Prostitz press took a substantial risk with its first printing of the Isserles edition, which despite its ultimate and overwhelming success drew no small amount of criticism from the great Ashkenazic exegetical authorities of the day.

In a fashion almost shockingly opposed to the arguments around hermeneutic and thus doctrinal authority espoused by (Counter-)Reformation exegetes, the Ashkenazic transmission of commentary in this period was in fact dominated by a resistance to textual stability, insisting in contrast upon the primacy of local custom and the individual *posek* (legal decisor), over and above the authority of the interpretive tradition he may have received. In this regard, Isserles' rendering of Ashkenazic halachah as represented in his glosses on Caro was highly unorthodox, and ran counter to both Ashkenazic legalistic and textual practice.[72] As Elchanan Reiner has

70 The Prostitz Talmud was eventually released between 1602-05, and its editorship attempted, albeit somewhat disingenuously, to trace its lineage back to the great Venetian editions which had preceded the papal ban. See Heller, *The Seventeenth Century Hebrew Book: An Abridged Thesaurus.* Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011. 688-89. and also his *Studies*, 92-105.

71 It appears that two Venetian printing houses released editions of the *Shulhan Arukh* in 1567, Gryphio and di Cavalli, both of which employed Boehm (See Heller, *The Sixteenth Century Hebrew Book* and Steinschneider-Cassel p. 39/59, n. 16 and 20). That Boehm may have been instrumental in the production of both seems at once counter-intuitive (due to Gryphio and Cavalli's competing business interests) and difficult to discount.

72 How radical Isserles intended his glosses to be is a matter of some dispute. Nonetheless, scholarly consensus seems to be that the *Mappah* was fundamentally a gesture in support of legal codification, in contrast to some Ashkenazic authorities who opposed it on principle. See, for example, the brief account given in “Isserles,

argued, the textual transmission of Ashkenazic halachah in this period was characterized by an unfiltered accumulation of diverse and divergent legal decisions and argumentation, "without the intervention of any editor's hand that might lighten the increasingly heavy weight bearing down on the original text from one generation to the next" (94).[73] But this accumulation, though unfiltered and cumbersome, was not a constraint on the posek, limiting his interpretive authority or yoking him to the decisions of his predecessors. On the contrary, as Reiner asserts, early modern Ashkenazic

> authority is personal, it depends absolutely on the halachic scholar [...], who cannot – and may not – rely on precedents. Moreover, authority is a unique, one-off affair. The posek must thrash out each decision individually, deliberating with the sources and with himself. The handwritten or printed book was not an authoritative text, although there was a danger that it might be considered in that light. Meant merely as an aid to its author, without whom the book was meaningless, its authority derived from him and he was also the sole legitimate reader. (87-88)

Such is the view of halachic decision and transmission espoused by Hayyim b. Bezalel (elder brother of the Maharal of Prague) in his polemic attack on another of the Rema's halachic digests, *Torat ha-Hattat* (Cracow, 1569), a reorganized and streamlined version of the essential Ashkenazic legal handbook, *Sha'arei Dura*.[74] It is apparent why R. Hayyim chose *Torat ha-Hatat* as the object of his polemic rather than the *Shulhan*. Immediately after their failure to print the Talmud, Prostitz and Boehm printed Isserles' *Torat ha-Hatat* with an inflammatory prologue in which the Rema offers an uncompromising critique of Ashkenazic halachic transmission. Condemning its current incarnations as didactically inadequate and the source of ever-multiplying and uninformed legal decisions, Isserles proposes his work as a replacement, a fixed legal code, lucidly and conclusively presented, upon which decisions may be based with confidence. In his rebuttal a few years later, *Vikuah Mayyim Khayyim* (c. 1574, though fittingly only printed much later in Amsterdam, 1711), R. Hayyim maintains that such a codification of halachah destroys its evolving and flexible character, rendering it incapable of adapting to local practice, exceptional or complex cases, and changing historical context.[75] Moreover, R. Hayyim argues that halachah must remain fluid, living, whereas its transmission via text (whether printed or chirographic) would deprive it of these essential qualities. This antagonistic attitude toward textual transmission reflects a strikingly reactionary turn for the period (though the concern that

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Moses." *The Cambridge Dictionary of Judaism and Jewish Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 314-15. However, there is no doubt that, whatever Isserles' intentions, both the *Shulhan* and the *Mappah* generated a great deal of controversy at the time and faced aggressive critique from leading Ashkenazic authorities of the day.

73 E. Reiner, "The Ashkenazi Elite At the Beginning of the Modern Era: Manuscript Versus Printed Book." *Jews in Early Modern Poland*. Ed. Gershon Hundert. Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry. Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997. 85-98.

74 Moses ben Israel Isserles [Rema]. *Torat ha-Hattat.* 1st ed. Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1569; ibid. ———. 2nd ed. Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1577; ibid. ———. 3rd ed. Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1590.

75 Hayyim ben Bezalel. *Vikuah Mayyim Hayyim.* 1574; ibid. ———. Amsterdam: 1712.

halachah remain flexibly responsive to the shifting needs of local Jewish communities has persisted into our own moment). Striking in R. Hayyim's case is that he eschews not only the innovations of print, but textual transmission in general. R. Hayyim's perspective does not pit the transmissive practices of a scribal culture against technological advances of print, but actually looks askance at the very notion of a textualized halachah of any variety.

Reiner traces this understanding of legal decision back to the scribal practices of medieval Ashkenazic *yeshivot*, which practiced a formal compromise between the two extremes. In an interpretive context more concerned with Talmudic hermeneutics than the quotidian urgency of legal decision, exegetical interlinear glosses and marginalia proved an effective, if ever-proliferating, solution to the problem of interpretive rigidity. By meticulously detailing the polyvocal, conflicting and complementary diversity of rabbinic commentary, scribes in the Ashkenazic *yeshivot* were able to transmit a transparent record of halachic flexibility. In this light, it seems that Hayyim b. Bezalel does not merely espouse a traditional textual policy; rather, in the context of his early modern historical moment, such a position evinces reactionary extremism. The innovation in written communication initiated by print media, amplifying and widely disseminating the dangers of a written halachah, also called for a retrospective rejection, or at the very least intractable suspicion, of the traditional means of exegetical transmission. If R. Hayyim represents the early modern reactionary, the Rema might be viewed as a textual reformer, for "more than just introducing Ashkenazi[c] practice at the appropriate place [in Caro's work], he in fact edited and screened [Ashkenazic custom]. Quite deliberately, his glosses discarded rather than preserved the bulk of the corpus of Ashkenazic customs left over from the Middle Ages" (Reiner 97). In so doing, the Rema did not just produce an accessible codification of halachah, but by denuding it of marginalia, he elided any textual (and therefore enduring) acknowledgement of its flexibility, presenting it instead as an authoritative edifice, immutable and opaque.

In a graceful but rather dated essay on scribal culture and originality, Gerald Bruns addresses precisely the same problems as though which provoked the controversy between R. Hayyim and the Rema: "the way in which textuality is imagined, and [...] the ways in which this imagining bears upon or, indeed, shapes the act of writing" (113).[76] In Bruns' conception, however, these diverse textual imaginings are mapped onto the historical situation and textual technology of a culture: medieval and Renaissance cultures generate "open" manuscript or scribal texts, while (early) modern cultures produce "closed," printed texts (113). This binary opposition seems reductive in light of more recent arguments about the interrelation of manuscript and print by historians of textual transmission like McKitterick and Dane, as we saw earlier. Yet out of Bruns' characterization emerges an animating logic which bears a strong affinity with R. Hayyim's argument for traditional Ashkenazic exegesis: "the text is not reducible to the letter; that is, a text always contains more than what it says or what its letters contain, which is why we [in a manuscript culture] are privileged to read between the lines, and not to read between them only, but to write between them as well" (Bruns, 125). For R. Hayyim, halachah cannot be reduced to the letter of the law, but must be decided by the specific, local circumstances of Jewish life. A codification which abbreviates diversity of opinion in any measure incrementally decreases this capacity for flexible, case-by-case legislation. Such an commitment to interpretive flexibility hearkens yet further back, calling to mind the

76 G. Bruns, "The Originality of Texts in a Manuscript Culture." *Comparative Literature* 32 (1980): 113-29.

acknowledged, fruitful polysemy of classical rabbinic hermeneutics. In that interpretive context, verses such as "One thing God has spoken; two have I heard" (Psalm 62:12) are taken to refer to the divine capacity for polyvalent speech, which can only be fully communicated in human terms by a multitude of (sometimes contradictory) utterances.[77] Thus, the already terse language of the Hebrew Bible is made all the more concise by virtue of the polyvalency of God's speech. To make the meaning of God's word transparent, commentators must endlessly tease apart the opaque, densely layered biblical verse. Such a hermeneutics is still discernible in the thinking of R. Hayyim, for whom a fixed code is inadequate to the infinite meanings latent in the Tanakh and its Talmudic extrapolations. Returning to Bruns' account of medieval (non-Jewish) exegesis, this imagining of open, flexible textuality casts the medieval writer as an "embellishing grammarian," so that,

> in the Middle Ages it was not uncommon for such commentary to become an exegesis carried on under the sanction of embellishment, whereby the grammarian would [literally] add to a text a construction of his own [...] for such embellishment often took the form of marginal and (more interesting still) *interlinear* commentary. And it is at this point that differences between interpretation and invention, imitation and originality, translation and *poiesis*, one text and another, become hard to define. (120)

In this regard, exegetical textuality in Ashkenaz seems to have partaken of transmissive practices employed by its non-Jewish fellows, displaying the medieval scribal mouvance Zumthor elaborates. Rabbinic biblical hermeneutics and medieval European embellishment dovetailed in the exegetical textuality of Ashkenaz, mutually motivating and reinforcing one another. Yet as we have already seen in the accounts of Brian Richardson and others, Renaissance print also evinced this kind of textual drift, which, in the Middle Ages, had already become a literary aesthetic in its own right, a kind of poetic originality subsequently devalued in literary modernity. If both scribal Ashkenazic exegesis and Renaissance editing permitted for the variations of mouvance and consequently produced "open," unstable texts, what exactly gave R. Hayyim's polemic its bitter intensity? What feature so utterly distinguished his flavor of medieval mouvance from the Renaissance editing techniques employed in printing the *Shulhan* and *Mappah*?

The distinction is ultimately reducible not to doctrinal divergence or hermeneutic strategy but rather to textual aesthetics. Where Bruns traces the medieval writer's embellishing textual imagination to the work of grammatical explication, Richardson has identified sixteenth-century Italian editorial policies with the prevalence of aesthetic assumptions deriving from the plastic arts:

> To what shared aesthetic principles, then, were editors alluding when they termed themselves restorers or painters? The references to antique statues point to the belief that it was better to remove all

77 See, for instance, *Midrash Mechilta de-Rabbi Yishmael* on Exodus 20:8.

> signs of imperfection when displaying an object from the past. A damaged statue was held to be improved by the restoration of missing limbs and by the polishing of its surface so that it appeared entire and new. [...] Similarly, it was believed that earlier paintings and frescoes could be improved by means of adaptations and reworkings. [...] The comparison with portraiture seems to allude to the principle that an artist should take what was best from nature, rejecting defects and irregularities. One way of doing this was to combine the best features from different sources, depicting a figure theoretically possible but which had ever existed. (*Print Culture,* 184)

The Rema, too, was engaged in a project of restoration: renovating Ashkenazic halachic tradition by polishing away the rough, complicating, and encumbering accretion of legal disputation, those "irregularities" which derive from the clamorous disagreement and outright contradiction of a multitude of rabbinic authorities. From this vast body of literature, he could freely pluck individual decisions on ritual practice, fiscal obligation and so on, and reassemble these salvaged fragments into a seemingly intact, polished, and authoritative legal code. At the same time, the very aesthetics of this exercise dictated that the Rema silently discard the exegetical contexts of authorship and authority in which those decisions had been embedded. In a generous apology for the editorial violence of Renaissance textual criticism, Richardson suggests that

> If we bear these [aesthetic] principles in mind, it becomes easier to see how Renaissance editors could adopt methods which nowadays may seem strangely unsympathetic to the original aspect of their texts. In the Cinquecento, it was considered legitimate and praiseworthy for editors to use their own skills in order to give an improved representation of the original, in the same way as restorers used their techniques to make good the damage inflicted by time, and just as painters chose only the best features offered by nature, preferring, if necessary, *pulchritudo* to *similitudo*. Where the transmission of a text had introduced real imperfections, such as incomplete verses, these were to be silently restored so that the reader was not presented with something fragmentary. Many faults, of course, existed only in the eye of the beholder, but they were removed nevertheless, even if the author was Petrarch or Boccaccio. When an editor had a number of sources for a text, none of which were judged perfect, the best method seemed to be that of Zeuxis: to select and combine the best parts from each. (186)

In his description of "silent restoration," Richardson lays bare the concealing aesthetics of Renaissance literary renovation, which took place behind an opaque institutional and textual veil, hidden from readerly perception. In light of the Ashkenazic tradition of textual "transparency" in

exegetical transmission, the Rema's cultivated opacity can be simultaneously read as a sin of omission whereby he concealed and thus implicitly denied his editorial intervention. In his polemic, R. Hayyim does not take issue with any particular legal decision(s) the Rema transmitted in his halachic digests, nor with the interpretive means by which he arrived at them. He was in fact arguing that the transmission of halachah demands a particular kind of textual "openness" (to use Bruns' metaphor), and that codification itself – the elision of multiple and conflicting narratives of legal decision-making in favor of "closed" dicta – destroyed this. The Rema's implicit editorial policy in the *Mappah* and *Torat ha-Hatat*, by contrast, evinced that "painterly" attitude toward textual restoration typical of the empowered Renaissance editor, especially those preparing new editions of the pagan classics and vernacular poetry. Such a textual steward aspired to the new, Italian sense of "corretto" which "was [from the 1540s onward] openly interpreted as 'corrected (according to current ideals)' rather than 'correct, authentic'" (184). The same humanist preoccupation with a lucid, accessible, and 'perfected' text, editorially curated and selectively is also discernible in Caro and the Rema's construction of a interpretively selective but purportedly authoritative legal code. Such a highly selective and aesthetically-minded style of literary transmission posed a fundamental threat to the preservation of halachic flexibility, the very essence of Jewish legal decision-making as R. Hayyim understood it.

And R. Hayyim was not alone: Isserles' dramatic editorial departure was not received positively by many leading Ashkenazic authorities, as Moshe Halbertal has shown.[78] While the same argument had been leveled by Polish rabbis at Caro's *Shulhan Arukh* as well, the appearance of similar strategies unapologetically employed with full force by an Ashkenazic halachist like Isserles brought the struggle for interpretive authority home. Where Ashkenazic rabbis had already been striving to curtail the intellectual and textual influence of Italian Hebrew books, the arrival of Prostitz and Boehm represented the importation not only of Italian type and print apparatus but also of Italian editorial attitudes. In Reiner's words:

> The authority of the traditional library was severely shaken by its exposure to the foreign literature that began to come off the Italian printing-presses in the late fifteenth century and streamed steadily into the Ashkenazi and Polish yeshivot. Ashkenazi society was now able to read Sefardi biblical and talmudic exegesis, halachic literature, philosophy and kabbalah. (93)

And it was, in fact, exactly these genres, the mainstays of Boehm's Italian print career, which the Prostitz press set about producing locally in Cracow.

Despite Reiner's emphasis above, Sephardic literature was only part of the literary cargo Boehm and Prostitz imported from Italy. Indeed, their preference seems to have been not specifically for the literature of the Sephardic Diaspora, but rather for the works with which they were already familiar from their tenure in Italy. During the first several decades in Poland, the

78 See M. Halbertal, *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997. This account of the fraught transition of Ashkenazic legal literature "from a flexible canon to a fixed code" (72-81) discusses the critiques leveled at the Shulhan by students of R. Shalom Shachne (d. 1558), Hayyim b. Bezalel among them. (That the Rema was Shachne's son-in-law further complicates this picture.)

early period when both Isaac b. Aaron and Boehm were still living, the partners fed their press often by reprinting those works with which Boehm was most familiar, such as *Derekh Emunah,*[79] *Imrei Noam,*[80] *Yalkut Shimoni,*[81] *Amudei Golah,*[82] and *Sefer ha-Yashar;*[83] to name only five.[84] I would stress, however, that it was not simply convenience or familiarity which motivated the Prostitz reprints of Boehm's Italian oeuvre. While it was doubtless easier to reissue copies of already printed works than to set a book for the first time from manuscript, it was more likely that Prostitz and Boehm were loath to waste the increased commercial value of those Italian works, which had already undergone first-rate correction and editing. The business plan of the press seems to have relied upon a dual production model: reprinting Italian editions of the essential Hebrew library and issuing first editions by local star authors whose intellectual stature and experimental or controversial attitudes would provide free publicity for the Prostitz house.[85] The value added by expert editorial renovation in early modern Italian print has already been thoroughly documented,[86] and in this light, the early decision of the Prostitz press to take on the textually radical, editorially ambitious Isserles as one of their most prominent authors reinforces the notion that the Italian "culture of correction" was taking root in Ashkenazic soil.

VI. *Shmuel Bukh k*'s antecedents in manuscript and print: narrative departure from the tanakh

It seems to be in just this Italian connection that the press began printing the Old Yiddish biblical epics, *Shmuel Bukh* (1578, 1593) and *Melokhim Bukh* (1583), which are antedated by Italian editions of the 1560s.[87] To what extent were the textual practices and literary aesthetics of

79 Meir ben Ezekiel ibn Gabbai, *Derekh Emunah.* Constantinople, 1560; ibid. ———. Ed. Samuel Boehm. Padua: Lorenzo Pasquato, 1562; ibid. ———. Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1577.

80 Jacob di Illescas, *Imrei No'Am.* Constantinople: 1540; ibid. ———. Ed. David Norlingen. Cremona: Vincenzo Conti, 1565; ibid. ———. Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1598.

81 Simeon of Frankfort. *Yalkut Shimoni.* Ed. Meir Printz, Venice: Alvise Bragadin, 1566; ibid. ———. Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1595; ibid. ———. Vol. II Salonika, 1521; ibid. ———. Vol. I Salonika, 1526.

82 Isaac ben Joseph of Corbeil. *Amudei Golah (Sefer Mitsvot Katan).* Constantiople: [1510]; ibid. ———. Eds. Samuel Boehm, and Vittorio Eliano, Cremona: Vincenzo Conti, 1556; ibid. ———. Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1596.

83 Constantinople, [1515]; Venice, 1544; Cracow, 1586.

84 This pattern of publication may be yet further expanded to the include the antecedents to the Italian editions with which Prostitz and Boehm were familiar. In general, and certainly in the case of each of these works (n. 43-47), the Italian editions of the 1560s were the direct descendants of earlier Turkish printings, usually imported from either Salonika or Constantinople.

85 This tactic was made all the more lucrative by the support of local rabbis who in 1590 worked to legally discourage the importation of Italian works that had already been printed by the Prostitz press. Polish rabbis who published their works in Italy, rather than through the Prostitz press, were subjected to sales-delays once the books arrived in Poland. This served to both legitimate the press's strategy and to further incentivize it. (See 'Prostitz Family' in the *YIVO Encyclopedia*.)

86 See Grafton's *Culture of Correction* (2012) and Richardson's *Print Culture in Renaissance Italy* (1994).

87 See Falk's account of the transmission histories of both works (pp. 14-30). It seems to have been the popularity of *Shmuel Bukh* and *Melokhim Bukh* which later led the press to print two further epics: *Doniel Bukh.* Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1588 (based on Basel, 1557) and *Sefer Yehoyshue.* Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1588. In this period, the press was also printing Yiddish translations of the *Kethuvim*, such as Proverbs (1582), Psalms (*Sefer Tehilim*. Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1586), and prose retellings of Judith and Susannah (*Shoshanah Ve-Yehudit.* Trans. Shalom ben Abraham. Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1571), and of the *Megillot*, such as Esther (*Megilas Esther.* Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1589) and Song of Songs (*Sefer Shir ha-Shirim.* Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1579). As Turniansky intimated above, it seems to have been

Italian humanist editorship applicable to vernacular biblical literature written for Ashkenazic audiences? In the previous section, I discussed the possibility that the Prostitz press was hospitable to Caro's *Shulhan* and Isserles' *Mappah* precisely because Boehm and Prostitz had a background in Italian Renaissance textual aesthetics which inclined them to look sympathetically on an ambitious project of legal codification. In reprinting the *Shmuel Bukh,* however, they were turning their attention not only to a different (vernacular!) language, but also to an entirely different literary genre. As far as contemporary evidence is available to us, the Yiddish biblical epic faced nowhere near the degree of the scrutiny or the controversy that rabbinic works like the *Shulhan* aroused. In fact, virtually nothing has survived of *Shmuel Bukh's* reception, whether by popular audiences or rabbinic authorities. We can only assume, though I think it is reasonable to do so, that early modern rabbinic exegesis in Hebrew and biblical epic in Yiddish were held to substantially different textual standards. In some respects, however, it seems probable that a vernacular epic would have been far more susceptible than rabbinic exegesis to the practices and preferences of Italian Renaissance editing. As the scholarship of Richardson and D'Amico illustrates, the core values of Renaissance humanist textual renovation were forged in no small measure through the editing and printing of the classical Greek and Latin genres, epic among them. In some sense the secular nature of this literature may have even encouraged the development of a specifically humanist textuality precisely because it did not raise thorny questions about the doctrinal authority and textual stability of Scripture. *Shmuel Bukh,* a text which straddles the boundary between secular belles-lettres and biblical exegesis, may have been the closest Jewish editors like Prostitz and Boehm would come to the kind of editing practiced by their non-Jewish colleagues on the epics Homer and Virgil. Humanist editing of the epic aside, it is clear that the Prostitz editions of *Shmuel Bukh* bear the signs of thorough and attentive textual renovation. A detailed, textological examination of editorial intervention in the first Prostitz edition of *Shmuel Bukh*, *k*, will disclose the affinity between humanist textual criticism and the practices of 'correction' employed by Ashkenazic print professionals like Prostitz and Boehm.

Before we discuss *k* any further, we should establish an intertextual baseline upon which to judge the degree of its—and by proxy, *m*'s—departure from its predecessors in print and manuscript. By looking at a dramatic instance of narrative departure in the editio princeps, *A*, we will be better able to reflect on the difference between authorial departure from biblical and midrashic antecedents and that initiated by the editors of later *Shmuel Bukh* editions.[88] While *Shmuel Bukh* does indeed evidence what I would generally designate a conservative relationship to its source materials, from its adherence to the Tanakhic original to its dependence on the glosses of Rashi and contemporary midrashic compilations like *Midrash Shmuel* (Constantinople, 1517), there are, scattered throughout the manuscript and print editions, surprising instances of deviation from one or all of these anterior texts. An unnamed character from the biblical account may be identified, following prior midrashic interpretations, with a much more prominent figure, contrary to the Tanakhic narrative which unequivocally

Prostitz's intention "to publish the whole Bible in Judæo-German in order that 'women and children might be able to read without the help of a teacher.'"

88 A note on the textual evidence for what follows: I have relied for all citations on the editio princeps. Nevertheless, examination of the manuscripts *P* and *H* has revealed that the omissions and departures from the biblical text noted here in *A* also appear in both manuscripts. Following Falk, who argues that *A* derives from a manuscript tradition distinct from *P-H*, we may take this as evidence that these narrative departures date yet further back, to the source—even *Urtext*?—from which all three ultimately derive.

distinguishes them.[89] Yet this type of exegetical operation is not always employed. At times, *Shmuel Bukh* rejects inherited interpretation as well, and simply omits a character that seems unnecessary or uninteresting.[90] One could speculate that the first author-adaptor of *Shmuel Bukh* was guided in his work by literary and aesthetic principles which on occasion took precedence over fidelity to either biblical source material or rabbinic interpretation. And indeed, scholarly consensus describes this author as an extremely erudite and gifted poet, though little has been made of his tendency to liberty and departure from both rabbinic and biblical source materials.[91] In order to better appreciate the difference between the textual instability introduced in the Prostitz edition and the use of poetic license in iterations of *Shmuel Bukh* prior to 1560, we must develop a sense of the narrative freedom and intertextual tastes of those earlier adaptors.

Narrative Comparisons: I Samuel

One passage in *Shmuel Bukh* that piquantly typifies this inclination to narrative departure describes the prophecy of the fall of the house of Eli the High Priest and the initiation of the young Samuel as prophet. This account differs from the biblical narrative in several ways: first, it deletes a significant actor in this dramatic arc, a "man of God" [איש אלהים] who first prophesies the fall of Eli and his descendants from divine favor; second, it reassigns the most potent rhetorical devices of his speech to the prophecy that God makes to Samuel; and finally, the narrative progression of the larger dramatic arc is reorganized to spotlight Samuel as the episode's central actor, and simultaneously minimizing the role played by Eli and his sons.

In I Samuel, the biblical author goes to great lengths to construct a narrative that demonstrates Samuel's virtue, wisdom, and suitability for his role, in order to sharply contrast it with the moral corruption and ritual violations of Eli's two sons, Phinehas and Hophni. Here is the biblical account in its entirety:

I Sam. 2-3[92]

יאוַיֵּלֶךְ אֶלְקָנָה הָרָמָתָה, עַל-בֵּיתוֹ; וְהַנַּעַר, הָיָה מְשָׁרֵת אֶת-יְהוָה, אֶת-פְּנֵי, עֵלִי הַכֹּהֵן.
יבוּבְנֵי עֵלִי, בְּנֵי בְלִיָּעַל: לֹא יָדְעוּ, אֶת-יְהוָה.
יגוּמִשְׁפַּט הַכֹּהֲנִים, אֶת-הָעָם--כָּל-אִישׁ זֹבֵחַ זֶבַח, וּבָא נַעַר הַכֹּהֵן כִּבְשֵׁל הַבָּשָׂר, וְהַמַּזְלֵג שְׁלֹשׁ הַשִּׁנַּיִם, בְּיָדוֹ.

יווְהִכָּה בַכִּיּוֹר אוֹ בַדּוּד, אוֹ בַקַּלַּחַת אוֹ בַפָּרוּר--כֹּל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲלֶה הַמַּזְלֵג, יִקַּח הַכֹּהֵן בּוֹ; כָּכָה יַעֲשׂוּ לְכָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל, הַבָּאִים שָׁם בְּשִׁלֹה.

[11]And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest. [12]Now the sons of Eli were base men; they knew not the LORD. [13]And the custom of the priests with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand; [14]and he struck it

89 Neither were these practices the exclusive purview of Jewish exegetes. Use of *amplificatio* is equally evident in the medieval and early modern adaptation of biblical and classical literature in Latin and the European vernaculars.

90 I will look at a striking example of this practice below, in which the man of God [איש אלהים] of I Samuel 2:27 vanishes from *Shmuel Bukh* altogether.

91 See, for example, Weinreich, *Bilder*, 91-93; Baumgarten, *Introduction*, 143-149; Falk, v. 1, 1-3, 10-13.

92 All English translations of the biblical text provided here derive from the 1917 Tanakh of the Jewish Publication Society.

into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the flesh-hook brought up the priest took therewith. So they did unto all the Israelites that came thither in Shiloh. [15]Yea, before the fat was made to smoke, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed: 'Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.' [16]And if the man said unto him: 'Let the fat be made to smoke first of all, and then take as much as thy soul desireth'; then he would say: 'Nay, but thou shalt give it me now; and if not, I will take it by force.' [17]And the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD; for the men dealt contemptuously with the offering of the LORD. [18]But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. [19]Moreover his mother made him a little robe, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. [20]And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say: 'The LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which was lent to the LORD.' And they would go unto their own home. [21]So the LORD remembered Hannah, and she conceived, and bore three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD. [22]Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons did unto all Israel, and how that they lay with the women that did service at the door of the tent of meeting. [23]And he said unto them: 'Why do ye such things? for I hear evil reports concerning you from all this people. [24]Nay, my sons; for it is no good report which I hear the LORD'S people do spread abroad. [25]If one man sin against another, God shall judge him; but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall

טוגַּם, בְּטֶרֶם יַקְטִרוּן אֶת-הַחֵלֶב, וּבָא נַעַר הַכֹּהֵן וְאָמַר לָאִישׁ הַזֹּבֵחַ, תְּנָה בָשָׂר לִצְלוֹת לַכֹּהֵן; וְלֹא-יִקַּח מִמְּךָ בָּשָׂר מְבֻשָּׁל, כִּי אִם-חָי.

טווַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הָאִישׁ, קַטֵּר יַקְטִירוּן כַּיּוֹם הַחֵלֶב, וְקַח-לְךָ, כַּאֲשֶׁר תְּאַוֶּה נַפְשֶׁךָ; וְאָמַר לוֹ, כִּי עַתָּה תִתֵּן--וְאִם-לֹא, לָקַחְתִּי בְחָזְקָה.

יזוַתְּהִי חַטַּאת הַנְּעָרִים גְּדוֹלָה מְאֹד, אֶת-פְּנֵי יְהוָה: כִּי נִאֲצוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים, אֵת מִנְחַת יְהוָה.

יחוּשְׁמוּאֵל, מְשָׁרֵת אֶת-פְּנֵי יְהוָה: נַעַר, חָגוּר אֵפוֹד בָּד.

יטוּמְעִיל קָטֹן תַּעֲשֶׂה-לּוֹ אִמּוֹ, וְהַעֲלְתָה לּוֹ מִיָּמִים יָמִימָה--בַּעֲלוֹתָהּ, אֶת-אִישָׁהּ, לִזְבֹּחַ, אֶת-זֶבַח הַיָּמִים.

כוּבֵרַךְ עֵלִי אֶת-אֶלְקָנָה וְאֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ, וְאָמַר יָשֵׂם יְהוָה לְךָ זֶרַע מִן-הָאִשָּׁה הַזֹּאת, תַּחַת הַשְּׁאֵלָה, אֲשֶׁר שָׁאַל לַיהוָה; וְהָלְכוּ, לִמְקוֹמוֹ.

כאכִּי-פָקַד יְהוָה אֶת-חַנָּה, וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד שְׁלֹשָׁה-בָנִים וּשְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת; וַיִּגְדַּל הַנַּעַר שְׁמוּאֵל, עִם-יְהוָה.

כבוְעֵלִי, זָקֵן מְאֹד; וְשָׁמַע, אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּן בָּנָיו לְכָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-יִשְׁכְּבוּן אֶת-הַנָּשִׁים, הַצֹּבְאוֹת פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד.

כגוַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם, לָמָּה תַעֲשׂוּן כַּדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי שֹׁמֵעַ אֶת-דִּבְרֵיכֶם רָעִים, מֵאֵת כָּל-הָעָם אֵלֶּה.

כדאַל, בָּנָי: כִּי לוֹא-טוֹבָה הַשְּׁמֻעָה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי שֹׁמֵעַ, מַעֲבִרִים עַם-יְהוָה.כהאִם-יֶחֱטָא אִישׁ לְאִישׁ, וּפִלְלוֹ אֱלֹהִים, וְאִם לַיהוָה יֶחֱטָא-אִישׁ, מִי יִתְפַּלֶּל-לוֹ; וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ לְקוֹל אֲבִיהֶם, כִּי-חָפֵץ יְהוָה לַהֲמִיתָם.

כווְהַנַּעַר שְׁמוּאֵל, הֹלֵךְ וְגָדֵל וְטוֹב: גַּם, עִם-יְהוָה, וְגַם, עִם-אֲנָשִׁים.

כה וַיָּבֹא אִישׁ-אֱלֹהִים, אֶל-עֵלִי; וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו, כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה,
הֲנֵגְלֹה נִגְלֵיתִי אֶל-בֵּית אָבִיךָ, בִּהְיוֹתָם בְּמִצְרַיִם לְבֵית פַּרְעֹה.

כח וּבָחַר אֹתוֹ מִכָּל-שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִי, לְכֹהֵן, לַעֲלוֹת עַל-מִזְבְּחִי
לְהַקְטִיר קְטֹרֶת לָשֵׂאת אֵפוֹד, לְפָנָי; וָאֶתְּנָה לְבֵית אָבִיךָ, אֵת-
כָּל-אִשֵּׁי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

כט לָמָּה תִבְעֲטוּ, בִּזְבְחִי וּבְמִנְחָתִי, אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי, מָעוֹן; וַתְּכַבֵּד אֶת-
בָּנֶיךָ, מִמֶּנִּי, לְהַבְרִיאֲכֶם מֵרֵאשִׁית כָּל-מִנְחַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְעַמִּי.

ל לָכֵן, נְאֻם-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, אָמוֹר אָמַרְתִּי, בֵּיתְךָ וּבֵית אָבִיךָ
יִתְהַלְּכוּ לְפָנַי עַד-עוֹלָם; וְעַתָּה נְאֻם-יְהוָה חָלִילָה לִּי, כִּי-מְכַבְּדַי
אֲכַבֵּד וּבֹזַי יֵקָלּוּ.

לא הִנֵּה, יָמִים בָּאִים, וְגָדַעְתִּי אֶת-זְרֹעֲךָ, וְאֶת-זְרֹעַ בֵּית אָבִיךָ--
מִהְיוֹת זָקֵן, בְּבֵיתֶךָ.

לב וְהִבַּטְתָּ צַר מָעוֹן, בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-יֵיטִיב אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל; וְלֹא-יִהְיֶה זָקֵן
בְּבֵיתֶךָ, כָּל-הַיָּמִים.

לג וְאִישׁ, לֹא-אַכְרִית לְךָ מֵעִם מִזְבְּחִי, לְכַלּוֹת אֶת-עֵינֶיךָ, וְלַאֲדִיב
אֶת-נַפְשֶׁךָ; וְכָל-מַרְבִּית בֵּיתְךָ, יָמוּתוּ אֲנָשִׁים.

לד וְזֶה-לְּךָ הָאוֹת, אֲשֶׁר יָבֹא אֶל-שְׁנֵי בָנֶיךָ--אֶל-חָפְנִי, וּפִינְחָס:
בְּיוֹם אֶחָד, יָמוּתוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם.

לה וַהֲקִימוֹתִי לִי כֹּהֵן נֶאֱמָן, כַּאֲשֶׁר בִּלְבָבִי וּבְנַפְשִׁי יַעֲשֶׂה; וּבָנִיתִי
לוֹ בֵּית נֶאֱמָן, וְהִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי-מְשִׁיחִי כָּל-הַיָּמִים.

לו וְהָיָה, כָּל-הַנּוֹתָר בְּבֵיתֶךָ, יָבוֹא לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לוֹ, לַאֲגוֹרַת כֶּסֶף
וְכִכַּר-לָחֶם; וְאָמַר, סְפָחֵנִי נָא אֶל-אַחַת הַכְּהֻנּוֹת--לֶאֱכֹל פַּת-
לָחֶם.

entreat for him?' But they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them. [26]And the child Samuel grew on, and increased in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.
[27]And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him: 'Thus saith the LORD: Did I reveal Myself unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in bondage to Pharaoh's house? [28]And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to go up unto Mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before Me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire? [29]Wherefore kick ye at My sacrifice and at Mine offering, which I have commanded in My habitation; and honourest thy sons above Me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel My people? [30]Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, saith: I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before Me for ever; but now the LORD saith: Be it far from Me: for them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. [31]Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thy house. [32]And thou shalt behold a rival in My habitation, in all the good which shall be done to Israel; and there shall not be an old man in thy house for ever. [33]Yet will I not cut off every man of thine from Mine altar, to make thine eyes to fail, and thy heart to languish; and all the increase of thy house shall die young men. [34]And this shall be the sign unto thee, that which shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they

shall die both of them. 35And I will raise Me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in My heart and in My mind; and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before Mine anointed for ever. 36And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thy house shall come and bow down to him for a piece of silver and a loaf of bread, and shall say: Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a morsel of bread.'

יוְהַנַּעַר שְׁמוּאֵל מְשָׁרֵת אֶת-יְהוָה, לִפְנֵי עֵלִי; וּדְבַר-יְהוָה, הָיָה יָקָר בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם--אֵין חָזוֹן, נִפְרָץ.

1And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision. 2And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place—now his eyes had begun to wax dim, that he could not see—3and the lamp of God was not yet gone out, and Samuel was laid down to sleep in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was,

בוַיְהִי בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, וְעֵלִי שֹׁכֵב בִּמְקוֹמוֹ; וְעֵינָו הֵחֵלּוּ כֵהוֹת, לֹא יוּכַל לִרְאוֹת.

גוְנֵר אֱלֹהִים טֶרֶם יִכְבֶּה, וּשְׁמוּאֵל שֹׁכֵב, בְּהֵיכַל יְהוָה, אֲשֶׁר-שָׁם אֲרוֹן אֱלֹהִים.

4that the LORD called Samuel; and he said: 'Here am I.' 5And he ran unto Eli, and said: 'Here am I; for thou didst call me.' And he said: 'I called not; lie down again.' And he went and lay down. 6And the LORD called yet again Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said: 'Here am I; for thou didst call me.' And he answered: 'I called not, my son; lie down again.' 7Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. 8And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said: 'Here am I; for thou didst call me.' And Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the child.

דוַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה אֶל-שְׁמוּאֵל, וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּנִי.
הוַיָּרָץ אֶל-עֵלִי, וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּנִי כִּי-קָרָאתָ לִי, וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא-קָרָאתִי, שׁוּב שְׁכָב; וַיֵּלֶךְ, וַיִּשְׁכָּב.
וַיֹּסֶף יְהוָה, קְרֹא עוֹד שְׁמוּאֵל, וַיָּקָם שְׁמוּאֵל וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל-עֵלִי, וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּנִי כִּי קָרָאתָ לִי; וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא-קָרָאתִי בְנִי, שׁוּב שְׁכָב.

זוּשְׁמוּאֵל, טֶרֶם יָדַע אֶת-יְהוָה; וְטֶרֶם יִגָּלֶה אֵלָיו, דְּבַר-יְהוָה.

חוַיֹּסֶף יְהוָה קְרֹא-שְׁמוּאֵל, בַּשְּׁלִישִׁת, וַיָּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל-עֵלִי, וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּנִי כִּי קָרָאתָ לִי; וַיָּבֶן עֵלִי, כִּי יְהוָה קֹרֵא לַנָּעַר.

טוַיֹּאמֶר עֵלִי לִשְׁמוּאֵל, לֵךְ שְׁכָב, וְהָיָה אִם-יִקְרָא אֵלֶיךָ, וְאָמַרְתָּ דַּבֵּר יְהוָה כִּי שֹׁמֵעַ עַבְדֶּךָ; וַיֵּלֶךְ שְׁמוּאֵל, וַיִּשְׁכַּב בִּמְקוֹמוֹ.

יוַיָּבֹא יְהוָה וַיִּתְיַצַּב, וַיִּקְרָא כְּפַעַם-בְּפַעַם שְׁמוּאֵל שְׁמוּאֵל; וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל דַּבֵּר, כִּי שֹׁמֵעַ עַבְדֶּךָ.

יאוַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-שְׁמוּאֵל, הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי עֹשֶׂה דָבָר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: אֲשֶׁר, כָּל-שֹׁמְעוֹ--תְּצַלֶּינָה, שְׁתֵּי אָזְנָיו.
יבבַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אָקִים אֶל-עֵלִי, אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ--הָחֵל, וְכַלֵּה.

יגוְהִגַּדְתִּי לוֹ, כִּי-שֹׁפֵט אֲנִי אֶת-בֵּיתוֹ עַד-עוֹלָם--בַּעֲוֹן אֲשֶׁר-יָדַע, כִּי-מְקַלְלִים לָהֶם בָּנָיו, וְלֹא כִהָה, בָּם.

9Therefore Eli said unto Samuel: 'Go, lie down; and it shall be, if thou be called, that thou shalt say: Speak, LORD; for Thy servant heareth.' So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

יוּלְכֵן נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי, לְבֵית עֵלִי: אִם-יִתְכַּפֵּר עֲוֹן בֵּית-עֵלִי, בְּזֶבַח וּבְמִנְחָה--עַד-עוֹלָם.

טוַיִּשְׁכַּב שְׁמוּאֵל עַד-הַבֹּקֶר, וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת-דַּלְתוֹת בֵּית-יְהוָה; וּשְׁמוּאֵל יָרֵא, מֵהַגִּיד אֶת-הַמַּרְאָה אֶל-עֵלִי.

טוַיִּקְרָא עֵלִי אֶת-שְׁמוּאֵל, וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל בְּנִי; וַיֹּאמֶר, הִנֵּנִי.
יזוַיֹּאמֶר, מָה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֵלֶיךָ--אַל-נָא תְכַחֵד, מִמֶּנִּי: כֹּה יַעֲשֶׂה-לְךָ אֱלֹהִים, וְכֹה יוֹסִיף, אִם-תְּכַחֵד מִמֶּנִּי דָּבָר, מִכָּל-הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר אֵלֶיךָ.

יחוַיַּגֶּד-לוֹ שְׁמוּאֵל אֶת-כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים, וְלֹא כִחֵד מִמֶּנּוּ; וַיֹּאמֶר--יְהוָה הוּא, הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינָו יַעֲשֶׂה.

[10]And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times: 'Samuel, Samuel.' Then Samuel said: 'Speak; for Thy servant heareth.' [11]And the LORD said to Samuel: 'Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. [12]In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from the beginning even unto the end. [13]For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity, in that he knew that his sons did bring a curse upon themselves, and he rebuked them not. [14]And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated with sacrifice nor offering for ever.' [15]And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to tell Eli the vision. [16]Then Eli called Samuel, and said: 'Samuel, my son.' And he said: 'Here am I.' [17]And he said: 'What is the thing that He hath spoken unto thee? I pray thee, hide it not from me, God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that He spoke unto thee.' [18]And Samuel told him all the words, and hid nothing from him. And he said: 'It is the LORD; let Him do what seemeth Him good.'

As diverse scholarly readings of this dramatic arc suggest,[93] the author establishes this contrast between Samuel and the Elides by means of an alternation of narrative units, the first describing Samuel's laudable development and the next the dissolute behavior of the sons. In the very first example, Samuel has been offered by his mother Hannah for service in the temple at Shiloh.[94]

93 For further commentary, see Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation With Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel.* New York: W.W. Norton, 1999; ibid. *The Art of Biblical Narrative.* Rev. & updated ed., New York: Basic Books, 2011; J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses.* Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993; P. Kyle McCarter, McCarter, P. Kyle. *1 Samuel.* Anchor Bible, v. 8. New York: Doubleday, 1980; Peter D. Miscall, *1 Samuel: A Literary Reading.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

94 Literally, Hannah “loans” her son for service in the Temple (I Sam. 1:28). This is a pun on Samuel's name which

There he served God, before the high priest Eli (2:11). The wicked sons, by contrast, "were base men, and knew not the Lord" (2:12). The opposition is diametric; where Samuel serves God, and by association also his high priest, Hophni and Phinehas do not even acknowledge God;[95] where Samuel serves before Eli, Eli's own sons, בני עלי, are nevertheless described as בני בליעל, an idiom whose use of the word בני suggests a sinister revision of their patronym. Literally, this term should be translated "sons of worthlessness," though it can range in meaning from "good for nothing" to "villain." The effect of the whole is to suggest the faithfulness and piety of Samuel, both in his relationship to God and to Eli, while simultaneously emphasizing the distance of Hophni and Phinehas from the father and God they are supposed to serve. As the narrative continues, the ritual transgressions of the brothers and their corruption of ritual practice is matched at every turn by Samuel's maturation into an exemplary cultic functionary, serving in the temple, clad in priestly garments (2:18).

While this alternation will not reach its climax until the scene of Samuel's prophetic initiation, it is given an early expression in the message delivered by the anonymous man of God, who visits Eli and announces the downfall of his house (2:27-36). In his prophecy, the man of God not only accuses and condemns Eli and his issue, but also conveys God's intention to "raise up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in my heart and my mind" (2:35). With this priestly replacement for Eli's dynasty already introduced, the scene of Samuel's prophetic initiation assumes tremendous proportions. By the time God speaks to him, he is already both the fulfillment of the prophecy against Eli's house and the replacement for Eli's sons. The series of juxtapositions compellingly foreshadows this ultimate resolution.

P. Kyle McCarter, among others, has pointed out that the Josianic historian, as the author of I Samuel has been termed in contemporary biblical source criticism, likely did not intend Samuel as the final fulfillment of this prophecy (89-93). Instead, the prophecy hearkens forward yet further to the definitive establishment of Jerusalem as the sole sanctioned location for cultic worship (the "sure house" mentioned in 2:35), and the election of Zadok as the sole High Priest. It must be said that it is apparent from the biblical narrative, even by so gross a measure as word-count, that Samuel's positive development is of small consequence when set against the abhorrent corruption of the Elides, and that Samuel's story (at least until his initiation) is but background to the story of the decline and fall of Eli's house. In this light, I would argue that the man of God's prophecy here serves a dual function. For the Josianic historian, it is first and

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runs through the first chapter. First, Hannah names her child Samuel [שְׁמוּאֵל] because she "asked him" [שְׁאִלְתִּיו] of the Lord (1:20). But when Hannah brings Samuel for service in the Temple as repayment for her answered prayer, she offers a secondary interpretation of his name, emphasizing that he is destined for priestly service (1:27-8): "For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath granted me my petition which I asked of Him; therefore I also have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he is lent to the LORD.' And he worshipped the LORD there" אֶל-הַנַּעַר הַזֶּה, הִתְפַּלָּלְתִּי; וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה לִי אֶת-שְׁאֵלָתִי, אֲשֶׁר שָׁאַלְתִּי מֵעִמּוֹ. וְגַם אָנֹכִי, הִשְׁאִלְתִּהוּ לַיהוָה, כָּל-הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר הָיָה, הוּא שָׁאוּל לַיהוָה; וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ שָׁם, לַיהוָה. In the first verse, Hannah reminds us of her pun on "Samuel" and the verb שא״ל by literally saying that God granted her "request" which she "requested" of him. In the next verse, however, she transfers this triliteral root into another verb paradigm, which shifts its meaning from "request" to "loan": "So I [in my turn], shall loan [הִשְׁאִלְתִּהוּ] him to the LORD, and he shall be loaned [שָׁאוּל] to the LORD for all his days." It can surely be no accident that the last of these is also the name of the first king of Israel, Saul, whom Samuel will personally anoint at God's bidding.

95 See McCarter on ידעו as "acknowledge" (pp. 78, 82).

foremost justification and praise of Zadok's ruling priestly dynasty, and only seconarily a foreshadowing device, propelling the narrative toward its inevitable resolution in the elevation of Samuel to rank of prophet and eventually high priest.[96]

Narrative Comparisons: Shmuel Bukh

For *Shmuel Bukh*, on the other hand, the young Samuel is at this stage the primary focus, a protagonist in the novelistic sense. In adapting the biblical material to the verse form and narrative style of the epic, *Shmuel Bukh* discards the alternating structure of the original in favor of a more linear and teleological organization:

A 49-66[97]

49 נון ווש דער כוהֵן גָדול בַּון רעבַטר עלטר גרוא
ער היש זיין קינדר גו״ט דינן אז ער הוט גיטן
דער איין היש חָפְנִי דער אנדר פִּנְחָס
זיא ווארן אלי בייד אין גו״טש דינסט גאר לאש

50 ווען מן ברוכַט איין קָרְבָן זוא ווארן זיא ביהענד דא
אונ׳ נאמן דאש ולייש אונ׳ בריטן עז רוא
אֵי מן דש קָרְבָן ברוכַט זוא העטן זיא עז בַּור דייט
זיא וואלטן עש ניט לושן ווש מן אין עש אוימדר זייט

51 דש ולייש אויש דעם קעשיל דיא ווייל עש נוך זוד
זיא נאמן עש מיט גיוואלט און אל יִשְׂרָאֵל רוט
זיא וואלטן ניט ווארטן ביז דש מן גו״ט יִתְבָּרַךְ הט גיאֵרט
אֵי עש ווש גיזוטן דא ווש דש ולייש בַּור צֵירט

52 נוך מער העטן זיא ביגאנגן דיא צוועז זוינדיגן קנאבן
ווען איין ורויא נאך אירר קינט בעט איר קָרְבָן וואלט האבן
זיא ווש צו טְבֵּילָה גאנגן אונ׳ וואלט היים הין גון
זוא זוימטן זיא איר איר קָרְבָן דאש זיא מושט לאנג שטון

96 At the same time, Hannah's pun in I Sam. 1:28 on Samuel and Saul strongly foreshadows the founding of the monarchy and Samuel's critical role therein. The man of God of I Sam. 2 thus prefigures Samuel's own eventual role as divine emissary who anoints the first king(s) of Israel. On an even larger scale, this transition between priestly lineages (Eli to Samuel) further intimates the possibility for change in royal dynasty (from Saul to David). All of this, of course, is overlaid with the irony that Samuel will come to suffer Eli's fate, his sons unprincipled and degenerate (I Sam. 8) and that David's own son will first commit fratricide and then betray him (2 Sam. 14), and that after David's death, Solomon will displace his brother Adonijah in the line of succession and ultimately execute him (1 Kings 1-2). Like the Patriarchal families of Genesis, the divine-right regimes of Israel, both priestly and kingly, are founded in the human messiness of moral failure and familial strife.

97 A brief comment on transcription: the transcribed texts are, to the best of this writer's ability, given here exactly as they are found in the printed editions. Because small surprises, which may in fact be errors, are to be found scattered frequently throughout each text, no attempt has been made to point them out them individually. Instead, the reader is invited to apply broadly the classic “sic erat scriptum” to the whole of the presented text.

53 אונ׳ דיא הויפשן ורויאן דיא קאמן הארט בַּון דאן
בַּון אין אוּן נְבָלוֹת שלופַן היים צו אירם מאן
דא ווארד דער כוהֵן גדול ויל בַּון אין גיזייט
ער שרטופַּט זיניא קינדר אונ׳ ווש אים בַּון הערצן לייט

54 דיא שטרוף ווש בַּור לורן אונ׳ האלף אן אין גאר קליין
דא צוירנט אונזר טרעשטר אויבר אל יִשְׂרָאֵל גימיין
אונ׳ ער וואלט אן אין רעבַּן איר גרוש מישטוש
דר נוך ניט אויבר לאנג קאם מענבַּר מאן אין נוט

55 שְׁמוּאֵל דער ויל יונגן אין דעם טעמפיל לאג
דאר אינן בראנן דער לוייבַּטר אז דער העליא טאג
שְׁמוּאֵל דער ויל ווערדיא לאג אונ׳ שליף
גו״ט בַּון דעם הימיל דעם קנאבן שְׁמוּאֵל ריף

56 דא מיינט דער קנאב שְׁמוּאֵל וויא אין זיין רַבִּי ריף
ער שטונד אויף גר ביהענדן ער צו זיינם רַבִּי ליף
ער איילט זוא באלד אונ׳ ליף זוא זער
ביז ער קם צו עֵלִי זיינם מיינשטר אונ׳ זיין הער

57 ער שפראך ליבר הער זאגט אן ווש וואלט איר מיין
גיא ווידר שלופַן דוא ליבש קינדליין
איך האב דיך ניט גירופַן לִיג דיך שלופַן ווידר
דא גינג דער קנאב שְׁמואל אונ׳ לִיגט זיך שלופַן נידר

58 אז זיך נון הט גילִיגט שְׁמואל דער גיזִיל
דא ריף אים גו״ט בַּון הימיל אבר שְׁמוּאֵל שְׁמוּאֵל
דער קנאב גאר בינהענדן אבר צו זיינם רַבִּי קם
אז ער דיא גו״טש שטימן צו דעם אנדרן מול בַּור נם

59 ער שפראך ליבר מיינשטר זאגט אן וואש וואלט איר מיין
איר האט מיך מער גירופַן וואש איר וואלט דאש זול זיין
דא מערקט דער כוהֵן גָּדול אַן דעש קינדש זאגן
דש אונדזר טרעבַּטיין רוֶיפט דעם יונגן קנאבן

60 ער שפראך ליבר זון דוא זולשט שלופַן גון
ווירשטו דיא גו״טש שטימן צום דריטן מול בַּור שטון
זוא שפריך גר ביהענדן ליבר העריא מיין
איך הויר אלזוא גערן דיא הייליגן ווארט דיין

61 אונ׳ דא זיך הט גילֵגט דר קנאב שְמואֵל נידר
דא ריף דיא גו״טש שטים צום דריטן מול ווידר
יא שפראך דער קנאב ביהענדן ליבר העריא מיין
ווש דוא הער גיביטשט דש זול אל מול זיין

62 דא שפראך אונזר הער גוט איך וויל דיר זאגן
חָפְנִי אונ׳ פִּנְחָס ווערדן צו טוט דר שלאגן
דר נוך וויל איך מיך רעכֵן אן אל יִשְרָאֵל גימיין
דר בֵון מוישן דר שרעקן בייד גרוש אונ׳ קליין

63 וועו עש ווערט הוירן דעם ווערט עש ווערדן לייט
אל עלי גיזינד דעם זייא בֵור וואר גיזייט
דאש איך בֵון דער כְּהוּנָה זיא בֵור שטושן הון
אום איין שטוק ברוט מוישן זיא בעטלן גון

64 אוימר אונ׳ אֵיוויקליכֵן אונטר עֵלִי גיזינדן
יונגיא לייט זולן שטערבן קיין אלטן זול מן וינדן
אונ׳ דא דער קנאב שמואֵל אין גרושן זורגן לאג
אונ׳ שטונד אויף מיט גרושן זורגן דא לוייכֵטט אים דער טאג

65 אונ׳ דא דער קנאב שְמואֵל טעט אויף דש טעמפיל טור
עֵלִי דער כוהֵן גדול ווארטט זיין דר בֵור
ער גיבוט אים מיט גיוואלטן דאש ער אים זולט זאגן
ווש גו״ט יתְּברך האט גישפרוכֵן דש טורשט ער אִם ניט בֵור זאגן

66 אונ׳ דא דער כוהֵן גָּדול בֵור נם דיא רֵיד זוא ויל
ער שפראך אונזר הער גו״ט מאג טון ווש ער וויל
דר נוך וואוכֵש שְמאֵל אונ׳ ווארד איין נָבִיא גאר
דש ווארדן אל יִשְרָאֵל אויבר אל גיוואר

The preceding narrative of Hannah and the dedication of Samuel, her first-born, for service in the Temple concludes with a verse (48) describing Hannah's happy return home, leaving the boy in Shiloh, where he studies until his learnedness rivals that of the high priest himself. In many senses, that verse serves to tie up the loose ends of the preceding narrative and to provide the reader with a reassuring epilogue. The next verse (49) marks the beginning of a new narrative unit, the story of the Elides and their fall. The temporal adverbial נון (literally, "now") begins this verse, signaling a shift in narrative focus from Samuel and Hannah to another contemporaneous family drama, that of Eli and his sons.

There follows a thorough description of the ritual corruption of the sons, linked explicitly to their avarice. When Eli finally intervenes, it is too late—God's anger is great and cannot be

assuaged. At this juncture in the biblical telling the Josianic historian introduces the man of God, linking the historical account to his own, Deuteronomistic religious and political context via prophetic utterance. In contrast, the adaptor of *Shmuel Bukh* omits that scene altogether, and we cut directly to Samuel's prophetic initiation. God calls out to him, and after some initial confusion and consultation with Eli, Samuel answers God and receives the divine message. In *Shmuel Bukh*'s version, the man of God's speech is interpolated with the divine message to Samuel so that Samuel becomes the sole recipient of divine favor and confidence. In fact, Eli literally cannot hear God's voice as it calls out to Samuel, and this "deafness" signals not only the transfer of Eli's priestly status to Samuel, but also marks the transition from religious authority based in dynastic cultic hierarchy to one founded on prophetic election. In the morning, Eli persuades Samuel to tell him the words God spoke to him the night before, and upon hearing God's condemnation of his house, Eli resigns himself, saying "Our Lord God may do as he will." Samuel's status as prophet is confirmed and becomes known all throughout Israel.

In his study of narrative art in the books of Samuel, J. P. Fokkelman has pointed out that "[T]he relation between the sequences devoted to Eli/the Elides is not forceful enough to be called a real plot", that "it is conceptual in nature, rather" (114). He justifies this claim by pointing out that none of the actors (neither Eli, his sons, Samuel nor God) can rightly be called the single hero who unifies the progression from one narrative unit to the next. Fokkelman astutely points out that a more linear, unified plot is simply not pertinent, given the aims of the narrator, who is "bent on denouncing the Elides: via evidence, paternal criticism, and God's curse" (114), to provide scriptural justification for his religious and political concerns, namely the justification of the Zadokic dynasty. In the Josianic historian's eagerness to disqualify the Elianic priesthood, he avails himself only of those literary devices that will further his purpose, namely foreshadowing the demise of Eli's house by means of alternating references to Samuel's rising star.

In contrast, the author of *Shmuel Bukh,* who naturally does not share the contemporary critic's perspective on the Josianic historian and his project, disregards those portions of the biblical text which focus on the political drama of the priesthood to the exclusion of Samuel's own rise to power. In interpolating the man of God's message into God's direct speech to Samuel, he discards any reference to the בית נאמן or the faithful servant whom he will raise up. Furthermore, he neglects even the preamble in which the man of God describes the priestly privilege and special relationship with God the house of Eli had historically enjoyed. In essence, he prunes away all the moral outrage at the corruption of the priesthood, outrage which served the Josianic historian as a vivid negative contrast with the righteous service of the present Zadokic priests. By omitting the man of God and making Samuel the recipient of the divine word, the *Shmuel Bukh* shifts the narrative spotlight from priestly dynastic politics to the personal story of Samuel's ascent and its focus on of an intimate, individual prophetic relationship with God as the foundation of religious authority.[98] Because of these interventions, a

98 The biblical books of Samuel (and indeed the other "historical books" such as Kings and Chronicles) are themselves interesting in this regard. Situated in the Masoretic text between the so-called "five books of Moses" and the books of the Former Prophets, they act as a bridge between the providential, national narrative-arc of the Torah and the individual prophetic voices that come to predominate in the books of Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. This gradual transition from national narrative to prophetic utterance is already visible here, in the election of the individual Samuel over the family dynasty of Eli.

linear plot is elaborated: the conflict between Eli and his sons is introduced, developed, and finally resolved by divine intervention and the appointment of a new religious leader. Furthermore, a frame narrative has been constructed to bracket the misdeeds of the Elides: the promise made by the growing wisdom of young Samuel at Shiloh is fulfilled in his special prophetic election by God. In this light, the reader can understand only one figure to be the fitting replacement for Eli's dynasty: the young Samuel, favored by God and made prophet.

Poetic License and Rabbinic Precedent

The above shift in narrative attention, however, does not necessarily indicate that the *Shmuel Bukh* adaptor is departing from received scriptural interpretation in any substantial sense. Elsewhere, such deviations from the biblical narrative can be traced directly to midrashim that do not selectively edit, but rather elaborate upon or seek to clarify the significance of characters, events, and rhetoric already evident in the biblical sources. As David Stern puts it in his study of midrash and literary theory,[99]

> [T]he Rabbis always undertake their study of the Bible with the assumption that every word in Scripture is both necessary and significant. [...] The exegete's task therefore does not involve disclosing a less obvious, hidden, or revisionist meaning for the [entire] verse; rather, it consists of unpacking the significance of each separate simile or phrase in the verse. (20)

In this sense, one can say that midrash attempts to account for the presence of each individual phrase of Scripture, to describe and enumerate the multitude of interconnections and hermeneutic possibilities latent in the biblical text. In a similar vein, Daniel Boyarin's work on rabbinic intertextuality highlights the way in which "[t]he text of the Torah is gapped and dialogical, and into the gaps the [midrashic] reader slips, interpreting and completing the text in accordance with the codes of his or her culture" (14).[100] Boyarin goes on to suggest that, rather than an ahistorical appropriation of the biblical text, this kind of reading is better seen as the reflecting the hermeneutics implicit in the Tanakh itself: "The intertextual reading practice of the midrash is a development [...] of the intratextual interpretive strategies which the Bible itself manifests [...] Were I to attempt to define midrash at this point, it would perhaps be radical intertextual reading of the canon, in which potentially every part refers to and is interpretable by every other part" (15-16). Finally, Gerald Bruns has claimed that rabbinic midrash reads the Bible as "a self-glossing book" (626).[101] Common to all of these accounts is the notion that midrash is concerned with explicating that which is already implicit in the text itself, and that reading one part of the Bible through another is the fundamental means by which to bring the latent to the surface.

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99 D. Stern, *Midrash and Theory: Ancient Jewish Exegesis and Contemporary Literary Studies.* Rethinking Theory. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996.

100 D. Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

101 G. L. Bruns, "Midrash and Allegory: the Beginnings of Scriptural Interpretation." *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987. 625-46.

Nevertheless, there is reason to suspect that the adaptational operation performed upon the man of God from I Samuel 2 is of a different sort, since here a character's actions and role in the narrative are altogether eliminated and the narrative restructured to disguise the omission. This procedure is quite distinct from the midrashic practice of identifying a nameless character with a better-known figure.[102] Where the aim of midrash is to clarify the identity of the unnamed character, the purpose of *Shmuel Bukh*'s deletion is to excise the character and thereby strengthen and enrich Samuel's role as protagonist. This violates the primary assumption underlying midrashic praxis, namely that "every word of Scripture is both necessary and significant." From this perspective, such a complete excision of even a minor character represents an extreme departure from the chief goal of midrash.[103]

And yet, the purposefulness of the character deletion in *Shmuel Bukh* 55-65 is made all the more striking when one considers the exegetical alternatives available to the adaptor. If the adaptor was determined to replace the man of God with a more significant and therefore recognizable character, why did he not avail himself of one of the existing midrashim? *Midrash Shmuel*, for example, identifies the man of God as Samuel's own father, Elkanah (31, 225), a move which offers a paternal counterbalance to the lead role played by Hannah in I Sam. 1. In *Shmuel Bukh,* Elkanah is already well-known to the reader from the family drama which occupies approximately the first fifty strophes of the narrative, and would have effectively replaced an anonymous supporting character with a character of prior emotional significance to the narrative. Yet the adaptor rejects this option in favor of one much more radical and unprecedented when he deletes the man of God and his role in the narrative, opting instead to use his dramatic rhetorical flourishes as adornment for the originally plainer and more pedestrian message God delivers to Samuel. In so doing, the adaptor brings new literary assumptions into play, which at times supercede even those inherited from traditional Jewish modes of exegesis.

102For instance, one such intratextual method is used to clarify the identities of anonymous characters in biblical narrative, especially those who play a significant role. The events of I Samuel 4:12 are just such a case, in which an unnamed Benjaminite courier traverses the distance between the battle and Shiloh, in order to inform Eli that the Ark has been captured by the Philistines. In *Shmuel Bukh*, this courier is renamed Saul, identifying him as that other Benjaminite who will become the eventual founding monarch. Yet this conflation of characters is not the work of the *Shmuel Bukh* adaptor, but must be attributed instead to his exegetical forebears. *Midrash Shmuel*, for instance, identifies this messenger as Saul, taking its cue in turn from an array of even earlier commentators (42, 254). Such a widely known and oft-cited midrash could have provided rabbinic precedent, serving to sanction *Shmuel Bukh*'s narratively advantageous liberties.

103The question arises what kind of omission, if any, is evident in classical rabbinic midrash. While midrashim often retell portions of biblical narrative, they rarely do so at such length that this becomes an issue. More often in a midrashic compilation (whether classical or medieval), a particular midrash unfolds from a single biblical verse, takes its course, and upon concluding, 'returns' the reader to his place in the biblical account. This 'interstitial' quality means that the midrash, even when it is not exhaustive in its retelling, rarely seems to be deliberately excluding or omitting a component of the biblical text. Thus far, I have not encountered any single example of midrashic retelling that employs the omission of an entire character, as occurs in this portion of *Shmuel Bukh.* Nevertheless, the argument from absence is always questionable. Yet if this does indeed prove to be the case, it remains to be seen whether omissive practices of this kind do not in fact derive from European compositional practices like *amplificatio,* which operated according to quite different standards from the rabbinic hermeneutics of Late Antiquity.

VII. TEXTUAL CRITICISM AND THE BIBLICAL INTERTEXT IN *Shmuel Bukh k*

The exercise of literary freedom in the (re)production of *Shmuel Bukh* is made more complex and suggestive by the fact that the original adaptor was not the only mediator of this work moved to countermand the decisions of his predecessors. Later editors similarly intervened to significantly abridge, revise, and otherwise alter the text they had inherited. In some cases this meant recourse to a different rabbinic source, to further omission, or even to the addition of expository embellishment. Most significant, however, is that beginning with the Mantuan edition, *m* (c. 1562-64), the editorial inclination is not to wild variation or fanciful detour from the biblical source, but in fact to a yet more rigorous standard of biblical conservatism.[104] The Mantuan mediator between *A* and *k* (whether or not this was Samuel Boehm) in fact composed new lines of text in order to "correct" certain instances where *Shmuel Bukh* deviated from the biblical account. As in the description of humanist editing above or the work of the Rema on Caro's Shulhan, *Shmuel Bukh*'s later editor also worked to renovate the textual models he had received.

Shmuel Bukh was not a collection of conclusive legal decisions, nor was it merely the sum of its various editions and manuscripts. In its generic ambiguity, a hybrid of epic and exegesis, *Shmuel Bukh* was a collage of intertexts spanning centuries, from the Middle East to Western Europe: chivalric literature, biblical narrative, rabbinic and midrashic commentary, and the late textual reverberations of mouvance. Nevertheless, humanist criticism, with its reconceived notions of textual integrity and historicity, could be brought to bear on all of these in restoring the text of *Shmuel Bukh* to a more "perfect" state. Here I will argue that to bring the unruly clash of textual corruption and competing intertexts under his control, the *Shmuel Bukh* editor prioritized certain intertexts, exegetical strategies, and formal conventions over others. As we will see in *k'*s editorial operations, for instance, conformity with the biblical original takes priority over rabbinic precedent. By imposing his own priorities on *Shmuel Bukh'*s many intertexts, the aggressive editor simultaneously stamped the work with his hermeneutic orientation, revising it to suit his understanding of literary, and even exegetical, authority.

A careful study of the relationship between *A* and *k* will here prove instructive not only in describing the textual transformations undergone over the intervening three and a half decades, but more importantly in limning the humanist character of these editorial policies. The textual gap separating the Augsburg editio princeps *A* (1544) from the first Cracow edition *k* (1578) is a narrow one. Still, both *m* and *k*, despite being very closely related to one another, represent a marked departure from the editio princeps and manuscript tradition, though this deviation is not so great as to call into question their pedigree. Rather than suggesting the presence of a supplementary source, the alterations which appear in the Mantuan and Cracovian editions are of a distinctly editorial sort, having overwhelmingly to do with mechanical issues such as formatting and orthography. Thus Frakes writes in his summary description of the *Shmuel Bukh* corpus: “The texts of *pmkb* [Prague 1602, Mantua 1562-64, Cracow 1578 and 1593, Basel 1612]

104The textual apparatus prepared by Falk in the facsimile edition of *A* demonstrates a great affinity between *m* and *k*, though not an absolute identity. Only an exhaustive comparison of the two editions would suffice to determine their exact degree of similarity, one which I do not undertake here. (Such a comparison is naturally made all the more difficult given that no copy of *m* has been recently located.) It would be premature to apply to the latter *all* the theories relevant to the former; nevertheless, in this selective reading of *k*'s “corrections” I have confirmed that the same operations were performed in *m*, according to Falk's apparatus.

also differ in myriad minimal ways from *A*; at the same time, only rarely do they offer substantive contributions to the construction of the text" (219), and while this is certainly an apt characterization, the later editions are given to bursts of small-scale revision, though they may at times follow their predecessor with great precision for dozens, if not hundreds, of lines. Still, alterations and omissions of entire stanzas, changes in word choice and syntax, and reshuffling of narrative sequences occur with some regularity. In fact, these myriad minimal differences accumulate with such speed that one may very soon begin to generalize from them, and to discern the lineaments of a biblically conservative, textually subtle revisionism, which may derive from the text-critical aesthetics of Italian humanist editing. Here, we will proceed from the smallest editorial manipulations to the more expansive, so that their shared purpose might become apparent when viewed in light of one another.

Practices of Revision

One of the most readily apparent sorts of revision to appear in *k* has to do with the ongoing project of "repairing" what the *k* editor saw as inconsistencies in the rhyming couplets of *A*.[105] Though *A* is generally very strict in its adherence to the end-line rhyme scheme it inherited from the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied* (AABB),[106] there are not a few occasions where *A* evidences textual corruption or perhaps simple lassitude, either foregoing the rhyme entirely or settling for an imperfect rhyme.[107] In the majority of these cases, the rhyme appears repaired in *k*, by retaining the original initial rhyme word and supplying a more fitting partner:

I Sam. 28

[3] [...] And Saul had put away those that divined by a ghost or a familiar spirit out of the land.

*A*708		*k*643	
אין דען זעלביגן צייטן ווארד מן קויניג		אין דען זעלביגן צייטן ווארד מן קויניג שאול	
שָׁאול זאגן	[sagén]	זאגן	[sagén]
יִשְׂרָאֵל ויל צויברין אין אירן שטיֵטן האבן	[habén]	וויא דאַ פַּאלק ישראל גאר ויל צוירבייא פּפַלאגן	[pflagén]

The semantic change here is minimal, maintaining grammatical continuity with the unaltered first line, and touching upon all the key points: that the practice of magic is widespread in Israel. (Editorial intervention was not limited, of course, to the alteration of rhyme-words. Here the

105For a more phonologically nuanced treatment of the problem of rhyme in *Shmuel Bukh* (and indeed the Old Yiddish midrashic epic more generally), see S. Neuberg, "Reimstudien zur jiddischen Midrasch-Epik." *Röllwagenbüchlein, Festschrift für Walter Röll zum 65. Geburtstag*. Eds. J. Jaehrling, U. Meves, and E. Timm. Tübingen: 2002. 391-409, as well as his "Noch mehr Reime im Šmu'el-Buch." *Jiddistik-Mitteilungen* 39 (2008): 12-16.

106Falk v. 2, 114-15; Frakes, 218; Weinreich, *Bilder*, 97-98.

107This is not to say that differences of rhyme between *A* and *k* may always be attributed to this kind of editorial correction.

change in meter seems to be either a price paid for the 'improved' rhyme or a purposeful revision itself.) Another solution visible in *k* is the replacement with an alternative couplet, altogether discarding the rhymed pair found in *A*:

I Sam. 30

[12][…] and when he had eaten, his spirit came back to him; for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights. [13]And David said unto him: 'To whom belongest thou? and whence art thou?'

*A*760		*k*693	
דא ער צו זיינן קרעפֿטן ווש קומן נון	[nun]	אונ׳ דא ער נון איין ווינ׳ג האט ווידר צו גינומן	[ginumén]
דא שפראך צו אים הער דָוִד זאג אן ווש מאנש בישטו	[bistu]	דא שפראך צו אים דוד זאג אן וואו בישטו הער קומן	[kumén]

Here it is interesting to note that the two original end-line words from *A* are retained in the version given by *k*, although they are placed elsewhere in the line. Also curious is *k*'s "recycling" of *A*, harvesting the קומן of the first line and transplanting it to the end of the second.

In the case of these two examples, there is little question as to the reason the couplets from *A* have been discarded in *k,* since they would not be considered full rhymes by any definition. However, a last example demonstrating the treatment of semi-rhyming couplets tells us significantly more about the standards enforced in *m* and *k*:

II Sam. 1

[6][...] 'As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and the horsemen pressed hard upon him.

*A*842		*k*773	
ער שפראך איך ווש אים שטרייט אויף דעם בערג גִלְבֹועַ	[gilboa]	ער שפרך אם בערג גלבוע און גיוערד	[gifERD]
דא דש גרוש אונגלויק ליידר גישא	[giša]	דא זאך איך דען אידלש קוינ׳ג דורט ליגן אויף דער ערד	[ERD]

Here *A*'s unaccented rhyme is unusual in that it only rhymes the very last syllable of the chosen words. At the same time the alliteration of the rhyme-words creates the illusion of a greater aural similarity than in the unsuccessful rhymes of our previous two examples. Moreover, the first syllables are not only alliterative but assonant, further tightening the sonic affinity of the two words, in what Benjamin Hrushovski [Harshav] calls "a focalizing sound pattern."[108] Despite

108B. Hrushovski, "The Meaning of Sound Patterns in Poetry*." Poetics T*oday 2 (1980): 39-56.

these elements which *A* uses to suggest the presence of a full rhyme, and which positively contribute to the play of sound and meaning in the stanza as a whole, *k* rejects it entirely, replacing it with a rhyme about which there could be no uncertainty, for the first rhyme-word anaphorically contains the whole of the second. This aural play becomes yet more layered due to its chiastic interleaving of repeating sounds: gifERD – DER – ERD, and thus achieves a far greater degree of phonic complexity than its predecessor. (It is, however, worth noting that the value of the assonant alliteration practiced by *A* was not lost on our editor who recycled it for use in the phrase גלבוע און גיוערד.)

These interventions pair an exacting formal standard with a strong commitment to preserving the content of the inherited text *A,* although these two ideals often come into conflict with one another. Such a degree of editorial attentiveness suggests very intimate work with previous editions, comparing precisely and salvaging as much as possible from the anterior texts. At the same time, the editor is aesthetically motivated, attempting through these formal "repairs" to bring the text more into line with his own poetic standards. This attitude testifies to *k*'s two-fold conservatism. On the one hand, it demonstrates an abiding commitment to the formal tradition *Shmuel Bukh* inherited from the European epics; the efforts at "fixing" *A*'s rhymes seem to be in service of an uncompromising adherence to this literary practice, which seeks to make the verse more consistent with epic conceptions of prosodic symmetry. On the other hand, the tendency to minimize intervention and to recycle promising elements from *A* suggests that later editors took care to preserve the text of *A* wherever possible. Italian Renaissance editing was prone to just this kind of conservative handling of textual antecedents, which stemmed from the ideological conflict inherent in humanist print practice which sought on the one hand to recover a pristine original text, but accepted on the other that the text had to be 'corrected' according to current ideals in order to be marketable. *Shmuel Bukh* editors, too, seem to have engaged in both pursuits: polishing away the textual 'corruption' evidenced by partial and incomplete rhymes, yet nevertheless cleaving close to the textual models at hand in their search for an unblemished *Urtext*. The text of *A* was not to be carelessly disregarded, but rather carefully polished and restored to its "original" excellence.

Two modes of textual emendation predominated in Renaissance editing: "The first was *emendatio ope codicum*; that is, a manuscript-based system of correction. Usually it implied selective comparison of sections of one or more manuscripts or the printed versions of a text. It did not refer to any systematic collation of all manuscripts in their entirety" (D'Amico 10). Yet multiple texts were needed for this kind of comparison, and it is far from clear that the editors of *k* had access to multiple versions of *Shmuel Bukh,* whether in print or manuscript. It is more likely, in the case of these rhymes, that the editor resorted to another technique: "The second was *emendatio ope ingenii* or *emendatio ope coniecturae*, the use of the editor's talents and knowledge through conjecture to propose better readings independent of manuscript authority." (10). In the matter of rhyme, the *Shmuel Bukh* editors seem to have turned to their work with similar tools and aims as their non-Jewish colleagues.

A range of other editorial maneuvers point up the way that the later editions of *Shmuel Bukh* evidence a sustained project of revision and correction, which proceeds methodically through *A* from beginning to end, repairing and renovating as necessary. One instance of obvious editorial correction appears in the omission of certain stanzas that were present in the editio princeps; as, for example, those which are mere duplicates of a previous verse. This editorial

policy is enforced even when the first verse, rather than its subsequent "duplicate," is at fault. In the following instance, the two verses are separated by several stanzas, yet only the second reads logically in narrative sequence. The later editor, having read the verses as they appear in *A*, noted the narrative disjuncture introduced by the first stanza and thus omitted it, leaving the twin untouched:

I Sam. 30

[26]And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, saying: 'Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD'; [27]to them that were in Beth-el, and to them that were in Ramoth of the South, and to them that were in Jattir; [28]and to them that were in Aroer, and to them that were in Siphmoth, and to them that were in Eshtemoa; [29]and to them that were in Racal, and to them that were in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to them that were in the cities of the Kenites; [30]and to them that were in Hormah, and to them that were in Bor-ashan, and to them that were in Athach; [31]and to them that were in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt.

A792-796	k724-727
נון וואלן מיר זינגן וועם הער דָוִד זאנט	דאש דאזיג זיין די שטיט דיא ער אלש הין זאנט
דען אלטן אונ׳ דען הערן אין בֵּתְאֵל לאנט	דען אלטן אונ׳ דען הערן צו בית אל אין דעם לנט
אונ׳ דען בַּון רָמוֹת נגֶבּ אונ׳ דען בַּון יְתִיר	אונ׳ דען פַּון רמות נגב אונ׳ דען פַּון יתיר
אונ׳ דען בַּון עֲרוֹעֵר שיקט ער אויך שיר	אונ׳ דען פַּון ערוער דען שטיטן אלי וויר
נון וואלן מיר הער דָוִד צו צִקלַג לון	
אונ׳ וואלן נון זינגן וואש שָׁאול הוט גיטון	
דא ער דיא זעלביג נאכט ווידר קאם צו זיינן מאן	
צו מורגנש דא עש טאגט דער שטרייט הוב זיך אן	
אונ׳ דען בַּון שִׁפמות אונ׳ דען בַּון אשתְּוען	אונ׳ דען בַּון שפמות אונ׳ דען בַּון אשתמוע
אונ׳ דען בַּון רוכַל לושט אוייך ניט בַּור שמוהן	אונ׳ דען בַּון רכיל לושט אוייך ניט ור שמוהנ
אונ׳ אויך דען שטיֵטן דא דא זאש דער יְרָחְמְאֵלִי	אונ׳ אויך אין שטיטן דא דא זש דער ירחמאלי
אונ׳ אין דען שטיֵטן דא דא זאש דער קֵנִי	אונ׳ אויך אין דען שטיטן דא דא זש דער קניא
אונ׳ דען בַּון חָרְמָן אונ׳ דען בַּון עשָׁן	אונ׳ דען בַּון חרמה אונ׳ דען בַּון עשן
אונ׳ דען בַּון עָתָק אונ׳ דען בַּון חֶבְרוֹן	אונ׳ דען בַּון עתך אונ׳ דען בַּון חברון
אונ׳ צו אלן שטיֵטן דא זיא ווארן הין גאנגן	אונ׳ צו אלן שטיטן דא זיא ווארן הין גנגן
דא מאן אין אונ׳ דיא זיינן גוטליך הוט אנפַּאנגן	דא מן אין אונ׳ די זיינן גויטליך הט אנפַּאנגן

נון וועלן מיר הער דָוִד צו צִקְלַג זיצן לון	נון וואלן מיר דוד צו ציקלג לושן שטון
אונ׳ וואלן אבר זינגן וויש שָאול הוט גיטון	אונ׳ וואלן נון זינגן וויש שאול הט גיטון
דא ער דיא זעלביג נאכַט ווידר קאם צו זיינן מאן	דא ער די זעלביג נכַט צו דען זיינן קאם צו גאן
דעש מורגנש דא עש טאגט דער שטרייט דער הוב זיך אן	צו מורגנז דא עש טגט דער שטרייט הוב זיך אן

As the above transcription makes clear, *A*793 and *A*796 are identical in content and vary only slightly in wording. Their co-occurence here most likely resulted from error while reading the proofs, when the typesetter's eye jumped from one נון וואלן to another on the same page.[109] The editor of *k* noticed the duplication, but was not content merely to delete one verse and leave the other. Instead, the editor combined the two variants from *A,* creating a single stanza, "improved" according to the very sort of aesthetic preferences described above. *A*793's first line is missing a full foot after the caesura. *A*796's first line, by contrast, includes two more syllables at the end of the line. The *k* editor prefers A796 for its prosodic symmetry and reproduces its first line in *k*727, with minor alteration. Yet other aspects of *A*796 seem not to have appealed. Its fourth line, which is a full sentence in *A*793, contains two definite articles, effectively rendering it a noun phrase: דער שטרייט דער הוב זיך אן. In this case, *k*727 rejects *A*796 in favor of *A*793. As with the altered rhyming couplets, the later editors seem to have worked in accordance with a conservative plan of revision, making use of the materials already available to "improve" the text for further reprinting. Here, as before, "Striving after beauty did not, however, always have to entail sacrificing truth. One can identify in Renaissance editing a current which was influenced to some extent [...] by the predominant tendency to polish the surface of a text but which nevertheless stopped short of introducing major arbitrary improvements" (Richardson 186). The precise, keen-eyed technique of our editor proceeded in much the same way, invisibly eliminating perceived defects with minimal alteration or interference.

By now a picture of editorial prioritization, as practiced in the later *Shmuel Bukh* editions, begins to emerge. Formal or aesthetic standards of the European epic (e.g. rhyme scheme and scansion) enjoy pride of place, trumping the text-critical obligation of fidelity to the content of *H-P-A*, thus introducing a degree of very intentional mouvance. Nevertheless, the textual antecedents are in turn generally preferred over wildly original editorial interpolations. Still, this characterization—while it takes note of the competition between source intertexts, *H-P-A* on the one hand, and the formal demands of the *Shmuel Bukh* strophe on the other—remains incomplete unless we turn our attention to a third intertext, which in all likelihood enjoyed greater cultural cachet than either of the aforementioned two, that is, the biblical books I and II Samuel. Though the fact that our editors were Jews no doubt plays a significant role in their treatment of the biblical text in *Shmuel Bukh*, both Jewish and non-Jewish humanist policies around biblical textual stewardship are closely aligned with the practice of biblical literalism visible here. D'Amico has pointed out that the humanist textual critic Lorenzo Valla (1407-57) had already more than a century earlier begun to treat scripture (for him, the Latin Vulgate) like any other text in need of critical restoration. For Valla, "Scripture was subject to the same laws of decay as

109In the context of scribal error, this kind of mechanical error is said to result from *homoeoarcton*/*homoeoteleuton*. In such cases, two string of letters beginning or ending similarly mislead the eye, which skips forward or back between them, causing either repetition or omission in the new document. These two outcomes are known as dittography and haplography, respectively.

any other literary artifact and was similarly recoverable by the same techniques of linguistic and textual explanations" (16), and for the *Shmuel Bukh* editor this practice persists, albeit at a literary remove from the biblical original. Where the editor of *k* perceives 'errors' in anterior versions of *Shmuel Bukh,* whether these involve biblical characters, place-names, events or chronology, he is quick to intervene, erasing the past in favor of his own readings.

Revision and Biblical Conservatism

In many ways, the techniques of restoration described above were applied equally to *A*'s use of specifically biblical materials. A stark example is in *k*'s persistent correction of misspelled names of biblical figures, toponyms, etc., a few of which are cited below:

I Sam. 27

[2]And David arose, and passed over, he and the six hundred men that were with him, unto Achish the son of Maoch, king of Gath.

*A*695	*k*631
דש מיר אוייך אין גתּ קיין אויבר לאשט ניט טון	דז מיר אייך אין גת קיין אויבר לשט ניט טון
אלזוא זאגט הערציג דָוִד צו אָכִּיש מָעון זון	אזו שפראך דוד צו אכיש מעוכש זון

Above, the late redactor corrects the inaccuracy pertaining to the name of Achish's father, Maoch (even adding the possessive, as appropriate), where *A* has it confused with the wilderness, Maon,[110] in which David had wandered only a short time ago. There are a few possible ways that this may have occurred. One is that the typesetter misread his copy-text, mistaking a final *kaf* for a final *nun;* in this case, the typesetter must not have known the biblical account well enough to catch the error, which might not be surprising since typesetters were not necessarily men of great learning and sometimes literate only in a rudimentary sense. Another possibility is that this is an instance of fouled type, when a final *nun* was distributed into the wrong compartment of the type-case, mingling with the final *kafs*. Still, such typesetting errors were often caught by a supervising corrector. Such an error is also interesting given the fact that Hebrew words required so much more care and attention to set in *A,* which was committed to including correct diacritical marks for all biblical names and terminology.

Another similar case appears revised in *k* when *A* confuses the name of the wadi Besor with the land ruled by King Talmai, Geshur:[111]

I Sam. 30

[9]So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed.

110See I Samuel 23:24-25.
111See II Samuel 3:3.

*k*690	*A*757
דא קאמן זיא צו איינם באך דער היש באך כשור	דא קאמן זיא צו איינעם באך דער היש גְשור
דא בליבן צווייא הונדרט זיינר מאנן שטין דר פַּאר	צווייא הונדרט זיינר מאנן בליבן שטון דר בַּור

This case is complicated by the fact that *k* itself seems to have misspelled Besor, which appears twice (its only occurrences in all of that edition) with a *kaph* instead of a *beth*. This may again be put down to fouled type, but it is also possible that the editor at work on this portion of the text saw the error in *A* and, glancing at the original biblical name to correct it, misread it as כשור, rather than בשור. In the second occurrence, *A* has corrected its error, but *k* does not, suggesting that the editor, who believed he had already correctly ascertained the biblical name, simply repeated his mistake. Though this incident does not testify to the infallibility of the later editors,[112] the alteration of the erroneous *gimel* from *A* suggests once again that *k* was in the business of correcting the biblical inaccuracies of its predecessor, most likely with the Hebrew on hand.

In these two previous instances, fouled type provides an elegant explanation for how these irregularities appear in both *A* and *k.* Only one detail gives me pause: that in both instances the misspelling transforms the original biblical name not into a nonsense word, but into *another* name that occurs close by in the Bible itself. This suggests perhaps that errors due to fouled type escaped *A*'s editorial notice precisely because they so closely resembled names already evident earlier in the text. One last example in this category of corrected misspellings illustrates precisely this dogged attention to biblical detail which is so characteristic of the Cracow edition, when contrasted with *A*.[113] Here, a chain of misspelled biblical toponyms is painstakingly corrected (although neither text manages to correctly spell the place-name, Rachal):

I Sam. 30

[28][...]and to them that were in Siphmoth, and to them that were in Eshtemoa; [29]and to them that were in Racal, and to them that were in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to them that were in the cities of the Kenites; [30]and to them that were in Hormah, and to them that were in Bor-ashan, and to them that were in Athach; [31]and to them that were in Hebron [...]

112In the interest of fairness, one must acknowledge that the editors may not have been at all to blame in this particular instance. Instead, the two instances of Besor appearing spelled with a *kaph* may have been an intentional substitution for *beth*, given that, in the Yiddish type used in *k*, the two letters are all but identical. Both instances occur in the space of *k*'s eleventh quire: the first occurrence on the third page and the second on the eighth. The previous quire, the tenth, was very heavy in its use of the square Hebrew *beth* (which occurs there 26 times, more than twice as many times as in the eleventh), and it may be that this quire had already been finished and was being printed as the eleventh quire was being set in type. The eleventh quire may thus have come up short of the square Hebrew *beth*, for which the nearly identical *kaph* was then substituted.

113It is worth recalling that the textual critics who have worked extensively on these editions, such as Falk, Fuks, Süsskind and others, believe that *A* and *k* were both edited in the course of their production. The difference between them rests in the degree of editorial intervention. Though both *A* and *k* enjoy the advantage of being critical "rereaders" of an inherited text, *k's* editorial scrutiny appears to be the more intense.

*A*794-95	*k*725-26
אונ׳ דען בַּון שִׁפַּמותּ אונ׳ דען בַּון אשתְּוען	אונ׳ דען בַּון שפמות אונ׳ דען בַּון אשתמוע
אונ׳ דען בַּון רוכַל לושט אוייך ניט בַּור שמוהן	אונ׳ דען בַּון רכַיל לושט אוייך ניט ור שמוהן
אונ׳ אויך אין דען שטיֵטן דא דא זאש דער יִרָחְמְאֵלִי	אונ׳ אויך אין שטיטן דא דא זש דער ירחמאלי
אונ׳ אין דען שטיֵטן דא דא זאש דער קֵנִי	אונ׳ אויך אין דען שטיטן דא דא זש דער קניא
אונ׳ דען בַּון חָרְמָן אונ׳ דען בַּון עשָׁן	אונ׳ דען בַּון חרמה אונ׳ דען בַּון עשן
אונ׳ דען בַּון עֲתָק אונ׳ דען בַּון חֶבְרוֹן	אונ׳ דען בַּון עתך אונ׳ דען בַּון חברון

In the space of six lines, *k* corrects three misspellings, and attempts but fails to do so with a fourth. Yet more important than the misspellings themselves is the fact that all of these names are rare in the biblical text. Unlike the previous two examples, in which a Hebrew name was mistaken for another recently and previously occurring one, Eshtemoa occurs but thrice in the entire Tanakh,[114] Hormah nine times,[115] and Atach only once, in this very passage. It is not surprising that the redactors of either edition would not have known these names on sight, which may lead a modern observer to suspect that *k*'s relative success in striving for biblical accuracy (by comparison with *A*) was due in no small measure to *k*'s immediate editorial recourse to the biblical original.

It is, however, unclear whether the above example resulted from simple error in proofing or conscious editorial choice. If this kind of textual instability is merely the consequence of mechanical accident, it tells us nothing about the intertextual priorities of the editors. While this kind of orthographic correction was programmatically pursued throughout *k,* it is also one of the easiest kinds of correction to put into practice. The double-checking of character and place-names is simple work and is easily performed by lightly skimming the text and then turning to the biblical original for confirmation. The detection of departure from the narrative chronology of the biblical account requires a great deal more care and a reading technique of sustained, even vigilant attention, not only to local and specific detail, but also to verse-by-verse narrative progression. Here too, biblical editing from *m* on proves more exacting than that of the editio princeps, and suggests that *k's* editors were concerned with a return to the biblical text that extended beyond the correction of errata. In the following example, David and his men have just heard an eyewitness account of the battle on Mount Gilboa: the Philistines have prevailed and Saul and his sons are slain. David, hearing a distorted version of this from an Amalekite who fled the scene, inquires after the man's provenance:

II Sam. 1

[13]And David said unto the young man that told him: 'Whence art thou?' [...]

114As a place-name: Josh. 21:14, I Sam. 30:28, and I Chron. 6:57.
115Num. 14:45, 21:3; Deut. 1:44; Josh. 12:14, 15:30, 19:4; Judg. 1:17; I Sam. 30:30; and I Chron. 4:30.

*A*849	*k*780
דא שפראך קויניג דָוִד צו דעם בוטן ברוטער	דא שפרך הערציג דוד צו דעם בוטן ברוטער
זאג ווער אישט דיין ואטר בֹון וואנן קומשטו הער	זג אן ווער איז דיין ואטר בֹון וואנן קומשטו הער

Here, *k* objects to *A*'s reference to "King David," which, while suggestive and effectively foreshadowing, is nevertheless narratively premature. With the death of Saul and his sons, David is indeed poised to assume the throne. But the apparently pivotal significance of this moment is actually an illusion generated by the biblical author's withholding of crucial information. As the reader ultimately discovers, Saul's line is not extinguished on Mount Gilboa, for a fourth son, Ish-bosheth, survives and is soon crowned by Abner, Saul's military commander, an act which spurs the short-lived division of the kingdom of Israel between Ish-bosheth in the north and David in the south. It will be two years before David rules as king of a united Israel, and indeed, *A* uses this royal appellation only in this single instance prior to David's assumption of the throne in the southern Kingdom of Judah (*A*881, II Sam. 2:4). The editor of *k,* aware that David will not ascend the throne for some time, revises *A,* insisting upon *hertsig* ('duke' or 'lord'), which had been David's usual title in both texts up until this point. Most interestingly, *k*'s intervention requires that the editor do more than merely mechanically consult the biblical verse, in which David is referred to without title, as is typical in the biblical account both before and after David's coronation. Instead, this alteration reflects *k*'s critical engagement with the inherited text *A*, as well as its constant awareness of the greater narrative trajectories of the biblical account.

Whatever the case may be, this error is a particularly striking instance of departure from the naming practices of the biblical text and thus not very difficult to detect. Yet, assuming that *A*'s early use of 'King David' was indeed intended as literary foreshadowing, it seems that *k* was not entirely opposed to introducing foreshadowing of its own. Below, in the famous episode involving the Witch of Endor, the prophet Samuel is raised from the dead and prophesies the death of King Saul and his sons in battle:

I Sam. 28

[19]Moreover the LORD will deliver Israel also with thee into the hand of the Philistines; and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me [...]

*A*737	*k*670
רייכַר קויניג שָאול צוואר איך וויל דיר זאגן	רייכַר קוניג שאול צוואר איך וויל דיר זאגן
דוא אונ׳ דיין זוין וועדן צו טוט גישלאגן	דוא אונ׳ דיין דרייא זוין וועדן טוט גישלאגן

In this case, *A* is in fact a more exact rendering of the biblical text. In contrast, *k* lightly foreshadows the conflict between David and Ish-bosheth by specifying that Saul and *three* sons will be slain. This alteration does not explicitly refer to Ish-bosheth, but nevertheless will recall him to the mind of any reader aware that Saul had four sons, not three. Once again, *k*'s interventions are concerned not only with fidelity to the exact, local phrasing of the biblical text,

but more generally to a project of rendering the whole course of the biblical narrative, even where it means expunging ambiguity present in the biblical text itself. Here it seems that literary *pulchritudo* won out over textual *similitudo*, so that the literal wording of the biblical text is subordinated to the clarity of its narrative and the addition of foreshadowing and other literary effects.

The previous two instances serve to point up *k*'s tendency toward clarification and narrative coherence, an inclination which aims to harmonize biblical detail and reaffirm biblical consistency throughout the narrative. Yet *k*'s redactors had not only to contend with the deviations from the biblical text introduced in *A*; additionally, *k* concerns itself with interpolations of received rabbinic interpretation, which *A* seamlessly fuses with the biblical narrative. Here, in enumerating David's sons and their mothers, *A* invisibly incorporates rabbinic interpretation regarding the parentage of Ithream:

II Sam. 3

[2]And unto David were sons born in Hebron; and his first-born was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; [3]and his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; [4]and the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; [5]and the sixth, Ithream, of Eglah David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron.

*A*914-917		*k*841-844
914 נון האט דער קוניג דָוִד גיצירט זיינן לייב	841	נון האט דער קוניג דוד גיצירט זיינן לייב
ער הט בייא אים צו חֲבָרון זעכַש אֵיליך ווייב		ער האט צו חבַרון יליכַר זיכַש ווייבא
איטליכַי ביזונדר בייא אים גיוואן		נון האט ער פַון אין אלן פַון איטליכַר איין זון
צו דעם קוניג דָוִד אז איך אוייך זאגן קאן		וויא זיא אלן הישן דא ויל איך זאגן פַון
915 דער ערשט היש אַמְנון זיין מוטר ווש אִחִינועַם גינאנט	842	דער אירשט היש אמנון ווש בַון אחינועם קומן
דער אנדר היש כִלְאָבַ אז מן גישריבן ואנד		דער אנדר היש כלאב בַון אביגיל דער ורומן
אֲבִיגַיִל ווייב נָבָל הט אים גיוואונן דא		די אים דער אידל דוד צו ווייבא הט אויש גילעזן
מיט דעם קוניג דָוִד דש ווש דער קוניג ורוא		זיא וואז בַון כרמל נבַלש ווייבא גיוועזן
916 דער דריט היש אַבְשָלום דער אלער שוינשט מאן	843	דער דריט היש אבשלום דער אלר שוינשטי מן
דען מן אין דער ווועלט נירגנט וינדן קאן		דען מן אין דער ווועלט נירגנט וינדן קאן
זיין מוטר היש מַעֲכָה איין קוניגין שון		זיין מוטר היש מעבה איין קוניגין אזא שון
איר ואטר היש תַלְמַי צו גְשור טרוג ער דיא קרון		איר ואטר היש תלמי צו גשור טרוג ער דיא קרון

917 אֲדֹונִיָה זון חגִיתּ דער וירד אין דער צאל	844 דער וירד ווש גיננט אדוניה זון חגית
דער בֹוינפַט היש שְׁפַטיָה זיין מוטר היש אֲבִיטַל	דער בֹוינפַט היש שפטיה זיין מוטר אביטל היש
דער זעכשט יִתְרֹועַם אז מן עש גישריבן וינט	יתרעם זון עגלה ווז דער זיכשט אן דער צאל
זיין מוטר היש מִיכַל דעש קויניגש שָׁאול קינד	נון זאגן איין טייל לוייט עגלה דז ווז מיכל

Early rabbinic commentators had struggled with this account of David's household as it appears in II Samuel. Most significant is the omission of Michal from the list of David's wives, given that she was his first wife and plays no small role in the Davidic story. Still, after Saul's break with David, Michal is vindictively married to Palti ben-Laish, so that in these verses she might rightfully be excluded from the list, which purports only to describe David's household *during his tenure in Hebron*. Nevertheless, classical aggadic sources attempted to discern Michal's presence in this passage by identifying her, via a number of exegetic stratagems, with David's wife Eglah.[116] The result is that *A* relies unquestioningly on rabbinic precedent. Falk attributes this midrashic interpolation to *Yalkut Shimoni* (v. 2, 111), which explains that the rabbis understand Eglah to be another name for Michal. However, *A* neglects to explicitly assert, as *Yalkut Shimoni* does, that this represents rabbinic consensus. In this sense, *A* is nearer to Rashi, who affirms the identity of the two women without qualification or reference to rabbinic precedent. *A* thus implicitly assumes the identity of Michal and Eglah, and in the end claims that Michal is the mother of Ithream, eliding Eglah altogether. In essence, *A*'s intertextual practice implies the literary, historical and religious equivalence of rabbinic and biblical materials, combining them without distinction, and ignoring, or perhaps willfully obscuring, any diversity in rabbinic opinion. For *A,* the unmarked inclusion of rabbinic materials does not represent a disruption in the transmission of the biblical text, but an explicit articulation of the implicit truths contained therein. Such a case is an exemplary instance of the principle described above: "One thing God has spoken; two have I heard." Thus, one word, *Eglah*, is written; yet two may we read.

In vivid contradistinction, *k* flags this rabbinic contribution with emphatic qualification, "Now, some people say that Eglah was Michal." While a brief comment, the phrasing is significant. Rather than underscoring the remarkable pedigree of this interpretation, descending as it does from the *amoraim* of the Babylonian Talmud and later from Rashi, among other prominent medieval exegetes, the interpretation is not conveyed with any great show of reverence and is rather stated with impassive exegetic neutrality (such as in the choice of "people" [לוייט] over options, such as, "rabbis" or "commentators"). Additionally, it acts to warn the reader that not everyone is of the same opinion in this matter. Even as *k* tactfully calls into question these anterior rabbinic readings, it nevertheless hews close to rabbinic rhetorical and citational practices reaching back to the Talmud itself, where multiple readings were often presented side-by-side without any final judgment made between them. The total effect is two-fold; first, *k* maintains a strict adherence to the factual information provided by the Tanakh, in

116 See, for example, *Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin* 21a, *Bereshit Rabbah* 82:7, and *Midrash Tehillim* 59:4. For a modern commentary on this passage, see Alter's *The David Story.*

which Eglah is unambiguously named as the mother of Ithream and Michal goes unmentioned. Second, it informs the reader of a widespread and relevant interpretation, the exclusion of which could lead to confusion, whether for the reader who comes to this text believing that Michal was the mother of Ithream or to the reader who, taking the text at face value, departs believing that Eglah had never been connected with Michal and wonders why Michal is absent. Whatever the case may be, it is only after this commitment to the biblical text is observed that *k* proceeds with a supplementary comment on received interpretation.

As ever, it is this sort of faint but pointed distinction which separates the two editions. Like its antecedent, *k* frequently incorporates the fruits of rabbinic exegesis, and more often than not these extra-biblical interludes are unmarked, blending smoothly with the surrounding narrative in a style characteristic not only of *A* but also of *Shmuel Bukh*'s manuscript tradition. Though no direct relation exists, one might well look at this decision as reflecting an Erasmian exegetical practice. While intently engaged with his hermeneutic patrimony, Erasmus nevertheless critically reframed these traditions of commentary with his fidelity to the historical and textual evidence present in scripture. By the same token, *k*'s revisions of *A* fall always on the biblically conservative side of literary adaptation, more precisely articulating the broad gestures of the earlier versions, yet also resolutely qualifying or restraining their more elaborate, embellishing rabbinic and medieval intertexts.

The Humanist Editor and Biblical Stylistics

One final example of this tendency on a larger scale than we have yet seen will usefully underscore the way *k*'s exacting biblicism motivates a degree of narrative intervention in *A* that spans not merely biblical verses or stanzas, but entire scenes. This episode gives an account of David's narrow escape from King Saul's murderous rage with the aid of Michal, who has only recently become David's wife.

I Sam. 19

[10]And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the spear; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the spear into the wall; and David fled, and escaped that night. [11]And Saul sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning; and Michal David's wife told him, saying: “If thou save not thy life to-night, to-morrow thou shalt be slain.” [12]So Michal let David down through the window; and he went, and fled, and escaped. [13]And Michal took the *teraphim*, and laid it in the bed, and put a quilt of goats' hair at the head thereof, and covered it with a cloth. [14]And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said: 'He is sick.' [15]And Saul sent the messengers to see David, saying: 'Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him.' [16]And when the messengers came in, behold, the teraphim was in the bed, with the quilt of goats' hair at the head thereof. [17]And Saul said unto Michal: 'Why hast thou deceived me thus, and let mine enemy go, that he is escaped?' And Michal answered Saul: 'He said unto me: Let me go; why should I kill thee?' [18]Now David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth.

*A*449-467	*k*393-409
449 שָׂאול נאם זיין שפיש מיט קרעפַּטן אין זיין האנט ער וואלט דָוִד דען יונגן נאגלן אן דיא וואנט דוך ווייך אים דָוִד אויש דעם שטיך דער ורום מאן דער שפיש שטעקט אין דער וואנט דָוִד ולוך בַּון דאן	393 שאול נאם זיין שפיש מיט קריפַּטן אין זיין הנט ער וואלט דוד דען יונגן ניגלן אן דיא וואנט דוך ווייכַט אים אויש דעם שטיך דוד דער ורום מן דער שפיש שטעקט אין דער וואנט דוד ולוך הין דן
450 דָוִד ולוך היים אין זיין אייגן הויש צו זיינר ליבן ורויאן דיא זאך צום ועגשטר אויש זיא זאך דעש קויניגש קנעפַּט קומן הר נוך גיראנט דא שלוג זיא צו דיא פפַורטן דא זיא דיא בוטן דר קאנט	394 ער ולוך גאר ביהענד היים אין זיין הויז צו זיינר ליבן ורויאן דיא זאך צום ועגשטר אויש זיא זאך דעש קויניגש קנעפַּט קומן הרנוך גירנט דא שלוג זיא צו דיא פפַורטן דא זיא דיא בוטן דר קנט
451 זיא אום רינגלטן דָוִדש הויש צוואר ער קאן אונש ניט אנטגון אונ׳ וועז עש וועזרט טאג זיין לעבן מוש ער לון דא וואושט דָוִד דער יונג דש ער מושט ליידן פִּין ער מיינט אין זיינם הויש וואלט ער און אליא זורגן זיין	395 זיא אום רינגלטן דאז הויז ער קאן אונז ניט אנטגון וועז עש מורגן ווירט טאג זיין לעבן מוש ער לון דא וואושט דוד דער יונג דש ער מושט ליידן פיין ער מיינט אין זיינם הויש און אלי זורגן צו זיין
452 דא גינג דיא יונג קויניגן בַּור אירן מאן שטון דָוִד מיין ליבר מאן מיין ורייגט זוא וואל גיטון דוא מושט בַּון הינן וליהן עש טוט דיר ליידר נוט וליכַּשטו ניט בַּון הינן זוא בישטו מורגן טוט	396 דא גינג דיא יונג קויניגן פַּור אירן מאן שטון דוד מיין ליבר מאן מיין ורויינט זא וואל גיטאן דו מושט פַּון הינן וליהן עש טוט דיר ליידר נוט וליכַּשטו ניט פַּון הינן זא בישטו מורגן טוט
453 וואו הושטו הער גילושן דיא לייכַּטן ברויניא דיין דיין ויל גוטש שווערט אונ׳ רינג שטעהליין ער שפראך הערץ ליביא ורויא איך ולוך עש טעט מיר נוט מיך וואלט דיין ואטר דער קויניג אי שלאגן טוט	397 וואו הושטו גילושן דיא ליכַּטי ברוויניא דיין דיין ויל גוטש שווערט אונ׳ רינג שטעהליין ער שפראך הערץ ליבי ורויא איך ולוך עש טעט מיר נוט מיך וואלט דיין ואטר דער קויניג אי שלאגן צו טוט
454 איך ולוך באלד בַּון דאנן דש איך ורישט מיין לעבן מיין שווערט אונ׳ מיין הארניש קונט מיר נימנט	398 איך ולוך בלד פַּון דנן דז איך ורישט מיין לעבן מיין שווערט אונ׳ מיין הרניש קונט מיר נימנט

	געבן	געבן
	מיין הערץ ליביא ורויא נון גיב מיר דיינן רוט	מיין הערצי ליבי ורויא נון גיב מיר דיינן רוט
	הילף מיר היינט בֿון הינן דש זיא מיך ניט שלאגן טוט	הילף מיר היינט פֿון הינן דז זיא מיך ניט שלאגן טוט
455	זיא שפראך איך בין דיר ליב איך הילף דיר ווש איך קאן	399 זיא שפראך דוא בישט מיר ליב איך העלף דיר וואש איך קאן
	לוש מיכש הר נוך גינישן דוא הערץ ליבר מאַן	לוש מיך עש אויך גינישן מיין הערץ ליבר מאן
	וועז איך דיר הילף בֿון הינן וויא עש מיר האלט גאט	הילף איך דיר פֿון הינן גוֹט ווייש וויא עז מיר גוט
	איך קום בֿון מיינם ואטר אין אנגשט אונ׳ אין נוט	איך קום פֿון מיינם ואטר אין אנגשט אונ׳ גרושי נוט
456	דש מוש איך מיך דר וועגן העלד הוך גימוט	400 דאש מוש איך מיך דר וועגן דו העלט זא וואול גימוט
	דוא זולשט מיין הער גידענקן וועז דיין זאך ווערט גוט	דוא זולשט מיר עש אויך גידענקן וועז דיין זך ווערט גוט
	זולשטו דיך בֿון מיר שיידן העלד אוז בֿור צייט	זולשטו דיך פֿון מיר שיידן דו הילט אוז ור צייט
	מיר גישאך בייא מיינן טאגן ניא אלזוא גרוש לייט	מיר גישאך בייא אל מיינן טאגן ניא אזו גרושי לייד
457	נון הויר מיין ליביא ורויא דש זולשטו זיכֿר זיין	401 ער שפראך מיין ליבי ורויא דאז זולשטו זיכֿר זיין
	הילפֿט מיר גוֹט יתֿברך בֿון הימל איך בֿור גיש ניט דיין	הילפֿט מיר גוֹט פֿון הימל זא ור גיש איך ניט דיין
	זיא ליש אין דורך איין וענשטר אן איינם זייל	זיא ליש אין דורך איין וענשטר הראב אן איינם זייל
	זיא שפראך מיין ליבר הער גוֹט יתֿברך מוש דיר געבן גלויק אונ׳ הייל	זיא שפראך אונזר הער גוֹט גיב דיר גליק אונ׳ הייל
458	דא ער קאם צו דער ערדן צו וליהן ווש אים גוך	402 דא ער קאם צו דער ערדן צו וליהן וואז אים גוך
	אין דיא שטאט גען רָמָה ער בֿון דאנן ולוך	ער לוף אז אום זיין האלז נימנט לוף אים נוך
	דא ער קאם גען רָמָה צו שמואֵל דעם נָבִיא	דא גינג דיא אידל מיכל אונ׳ נאם איין גרושן געצן
	ער קלאגט דעם נָבִיא ורומן ווארום ער ווש היא	איין פֿעל פֿון איינר גיישן וואז זיא אויף דען קופפֿא זעצן
459	ער קלאגט אים אויבר שָׁאוּל ווש ער אים הוט גיטון	403 זיא וואז אין פֿיין צו פוצן דש איינר גישווארן העט
	נון וואלן מיר הער דָוִד דעם נָבִיא קלאגן לון	עש ווער איין מענש גיווען זיא ליגט אין אין דז בעט

אונ׳ זינגן בַּון זיינר ורויאן וויא זיא הט גיטון
אונ׳ וויש זיא דעש קויניגש קנעכַטן הט ווישן לון

זיא שפראך צו שאולש קנעכַטן וואַרום זייט איר קומן הער
זיא מאכַט זיך כלא יודע וואש איז מיין ואטרש ביגער

460 זיא שפראך צו דען קנעכַטן וואַרום זייט איר קומן הער
וויש וויל מיין ואטר אודר וויש אישט זיין ביגער
ורויא אֵידליא קויניגין דאש לושן מיר אוייך בַּור שטון
דער קויניג וויל דָוִד צו רעכַטר נוט הון

404 זיא שפראכַן אידלי ורויא וואו אישט אייער מאן ער זול גאר גיניטיג צו דעם קויניג גאן
זיא שפראך ליבן הערן עש קאן ליידר ניט גיזיין ער איז מיר קראנק גיוואַרדן דער אידל הערי מיין

461 זאגט אוייערם הערן דש ער צום קויניג גוט
זיין גיבוט זול ער ניט דר ברעכַן אודר ער הוט בַּור שולדט דען טוט
דא שפראך דיא אֵידיל קויניגין דש קאן ניט גיזיין
ער איז קראנק וואַרדן דער ליב הער מיין

405 זיא גינגן צו דעם קויניג אונ׳ זאגטן אים דיא מער וויא דער יונג דוד אין זיינם הויש קראנק ווער
ער שפראך זאגט מיינר טאכַטר איר וואלט צו אים גון
אונ׳ ברענגט אים מיט דעם בעט זיין לעבן מוש ער לון

462 דיא בוטן גינגן דראט דעם קויניג דיא מער צו זאגן
דא היש איר דיא קויניגין איין גרוש בילד הער טראגן
זיא באנד איין גיש הויט אן זיין הויבט ורוא
זיא לֵיגט עש אן דש בֵּיט אונ׳ דעקט עש עבן צו

406 דא גינגן הין דיא בוטן אונ׳ וואלטן אין בישויאן זיין קרנקהייט וואלן מיר ביזעהן שפראכַן זיא צו דער ורויאן
זיא וואלטן אין הין טראגן וויא זיא שאול גיהיישין העט
זיא ואנדן איין גרושן געצן ליגן אין דעם בעט

463 זיא גינגן צו דעם קויניג אונ׳ זאגטן אים דיא מער
וויא דָוִד אין זיינם הויש קראנק ווער
ער שפראך זאגט מיינר טוכַטר איר וואלט צו אים גון
אונ׳ ברענגט אין מיט דעם בֵּיט זיין לעבן מוש ער לון

407 זיא קאמן צו דעם קויניג אונ׳ זאגטן אים די מער וויא איין גרושר געץ אים בעט גילעגן ווער
דא שיקט דער קויניג שאול נוך דער טוכַטר זיין
ער שפראך דוא הושט ור שיקט דוד דען ויינט מיין

464 דא גינגן דיא בוטן אונ׳ וואלט אין בישויאן
זיין קראנקהייט וואלן מיר ביזעהן שפראכן זיא צו דער ורויאן

408 דר צו הושטו מיך ביטרוגן מיט איינם גרושן בילד
איך גיבא דיר דז מיין טרייאן איך וויל דיר לונן ווילד

זיא וואלטן אין הין הון גיטראגן ער וואר דא אינן ניט

זיא שפראך מיין ליבר פַּאטר איך מושט עז טון ור נוט

זיא בֿונדן איין גרוש גֵיצן ליגן אין דעם בֵּיט

העט איך אים נים גיהולפֿן זא העט ער מיך גישלאגן טוט

465 דא זאגטן זיא דעם קויניג דיא מער

409 מיין לעבן מושט איך רעטן פֿור אים אין מיינם הויש

אונ׳ וויא איין גרושר גֵיץ אין דעם בֵּיט גיעלגן (!) ווער

ער וואלט מיך הון דר שלאגן דא ליש איך אין הינויש

דא שיקט דער קויניג שָׁאול נוך זיינר טוכֿטר ויין

נון לושן וויר שאול אונ׳ זיין טוכֿטר זיין איין דינג

ער שפראך דוא הושט מיר בֿור שיקט דָוִד דען ווינד מיין

אונ׳ וועלן נון זינגן וויא עז דוד גינג

466 דר צו הושטו מיך גילייכֿט מיט איינם גרושן בילד

איך גיב דיר דעש מיין טרוייא איך וויל דיר לונן ווילד

זיא שפראך מיין ליבר ואטר איך מושט עש טון בֿור נוט

העט איך אים ניט גיהולפֿן ער העט מיך גישלאגן טוט

467 מיין לעבן מושט איך רעטן בֿור אים אין מיינם הויש

ער וואלט מיך הון דר שלאגן דא ליש איך אין הין אויש

נון לושן מיר שָׁאול אונ׳ זיין טוכֿטר זיין איין דינג

אונ׳ וואלן ווייטר זינגן וויא עש הער דָוִד גינג

In the biblical narrative, the drama of Saul and David's enmity transitions here to the drama of Michal's shifting allegiance. Though she makes her loyalty known by urging David to flee, her subsequent actions speak even louder as she carries out her clever but only temporarily effective ruse, buying David the time of which he is in such dire need. And indeed, the buying of time is at the heart of this episode, both formally and thematically speaking. Much has been said, by Erich Auerbach among others, regarding the masterful generation of suspense in biblical narrative.[117] In Auerbach's famous phrase, the biblical text is "fraught with background" (12), and it is this tension between what the reader knows and what he does not which serves as the engine of

117E. Auerbach, *Mimesis; the Representation of Reality in Western Literature.* Trans. William R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

narrative crescendo and readerly engagement.[118] To rephrase in the terms of Robert Alter, the biblical author is an adept in the art of narrative reticence, withholding crucial information from the reader so that suspense, ambiguity, and uncertainty proliferate (see especially *Biblical Narrative,* ch. 6 and 8).

And so it is here as well. David's position in this passage is precarious, and anxiety on David's behalf has been the primary occupation of the reader for the last several chapters. Resolution of the suspense in which the reader is kept waiting after David's escape is only achieved after a span of five intervening verses, when we are finally informed of his safe arrival in Ramah. And the biblical author does not hesitate to prolong readerly uncertainty, delaying information regarding David by lingering over Michal's clever ploy. Yet the information regarding David is not the only operation of narrative reticence in this episode. The pace of the narrative itself is slowed by the mediation of the servants of Saul, heightening the suspense pertaining both to Michal's gambit and to David's fugitive departure. In fact, Saul's servants must traverse the distance between the king's dwelling and David's four times, always conveying new information with them, from Saul to Michal, Michal to Saul, and back again. This heavily mediated exchange of information hobbles the narrative, slowing its inevitable approach to the climactic confrontation between Michal and Saul, and even more pointedly to the resumption of the David story.

For all the effectiveness of narrative reticence in the generation of suspense, such a tack is utterly abandoned in the initial adaptation of this passage from biblical prose to Old Yiddish epic. *A*, as well as the two extant *Shmuel Bukh* manuscripts, *P* and *H*, dispense with the strategy of withholding narrative detail and inform us at once that David escapes from Michal's window, down a pillar, and proceeds to Ramah, where he is taken in by Samuel, sheltered and permitted to bemoan his fate. Only after David's flight is rounded off do these early versions of *Shmuel Bukh* return to the story of Michal's deception and her confrontation with her father. It is important to recognize in this instance that these early versions do not perform an exegetical operation on the biblical text; no interpretive argument is being advanced. As both the biblical narrative and *H*, *P*, and *A* make clear, though by radically different means, David's flight and Michal's stratagem occur simultaneously and both narrations work to accommodate a kind of literary cross-cutting between events and locales. Furthermore, the *Shmuel Bukh* author is not, to the best of my knowledge, complying with midrashic precedent by revealing David's whereabouts prior to the Michal scene. The choice to reveal this information at once rather than conceal it until later is clearly distinguishable from the usual operations of midrash, which tends to fill in the gapped and elliptical surface of the biblical text by introducing materials from *outside* the passage at hand, be they other verses from other biblical books, *baraitot*, or supplementary narration (Boyarin, *Intertextuality,* 14). In this case, *H, P* and *A* work only with the materials provided by the biblical text, and yet produce a significant change to the narrative all the same. Indeed, they act as a cinematic editor in the cutting room might, changing the order of scenes by means of a splice, but without shooting any additional footage. This practice of changing narrative form without altering meaning is the very antithesis of exegesis, since it is not an attempt to elucidate or embellish, and suggests that aesthetic concerns (whether the product of

118See M. Perry and M. Sternberg, “The King Through Ironic Eyes: Biblical Narrative and the Literary Reading Process.” *Poetics Today* 7.2 (1986): 275-322.

humanist textuality or not) could expand the work of an adaptor beyond slavish fidelity to the biblical text.

In *k*, we witness a return to the narrative structure of the biblical original. The later humanist editor enforces an intertextual hierarchy which subordinates the earlier versions of *Shmuel Bukh H-P-A* to their more perfect, original ancestor, the Tanakh. (A display which is in itself a perfect example of the rigorous biblicism of the early modern Jewish humanist sketched by Lesley.) And by insisting that *Shmuel Bukh* conform to the narrative form of its biblical source, the editor knits the two texts together, heightening their exegetical and literary entanglement. Thus, rather than a neat resolution to David's departure, we are left wondering as David disappears into the night (*k*402), but find ourselves nevertheless compelled to follow Michal's lead as she arranges her deception (*k*402-03). It is only after her confrontation with Saul takes place (*k*407-09) that we are returned to the matter of David's flight to Ramah and his reception there by Samuel (*k*409-10). The intervening stanzas (*k*403-07) describe Michal's ruse, and then following her encounter with Saul we are informed of David's arrival in Ramah; since we still do not know whether Michal's ploy will succeed in its purpose, the promise that we will hear what has become of David carries with it special anticipation.

Yet this is not the only instance of recursion to the biblical original in this short passage. In *H, P,* and *A,* the order in which Michal executes her plan is altered as well. Where the biblical account has her disguise the *teraphim* and then deceive the messengers with her tale of David's illness, our three earliest versions of *Shmuel Bukh* narrate precisely the opposite, namely that Michal told the messengers that David had fallen ill, and that in the time given her between their departure and their return, the idol was installed in David's bed. Again, I have found no midrashic justification for this alteration, nor does it seem to result from accidental misreading by a copyist, since the departure of the messengers occurs in the very same stanza as Michal's ruse, and is in fact fused with it by virtue of end-line rhyme. In *k*, by contrast, this detail too is corrected to follow the biblical original; Michal prepares the *teraphim*, then tells her lie, and has only to wait for the messengers to return and discover the deception. Even more pointedly, the Cracow edition adds two lines to stress Michal's forethought in designing her ploy:זיא שפראך צו שאולש קנעבַטן וואַרום זייט איר קומן הער / זיא מאבַט זיך כלא יודע וואש איז מיינש ואטרש ביגער. These two lines make explicit what the biblical text, with its characteristic reticence, merely implies: that Michal is not only aware why the servants have come, but that she has prepared her lie in advance, and that her pseudo-naive questions are merely meant to give her lie about David's illness the semblance of veracity. In sum, *k* uses its return to biblical stylistics for two purposes, promoting a reading of the biblical episode that foregrounds Michal's trickery and foresight, while simultaneously restoring the tension and suspense that had suffused the anterior text.

CODA

Let us return to the questions posed at the beginning of this essay. The persistence of literary instability into the sixteenth century provided for the emergence of a new role in European textual production. The early modern editor, erudite, aggressive, critically engaged with his textual tradition, was not a merely mechanical, passive reproducer. As highly intellectual, economically ambitious professionals in the burgeoning world of print, editors played a role in which the functions of scribe and exegete were combined. Like the scribe, he

operated within the very body of the text, implicated in and responsible for every jot and tittle of its (re)production. At the same time, he also intervened in the text from outside and above, exercising the exegete's expansive intellectual rights to reinterpretation, textual expansion, philological explication, and literary embellishment.

Yet the exegetical and religious implications of this enhanced textual stewardship were hardly certain. The tacit, implicit aesthetics of Renaissance editing was fundamentally problematic in an Ashkenazic literary culture which prized transparency as the guarantor of textual reliability, and thence, religious and legal authority. For this conservative Ashkenazic exegete, the editor was a dangerous interloper, silent where he should be articulate, concealing what he should reveal. At the same time, other contemporary rabbinic authorities were inclined to advance the editor's cause, incorporating it into their biblical hermeneutics in order to enjoy a degree of intellectual freedom historically unattainable due to the heavy burden imposed by received interpretation. Renaissance editing provided an opportunity to thresh out the diverse intertextual elements that comprised the nearly inexhaustible accumulation of Jewish biblical literature. For these commentators, aggressive editorship was a step toward an intellectually unencumbered reading practice and the assumption of an authoritative exegetical voice.

We may thus understand the late editing of *Shmuel Bukh* as an experiment in the style of contemporary rabbinic exegesis and Renaissance belletristic textual renovation. Editors and progressive Ashkenazic exegetes collaborated in professional ventures like the Prostitz press to experiment with new textual modalities which promised the Ashkenazic reader an immediate encounter with the Hebrew Bible both more lucid and more aesthetically refined. The winnowing exegetical reductionism of modern rabbinic readers and the humanist, historicist textual criticism of the Italian Jewish corrector coalesced in generic experiments like *Shmuel Bukh*, resulting in a text invested in the authenticity of undiluted biblicism, yet stylistically ambitious. Just as humanist belles-lettres had relied on religiously daring reconceptions of classical genres retrieved from pagan antiquity (the epic foremost among them), so too could the editor-exegetes of early modern Ashkenaz deploy the Yiddish biblical epic as a vehicle for scriptural literalism wedded to a virtuosic, classicizing poetics.

INTRODUCTION

The Prostitz press was among the most prominent participants in the poetic and exegetical enterprise discussed in the previous chapter, that of rendering the entirety of the Hebrew Bible into literary Yiddish.[119] From the mid-sixteenth to early seventeenth century, the press released editions of the books of Samuel (1578), Song of Songs (1579), Kings and Proverbs (1582), Isaiah[120] and Psalms (1586), Joshua and Daniel (1588), and Esther (1589).[121] This last ultimately achieved renown as "the long Scroll" [*di lange megile*] (though it did not receive this accolade until the 1663 Amsterdam edition appeared many decades later), so called for its lushly, perhaps excessively elaborated style of homiletic paraphrase, which drew from both the rote-translation tradition of the *taytsh-khumesh*[122] and the ceaseless hermeneutical disputation of classical midrash.[123] No abridgment or digest, the Prostitz *Megilas Esther* was a substantial literary and exegetical accomplishment in comparison with its leaner competitors.[124] Yet it was also quite distinct from the epic tradition of the *Shmuel Bukh*. Rather than a chivalric epic, the Prostitz *Esther* was very much in keeping with a rabbinic translation practice dating to the Aramaic *targumim*, which Philip Alexander describes as the presentation of "midrashic exposition of a biblical book basically in the guise of translation" (165).[125] That is to say, although the Prostitz press seems to have recognized both *Shmuel Bukh* and *Megilas Esther* as valid translations and thus equivalent products in its biblical enterprise, the two works nevertheless belonged to distinct literary genres.

In almost every respect, *Shmuel Bukh* was composed to serve as a different kind of literary product than the Prostitz *Esther.* Where *Esther* is didactic, *Shmuel Bukh* is entertaining. Where *Esther* is practical and its language pedestrian, *Shmuel Bukh* is belletristic. Where *Esther* is an outgrowth of a specifically Jewish exegetical practice, *Shmuel Bukh* emerges from a decidedly European genre, the *Heldenepos*. This series of contrasts is continued in the use each work makes of its biblical and rabbinic intertexts.[126] Our last chapter addressed the intertextual practices of *Shmuel Bukh*'s Cracovian editor, whose apparent commitment to the "restorative"

119 For Prostitz's intentions regarding Yiddish Bible translations, see Perles, 353.

120*Sefer Yishaye*. Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1586.

121Prostitz also published the deuterocanonical book of Judith together with the story of Susannah and the Elders, an apocryphal addition to Daniel, in 1571.

122Neil Jacobs defines *taytsh* as "[a] calque language which originated as a practical aid for translation of the bible and prayers. [...] This phenomenon has antecedents in Jewish tradition (and, hence, vertical legitimation), tracing back to the practice of reading aloud both the Hebrew original (twice) and the (Judeo-)Aramaic *targum* (once); [...] *Taytsh* consists of a systematic morpheme-by-morpheme translation. The result is an artificial calque language which does not follow Yiddish syntax" (295). See N. Jacobs, *Yiddish: A Linguistic Introduction.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 295-97; and Baumgarten, 99-103.

123See, for example, I. Zinberg, *Di geshikhte fun der literatur bay yidn.* New York: Alveltlekher yidisher kultur-kongres, 1964. 123.

124*Megilas Esther.* Cracow: Isaac ben Aaron Prostitz, 1589.

125Philip S. Alexander, "Notes on Some Targums of the Targum of the Song of Songs." *Targum and Scripture: Studies in Aramaic Translations and Interpretation in Memory of Ernest G. Clarke*. Eds. Ernest G. Clarke, and Paul Virgil McCracken. Studies in the Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture, v. 2. Leiden: Brill, 2002. 159-74.

126The Prostitz *Esther* also represents a fascinating reversal of the conventional associations of the Scroll of Esther in post-biblical Jewish literary creativity. Most commonly, adaptations of Esther material are an occasion for transgressive entertainment and scandalizing humor.

ideals of humanist textual criticism encouraged his investment in biblical fidelity and an attendant avoidance of midrashic intertexts. At the same time, due to the very same restorative aesthetics, that editor preferred to "smooth" and beautify the surface of the text, to the exclusion of evidence of citation and allusion. Almost all intertexts were thus rhetorically homogenized with the surrounding language, creating the appearance of a coherent, unitary whole. In stark contrast to a poetic rendering like *Shmuel Bukh*, which rarely divulged evidence of its intertextuality and then only with characteristic reticence, the Prostitz *Esther* is characterized by its pronounced intertextual transparency, aggressively underscoring the transition from one intertext to the next. Though these two works emerged from the same press around the same period, their generic positioning was responsible for a near-diametric opposition in their intertextual practices.

The Prostitz *Esther* did not display the literalist biblicism apparent in the *Shmuel Bukh* (though both could very well have been edited by the same hand). Instead, this paraphrase can be traced directly to a midrashic lineage of core *targumim* on the biblical Scroll of Esther, a tradition of commentary and compilation that includes *BT Megillah*, *Targum Rishon* and *Sheni*, *Midrash Esther Rabbah*, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, and their medieval proxies, the later midrashic compilations *Yalkut Shimoni, Ein Ya'akov* and similiar. Though the thematic content of the Prostitz *Esther* owes a heavy debt to these Hebrew and Aramaic antecedents, the work nonetheless bears the strongest rhetorical resemblance to contemporary Yiddish homiletic prose,[127] discarding the dialogic quality of rabbinic commentary and cultivating instead a more consistent expository style of narration. Thus, its rendering of Esther 2:5 reads:

> ein man ein jud war in Šušan, di heibt stat un' sein nomen war Mordekhaj, son Jaʾir, son Šimʿi, son Kiš; ein man von Benjamin; er sagt im pasuq drum ein jud, drum daß er gotes forcht men het in im den di andren juden un' hilt sich aso gar judischlich; un' der selbig M. war von Binjamin as nun stet geschriben bescheidlich in Targum von der megilla; do rechent ers auf den ganzen jiḥut bis an Benjamin, un' drum hebt er do an mit Jaʾir son Šimʿi daß ir solt wißen daß das der Šimʿi war, der Dawid ha'melekh aso hot gescholten do Dawid ver sein son Abhšalom floch; un' M. war des Šimʿi enikel, un' drum wolt im Dawid ha-melekh nischt drum tun, do in Šimʿi aso ibel aus richtet un' schalt in aso; Dawid ha-melekh der sach in der nebhuʾa daß Mordekhaj solt von im komen, drum wolt er in nit drum teten, aber do er wolt sterben, do tet er Šelomo, sein son, ṣewaʾa daß er solt sehen, daß Šimʿi wen er wert nimer kinder haben do solt er in teten, daß im di sind solt wern ver geben un' solt ḥeleq leʿolam ha-baʾ haben un daß di ṣaddiqim, di weren von im komen, nit von sein sind wegen ver derbet weren un' daß er in jener welt nit darft nimer zu besen; un' ach lernen mir der von, daß wen einer imenz was zu leid tut un' im komt zu daß er kan sich

127See Baumgarten, 93-94, 113-16, on the ways in which this vernacular genre both incorporated and resisted the rhetorical and hermeneutic hallmarks of rabbinic exegesis. The genre is epitomized by the so-called *Tsenerene.* See Jacob b. Isaac Ashkenazi. *Tse-enah u-Re-enah: Basel 1622*. Ed. Chava Turniansky. Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1967.

> wider rechnen, do sol er sich nit aso bald rechnen as ein behema, er sol vor aus rechnen un' trachten gar wol, was niz oder schad der von komt as Dawid ha-melekh tet mit Šimʿi,
>
> (Staerk-Leitzmann, 292-93)[128]

This narrator possesses a consistent, individual voice, often addressing the reader directly ("so that you might be know" [ir solt wißen daß]) yet with a sense of confraternity ("from this we learn" [lernen mir der von]). Nevertheless the narrator speaks plainly, conveying the biblical account, an attendant rabbinic interpretation and its moral significance in prosaic language, all the while employing the Hebrew-Aramaic component of Yiddish rather sparingly (especially considering the material under discussion). At the same time, the narrator displays a citational self-consciousness obscured by his rhetorical simplicity, as when he carefully distinguishes between the texts anterior to his translation, reminding the reader first of the Hebrew *pasuk*, the biblical verse itself, then of the Aramaic *targum* (by which he refers to *Targum Sheni*, that contains almost verbatim the account of David and Shimei given above, though an unmarked reference to the *"targum"* ordinarily refers to *Targum Onkelos*). The narrator thus positions his text among a variety of literary antecedents: targumic translation, rabbinic exegesis, homily, and narrative exposition. Furthermore, he is to a degree inclined, in the course of his elucidation of Scripture, to provide some minimal textual education, so that the reader might be sensitized to the fact that this Yiddish account is actually a compilation drawn from diverse sources. In this vein, the narrator elsewhere introduces intersecting biblical verses by means of explicit attribution ("[King] David also said," when citing a verse from Psalms, or "as the prophet Isaiah said"), rather than with abbreviated citations of biblical books, or the utterly formulaic and uninformative "as it is written." With these citations, the narrator urges the reader to be cognizant, not only of the array of biblical authors (that is to say, those figures to whom biblical books had traditionally been attributed), but also of the varied strata of translation and commentary which are the exegetical accessories of Scripture. The Prostitz *Esther* thus exhibits a tendency toward intertextual transparency and self-disclosure characteristic of Yiddish biblical paraphrase in this period,[129] presenting itself itself quite plainly as a student's edition of the Scroll of Esther aligned with rabbinic opinion.

For these reasons, Alexander's assessment of *targum* as mere "midrashic exposition [...] in the guise of a translation," proves an imperfect fit for *di lange megile*. This view, with its language of disguise and concealment, implies that the targumic author has somehow dissembled in presenting midrashic materials alongside literal biblical translation. However appropriate to the Aramaic targumim this characterization may be, it does not account for instances like our Yiddish *Esther,* in which the Prostitz editorship decisively prioritized intertextual transparency. In the above passage, we have seen how the narrator carefully and explicitly navigates among his intertexts. At the same time, his intertextual ambitions are tempered by pragmatic, commercial

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128The above is Staerk-Leitzmann's transliteration. See W. Staerk and A. Leitzmann, *Die jüdisch-deutschen Bibelübersetzungen von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts*. Jena, 1923. There is, as yet, no modern critical or facsimile edition of this work, and I have not yet had the opportunity to examine an exemplar of the 1589 Prostitz edition.

129 The crowning achievement of this genre, Jacob b. Isaac Ashkenazi's *Tsene-rene* (likely printed first in Lublin between 1600-1620), has progressed in its citational approach to include reference to specific biblical commentators, such as David Kimhi and Bahya b. Asher.

concerns. For just as the composer is eager to mine the rabbinic association of Shimei, David, and Mordecai for its wealth of moral and providential meanings, he is equally hesitant to lead his reader into the fraught and pilpulistic realm of comparative exegesis. The composer always keeps his intended audience in sight, considering their patience and intellectual preparation. Despite its devout, intertextual transmission of both Written and Oral Torah, the Prostitz *Esther* is ever a *product*, manufactured in a print shop concerned first and foremost with commercial viability.

Focus on the marketability of the Prostitz *Esther* limits the amount of its midrashic content for other reasons as well. Barry Walfish has detailed the ways in which the scandalous and morally problematic aspects of midrash troubled the rabbinic homilists of early modernity, who had begun to venerate their rabbinic and midrashic sources to a greater degree than ever before.[130] Walfish considers this tension between shocked disapproval and obligatory veneration to be the cause of the contorted apologetics for midrashic transgression that characterizes these early modern commentaries. This hypothesis also holds true in the case of the Prostitz *Esther*, which is generally modest and circumspect in its use of midrash, steering clear of the more sexually explicit or ethically dismaying moments in classical rabbinic commentary. Just as *Esther*'s editor avoided the inconvenience of *pilpul* for the sake of marketability, so too did he skirt those midrashim that would introduce subject matter inappropriate for his target audience, which undoubtedly included women.[131] In the context of religious education, as well, midrash posed significant problems for the social and sexual mores of early modern Ashkenaz.

Yet, just as generic difference permitted both the intertextual transparency of the Prostitz *Esther* alongside *Shmuel Bukh's* citational reticence, so too did variations in their specific conventions make individual genres more or less hospitable to midrashic hermeneutics. In contrast to the didactic and textual conservatism of vernacular homiletical paraphrase, for instance, the Yiddish Purim plays of the early modern period exemplify a radically irreverent, yet distinctively midrashic use of biblical narrative, and as such occasion the interaction of that mode with the performance styles of European popular drama.[132] The Purim play involves, as a rule, a great deal of sexual and scatological language. While often obscene or outrageous, the genre is nonetheless imbued with literary nuance by its exegetical wit and ear for liturgical parody. By virtue of the carnivalesque atmosphere of the holiday, a degree of religious, sexual, and bodily frankness ostensibly forbidden in daily public life was to be tolerated in good faith. The traditional injunction to drink "until you couldn't tell blessed Mordecai and Esther from accursed Haman and Zeresh" applied to the Purim play as well, where orthodox religious doctrine and standards of proper social comportment were freely upended.[133]

130Barry Walfish, "Kosher Adultery? The Mordecai-Esther-Ahasuerus Triangle in Talmudic, Medieval and Sixteenth-Century Exegesis*." The Book of Esther in Modern Resear*ch. Eds. Sidnie White Crawford, and Leonard Jay Greenspoon. London: Continuum, 2003.

131The anxiety around women reading midrash persisted throughout the early modern period, and resulted in the progressive bowdlerization of homiletical paraphrases in Yiddish. On the sanitized eighteenth century versions of the *Tsene-rene*, see Ch. Shmeruk, "Di mizrekh-eyropeishe nuskhoes fun der *Tsenerene*." *Tsenerene: Mustern.* Buenos Aires: Y. L. Lifshits Fond fun der Literatur-Gezelshaft baym YIVO, 1973. 330-350.

132Though the existing scholarship on this genre is substantial, see Bützer and Shmeruk below (n. 126) for thorough, carefully researched introductions to the Purim play and its literary and historical contexts.

133See, for example, Ch. Shmeruk, *Mahazot mikrai'im be-Yidish: 1697-1750.* Jerusalem: Ha-akademiyah ha-leumit ha-yisraelit le-mada'im, 1979. 157.

Though any on-stage improvisation in early modern Purim plays is necessarily lost to us, the critic of early Jewish theater Ahuva Belkin argues that improvisation played a significant role in the ribald and carnivalesque dynamics of the Purim play's humor: “In those places where the where the stage directions call for an improvised vocal response, such as "קומט מרדכי אונ' זאגט וואז ער זאגט" [Mordechai enters and says whatever he says] or “ענטפרט מרדכי וואז ער ענטפרט “ [Mordechai answers whatever he answers], we may assume that the players used the margin of improvisation allowed them to go even further than the written text” (24).[134] Frakes, too, notes regarding the 1697 *Akhashveyrosh-shpil* (which will occupy us at length in this chapter) that “the play is composed primarily in rhyming couplets, but there are occasional prose passages, especially in the monologues by Mordecai (and Mordecai's dream), which provide a clear hint of the common stage practice of the time, in which Mordecai's role was in large part improvised, ideally by an accomplished comedian” (*Early Yiddish Texts* 772). Belkin further claims that on-stage improvisation and the carnivalesque parodies which characterized the Purim play set it apart from contemporary non-Jewish biblical drama: “The gentile theatre of the 16th century abounded in biblical themes, with a strong preference for the Old Testament. The *Book of Esther* was dramatized hundreds of times. Its dramatic qualities enchanted playwrights in Europe, who tried to be faithful to the written text, and apologized whenever they considered alterations to be necessary. The Jewish folk play, on the other hand, was spontaneous and improvised freely on the text” (52-3).[135] Though this characterization fails to acknowledge other varieties of early modern drama which bear a stronger resemblance to the comedic attitudes and unfettered improvisation of the Purim play (such as the irreverent Shrovetide plays of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries), it nevertheless underscores the highly flexible form that the performance of the Purim play could take, both vis-a-vis the biblical text and the rabbinic tradition.

Thanks to its low-register, vernacular vulgarism, the Yiddish Purim play could unabashedly transmit moments of unvarnished crudity present in classical midrash, dispensing with the contorted apologetics and rationalizing equivocations to which the homilist had resorted. Even more strikingly, this Esther genre was perhaps singularly positioned to generate its own genuinely midrashic hermeneutics, in that it empowered the improvising actor to proliferate imaginative rereadings of traditional texts, whether liturgical, biblical, or exegetical. The very evanescence of extemporaneous oral performance conspired with the libertinism of the holiday to protect the interpretive freedom of the actor, who seems to have endured no lasting censure for the parodic midrashim he generated on stage. The very genre of parody and the carnivalesque levity of Purim served to enclose these performed interpretations within an implicit disavowal of any claim to exegetical seriousness on the part of the performer. In this vein, the wildest, most interpretively outrageous, and thus virtuosically hilarious midrashic effects are attributed not to Mordecai (represented in early examples of this genre as a shrewd, bawdy and sometimes threatening jester) but to the villain Haman. We shall see how Haman's mode of radical, satirical exegesis revives in pejorative form a distinctively midrashic

134See A. Belkin, “The “Low” Culture of the *Purimshpil*.” *Yiddish Theatre: New Approaches*. Ed. Joel Berkowitz. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003. 24-43.

135See A. Belkin, “Citing Scripture for a Purpose - the Jewish “Purimspiel” as a Parody.” *Assaph - C.* 12 (1996): 45-59.

hermeneutics, which the improvising performers of the Purim play enact to their own comic, caustic, and ultimately pleasurable ends.

Despite its low-brow role on stage, the Scroll of Esther was still an object of interest for the Jewish scholarly elite, and the early modern period saw the proliferation of printed editions of midrashic compilations,[136] which were designed to comprehensively assemble rabbinic source materials from Late Antiquity to the present. Compilations of this sort were reference works aimed at the scholarly elite, composed in Hebrew and providing a convenient verse-by-verse collation of rabbinic interpretations of diverse origin. Their target audience was likely moneyed, well-educated, and might have used such a work as an aid in the composition of homilies or original commentaries. Yet the access of the vast majority of the Jewish population to these texts would occur through a vernacular intermediary, such as a Yiddish paraphrase (like the Prostitz *Esther*) or a *magid,* an itinerant preacher who would selectively translate and incorporate this Hebraic material into sermons, or indeed through the performance of popular dramas like the Purim play. While the vernacular and oral origins of the early Purim play might seem to suggest that it would not have been substantially enriched by the hermeneutic tools of the scholarly elite, one cannot ignore its extensive use of midrashic resources to structurally expand the biblical narrative (in adding scenes and speeches), elucidate obscurities in the original Hebrew, and most of all, to elicit laughter. The comic enters into play's plot very often as part of a midrashic interlude, which is not rigidly adherent to its rabbinic antecedents but becomes instead an opportunity to portray the daily life of the people, fleshing out inherited midrashic expansions of the biblical text with unabashed, quotidian realism.

In this chapter I explore the ways in which the early modern Purim play displays an imaginative posture toward its biblical intertexts that preserves the distinctive hermeneutic features of classical midrash. Because the intertextual resources and practices of the Yiddish Purim play are so complex, we will consider a series of questions, which will give this chapter its form. How do competing accounts (or even mythologies) of the orality and subsequent textualization of midrash intersect with the exegetical disposition of the early modern Purim play, which makes its own gestures toward (a perhaps fictional) orality? Given that both midrash and the Purim play survive only as written or printed text, what if anything distinguishes their use of apparently oral and dialogic modes of exegesis? Crucially, to what extent can both midrash and Purim play be conceived as literary (re)enactments of "the drama of exegesis?" This question will be addressed in sections I and II of the chapter, where I review some dominant scholarly narratives of midrashic generation and transmission, and the way in which the ostensibly oral composition of classical midrash raises questions around the exegetical uses of authorial anonymity and interpretive authority. These issues are of central importance to the parodic liberties taken by the Purim play, and by considering a late-seventeenth century Purim play in their light, I excavate some of the dynamics of social and religious authority there submerged. Section III will proceed from this premise in asking: how does this Purim play's use of parody and laughter retrieve and sustain a distinctively midrashic hermeneutic? In this connection, I turn to M. M. Bakhtin's essays on the interrelation of dialogue and the comic mode,

136E.g. *Esther Rabbah* (Constantinople, 1517?; Pesaro, 1519; Venice, 1545, reprint of Pesaro). As with many of the medieval midrashic compilations, *Esther Rabbah* has a complex textual history, its earliest portions dating to the sixth century CE, though it was assembled, harmonized and reached its more-or-less current form in the twelfth or thirteenth century. See J. Neusner, *Esther Rabbah I : An Analytical Translation.* Brown Judaic studies, no. 182. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989, and the article on *Esther Rabbah* in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*.

rereading this incisive account of parody with an eye to the formal affinity between his dialogic conception of laughter and the hermeneutic strategies essential to midrashic exegesis. The Purim play will thence emerge as a coalescence of apparently diverse genres, made possible nevertheless thanks to their uniquely dialogic intertextuality. Finally, section IV, a brief coda, will examine how these parodically inflected exegetical techniques are taken up by the copyist of our play in his Hebrew preface. There, he deploys midrashic rereadings in service of his confessional heterodoxy and messianic radicalism, and in so doing gestures toward the new religious and literary avenues open to midrash in modernity.

I. PARADIGMS OF TRANSMISSION: TEXTUALIZING MIDRASH

In spite of its role as textual intermediary between classical midrash and the early modern Purim play, the medieval midrashic compilation represents a unmistakable departure from the imaginative hermeneutic of the aggadic tradition. Ostensibly, these compilations were modeled on the variegated, legalistically rigorous, and sometimes meandering discourses of the Gemara, yet a close look at their citational praxis reveals that the resemblance is merely skin-deep. *Yalkut Shimoni* is one of the most prominent examples of this medieval genre as it was reborn through the early modern printing press. Our first attestations in manuscript date to the early fourteenth century,[137] and by end of the sixteenth century *Yalkut Shimoni* had been printed in many of the major centers of Jewish print: Salonica (1521-26), Venice (1566), and Cracow (1595, also at the Prostitz press). Here once again, the Prostitz press produces a work that hews to the generic conventions which had governed earlier editions and the manuscript tradition. To cite only a brief example, *Yalkut Shimoni* opens its related discussion of Esther 2:5 with the following:

> איש יהודי, אמר רבי נחמן מוכתר בנימוס היה. בן יאיר בן שמעי מה נפשך אי ליחוסי קא אתי ליחסיה עד בנימין, אלא מאן שנא הני. תנא כלם על שמו נקראו. בן יאיר שהאיר עיניהם שלא ישראל בתפלה, בן שמעי ששמע אל תפלתו, בן קיש שנקש על דלתי רחמים ופתחו לו, קרי ליה יהודי וקרי ליה ימיני, קרי ליה יהודי אלמא מיהודה קא אתא וקרי ליה ימיני אלמא מבנימין קא אתי, אמר רבה בר רב הונא ואיתימא רבי יהושע בן לוי אביו מבנימין ואמו מיהודה, ורבנן אמרי משפחות מתגרות זו בזו, משפחת יהודה אמרה אנא גרמית למיתי מרדכי דלא קטליה דוד לשמעי, ומשפחת בנימן אמרה מינאי קא אתי, רבה אמר כנסת ישראל הוא דקאמר לאידך גיסא, ראו מה עשה לי יהודי ומה שלם לי ימיני, מה עשה לי יהודי דלא קטליה דוד לשמעי דאי קטליה דוד לשמעי לא הוה מתיליד מרדכי דמקני ביה בהמן וגרם להו צערא לישראל, ומה שלם לי ימיני שאלמלי קטליה שאול לאגג לא הוה מתיליד המן:

Here, in contrast to our Yiddish paraphrase, the dialogic structure of rabbinic hermeneutical debate has been preserved, so that the text proceeds from one attributed rabbinic assertion to the

137Its authorship and exact date of composition are a matter of scholarly dispute. Epstein and Zunz contend that it derives from the early thirteenth century, while Rappoport dates it to the eleventh. For Rappoport's assessment, see *Sefer Kerem Ḥemed*. Ed. Samuel Löb Goldenberg. Vienna: M. I. Landau, 1843. See also A. Epstein, "R. Shim'on Ḳara veha-Yalḳuṭ Shim'oni." *Ha-Hoker* 1 (1891). 85-93, 129-37; Leopold Zunz. *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden, Historisch entwickelt.* Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1832.

next, much in the style of the midrashic compilations from the classical period (such as *Esther Rabbah*, to which we will soon return). Unlike those compilations, however, *Yalkut Shimoni* is hardly interested in setting the rabbis in dialogue with one another. Its primary concern is to expansively assemble all the midrashic interpretations of a single *pasuk*, whether or not they coalesce into any kind of progressive discussion. We can see in this late midrashic compilation a tendency toward encyclopedic anthologization, a distinctly medieval artifact of an era preoccupied with the burgeoning of the great European libraries and the pressing question of how best to organize the ever-increasingly store of information they contained.[138] Still, *Yalkut Shimoni* continues to feature a vestigial version of rabbinic dialogism, though here it appears to function solely as a token of the rabbinic character of these materials, a rhetorical stamp of authenticity. While in this late iteration the dialogic quality of rabbinic exegesis wanes in its thematic significance, the formal effect of multiple voices juxtaposed together serves as an implicit statement of rabbinic poetics and thence, of textual pedigree.

By retaining the formal template of rabbinic dialogue, *Yalkut Shimoni* shares with its predecessors a tolerance for contradiction among myriad exegetes, though in its case, indifference might prove a more apt characterization. Where the single, unified narrative voice of the Prostitz *Esther* is ready to gloss over hermeneutic complications by discarding the diversity of interpretation that had survived as late as the medieval anthologies, *Yalkut Shimoni* piles up multiple, conflicting readings of a single verse, with little or no editorial concern for their interrelation. And indeed this tendency extends beyond the medieval anthology, as in the Hebraic exegeses of the early modern period which were aimed, not at a popular audience, but at the intellectual elite. Walfish's reading of the early modern homilist's apologetics accurately conveys the way in which the scholarly elite wrestled with their obligation to accept the exegetical authority of midrash. Yet this anxiety found its primary expression in Hebrew works by and for that elite, highly literate audience. In contrast, the equivalent vernacular genres express little or none of this anxiety, and continue to sacrifice hermeneutic complexity in the name of piety and pedagogical expedience. A telling example of *Yalkut Shimoni's* encyclopedic orientation drawn from the passage above involves the problematic identification of the Shimei (b. Kish) of Mordecai's lineage in Esther 2:5 with the Shimei (b. Gera) of II Sam. 16. On the one hand, *Targum Rishon* resists this association by giving a second genealogy in which Mordecai's ancestor, Shimei, is not the Shimei of II Sam. 16, but another Benjaminite descended from King Saul through his son Jonathan.[139] On the other hand, medieval commentators like Abraham ibn Ezra reject both possibilities and insist that Shimei b. Kish is of a different lineage altogether, not the brother of King Saul. This classical consternation over (and the medieval preservation of) competing genealogical accounts is confidently omitted in the Prostitz *Esther*, so that the identity of the two men named Shimei cannot be called into question. Yet *Yalkut Shimoni* bears only a passing resemblance to its classical antecedents, in which conflicting readings are not only acknowledged, but whose dialogic contextualization highlights moments of hermeneutic dispute.

138For an excellent treatment of this topic, see M. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture.* 2nd ed. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008; ibid and J. Ziolkowski, *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures.* Material Texts. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002. For a more playful treatment of the theme, see U. Eco, *The Infinity of Lists.* Trans. Alastair McEwen. New York: Rizzoli, 2009.

139See B. Grossfeld, *The First Targum to Esther: According to the Ms Paris Hebrew 110 of the Bibliotheque Nationale.* New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1983.

By setting conflicting readings into dialogue with one another, the classical midrashic compilation built larger narrative structures. *Yalkut Shimoni,* in contrast, preserves the attributions that form the rhetorical backbone of midrashic dialogue, but placidly disregards their fractious subtext in favor of encyclopedic compilation.

Robert Bonfil has proposed that this very turn toward impassive anthologization may have been in some ways inimical to midrash, as it was conceived in the hermeneutic imagination of the early rabbis (247-49).[140] In his account, midrash's distinguishing generic features derive from its origins in oral exegesis, so that it must by its very nature narrate the encounter of diverse, competing, and often antithetical understandings of the same text. In this view, classical midrash is a faithful record of the dynamic and contentious collaboration that is human conversation. By virtue of its commitment to preserving the very cacophonous diversity of its inception, then, midrash was singularly maladapted to systematization or harmonizing interpretation. Moshe Idel has similarly argued that Jewish thought in the Middle Ages was marked by the ascendancy of more harmonistic, highly systematized and thoroughly elaborated theologies than those evident in classical rabbinic literature.[141] In this account, biblical exegesis transformed over the course of the Middle Ages, and became a synoptic enterprise, yoking diverse exegeses together to form a consonant whole, often one that participated in or served to corroborate a pre-existing theological system (51). If we take the arguments of Bonfil and Idel together, it seems that the hermeneutic practices which had originally defined midrash were destined for extinction in the systematizing, harmonistic and (worst of all!) text-critical activity of the modern 'scientific' mind-set evident in the print culture of early modern Europe. From this perspective, a sixteenth-century homiletic paraphrase like the Prostitz *Esther*, and its Hebraic antecedents, display a merely superficial, rhetorical affinity with classical midrash, availing themselves more or less sporadically of the formal hallmarks of rabbinic literature or excerpted sound-bytes of rabbinic thought, while neglecting the imaginative, dialogic practice from which midrash originated.

Moshe Idel, in comparing midrashic hermeneutics with other forms of Jewish textual interpretation that rose to prominence in the medieval period, concurs, suggesting that it was "the absence of an explicit or systematic theology that enabled a freer, hermeneutical attitude to the text to develop in the Talmud and Midrash" (50), whereas medieval "philosophical, kabbalistic, and Ashkenazic Hasidic literatures drastically deviated from midrashic hermeneutics [in that they] were all profoundly influenced by relatively elaborated theologies, each [of] which impinged their peculiar concerns on the canonic texts" (51). Emphasizing the orality of classical midrashic composition, Bonfil elaborates on these historical claims by linking medieval Jewish hermeneutics with evolving technologies of textual transmission: "Midrashic original production was indeed mortally wounded in the same period in which European society underwent its first major shift from an oral to a written tradition. [...] In that same period, cultural activity concentrated on written texts, to be read, explained, glossed, or harmonistically interpreted when confronted with contradictions arising from other written texts" (248). He goes on to point out

140R. Bonfil, “Can Medieval Storytelling Help Understanding Midrash? The Story of Paltiel: A Preliminary Study on History and Midrash.” *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought, and History*. Ed. Michael Fishbane. Albany: SUNY Press, 1993. 46-55.

141M. Idel, “Midrashic versus Other Forms of Jewish Hermeneutics: Some Comparative Reflections.” *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought, and History.* Ed. Michael Fishbane. Albany: SUNY Press, 1993. 46-55.

that with the rise of literary and textual culture, the High Middle Ages saw the composition of the monumental harmonistic works of midrashic compilation (among which *Esther Rabbah* and *Yalkut Shimoni* are rightfully included) and that this aspiration to harmony and exegetical concord demanded the erasure of the conflicting, heterogeneous, and polyovcal elements of rabbinic discourse, of which midrash was the record. He concludes that the next "mortal blow" to midrash came with the advent of print, the emergence of a modern, textually critical consciousness and an attendant intolerance of inconsistency (249). By the time we arrive at the sixteenth century Venetian editions of *Esther Rabbah* and *Yalkut Shimoni*, as Bonfil's narrative would have it, active production of new midrash and the employment of a midrashic hermeneutical mode has all but ceased, and individual, inherited midrashim are preserved in petrified form by the ascendant genre of the compilation.

Yet despite his compelling characterization of the midrashic imagination, Bonfil's account of European textuality is left wanting. Bracketing for a moment the problematic founding assumption that midrash was indeed a faithful record of rabbinic speech, such a narrative is undermined by its portrayal of print culture, which is grounded in precisely the Eisensteinian clichés that material bibliographers like Dane and McKitterick have so labored to refute. Bonfil reproduces here the view of print as a petrifying and commodifying medium, which by compiling, harmonizing and mass-producing the varied textual products of the Oral Torah deprives them of their very capacity to represent the detailed, painstaking and fractious nature of rabbinic dialogue. Yet we have lately seen how the early modern editor, that most socially and intellectually mobile, textually enfranchised denizen of the printing house (whose 'scientific mind-set' Bonfil charges with the suppression of midrash) could also be the agent of textual dynamism, reintroducing textual complication, restoring exegetical polyphony, and resisting the positioning or transmission of the intertexts he inherited. As scholars like Richardson and D'Amico have argued, that very scientific mind-set (and the humanist textual insights that accompanied it) engendered an acute sensitivity to the contingency and historicity of textual transmission, obliging authors and editors to wrestle with the fraught, conflicting aspects of midrashic composition. As a salutary corrective to the more extreme view espoused by Bonfil, we could also return to Walfish's argument. In his view, the early modern biblical commentator was newly galvanized in his attention to the more outlandish and controversial aspects of midrash due in part to an esoteric view of the Oral Torah as theologically equal to the Written Torah (134-35). Daniel Boyarin has similarly pointed out the ways in which medieval Jewish exegesis resisted and demoted the aggadic portions of rabbinic literature on two fronts: in the Ashkenazic tradition, Rashi and his tosafistic descendants were content to exclude midrashic interpretations that did not speak directly to existing textual problems, while in Sephardic circles the Rambam had already dismissed *aggadah* as mere pedagogy, poetic figures to aid the simple in understanding the abstract philosophy of Scripture.[142] In Walfish's account, early modern commentators departed from both these traditions when they began to read *aggadah* with the

142See Boyarin's *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*: “Midrash has been largely suppressed in Jewish hermeneutics [...]. The allegorical-Aristotelian tradition of Judaism, best represented by Maimonides, has been hostile to the view of language that midrash presupposes, and this tradition has gained hegemony in the dominant Jewish culture” (xii). For a related articulation of the Rambam's assessment of the exegetical value of *aggadah,* see F. Talmage, *Apples of Gold in Settings of Silver : Studies in Medieval Jewish Exegesis and Polemics.* Ed. Barry Walfish, Papers in mediaeval studies, v. 14. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1999. 119, 129-30.

same exhaustive attention to detail and contradiction that the tosafists had reserved for interpreting *halachah* (122-25, 135).[143] In a sort of sequel to Idel's characterization of medieval Jewish theology (kabbalism in particular), Walfish explicitly identifies this renewed attention to *aggadah* with sixteenth-century esoteric mysticism:

> Kabbalists believed that the words of the Sages concealed kernels of mystical truth about the essence of the divine; therefore, their words had to be studied carefully, even if not every rabbinic statement contained these secrets. [...T]his resulted in a very reverential approach to the words of the Sages and a conviction that all the traditions of the Sages were authentic and reliable interpretations that penetrated to the true essence of the biblical text, and were not merely homiletical embellishment that could be ignored if they seemed illogical, embarrassing or inconvenient. (134)

The early modern biblical commentator's esoteric hermeneutics thus obliged him to entertain the wilder of these exegeses, even as his moral sensibilities may have been troubled by them. Walfish additionally points out that the proliferation of homiletic commentaries in the sixteenth century (particularly on the Scroll of Esther) was accompanied by a growing reliance on midrash, most probably through the medium of medieval anthologies, as a navigable library of relevant citations (125). The early modern biblical commentator now propagated and passed along to his (élite, Hebrew) readership the ambiguous, bizarre, taboo elements of midrash which his predecessors had simply ignored.

Even with this qualification, the mode of interpretation practiced by the early modern kabbalist bore scant resemblance to the midrash of the Sages. Rather than emulating the imaginative departures of midrash, these commentators could not so easily dispense with their highly articulated metaphysics, so that "[f]rom this period on the apologetic attempts to justify, explain away, mitigate or find deeper, esoteric meanings for the more provocative elements of this [midrashic] tradition proliferate" (Walfish 135). For Walfish, midrash persists in the early modern period as a source of thematic content, mined from classical and medieval midrashic compilations, but because it now bore transcendental meaning, it was simultaneously endowed with the textual inviolability previously reserved exclusively for the Written Torah. Thus, while both the medieval compilation and the early modern homiletical commentary may have signaled their intertextual affiliation with midrash by formal, rhetorical, or citational means, they were nevertheless participants in a canonization of the Oral Torah, which necessarily acted as a brake

143For additional perspectives on Rashi's selectivity as regards his midrashic materials, see Sarah Kamin, *Rashi: Peshuto shel mikra u-midrasho shel mikra*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1986. 548; and M. Signer, "Peshat, Sensus Litteralis, and Sequential Narrative: Jewish Exegesis and the School of St. Victor in the Twelfth Century." *Frank Talmage Memorial Volume* (1993): 203-16; ibid. "Rashi as Narrator." *Rashi et la culture juive en France du Nord au moyen âge.* Eds. Gilbert Dahan, Gérard Nahon, and Elie Nicholas. Collection de la Revue des études juives. Paris: E. Peeters, 1997. 103-10; ibid. "Restoring the Narrative: Jewish and Christian Exegesis in the Twelfth Century." *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.* Eds. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish, and Joseph W. Goering. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. 70-82; I. Marcus, "Rashi's Choice: The Humash as Rewritten Midrash." *Studies in Medieval Jewish Intellectual and Social History: Festschrift in Honor of Robert Chazan*. Eds. E. R. Wolfson, L. H. Schiffman, and D. Engel. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

on any contemporary impulse to imitate midrashic praxis and its radical imaginative departures from the plain sense or received interpretation of Scripture.

Is it ever possible to say, then, that the literary products of early modern biblical exegesis were properly speaking midrashic? Or, as Bonfil admonishes, do we err whenever we "[adopt] the term midrash as a synonym or a metaphor [for] modern hermeneutical activity" (248)? Bonfil, though his definition of midrash remains somewhat indistinct, insists that midrash is at its deepest level an oral genre, and as a result he is inclined to view all textuality (whether scribal or typographic) as a threat to the essential character of midrash, albeit to varying degrees.[144] Yet this premise returns us to the very problem we deferred above; namely, the assumption that the midrash we have inherited from the rabbis (always in written form, of course) was in fact a faithful – even mechanical? – transcription of *oral* discourse. Put another way, such a premise rejects out of hand the possibility that midrash was actually always a *textual* practice which presented itself as dialogue by formal and thematic means. To seriously consider this alternative, we must first come to terms with the unavoidable reality that all our evidence of midrash is text and only text. Not only that, we lack even compelling circumstantial evidence that midrash was transcribed, for the same individual midrashim appear in diverse sources in nearly identical form, suggesting that by the sixth century we have only to do with redactors manipulating the texts they have inherited. The same may also be said of the closing of the Talmudic canon in this period, as David Weiss Halivni has argued.[145] This view posits that the *Stamma'im,* a late (6-7th century) anonymous generation of sages, were not only the final redactors of the Gemara but in fact the authors of its distinctive rhetorical style, a method of dialectical argumentation known as *shakla vetarya* which had not been preserved in earlier halachic literature (such as the Mishnah and Tosefta). This meant that the Stamma'im were concerned with committing to writing, probably for the first time, the legal reasoning, the logical connective tissue which would set disparate inherited (Amoraic) interpretations in dialogue with one another. Yet Halivni, in fleshing out this account, resists the notion that the efforts of the Stamma'im were purely mechanical, that they merely copied out verbatim the oral tradition which had come down to them. In fact, Halivni argues, it was just the opposite: the Stamma'im had received Amoraic dicta in petrified form as part of a memorized, recited oral tradition, but the reasoning behind these legal rulings had not been preserved during this process of memorization and transmission. As a result, the Stamma'im received only in gapped, fragmented form the lost arguments of which the teachings of the Amoraim were the conclusion. The task of the Stamma'im was thus to reconstruct these arguments, assemble the remaining fragments, and fashion rhetorical contexts in which to embed them (3-4, 208, n. 2). In so doing, the Stamma'im sometimes resorted to "forced explanations," in which, wrestling with the remnants that had come down to them, they imposed an interpretation on the text which was not self-evident from the surviving materials (143). The Stamma'im, as anonymous editors, were also able to interpolate their interpretations and conclusions without attribution, sometimes in such a way that their words appear to be those of the Amora they are citing (14-15). In other instances, the Stamma'im may first introduce an

144"The affinity between the contents and the mechanisms of medieval *transmission of traditional knowledge committed to orality* and Midrash, as perceived by the medieval mind, may thus propose the former as a more general definition of the latter" (247). Bonfil goes on to describe the deleterious effects of textualization on midrashic production beginning in the Middle Ages and continuing into the early modern period (248-49).

145D. Halivni and J. L. Rubenstein. *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

objection one Amora made to another, only to respond with their own conclusion, because the response of the second Amora has been lost (24, n. 69-70). And indeed, when medieval commentators encounter the text, they are frequently deceived by this textual tromp l'oeil, and take elements of the anonymous stratum to be Amoraic. In contrast to a myth of pristine, infallible oral transmission, Halivni's work lays bare the complex, fractured, and, indeed, *textual* history of the "Oral Torah."[146] In light of this fact, it is often possible to discern in the documents of the rabbinic canon the literary gestures of late textual custodians, adopting rhetorical styles that serve to recast their textual inheritance as oral testimony.

Bonfil is not the only contemporary scholar to address midrash in terms that elide its always already opaque textual histories. Karl-Josef Kuschel, for example, offers the following account of the history of rabbinic literature: "The Talmud and Midrashim are a polyphonic choir of hundreds of rabbis from the most varied times and places and thus represent an open process of discussion of all kinds of questions of faith and life" (53).[147] Such a description, however appealing, overlooks the role played by often invisible textual stewards,[148] the later redactors, copyists and translators responsible for reproducing and transmitting these texts. By failing to discern the concealed hand of these textual agents, it is easy to mistake each individual rabbinic voice for an authentic, unmediated self-expression. Although her approach is not as romantic as Kuschel's, Lesleigh Cushing Stahlberg is also inclined to minimize the agency of the editor when describing rabbinic polyphony: "The form [of midrash] is unhierarchical: no redactor intervenes to tell us who is right and who is wrong; the presentation does not indicate whose opinion is to be followed and whose dismissed. Implicit in the polysemy is an assertion of the validity of multiple interpretations" (114).[149] Leaving aside for the moment the complicating fact that the anonymous voice of the Talmud avails itself of various means by which to make clear its opinion on halachic disputes among Tannaim (and thereby hand down a final, definitive ruling),[150]

146Halivni's analysis focuses almost entirely on the halachic passages of the Talmud, as did the work of the Stamma'im themselves. Expanding Halivni's project, Jeffrey Rubinstein has pursued similar lines of inquiry in relation to rabbinic *aggadah*. See J. Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999; ibid. *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005.

147Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Abraham: Sign of Hope for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.* New York: Continuum, 1995.

148For the best-known consideration of this problem in contemporary theoretical discourse, see L. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation.* 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2008. There, Venuti pursues the notion that the rise of an aesthetic of fluency in modern translation (especially in English) results in the erasure and concealment of the translator (2-7), thus creating the impression that the translation is the original and an attendant inclination to mistake the work of the translator for that of the author. Although Venuti's focus is largely modern and Anglophone, his admonition that we resist the temptation to forget or ignore the highly mediated nature of textual transmission (across languages, genres, historical periods, etc.) rings especially true in the case of rabbinic exegesis, where the textual artifacts which have come down to us clamorously insist on their instantiating orality.

149L. C. Stahlberg, *Sustaining Fictions: Intertextuality, Midrash, Translation, and the Literary Afterlife of the Bible.* New York: T & T Clark, 2008.

150*Deus ex machina* being one such method. A famous example from *BT Eruvin* 13b concludes a dispute between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai with the intervention of a heavenly voice, which announces: "Both these and these are the words of the living God, *but the halachah is according to Beit Hillel"* [אלו ואלו דברי אלהים חיים והלכה כדברי ב״ה] (italics mine). It is worth noting, of course, that the declarations of a *bat kol* could also be circumvented by Sages of the Bavli, who were at times content to reject divine intervention in favor of majority rule (the best-known example of which regards the Oven of Akhnai, *Bava Metzia* 59b). See *The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition.* New York: Random House, 1989.

Stahlberg understands the lack of vocal editorial intervention in the transmission of midrash to mean that the editor was a impartial medium, channeling rabbinic voices without altering, omitting, emending or otherwise meddling. Yet, as Halivni has demonstrated in the Bavli's halachic discourse and as Rubinstein and others have shown in the case of *aggadah*, the intervention by later rabbinic readers in their midrashic inheritance was extensive. In this connection, Stahlberg cites Ecclesiastes 12:11, which has traditionally been interpreted as a reference to the Dual Torah, "given by one shepherd" [נתנו מרעה אחד], that is, God. Yet it seems that from a text-critical perspective one might just as well say that each rabbinic document which has come down to us was also given by one shepherd: its final editor, crowding his unruly flock of rabbinic predecessors into a sheepcote of his own devising, generically proper to his time and place. In mistaking literary artifice or historical circumstance for irrepressible polyvocality, we risk partaking in an ahistorical and atextual mythologization of midrashic literature as the unblemished record of rabbinic orality.

In addition to the difficulties that bedevil a strictly oral definition of midrash, Bonfil's narrative of the quiescence of midrashic orality during the Middle Ages and early modernity concentrates on Hebrew-language documents, limiting the scope of his argument in crucial and ultimately misleading ways. For even if the composition of midrashim had ceased in the Hebrew literary production of the scholarly elites, midrashic compilations were still facilitating the contact of inherited midrash with the imagination of both literate and illiterate segments of Jewish society. I would argue that the midrashic mode persisted in the oral culture of the people long after it began to decline in the textual culture of the elites, and that it welled up in the unedited, unharmonized vernacular performance of the Purim play. Not only did it materially perform the rhetorically encoded orality of its midrashic antecedents (via the living bodies and voices of its actors), but by virtue of its vernacular Yiddish composition, its improvisational execution, and its parodic disavowal of its own exegetical products, the Purim play remained unconstrained by the processes of canonization which were petrifying the inherited sum of classical midrash during the same period.

Let us imagine that, in striving to delineate the contours of midrash as an exegetical mode, we ceased to view oral composition as a defining feature and replaced it with a rhetorical criterion: that midrash be a formal and thematic performance of oral discourse, a textual reenactment of fictional conversations, a citational mosaic fashioned to resemble dialogue. In this way, the exegetical practice of midrash may be decisively distinguished from the other early modern exegetical genres under discussion, however heavily they rely on that textual tradition for their raw materials.[151] The medieval anthology retains some of the rabbis' rhetorical gestures toward orality, but piles diverse interpretations one upon the other with minimal compositional interest in their interrelation as oral discourse, as we saw in *Yalkut Shimoni*.[152] Homiletic

151I do not discuss medieval *responsa* literature here, though it offers an appealing perspective on a literary mode arguably more 'oral' than that of the midrashic anthology, only because it was not generally concerned with the interpretation of biblical narrative. This is a marked difference from the midrashic anthology, biblical paraphrase, and Purim play, which are all united by their 'retelling' of the Hebrew Bible. Further, where Chapter 1 considered the broad variety of Hebrew and Yiddish genres printed by the Prostitz printing house in Cracow, here we have no immediate cause to link the Purim play either to that printing house or to the production of halachic works in general.

152Other scholars have found themselves similarly inclined to resist the narrative of midrashic extinction, even in the case of those medieval Hebrew genres like the anthology. For a discussion of this problem specific to *Yalkut Shimoni*, see J. Elbaum, "*Yalqut Shim'oni* and the Medieval Midrashic Anthology." *Prooftexts* 17.2 (1997): 133-

paraphrases, like the Prostitz *Esther*, go even further, extracting the interpretive conclusions from rabbinic commentary and discarding the oral formulae whose dialogic staging had generated the polyvocal effects characteristic of midrash and its attendant tolerance of interpretive diversity. (In a way, this genre takes the agenda of the medieval compilation one step further, striving to assemble, condense and harmonize the immense accretion of rabbinic commentary into ever more accessible, digestible and therefore marketable forms.) In addition to underscoring the important distinctions between midrash and these other exegetical genres that draw from it, such a definition also allows the alignment of midrash with early modern literary genres that might not have initially struck us as perpetuating a midrashic, or even exegetical, way of reading Scripture. Unlike a paraphrase like the Prostitz *Esther*, which hews close to the content of biblical and rabbinic reading but greatly departs in rhetorical style, the Purim play, usually including substantial improvisation on the part of the actors, gleefully and irreverently parodies rabbinic exegesis and Jewish liturgy. At the same time, this genre sampled extensively from the very same traditional midrashic inventory of which the staid and heuristic homiletical genres made such use. In this fashion, the Purim play was able to physically "stage" this polyvocal intertextual tradition as dialogue in much the same way the Stamma'im rhetorically (re)enacted the disputations of their interpretive forebears, the Amoraim and Tannaim, through stylized Talmudic dialogue.

II. THE DRAMA OF EXEGESIS: A CLASSICAL EXAMPLE

The most obvious manifestation of this problem, midrash's pervasive formal and formulaic allusion its own (perhaps fictive) oral origins, in contemporary rabbinic scholarship centers on the historical validity of attribution in classical midrashic compilations. Jacob Neusner has attacked earlier rabbinic scholarship, claiming that "[e]veryone has taken for granted that all statements attributed to named authorities in the document really were said by those authorities and testify to the character of opinion, now preserved in this writing, held at the time of those authorities" (3).[153] Boyarin, responding to Neusner's point, tempers this blanket-condemnation when he acknowledges that although it would be very dangerous "to depend either on the exact attribution [...] or to make overmuch from the exact form of the words in claiming an interpretation to be tannaitic," most scholars nevertheless avoid this pitfall by means of the "common-sense principle" that "[b]oth of these aspects of the text seem very likely to have been shaped by later transmission and redaction, and the later the text, the more likely is such intervention" (357).[154] All of which is very much in line with Halivni's account, in which Stamma'itic materials are invisibly interpolated with the teachings of earlier Sages, and thus come to be attributed to them. While Boyarin softens Neusner's critique, most significant for our purposes is the founding problem for scholars: that attribution is a prominent, perhaps crucial, component of rabbinic literary expression which is especially vulnerable to fictionalization. That is to say, attribution is one of the ways in which the literary ambitions of later redactors may be realized in the texts they inherited, and represents a type of intervention minimally destructive to

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153J. Neusner, *The Midrash Compilations of the Sixth and Seventh Centuries: An Introduction to the Rhetorical, Logical, and Topical Program, Esther Rabbah I.* Brown Judaic Studies, no. 2 Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989.

154D. Boyarin, "On the Status of the Tannaitic Midrashim" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112.3 (1992). 455-65.

the text's function as a bearer of meaning (in contrast to, for example, omission or expurgation). At the same time, fictional attribution is a powerful device, whose force lies in its ability to bestow authorial status upon the redactor, who may now orchestrate and ventriloquize, crafting fictional dialogues among authoritative historical interlocutors. In Neusner's language, "the authorship wishes us to believe that it speaks not in its own name but in the name of a [variety] of identified authorities. It then presents a consensus of the named authorities and their colleagues" (*Midrash Compilations* 2).[155] The redactor's power of fictional attribution is also a precious resource from a literary perspective, since it acts as an engine of dramatic tension, generating the illusion of confrontational interpretive discord and raising the narrative stakes of individual exegeses. In a sense, the later redactor is free to engineer controversy and contention out of a mere diversity of opinion, pitting divergent interpretations against one another to heighten contrast, spotlighting rather than obscuring the disputatious encounter of the rabbis with Scripture and with one another.

Consider the following, a lengthy, dogged argument which transpires in Petihta Eight of the classical midrashic compilation *Esther Rabbah I* (as well as in the compilations *Genesis Rabbah* and *Leviticus Rabbah*):

> ויהי בימי אחשורוש (אסתר א א) שמעון בר אבא בשם ר׳ יונתן אמר כל מקום שנאמר ויהי משמש צרה ושמחה, אם צרה אין צרה כיוצה בה, אם שמחה אין שמחה כיוצא בה. אתא ר׳ שמואל ב״נ ועבדה פלגו, כל מקום שנאמר ויהי משמש צרה, וכל מקום שנאמר והיה שמחה. אתיבון והא כתיב (בראשית א ג) ויאמר אלהים יהי אור ויהי אור. אמר לון אף היא אינה שמחה, שלא זכה העולם להשתמש לאותה אורה. אמר ר׳ יודא בר׳ סימון אורה שנבראת ביום הראשון היה אדם צופה ומביט בה מסוף העולם ועד סופו, וכיון שצפה הקדוש ברוך הוא בדור אנוש ובדור המבול ובדור הפלגה שהן עתידין לחטא לפניו עמד וגנזה מהם, הדא הוא דכתיב (איוב לח טו) וארח צדיקים כאור נגה: הולך ואור, עד-נכון היום. אתיבון (בראשית א ה) ויהי ערב ויהי בוקר יום אהד. אמר לון אף הדא אינה שמחה, שכל מה שנברא ביום הראשון הן עתידין להבלות, הדא הוא דכתיב (ישעיה נא ו) כי שמים כעשן נמלחו והארץ כבגד תבלה. אתיבון והכתיב (בראשית א ח-לא) יום שני, יום שלישי, עד יום השישי. אמר לון אף הדא אינה שמחה, שכל מה שנברא בששת ימי בראשית צריכין עשיה, שאינן נעשין עשיה שלמה, כגון החטים צריכים להטחן, והחרדל והתרמוסין צריכין להמתק. . איתיבון (בראשית לט ב) ויהי ה׳ את יוסף. אמר לון אף הדא אינה שמחה, שמתוך כך נתגרתה אותה הדב. איתיבון (ויקרא ט א) ויהי ביום השמיני קרא משה לאהרן ולבניו. אמר לון אף הוא אינו טוב, שבאותו היום מתו נדב ואביהוא. איתיבון (במדבר ז א) ויהי ביום כלות משה להקים את המשכן. אמר לון אף הדא אינה שמחה, שנגנז בו בנינו של עולם. איתיבון (יהושע ו כז) ויהי ה׳ את יהושע. אמר לון אינה שמחה, דכתיב (שם ו) ויקרע יהושע שמלתיו. איתיבון (דה״א יז א) ויהי כישב דוד בביתו. אמר לון אינה שמחה, שבאותו היום בא נתן הנביא ואמר

155This notion of "consensual agreement" enjoying greater authority than the opinion of the individual (whether explicitly named or not) is not Neusner's alone, but is also espoused by Halivni (215, n. 48).

לו (שם ד) לא אתה תבנה לי הבית. אמרין ליה אמרינן דילן, אמר את דילך.
אמר להם כתיב (זכריה יד ה) והיה ביום ההוא יצאו מים חיים מירושלים,
(ישעיה כז יג) והיה ביום ההוא יתקע בשופר גדול, (ישעיה ז כא) והיה ביום
ההוא יחיה איש עגלת בקר, (ישעיה יא יא) והיה ביום ההוא יוסיף אדני שנית
ידו, לקנות את שאר עמו, (יואל ד יח) והיה ביום ההוא יטפו ההרים עסיס.
איתיבון ליה (ירמיה לח כח) והיה כאשר נלכדה ירושלים. אמר לון אף ההיא
אינה צרה אה שמחה, שבו נטלו ישראל אפוכי על עונותיהן, דאמר ר׳ שמואל
אפוכי גדולה נטלו ישראל על עונותיהן בשעה שחרב בית המקדש, הדא הוא
דכתיב (איכה ד כב) תם עונך בת ציון.
(מדרש רבה על מגלית אסתר, פתיחתא יא, עמ׳ יא-יג)

To summarize briefly, the exegetical argument here centers on R. Samuel's stridently contested notion that there is a consistent difference in the biblical use of the rhetorical transitions "And it came to pass..." (וַיְהִי) and "And it shall come to pass" (וְהָיָה), the former signifying always misfortune and the latter exclusively good fortune. In the first part of the exchange, R. Samuel proposes his view, and then fields the objections of his unnamed but perhaps numerous interlocutors. (R. Judah appears briefly to offer a more moderate solution to one such objection, but then falls silent.) His rebuttals range from the plausible (as in his treatment of Lev. 9:1) to the absurd (the outrageous claim that all of God's work during the six days of Creation signified misfortune, and the especially flimsy retort regarding the misfortune of having to process the bounty of nature for human consumption). But R. Samuel is a stubborn fellow and his opponents finally lose patience with him, asking instead to hear his proofs rather than allow him to continue picking apart their counterexamples. This R. Samuel does, with a series of verses from the prophets, until finally the interlocutors are unable to restrain themselves and they burst out with a counterexample from Jeremiah involving the Siege of Jerusalem. Displaying great courage under fire, R. Samuel soldiers bizarrely on, advancing the argument that the destruction of the Temple was the good fortune which occasioned Jeremiah's use of "And it shall come to pass" (38:28), for on account of that disaster, all the sins of the Israelites were expiated. Petihta Eight in fact ends on this note, the dispute hanging in mid-air as the anonymous narrative voice remarks only that R. Samuel's last comment is in fact substantiated elsewhere in Scripture. The editorial voice does not offer an opinion as to whether this piece of evidence is weighty enough to make of the *hurban* a stroke of good luck.

Nonetheless, our editor is a prominent, if unannounced, actor in this scene. Although the passage formally declares its origin as conversation, it nonetheless bears the distinctive marks of editorial stylization and literary crafting, so much so that it is practically impossible to imagine that any such conversation actually took place in the form we have received. A clear instance of formulaic "disputation discourse," the dialogue itself is so formally rigid as to be almost unrecognizable as natural human speech. Every exchange follows exactly the same rhetorical pattern: "They further objected" + citation proof-text + "He said to them" + "This too does not signify good fortune. For..." Such a highly formalized style preserves content while erasing all the usual markers of ordinary conversation, however erudite: unintentional repetition, circumlocution, hesitation, ellipsis, interruption. The passage is not interested in a mimetic representation of human speech; this is neither a stenographer's transcription nor an exercise in

literary realism. Yet far more telling is the larger sequencing of the argument as a whole. The objections of R. Samuel's interlocutors are presented to us without fail in the exact order in which their proof-texts occur in the Tanakh itself: Gen. 1:3, 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31, 39:2, Lev. 9:1, Num. 7:1, Joshua 6:27, 2 Sam. 7:1. It seems to me unlikely, even in the most learned of rabbinic discussions, that proof-texts would occur to the participants as though they were employing a key-word search, scanning the biblical text from beginning to end. Yet so it appears in our text. I dawdle over these speculations only to illustrate how the highly stylized dialogue before us is a far cry from such an exegetical argument as it would take place in real-time.

In spite of its rigid formalism, this dispute is one of the most entertainingly dramatized in all of *Esther Rabbah I*, due in no small measure to the role played by attribution. Elsewhere in this document, divergent opinions on a single verse or phrase are presented with the neutral and impassive formula, "Another explanation for..." (e.g. p. 38, Petihta 9, 1:A-2:D) or "Another interpretation of the verse..." (e.g. pp. 124-25, Esther 2:1, 11-16:A) [דבר אחר]. Occasionally a slightly more dramatic dispute-form appears which attribution plays a role, such as 1:A-D on Esther 1:20 (Neusner 112), where R. Levi and R. Isaac suggest two competing solutions. Yet the dialogic effect is minimal and crafted with great editorial restraint, indicating no preference for one interpretation over the other, nor even any remark on how utterly the two interpretations conflict with one another. In contrast, our episode around R. Samuel is constructed in such a way as to spotlight the emotional tone of the conversation and its participants. From unfailingly consistent attribution, characterization emerges. R. Samuel takes shape as a figure familiar to anyone who has ever engaged in scholarly dispute: the proud, stubborn, yet learned speaker who, having blurted out an untenable claim, becomes entrenched in defending his position with all the resources of memory and intellect available to him, unable to admit defeat without losing face. His interlocutors, too, anonymous though they may be, are equally familiar: the restless and increasingly impatient collective who, though they have less personally at stake in the outcome of the argument, are irritated by the dogged egotism of their opponent and thus collaborate in refuting his claims. For the reader, these socially familiar characterizations can enhance or deflate the power of argument to convince. Once R. Samuel comes into focus as the authority too arrogant to acknowledge the weakness of his claim, or to revise his hypothesis in light of compelling evidence, his arguments too fail to convince. It is as though the very rhetorical staging of the scene conspires in crafting an ad hominem argument against him. Similarly, his opponents, though persistent in their objections, nevertheless honor R. Samuel with an opportunity to advance his case, and this invitation is winning in its way, a social nicety made all the more generous by the fact of the group's obvious annoyance. Without attribution, the distinctive social tone pervading this passage, the heated claustrophobia of drawn-out (and perhaps needless) debate, would dissipate. In its place, there would remain merely a catalogue of examples and counterexamples. One senses that this passage survived in its current form (and in multiple sources), not primarily due to any particular exegetical brilliance, but rather to the virtuosity of its literary execution, to its vivid rendering of social psychology, its emotional acuity. This is an instance of exegesis-as-dialogue in peak form, showcasing with startling clarity the power of dramatic staging to delimit and determine the reception of exegetical argument.[156]

156For a recent treatment of implicit critique as voiced by the anonymous stratum of the Bavli, see M. B. Wasserman, "The Humanity of the Talmud: Reading for Ethics in Bavli Avoda Zara" [diss]. University of California, Berkeley, 2014. This sort of fictional attribution is one of the most distinctive generic features of classical rabbinic exegesis, midrash included, but was also widely used by non-Jewish authors and editors in

On the one hand, fictional attribution is thus an essential resource for a redactor seeking authority and persuasive power within the document he compiles.[157] On the other hand, this literature, though it frequently attributes statements to its internal rabbinic personae, is characterized in no small measure by its refusal of external documentary attribution and a corresponding insistence on authorial anonymity; which is to say that this is a literature unwilling to attribute the individual texts of its corpus to specific, named authors. Viewed from this perspective, fictional attributions internal to the text point beyond themselves to the larger, external problem of authorial identity. Neusner argues that the management of authorship in classical rabbinic literature is theologically motivated: because the Oral Torah, to certify its divine origins, had to appear as "a single, undifferentiated voice of Sinai" (*Midrash Compilations* 4), individual authorial identity external to the text was suppressed. In its place, absolute authorial anonymity acted as the guarantor of the Oral Torah's legitimacy, so that "[t]he canon – 'the one whole torah of Moses, our rabbi' – presents single books as undifferentiated episodes in a timeless, ahistorical setting: Torah revealed to Moses by God at Mount Sinai, but written down long afterward" (6). For Neusner, it is from the depths of this impenetrable anonymity that textual authority arises: "*Esther Rabbah I* has no named author. [...I]t is represented, on the surface, as the statement of a consensus. That consensus derives not from an identifiable writer or even school but from the anonymous authorities behind the document as we have it" (10). In this fashion, anonymity removes the literature of the Oral Torah from the field of the individual, idiosyncratic, and human, elevating it to the level of the Written Torah: impersonal, ahistorical and divine.

Yet because anonymity alone presents a low barrier to entry (for anyone can neglect to put their name to a work), Neusner argues further that the anonymity of a rabbinic document is ratified by its internal discursive characteristics, namely that it makes use of an extremely constrained set of rhetorical techniques, speaking in a fixed and distinctive idiom: "all rabbinic writing produced in late antiquity closely adheres to repeated forms, literary conventions, and none makes room for or expresses individual preferences as to style and aesthetics. The single persistent literary trait of all documents of the canon of the Judaism of the Dual Torah is the highly formalized character of those writings" (16). In effect, the divinity of the literature of the Oral Torah is attested by rhetorical, aesthetic witnesses:

> The restrictive covenant of speech, the limited repertoire of language – these are meant to secure for the book the standing of the authority of the community as a whole. What speaks for one person bears his name – but then enjoys only his authority, an individual. What speaks for everyone and in the language-conventions of all, all at once and all together, then bears no name. [...] Here too we see how a given authorship obliterates the marks of private taste and personal judgment and gains for all of its participants that authority

Late Antiquity. Though the rabbis rarely identify their own writings with any aspect of contemporary non-Jewish culture, Neusner's account would be greatly enhanced by a comparison of rabbinic attribution with the attributive practices of non-Jewish literature in the same period.

157It is especially relevant to note the fictionality of the attribution in the above example, for the role played here by R. Samuel is attributed in *Leviticus Rabbah* instead to a R. Ishmael. See *Midrash rabbah: 'im kol ha-mefarshim.* Jerusalem: Vagshal Publishing, 2000.

> and standing that only the collectivity – the consensus of the group – can supply. (16)

(As in our example of rabbinic dispute above, attribution plays a decisive role in representing diversity of opinion precisely because explicit attribution serves to fracture and apportion authority, depriving contested statements of the same clout enjoyed by those unanimously, but anonymously, advanced. At the same time, its rigid formalism serves to portray such a dialogue as the divinely endorsed and thus infallible record of interpretive practice.) In this connection, Neusner adopts terminology which refers, not to individual authors, but to "an authorship," a multiple, unidentified, but authoritative collective. If seizing control of attribution is the road to internal compositional power, anonymity – and the collective endorsement it implies – offers the redactor another, external, point of access.

The Yiddish Purim play partakes in many of the authorial and attributive strategies of classical midrash, while turning them to new purposes. Like classical midrash, the early Purim play is anonymous, presented as the unclaimed product of some indistinct cultural and exegetical consensus, and thus authoritative in some sense, thanks to its very anonymity. And like the above dialogue of *Esther Rabbah I*, it is also drama, a dialogic (re)enactment of intellectual and social dispute, and in this generic context, attribution comes to serve the same purpose it did for the redactors of the classical midrashic compilation. By splintering the discourse of the collective into a cacophony of competing voices, the play apportions interpretive authority, subtly qualifying the validity of any given statement, no matter how lofty its source. Yet the Purim play makes two essential modifications to the midrashic formula, and it was in these very alterations that the midrashic imagination found refuge when the tide of early modern biblical hermeneutics turned against it.[158]

The first modification rests in the means by which attribution is fictionalized in the Purim play, and the means by which this fictionalization is disclosed. Unlike classical midrash, in which a historical rabbinic authority was named as the source of a certain interpretation, the attributive strategy of the early Purim play relied on putting these words into the mouths of the biblical figures themselves, who thus came – impossibly – to be explicating the very text in which they found themselves, retroactively providing "evidence" for interpretive claims first made by the rabbis of Late Antiquity. In effect, this compositional technique merges rabbinic explication and biblical narrative in a fashion that makes interpretation part of the narrative itself, and renders the two indistinguishable, particularly for a naïve audience. Where midrash rhetorically dramatizes its exegeses as faithful recordings of the very process of rabbinic disputation, the raw dialogues which would become the literature of the Oral Torah, the Purim play performs these interpretive conclusions as the exclamations of Mordecai the Righteous and Haman the Wicked, an approach which moves simultaneously in opposing directions. On the one hand, it seems to increase the claim to authority by cutting out the rabbinic middleman; thus, instead of "R. Ploni said, 'Mordecai said...,'" the actor playing Mordecai merely speaks, apparently producing the unmediated speech of the righteous man himself. On the other hand, by

158As I will suggest in Chapter 3, these features of the Purim play will come to serve, both by implication and by explicit invocation, as a model for the parodic intertextuality characteristic of the biblically-themed poetic experiments of Yiddish modernism. The oeuvre of twentieth-century Yiddish poet Itzik Manger perfectly embodies this implicit and explicit entanglement with these early modern Yiddish practices of radical allusion and iconoclastic intertextuality.

attributing the often profane, raucous, and hilarious discourse of this genre to biblical figures crowned with sanctity, the Purim play seems delight in self-conscious artifice, gleefully advertising the fictitiousness of these attributions even as they are being made.

The Purim play's second essential modification to classical midrashic dialogue is in the material circumstances of its transmission. Unlike its midrashic antecedents, whose iterations of rabbinic discourse take place only on a textual stage, the Purim play was literally performed by costumed actors, its jests uttered by self-evidently disguised speakers. The fictitiousness of this interpretive context is once again deliberate and exhibitionistic. In expressing his non-identity with the biblical character he portrays (by playing against type, so that Mordecai is not righteous but wickedly licentious), the Purim player encloses all the exegetical discourse attributed to that figure in the brackets of performance, a gesture which both assumes and disavows interpretive authority. That the Purim play is composed and acted out in Yiddish, and in verse, bespeaks an implicit violation of the "restrictive covenant of [Hebraic] speech" (Neusner, *Midrash Compilations* 16), which had served as the aesthetic guarantee of the divine origins of the Oral Torah, and endured in early modern midrashic compilations. In turning to our earliest extant Yiddish Purim play, we will see how this implicit rhetorical and linguistic stance, by disavowing any claim to exegetical (and thence religious) authority, asserts the innocence of its most radical and scandalous portrayals of biblical characters and events.

III. Akhashveyrosh-shpil 1697: drama, exegesis, and comic dismemberment

This Purim play[159] is preserved in a manuscript held at the Stadtbibliothek in Leipzig. It was produced in the German university city of Altdorf in 1697, apparently at the behest of the well-known Christian Hebraist Johan Christof Wagenseil.[160] His interest in Jewish language and culture led him to publish a study of Yiddish language, *Belehrung der Jüdisch-Teutschen Red- und Schreibart* (Königsburg, 1699), which included excerpts from contemporary Yiddish literature, and it is very likely this play was copied as part of Wagenseil's research, for which he collected an array of Yiddish primary sources. Chone Shmeruk surmises, however, that Wagenseil ultimately rejected the play for publication because of the great deal of foul language it contained.

The manuscript consists of 26 numbered pages, an illustrated title-page and Hebrew preface by the copyist. He identifies himself as a baptized Jew from Cracow, Moses ha-Kohen, who has taken the baptismal name Johan Christian Jacob. He decorated the title-page (fig. 1) with a frontispiece of columns arching from three-footed pedestals, and composed the Hebrew preface: place and date of copying, an homage to his benefactor, Rector Wagenseil, a rhymed Yiddish summary of the play itself which is followed by a concise Hebrew reminder of several essential traditions surrounding Purim (drinking, "playing,"[161] and the midrashic commonplace

159See Shmeruk's introduction in *Mahazot*, 155-56. For the full text of the copyist's preface, see p. 157, and for my translation, Appendix A.

160For recent treatments of Wagenseil's interest in Yiddish, see A. Elyada, *A Goy Who Speaks Yiddish: Christians and the Jewish Language in Early Modern Germany.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.; and also J. Frakes. *The Cultural Study of Yiddish in Early Modern Europe.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

161The prooftext given for this tradition warrants a short essay of its own. The copyist cites a verse from II Samuel 2:14: "Let the young men arise and play before us," taking its use of the verb 'to play' as a prooftext for the traditional injunction to make merry on Purim. A glance at the biblical context, however, instantly adds depth and complexity to this allusion. Here is the full passage (2:12-16): "And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. And Joab son of Zeruiah, and the servants of

that Purim and Hanukkah alone among festivals will not be abolished after the Redemption). The provenance of the play itself is a mystery, for Shmeruk is not prepared even to entertain the notion that the copyist (that is, Johan Christian, the author of the Hebrew preface) composed the play himself. Instead, he proposes that it was either copied from another text or transcribed as related orally by a Jewish actor who had performed it (155). This hypothesis is based upon the fact that a very similar play was published in 1708, possibly near Frankfurt, though that edition was apparently produced independently from our 1697 manuscript (211-12). Shmeruk concludes from this and from a comparison between the two versions, that the play had thus far circulated only as part of the oral tradition. Nevertheless, the 1697 preface itself tells us only that the document "was written" [נכתב], that the copyist signed his name [חתמתי את שמי], and that he "wrote" [כתבתי] it "to tell of this miracle clearly" [לספר את הנס הזה בשפתי ברורות]. Every instance is quite ambiguous and could mean Johan Christian composed, transcribed, or copied the play. While these details do not resolve the issue, they still give the impression that Johan Christian took substantial credit for his work, and conceived of himself not only as a preserver and perpetuator of this tradition, but also as one actively engaged in (re)telling it himself.

The problem of authentic and feigned orality, and the destabilization of the distinction between these two once they are committed to writing, suffuses the remainder of the play. In one sense, the *Akhashveyrosh-shpil* is, like most drama, a representation of characters' speech. At the same time, the Purim play engages with its rabbinic sources precisely by preserving their origins as dialogue, even though the rabbis of Late Antiquity are no longer the disputing speakers. To replace the rabbis, the Purim play uncouples individual rabbinic utterances from their original attributions and reassigns the content of those utterances to its biblical characters. This further

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David, went out; and they met together by the pool of Gibeon, and sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool. And Abner said to Joab, 'Let the young men, I pray thee, arise and play before us.' And Joab said, 'Let them arise.' Then they arose and passed over by number: twelve for Benjamin, and for Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together; wherefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is in Gibeon" [וַיֵּצֵא אַבְנֵר בֶּן-נֵר, וְעַבְדֵי אִישׁ-בֹּשֶׁת בֶּן-שָׁאוּל, מִמַּחֲנַיִם, גִּבְעוֹנָה. וְיוֹאָב בֶּן-צְרוּיָה וְעַבְדֵי דָוִד, יָצְאוּ, וַיִּפְגְּשׁוּם עַל-בְּרֵכַת גִּבְעוֹן, יַחְדָּו; וַיֵּשְׁבוּ אֵלֶּה עַל-הַבְּרֵכָה, מִזֶּה, וְאֵלֶּה עַל-הַבְּרֵכָה, מִזֶּה. וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְנֵר, אֶל-יוֹאָב, יָקוּמוּ נָא הַנְּעָרִים, וִישַׂחֲקוּ לְפָנֵינוּ; וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹאָב, יָקֻמוּ. וַיָּקֻמוּ, וַיַּעַבְרוּ בְמִסְפָּר--שְׁנֵים עָשָׂר לְבִנְיָמִן, וּלְאִישׁ בֹּשֶׁת בֶּן-שָׁאוּל, וּשְׁנֵים עָשָׂר, מֵעַבְדֵי דָוִד. וַיַּחֲזִקוּ אִישׁ בְּרֹאשׁ רֵעֵהוּ, וְחַרְבּוֹ בְּצַד רֵעֵהוּ, וַיִּפְּלוּ, יַחְדָּו; וַיִּקְרָא לַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא, חֶלְקַת הַצֻּרִים אֲשֶׁר בְּגִבְעוֹן].

That our copyist selected for his prooftext a scene of unmitigated violence erupting from a moment of apparent ritual combat is interesting enough, but becomes all the more so when we consider that the biblical verb 'to play' is consistently a source of ambiguity and exegetical consternation for its array of positive and negative valences: 'to play,' 'to sport (in tournament, as the above biblical example suggests),' 'to jest,' 'to toy with (often sexually),' 'to play a theatrical role or a music instrument.' It further seems to be etymologically linked to the verb 'to laugh,' with a similar semantic span, from delight to derision (cf. F. Brown, S. R. Driver et al. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Coded With the Numbering System From Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.* Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996. no. 850, 965-66). Yet this verb, whose suggestive, even ominous, ambiguity, is so perfectly exemplified by the biblical prooftext, neatly encapsulates the parodic, unpredictable laughter of the Purim play we are about to read. And the ominous undertones of this allusion cannot help but call to mind the conclusion of the *Megilah* itself, in which the supposedly retributive violence of the Jewish community against its Persian enemies begins to assume a sadistic flavor. By invoking the tradition of Purim "play," its disturbing slippage between gaiety and violence, the copyist reminds us that the drama on stage is itself layered with multiple meanings, double entendre, disguise, mimicry, and derisive laughter.

fictionalization of attribution in the Purim play emphasizes the ways in which exegesis may be dramatized, not as the record of rabbinic dispute, but as the midrashically expanded utterances of biblical characters themselves. A comparison of *Esther Rabbah I* and the 1697 *Akhashveyrosh-shpil* will demonstrate the Purim play's use of biblical characters to ventriloquize classic instances of rabbinic argument. In Esther 3:2, despite the king's order that all in the kingdom should bow before the minister Haman, it is written that Mordecai alone did not bow. In *Esther Rabbah I,* this matter is addressed first by the text's anonymous rabbinic narrator,

> לא יכרע ולא ישתחוה, וכי קנתרן היה ועובר על גזרת המלך. אלא כשצוה אהשורוש להשתחות להמן, חקק עבודת כוכבים על לבו ונתכון כדי ישתחוו לעבודת כוכבים. וכשהיה רואה המן שאין מרדכי משתחוה לו, נתמלא חמה. ומרדכי אומר לו יש אדון המתגאה על כל גאים, היאך אני מניחו ואשתחוה לעבאדת כוכבים. ולפי שיחד שמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא נקרא יהודי, לומר יהודי יחידי.
>
> (מדרש רבה על מגילת אסתר, פרשת ו, עמ׳ סא)

In this passage, we apparently have two voices at play: that of the rabbinic narrator and of Mordecai himself. The narrator provides us with essential backstory regarding Haman's idol, and it is then given to Mordecai to offer an explanation. Mordecai's diction is of a markedly different register, set off from the surrounding narration by its flowery, devotional rhetoric, more reminiscent of liturgy than commentary.[162] The baton is then passed back to the narrator, who gives Mordecai's poetic discourse drier theological explication in terms of rabbinic monotheism with a classic instance of midrashic word-play. This interplay of rabbinic and biblical voices insists upon the mediation of biblical utterances by the frame-narrative of rabbinic exegesis, but nevertheless maintains the appearance of accurate citation, purporting to transparently disclose the distinctions among the text's various sources. Yet a crucial fact slips out of view due to this variation in rhetorical register, namely that the words attributed to Mordecai are not citation of biblical text, but the invention of the very rabbinic authorities who then elucidate it. The shift in diction suggests that Mordecai's voice is distinct and distinguishable from that of his rabbinic mediators, obscuring the reality that this Mordecai is their literary invention, a mouthpiece through which rabbinic voices may be ventriloquized. The rabbinic mediator thus disguises himself, loudly announcing his presence one moment, and the next concealing his fictive interpolations as citational practice.

By contrast, the *Akhashveyrosh-shpil*[163] does away with the rabbinic narrator entirely:

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162 The phrasing around God's divine status here is particularly reminiscent of the so-called "Song of the Sea" of Exodus 15, which opens with similar words of praise: אָשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי-גָאֹה גָּאָה (Ex. 15:1). The verbal root, ג-א-ה , used here for 'exalt' is somewhat unusual in the Hebrew Bible (the more common choice being ר-מ-ם), and is given poetic flavor through emphatic reduplication "גָּאֹה גָּאָה". Mordecai's response in *Esther Rabbah I* makes use of a similarly poetic echo-effect, though via a different grammatical construction: המתגאה על כל גאים.

163 Throughout, I have italicized the Hebrew portions of the play, including its occasional stage directions, which always appear in Hebrew; the unmarked remainder of the text is in Yiddish. My translation is free and idiomatic, in order to approximate the effects of meter and rhyme.

[המן]
מרדכי וועלשטו דיך ניט בוקין.
פר וואר איך שלאג דיר איין דיין שעלמשן רוקין:

[מרדכי]
אוויא אוויא וויא איך מיך פר דיר נייגן אונט בוקין.
דוא האשט איין קריין אויף דיין רוקין.
הינטן מוזטו מיר גיין קוקין.
אוג אויך איזט ניט רעבט.
דז זיך דער הער זאל בוקין פיר זיין קנעבט.
(Shmeruk, 170)

In many ways the unmediated (but implicit) attribution of the *Akhashveyrosh-shpil* seems like a more daring tack than that of the rabbinic narrator. Since no effort is made in his text to maintain the citational formulae of classical midrash, there is no acknowledgment of a process of mediation or textual transmission. No citational distinction is made between biblical, rabbinic, and early modern intertexts, and there is no shift in register to set instances of allusion in relief. Just the opposite, in fact, since both biblical and rabbinic citations are so thoroughly enmeshed in the surrounding vernacular that they become all but indistinguishable from it. For instance, the formula "bow and prostrate" [לא יכרע ולא ישתחוה] of Esther 3:2 survives here in the Yiddish phrase from the *taytsh* tradition, נייגן אונט בוקין.[164] Vestiges of the midrash are also to be found in Mordecai's assertion that Haman wears a cross on his back, which recalls the idol to which Mordecai would not bow in *Esther Rabbah I*. And Mordecai's mocking excuse, that it is not fitting for a master to bow to his servant, echoes the devotional pieties attributed to him in the anterior rabbinic text. All these intertexts are rhetorically homogenized, rendered in Mordecai's derisive, crass, and inflammatory Yiddish idiom. In one sense, the register of the Purim-Mordecai's Yiddish itself, especially its 'translation' of rabbinic prose into playfully rhymed verse, is enough to disclose the fictitiousness of the attribution; perhaps the outrageousness of envisioning Mordecai the Righteous as a foul-mouthed jester contains the seeds of its own disavowal.

M. M. Bakhtin, in his discussion of medieval carnivalesque drama, the historical forerunner of the early modern Purim play, locates the origins of this genre in the so-called "dialogic" literature of the Christian Middle Ages:[165]

> The relationship to another's word was equally complex and ambiguous in the Middle Ages. The role of the other's word was

164Because *taytsh* was a calque language, its translations were rigidly yoked to the syntax of the Hebrew original. As a result, a distinctive Germanic equivalent was required for every Hebrew morpheme (see n. 3 above). Yet, because parallelism was a mainstay of biblical Hebrew literary stylistics, pairs of Yiddish synonyms, like "bow and scrape," had to be found. For a concise introduction to biblical parallelism, see "Parallelism in Hebrew Poetry." *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1906.

165M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays.* University of Texas Press Slavic Series, v. 1. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

> enormous at that time: there were quotations that were openly and reverently emphasized as such, or that were half-hidden, completely hidden, half-conscious, unconscious, correct, intentionally distorted, unintentionally distorted, deliberately reinterpreted and so forth. The boundary lines between someone else's speech and one's own speech were flexible, ambiguous, often deliberately distorted or confused. (69)

This freedom from attributive fidelity, the immense range of possible "relationships" to the other's word, made of citational acrobatics an aesthetic criterion, the defining feature of a radically intertextual poetics.[166] As Bakhtin goes on to point out, nowhere was this turn more evident than in the literature that emerged from and ensconced Scripture, liturgy, and the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Thus, though the sacred inerrancy of revelation would seem to preclude the possibility, scriptural literature hardly assumed a naïve stance toward its sacred intertexts. As Bakhtin asks, "[I]n what sort of intentional quotation marks is [the scriptural word] enclosed? Here a whole spectrum of possible relationships toward this word comes to light, beginning at one pole with the pious and inert quotation that is isolated and set off like an icon, and ending at the other pole with the most ambiguous, disrespectful, parodic-travestying use of a quotation" (69). Yet as we have seen, the relationship of medieval Jewish exegetes to the biblical word seems to have been somewhat more restrained, committed to an intertextually transparent transmission of Scripture and commentary, wherein intertexts were carefully distinguished from one another and from the context in which they were embedded. As in the above discussion of attribution in *Yalkut Shimoni*, medieval Hebrew exegesis remained invested in the attributive rhetoric of its rabbinic antecedents, even as it discarded the dramatic, conversational armature upon which these rhetorical formulae had depended. Yet literary genre seems to have made all the difference here: the goals of rabbinic prose, which could range from the esoterically scholastic to the didactic, were naturally distinct from those of a heroic epic or a comic drama in the vernacular, that aimed to entertain their audiences rather than instruct them. Freed of these didactic aspiration, the chivalric stanzas of the early *Shmuel Bukh* and the vulgar couplets of the Purim play freely interweave midrash and biblical citation without distinguishing between them. Indeed, without pedagogical goals in mind, did it really matter to the audience how the Purim

166Indeed, the Bakhtin's account of interrelating, intersubjective "languages" forms the theoretical foundation for the dynamics of intertextuality as we have been discussing them here. Julia Kristeva's 1966 essay "Word, Dialogue and Novel" points to Bakhtin's observations on the dialogic nature of all language as the seed from which her articulation of "intertextuality" springs: "an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin: any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double" (37). Elsewhere she elaborates that "Bakhtinian dialogism identifies writing as both subjectivity and communication, or better, as intertextuality. Confronted with this dialogism, the notion of a 'person-subject of writing' becomes blurred" (39). Or, in the words Toril Moi's introduction to that essay, "Kristeva's insistence on the importance of the speaking subject as the principal object for linguistic analysis would seem to have its roots in her own reading of Bakhtinian 'dialogism' as an open-ended play between the text of the subject and the text of the addressee, an analysis which also gives rise to the Kristevan concept of 'intertextuality'" (34). See J. Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel." *The Kristeva Reader.* Ed. Toril Moi. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

play cited its intertexts? In this way, the earnest, iconic citations of Hebrew exegesis could shade into the laughing, parodic, fictionalized attributions of the "low" Yiddish Purim play.[167]

No figure in the Purim play is better suited for ventriloquizing travestying speech than Haman the Wicked. The "intentional quotation marks" enclosing each of his utterances are reliably poisonous, and derisively rewrite the essential texts of the Jewish tradition, often Hebrew liturgical allusions, to reflect the extent of his hatred for the Jews. Yet in effect, Haman's hate-speech is always multiply enclosed; for while he venomously quotes the Jews, the Jewish Purim player is busy somatically ventriloquizing *him,* relying on the already-parodic rabbinic and biblical citations of the "historical" Haman's speech. One of the Purim play's most striking occasions for this kind of speech is known as Haman's Slander [מסירת המן], and derives from the aggadic corpus.[168] It is based on Esther 3:8, in which he persuades King Ahasuerus of the pernicious nature of the Jewish population: "And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, 'There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them'" [יֶשְׁנוֹ עַם-אֶחָד מְפֻזָּר וּמְפֹרָד בֵּין הָעַמִּים, בְּכֹל מְדִינוֹת מַלְכוּתֶךָ; וְדָתֵיהֶם שֹׁנוֹת מִכָּל-עָם, וְאֶת-דָּתֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינָם עֹשִׂים, וְלַמֶּלֶךְ אֵין-שׁוֶה, לְהַנִּיחָם]. In our

167See I. Even-Zohar, "Aspects of the Hebrew-Yiddish Polysystem: A Case of a Multilingual Polysystem." *Poetics Today (Special Issue on Polysystem Studies)* 11.1 (Spring 1990). 121-30. It should come as no surprise that the cultural purpose served by this broad spectrum of biblical literature is divided between "high" Hebrew genres on the one hand and "low" Yiddish ones on the other. Itamar Even-Zohar describes the diglossic polysystem of Ashkenazic Jewry as functioning in precisely this fashion: "the structure of relations between Hebrew and Yiddish in Eastern Europe [was] that of *high* vs. *low* culture. This division of labor manifested itself on all levels of verbal and textual activities…. One of the governing principles operating within one diglossic cultural polysystem is that there is never confusion between the different carriers (vehicles) of the different functions of culture. The division of labor is accepted to such a degree that expecting the one to function instead of the other is absolutely unthinkable for the people-in-the-culture. Depending on the situation, an attempted transgression may be considered either a punishable violation of good order or ridiculous and therefore negligible" (111). In this connection, it is easy to imagine how the Purim play, swathed as it was in the implicit disavowal of "the ridiculous," could freely mingle high Hebrew and low Yiddish intertexts with little anxiety.

And indeed, Bakhtin's account deals with precisely this kind of transgression in Latin parody, describing the way in which inter-lingual dynamics contribute to the parodic contours of a sacred literary work. In effect, Bakhtin claims that the sense and cultural significance of Latin parody are defined in terms of the linguistic mechanisms and social status of the vernacular: "The Latin 'parodia sacra' is projected against the background of the vulgar national language. The accentuating system of this vulgar language penetrates to the very heart of the Latin text. In essence, Latin parody is, therefore, a bilingual phenomenon: although there is only one language, this language is structured and perceived in light of another language, and in some instances not only the accents but also the syntactical forms of the vulgar language are clearly sensed in the Latin parody" (75). This idea, that the evocation of vernacularity permits the composition of "high" Latin parody, injects much needed nuance into Even-Zohar's rigid polysystem. Instead of a strict division of labor, devoid of confusion or even variation, the languages of a polysystem can thus inform and delimit one another, giving rise to an array of interlingual genres, parodic, ironic, and perhaps ambivalent. For a discussion of these dynamics in the rabbinic context, see D. Boyarin, *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

168See *BT Megillah* 13b-14a; *Targum Sheni* Esther 3.8; *Midrash Panim Aherim* 3; *Abba Gorion* 26; *Esther Rabbah* and *Targum Esther* 3.8; *Aggadat Esther* 30-31. See also "The Denunciation of the Jews" in L. Ginzburg, *The Legends of the Jews.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909-38; and "Haman's Slander and Ahasuerus's Decree" in Ch. N. Bialik, and I. H. Ravnizki, *Sefer ha-Aggadah: Miv'har ha-aggadot sheba-Talmud uve-midrashim.* Cracow: Y. Fisher, 1909. It is important to note that the term מסירה has another meaning, in Yiddish especially, and refers not to anti-Semitic slander, but to the *Jewish* 'informers' who report their co-religionists to the secular authorities, an act which is itself a serious transgression of halachah.

Akhashveyrosh-shpil, this moment is expanded, with the aid of midrash and the playwright's ingenuity, to a staggering 228 lines (that is, nearly twenty percent of the play). The soliloquy touches upon almost every aspect of Jewish religious and cultural life: holidays, liturgy, life-cycle rituals, sexuality, mercantilism, relations with non-Jews, with the secular authorities, and so on. In the tradition of Haman's Slander, every minute particular of Jewish practice and conduct is read as proof of Jewish treachery: violent, arrogant, deceitful, inimical to the well-being of the nation and the monarchy. The biblical Haman is engaged, after all, in justifying a genocidal enterprise to his king. Yet, as the rabbis expand Haman's speech via ever greater detail in his knowledge of Jewish life, this episode begins to disclose its psychological complexity and, thence, comic potential. The effect, in these expanded versions, is one of a mysterious boasting, as though Haman is, in spite of his hatred and contempt, nevertheless proud of his mastery of Jewish esoterica, especially Hebrew and halachah. The longer and more detailed Haman's libelous screed becomes, the more invested he appears to be in showcasing his own Jewish erudition.

This psychological portrait given by the rabbis reaches its zenith in our Purim play, not only in terms of sheer volume, but also in its turn to Hamanic rhetoric, its pretensions and failures, as an index to his anxiety. For while the rabbinic sources generally allow Haman the dignity of correctly citing his Hebrew sources, the *Akhashveyrosh-shpil* reveals to its Jewish audience Haman's intellectual ineptitude, unmasking him as a failed interpreter (both linguistic and hermeneutic) of Jewish materials, whose apparent erudition convinces no one but the foolish, drunken, ignorant king. In his tirade against the Jewish Sabbath, for example, Haman offers a wild mistranslation of the *kiddush* blessing said over the wine on Friday night:

דער נאך טואין זיא רום הער לויפן.
אונ׳ טואין פיש אויף דען שבת איין קויפן.
אויך קיין הון קיין גאנז איזט אינן ניכט צו טייאר.
אויף דען אבנט שרייאן זיא גלייך וויא דיא אום גיהייאר.
ויכולו השמים.
דער קינג זאל האבין ששה חלאים.
אויף ידים אונ רגליים.
הארץ וכל צבאם.
דער קינג זאל ווערין קרום אונט לאם.
(Shmeruk, 173)

Haman's interlinear translation bears no relation to the Hebrew original beyond the end-line rhymes, yet it derives much of its comic effect from the way in which it successfully mimics the Yiddish *taytsh* tradition. By imitating the sing-song alternation between Hebrew original and Yiddish paraphrase, Haman comes to sound less like a sinister, intellectual anti-Smite, and more like a buffoonish, inept *kheyder-yingl,* parroting mindlessly, without a clue as to what he's saying. Phonically the rhymes link semantically conflicting words, heightening the comic effect of Haman's mistranslations; thus "heavens" [שמים] is rhymed with "illnesses" [חלאים], "their array" [צבאם] with "lame" [לאם], and so forth. This is itself a play on midrashic exegesis, which sometimes makes use of phonic and etymological rereading. In this technique, Hebrew

homophones are swapped in and out of a biblical verse as a means of opening up a range of possible translations and interpretations.[169] Such exegetical prestidigitation is beyond the bumbling Haman of the *Akhashveyrosh-shpil*, however, and he characteristically botches his translation by simplistically relying on mere rhyme to guide him. On a grammatical level, Haman breaks the Hebrew prayer in a place that renders it syntactically incoherent, fragmenting the subject noun-phrase "the heavens, the earth, and all their host" and translating them as though they represented independent clauses. This technique is familiar from the *taytsh* tradition, which is so distinctive in part because of its rigid adherence to biblical Hebrew word-order, in violation of the Germanic syntactic structures of early Yiddish. Nevertheless, the *taytsh* tradition preserves grammatical coherence by virtue of its expansive project: the translation of entire verses, narratives, biblical books. But such integrity is necessarily disrupted by Haman's fragmentation of the *kiddush* blessing, so that his attempt at interlinear translation lacks even the illusion of grammatical equivalence. On a narrative level, this translational failure implies that Haman's supposed display of erudition before Ahasuerus is nothing more than that of a pompous ignoramus grandstanding, butchering a prayer that the play's Jewish audience has known by heart since childhood. In this sense, the Purim play is concerned with producing a laughing travesty of the biblical and rabbinic Haman, the learned anti-Semite.

Yet a further parody, at once more graphic and yet clandestine, is also taking shape. Though this is a play without stage directions, it is easy to imagine how the actor cast as Haman might perform his speech. The exposition regarding the wealth and avarice of the Jews would be delivered in Haman's “neutral” voice (however cunning and insufferable it may be), while the words of *kiddush* would be howled in a ridiculous travesty of the Jewish householder's usual delivery. The laughter of the audience at this moment would emerge not only from the bilingual content of Haman's speech (his interpretive failure) but also from the manner of its delivery: the absurd Hamanic imitation of the audience's Jewish husbands and fathers. The target of laughter is thus doubled: one permissible and thematically obvious (Haman), the other forbidden, invoked only via intonation and liturgical role-playing (the Jewish male authority figure). One can imagine that the adult males of the audience laugh at Haman's bilingual hermeneutic clowning, which relies on their knowledge of Hebrew, their familiarity with the rhetorical commonplaces of *taytsh,* and the rhyming imitation of philologic midrash. At the same time, the women and children laugh at the ludicrous but instantly recognizable vocal caricature of their husbands and fathers, caught and compromised at a moment whose sanctity ordinarily precludes laughter. On an even larger social level, Haman's liturgical parody represents a comic and carnivalesque opportunity ordinarily foreclosed in public Jewish life, that is, to vent frustration and hostility toward the monarch without fear of legal or social retribution. Yet it operates just as well on the private level of Jewish family, in which male authority, especially in the religious sphere, goes uncontested. The Haman of the *Akhashveyrosh-shpil* serves here as a means by which to ventriloquize and thus render inoffensive the forbidden thoughts and impulses of the Jewish community, which are aimed both outward, toward non-Jewish monarchs, and inward toward the filial authoritarianism of Jewish masculinity.

169For an example of this, see Mordecai's speech from *Esther Rabbah I,* part of which is cited above. There, Mordecai's monotheism is attributed to the fact that the Tanakh calls him an איש יהודי (i.e. a Jew), but which the rabbis reinterpret as איש יחודי, one who affirms the unity of God. The swapping of *heh* and *khet* in the triliteral root is a classic instance of this kind of “philological” midrash, a play with phonic and visual similarity, which also slyly mimics scribal error.

Haman's comic liturgies, whose fullest realization as parody depends on both vocal and textual allusion, serve to complicate Bakhtin's polarizing characterization of scriptural citation. In one sense, these liturgical parodies are "iconic," by virtue of their verbatim, explicit citation of Hebrew intertexts, distinct in both style and actual language from the surrounding Yiddish context that purports to interpret them. In another sense, however, these liturgies are instances of complex, impious laughter activated on a number of social and political levels. Such a combination opens up the possibility that a "pious and inert" citation can, under certain circumstances, be ignited to ambiguous, ludic purposes. Furthermore, whereas Bakhtin had previously figured parody using a textual metaphor (the quotation marks enclose), he soon revises this image to address the vocal aspect of parodic citation. Now, the quotation marks are not merely "intentional" but also "intonational":

> Every type of parody or travesty, every word 'with conditions attached,' with irony, enclosed in intonational quotation marks, every type of indirect word is in a broad sense an intentional hybrid [...]. In actual fact, in parodic discourse two styles, two 'languages' (both intra-lingual) come together and to a certain extent are crossed with each other: the language being parodied (for example, the language of the heroic poem) and the language that parodies (low prosaic language, familiar conversational language, the language of the realistic genres, "normal" language, "healthy" literary language as the author of the parody conceived it). (75)

Thus, one might ask not what kind of quotation marks enclose a fragment of text, but rather whose voice enunciates it, in what tone, with what grimaces, sneers, smiles, with what foul or reverential gestures? Inevitably, the turn to intonation signals a turn toward drama, that dialogism which is vocally allusive, somatically intertextual. And it is in this sense that Bakhtin terms the literary laughter of the Middle Ages "dialogic," for the two languages of parodic discourse "relate to each other as do rejoinders in a dialogue; there is an argument between languages, and argument between styles of language" (76). Bakhtin thus extols parody as the paragon of dialogism in the Middle Ages, privileging the comic with pride of place among literary genres for the complexity and subtlety of its citational practice.

This yoking of intertextuality to the comic appears to neatly account for Haman's liturgical parodies; yet the picture becomes more complex when we consider that Haman's Slander as presented in this Purim play may also have included parodies largely free from textual citation. As the stage directions of this Purim play indicate, the disjuncture between a character's utterances and his physical actions was another avenue by which parody could take shape. These "somatic" parodies resist the Bakhtinian model, since they consist not of two interacting "languages" but of the interplay between a character's language and the actor's physical performance. The unpredictable interaction of stage direction and scripted utterance provides that element of comic "intonation" necessary to parody. In service of these somatic parodies, the physical and sensual aspects of Jewish ritual are brought to the fore.[170] The preoccupation with

170This turn to carnivalesque physicality connects us once again to Bakhtin's reading of parody and the body. In his famous study of Rabelais, Bakhtin suggests that the vernacular genres of the Middle Ages first allowed for the free expression of the body and its "lower" functions, which were generally excluded from "canonical"

Jewish physicality, especially in Haman's Slander, is already present in the aggadic tradition where, for example, Haman complains about Jewish dietary restrictions, lamenting that though a Jew refuses to drink the wine offered by his Christian friend, he will nevertheless drink his own wine, even if a fly has fallen in it (*BT Megillah* 13b-14a, *Panim Aherim* 3). Numerous midrashim are devoted to individual Jewish physical practices that Haman paints as repulsive or perverse, circumcision among them. Yet in the *Akhashveyrosh-shpil,* Haman's earnestly anti-Semitic accusations take the form of physical, rather than literary, embellishment:

[המן]
אונ׳ צו אַטאגין טונין זיא דיא מיידלך זאל איך זאגן דיא בובין דיא שוועגן אב שניידן:

[מרדכי]
אידלר קינג וויא איין ליגנר איזט דאש האבין דיא מיידלך שוועגליך:

[המן]
יא:

[מרדכי]
איך וויל עש בלד גיוואר וועריז, איך וויל זוכין:

[והולך אצל הבתולות ומבקש][171]

[המן]
נר דיא בובין טואין זיא בשניידן.
אז זיא טואין גרושי שמערצן ליידן.
אונ׳ זאגין דאש איזט איין צייכן.
דז דאש קינד ניט זאל פון גאט אַב ווייכן.
(Shmeruk, 173-74)

Here, Haman's bizarre claim that Jewish girls are born with male genitals and only "made" female eight days after birth is very much in keeping with the rabbinic mainstays of Haman's Slander: the monstrous Jewish body and the physical perversity of the rituals surrounding it. Yet Mordecai's slapstick riff on this theme is itself a somatic *drash*, physically acting out the

literature. Bakhtin particularly points to the "openness" of this lower body, its unruly and rebellious capacity for penetration and excretion. As we will see, these preoccupations are at the forefront of Haman's 'slanderous' fascination with Jewish bodies. See M. M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. 303-436.

171It is not clear whether the text here refers to the maidens which have been assembled on stage as candidates for Ahasuerus' queen to replace Vashti (cf. Esther 2:2-16), or whether they are young women in the audience. In either case, the play achieves its comic aims. If the maidens are those gathered "on stage," they were in all likelihood played by men (thus making Haman's claim that they have penises and Mordecai's disbelief all the more ridiculous). If they are the young women of the audience, the licentious hilarity of the holiday may have encouraged a liberal attitude toward Mordecai's prurience.

invasive, hypocritical prurience that is concealed behind Haman's claim. Mordecai's inspection of the maidens merely physicalizes the psychic intrusion Haman has already initiated, looking up Jewish skirts in the name of intellectual investigation. In one sense, the hilarity of the moment is shot through with a pointed critique of Haman's sexual and intellectual dishonesty. Yet at the same time, the humor of the moment rests also with Mordecai's barely disguised libido, which seizes on disproving Haman's claim as an opportunity to freely violate Jewish sexual taboo. In the name of heroic advocacy for his people, Mordecai permits himself transgression of the very strictures that the anti-Semite Haman also ignores. As in the *kiddush* parody, our laughter is doubled, aimed both at the straw man, Haman, and at the Jewish male authority figure for whom he is a substitute.

Indeed, this is not the only instance in which Jewish vulnerability to anti-Semitic hermeneutic intrusion is figured in terms of sexual prurience and the violation of female modesty. That this is the work of this Purim play (in contrast to its rabbinic antecedents) becomes apparent when we examine our text's depiction of those areas of ritual life that the midrash neglected: most notably, women's rituals like immersion in the *mikvah*.[172] In the play, the ritual bathhouse, with its strict gender segregation and sexual seclusion, becomes a site of Haman's scandalous, provocative revelation, supposedly disclosing to his audience (consisting mainly of King Ahasuerus but inevitably including Mordecai) a sexually explicit scene of female privacy:

נאך אכט וואכין לויפן זיא אין דאש וואשיר עש מאג זיין נאך אייז זוא קלט.
אונ׳ זאגין איך ווער מוזין ביי מיין מאן שלופין בלד.
אונ׳ זאגין איין הלבי שטונד קלט איין גנצי נכט ווארים.
היינט ווער איך ליגן ביי מיין מאן אין ארם.
איין הור שטושט דיא אנדרה אינש וושר.
אונ׳ זאגט גיא הין דוא בישט כשר.
על הטבילה.
איך ווינש דיין מאן זאל האבין איין גרוש מילה.
און ווען זיא אויש דען וואשיר קומט זאגט זיא יוא מיין ליבר מאן.
גרייף מיר דראן.
וויא עש איזט מיר זוא קלט.
דרום מאך עש בלד.
דוא האשט גנוג לנג גיוורט.
איך ווייש דיין מילה איז שון הרט.
ווען זיא נון אין דאש בעט קומין.
טואין זיא מיט ננדר ברומין.

(Shmeruk, 174)

172The *mikvah* appears briefly in some aggadic versions of Haman's Slander, as in *Targum Sheni* 3:8: "In the middle of the night, their women go out to the waters, to bathe in them and to pollute them" [בחצות הלילה תצאנה נשותיהם המימה להתרחץ בהם ולפגלם]. See also Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews*, 1153. It is from this single sentence that the Yiddish scene given below is extrapolated.

This scene shares in the parodic mechanics of both Haman's botched translations and the anatomical prurience we observed above.[173] Here his account of ritual immersion distorts the actual language of Jewish prayer, as in his made-up, rhyming conclusion to the traditional blessing, which he attributes to the female attendant (that is, the 'slut' [הור] to whom Haman refers): "*al ha-tevilah, ikh vintsh dayn man zol hobn eyn groys milah*." In reality, the woman herself performs the blessing "Blessed art Thou, O LORD, our God, King of the universe, who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us regarding the immersion" [ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותו וצונו על הטבילה]. In Haman's account the atmosphere of sexual deprivation and anticipatory excitement is palpable, not only in the explicit statements of desire, but also in the physical aggression of the attendant, and the sexual urgency of the woman's own exclamations. Yet in spite of its cartoonish lewdness, Haman's version of the blessing contains a spark of authenticity: the primary motivation for immersion in the *mikvah* is to render the woman ritually clean after menstruation, and thus make her sexually accessible to her husband. Indeed, what purpose would God's commandment to immerse serve, without the bodies and desires to validate it? Haman yet again generates a doubled laughter: in one regard, he functions as a proxy for the intrusion of masculine sexual curiosity on a scene of female physical and ritual privacy, and satisfies that curiosity with a nearly pornographic articulation of unbounded feminine desire. At the same time, it is not difficult to sense in Haman's sexual frankness an acknowledgment (and even validation) of female sexual anticipation and conjugal pleasure, details which only a distancing, ventriloquizing persona can disclose without compromising individual modesty. Once more, Hamanic parody hermeneutically unbinds the strictures confining Jewish ritual, body, and libido.

For Bakhtin, as here, the function of parody extends beyonds the merely aesthetic or linguistic; Bakhtin sees comical mimicry as playing a central role in the historical emergence of a critical "scientific" mindset in the West, one that permits realistic apprehension and representation. In literary terms, the comic genres act as a "corrective of reality" (55) to the "high" or "straightforward" genres[174] because their multiple "languages," their intentional and intonational quotation marks, introduce to the literary work a diversity of perspective, and with it, psychological and political complexity:

> It is as if such mimicry rips the word away from its object, disunifies the two, shows that a given straightforward generic word —epic or tragic—is one-sided, bounded, incapable of exhausting the object; the process of parodying forces us to experience those sides of the object that are not otherwise included in a given genre or a given style. (55)

173This scene evokes not only treatments of Haman's Slander in midrashic sources, but also early modern non-Jewish dramas, which contained scenes of male trespass on privacy of the "lying-in" period that women observed both before and after childbirth. Johannes Praetorius' comedy on this theme, *Apocalypsis Mysteriorum Cybeles: Das ist eine Schnakische Wochen-Comedie,* is an early seventeenth century example of this genre in German, and was likely to have been in circulation around the same time and place as this Purim play.

174Here, Bakhtin has in mind especially the epic and the tragic. For our purposes, the liturgical and devotional are equally relevant.

Yet parody's formal features and effects are not aesthetically neutral; they are in fact, by their very nature, fraught with social and political implication: “It is the nature of every parody to transpose the values of the parodied style [...]: parody is always biased in some direction, and this bias is dictated by the distinctive features of the parodying language [...] —we feel its presence in the parody and we recognize that presence” (75). Though Bakhtin diplomatically prefers to think of the action of parody as a “transposition of values,” one might just as well view it as antagonistically subverting or undermining the high genre it sets out to mimic. And elsewhere Bakhtin does in fact lay the foundation for an overt articulation of the political or ideological consequences of parody, as when he addresses the significance of laughter, broadly conceived:

> Laughter is a vital factor in laying down that prerequisite for fearlessness without which it would be impossible to approach the world realistically. As it draws an object to itself and makes it familiar, laughter delivers the object into the fearless hands of investigative experiment—both scientific and artistic—and into the hands of free experimental fantasy. Familiarization of the world through laughter and popular speech is an extremely important and indispensable step in making possible free, scientifically knowable and artistically realistic creativity in European civilization. (23)

This is the first formulation of what Bakhtin comes shortly thereafter to call “comic dismemberment,” and already we see the key elements of which such a device is composed. Laughter is, according to Bakhtin, a symptom of familiarity, of nearness, of unfettered exploration and investigation. We laugh when we are uninhibited, free from fear, reverence, or piety. This laughter both demonstrates our liberation from intellectual confinement by tradition, and aids us in probing deeper into the nature of things as they truly are. When Bakhtin says that “laughter delivers the object into the fearless hands of investigative experiment,” he introduces a metaphor of physical and intellectual proximity that fully bears fruit as he approaches the definition of “comic dismemberment”:

> Basically, this is uncrowning, that is, the removal of an object from the distanced plane [...]. In this plane (the plane of laughter) one can disrespectfully walk around whole objects; therefore, the back and rear portion of an object (and also its innards, not normally accessible for viewing) assume a special importance. The object is broken apart, laid bare (its hierarchical ornamentation is removed): the naked object is ridiculous; its “empty” clothing, stripped and separated from its person, is also ridiculous. What takes place is a comical operation of dismemberment. (23-24)

Bakhtin's spatial figuration of the interaction of laughter and its object is in fact another version of his above description of parody. Just as parody disunifies the word and its referent, exposes their difference, and introduces distance between them, so comic dismemberment relies on the disunification of the constitutive elements of the object. Comic dismemberment is broadly

relational; parody is – in Bakhtin's view – narrowly linguistic. Yet the mechanics of the two are the same, taking the object down from its high alcove so as to draw it near for examination. The author (and with him, the audience) can inspect, magnify, and dissect the object until, in its accessibility, its vulnerability, it becomes an object of familiar laughter. At the same time, this very manipulation allows for the examination of the object from a variety of perspectives, complicating it, laying bare its wayward idiosyncrasies, its departures from orthodox signification. Comic dismemberment denudes the object, stripping it of obfuscating adornment, ceremonial mystique, the trappings of hierarchy and authority. Comic dismemberment makes the object ridiculous in its nakedness, together with its absurd accoutrements.

In the *Akhashveyrosh-shpil*, the midrash of the mikvah showcases diverse and layered deployments of comic dismemberment. On the surface, the object dismembered and rendered laughable is the Jewish woman, literally, spiritually, and sexually denuded. (And indeed, this scene is in some respects the feminine complement to the scene of Haman's *Kiddush,* in which Jewish masculinity was to be deflated.) In a similar, but more abstract vein, Jewish liturgy is subjected to Haman's linguistic demystification, when its elevated Hebraic register drops abruptly to the level of the Yiddish vernacular, replete with everyday vulgarisms.[175] Yet as the process of comic dismemberment proceeds, the objects of critique proliferate. Even as Haman lasciviously exposes female bodies and Jewish religiosity, his recurrent translational failures dismantle any illusion of expertise in Hebrew language or the secret inner workings of Judaism. And while the play's staging puts Haman's own prurience on display, it too draws only the thinnest veil of modesty over the Jewish male imaginations (of author, actors, and audience) for which it stands in. By implicating the laughing audience itself, comic dismemberment indeed becomes a process of familiarization, a drawing close, a drawing-in. The evocation of laughter becomes the sign, not only of realistic apprehension of the object, but also of the subject, that is, the laughing self.

In spite of its transgressive content and the details in which Haman deviates from orthodox practice, this scene nevertheless portrays Jewish erotic life as both sexually gratifying and halachically compliant. It thus functions as an arousing dramatization of Jewish ritual inflected with social, sensual, and vernacular detail, the savor of everyday life. And this unvarnished, intimate rendering is in fact possible because and not in spite of the turn to parody and the familiarized irreverence it permits. The realistic effects of parody are also visible in the formal dynamics of the Purim play as a performance of the midrashic hermeneutic. Just as the rabbinic midrashim on Haman's Slander exploited the gap in the biblical text, the Purim play takes advantage of the ritual gap in the midrashic tradition, using the omissive silence regarding the *mikvah* as an opportunity to portray, in transgressive but unapologetic fashion, graphic scenes from contemporary Jewish life. As with classical midrash before it, the *Akhashveyrosh-shpil* manages its anterior sources opportunistically, always fleshing out the gapped inherited texts with material of immediate social and even physical relevance to the daily life of the people. It thereby composes and incorporates new vernacular midrashim, embellishing upon the midrashic material it inherited even as it accurately depicts and re-enacts the interpretive work those earlier midrashim performed.

175This simultaneously intra- and interlingual "mixing of styles" – to borrow Bakhtin's term – is fully realized here in the use of a Hebrew-derived obscenity for the penis, rather than a Yiddish one.

Though he refers to it above only in passing, Bakhtin's conception of parody throws into relief the formal affinity between comic realism and the self-conscious intertextuality which inheres in traditions of biblical commentary. From a certain perspective, both commentary and parody can, as literary genres defined by their emphatically citational and allusive practice, claim to thematize intertextual discourse. Yet Bakhtin constrains his conception of intertextuality in two ways: First, he makes laughter the prerequisite for the interpretive dismemberment that leads to realism. Despite this overt claim, the figurative language he uses is unerringly evocative of the exegetic process, especially midrash, which even at its most earnest and devout, "disunifies the word from its object," subjects it to "investigative experiment," requisitions it for "experimental fantasy." Second, and as a corollary to this first postulate, Bakhtin severs the link between parody and exegesis by insisting that memory plays no role in the comic mode:

> The plane of comic (humorous) representation is a specific plane in its spatial as well as its temporal aspect. Here the role of memory is minimal; in the comic world there is nothing for memory and tradition to do. One ridicules in order to forget. (23)

Just as laughter results from the collapse of spatial distance between the observer and the object, so too is laughter a product of temporal collapse, that is, the erasure of memory. Yet in Bakhtin's own language is buried a refutation of this very narrative. If one ridicules in order to forget, then the impulse to ridicule is in fact generated by tradition and our memory of it, by the often fraught, ambivalent interaction of heir and estate. In truth, memory and tradition play a crucial role in the performance of the comic: that of straight man. Indeed, there can be no radical rewriting of tradition without careful memory of its normative forms. If we resist Bakhtin's restriction of interpretive dismemberment to the comic and his exclusion of memory from laughter, we disclose the consonance of parody and exegesis. And indeed because of this very formal affinity, both parody and exegesis permit the reader to assume stances that would be paradoxical in Bakhtinian terms: skeptical piety, reverent laughter, critical intimacy. Loudly announcing and ceaselessly demonstrating the uncertainty which inheres in hermeneutic activity, both these genres require that the reader acknowledge and participate in their very instability. Nowhere is this more true than in the case of midrash, which is philologically incisive, semantically experimental, and uninhibited in its polysemic capacity for fantasy. Yet all these activities rely upon the long arm of midrashic memory, which is tireless in its retrieval of biblical, rabbinic, liturgical intertexts for rereading. These qualities make it both intensively intertextual and, in its dismembering hermeneutic, uniquely hospitable to devout laughter. It is not surprising then, in the midst of the early modern expurgation of irreverent aesthetics and semantic ambiguity from Hebrew exegetical genres, that midrash should persist elsewhere, in "low," parodying, dissonant and unsanitized vernacular genres, the Purim play among them.

CODA: WAGENSEIL'S COPYIST AND COUNTER-EXEGESIS

As discussed above, the manuscript containing this Purim play was copied at the home of Rector Johan Christof Wagenseil in the town of Altdorf in 1697. The copyist identifies himself as a baptized Jew from Cracow, born Moses ha-Kohen, having taken the name Johan Christian Jacob. He also provides a last name that is difficult to read and which Shmeruk renders לעבר, but which may also be plausibly read as קעבר. Indeed, it is my belief that our copyist is known to us

already as none other than Johan Christian Jacob Kemper (1670-1716), the Sabbatean Jew born Moses b. Aaron ha-Kohen of Cracow, baptized in 1696 in Schweinfurt (near Altdorf). Kemper taught Hebrew at Altdorf until around 1698-99, and in 1696 copied at least one (other) manuscript for Wagenseil, *Revealer of Secrets* [גלי רזייא], by the fifteenth century Jewish apostate Paulus de Heredia, a repository of Christian demonstrations of the doctrine of the Trinity in kabbalistic works. Kemper himself went on to author *Matteh Mosheh* [The Staff of Moses], itself a three-volume opus on the Zohar as a source of esoteric confirmations of Christological doctrine. It is believed that Kemper may even have lived in Wagenseil's residence, where he became acquainted with the itinerant Swedish students Strömer (Kemper's future brother-in-law) and Camé, who were in Altdorf between 1696-98. These two convinced Kemper to accept a position as tutor of Hebrew at the University of Uppsala, where he lived until his death.[176]

The 1697 preface itself is a thicket of talmudic and liturgical allusions, which serve both as the kind of rhetorical embellishment proper to rabbinic paratexts of this period and as the occasion for Kemper's clever, Christianizing reinterpretation. Yet in the initial epigraph, he situates his manuscript generically, adhering with militant exactitude to that genre's rhetorical conventions:

קרובץ
זה השער ליהוה
צדיקים יבאו בו
(Shmeruk 157)

Ordinarily the term *kroyvets* designated a liturgical genre similar to the *machzor*, a collection of Jewish liturgical texts proper either to individual holidays or to the entire year, and generally accompanied by Yiddish paraphrases. Although its ultimate origins are obscure, the word itself is often, as in this case, identified as an acronym of first half of Ps. 118:15: "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous," and neatly alludes to the liturgical context in which the *kroyvets* was to be used. The "voice of rejoicing and salvation" evokes the voices of a congregation raised in song, and the "tents of the righteous" suggest the widespread image of the synagogue itself as a tent, as in the prayer uttered upon entering the house of worship, which begins "How lovely are your tents, O Jacob" (Num. 24:5). The acronym is followed by another, later verse from the same psalm, also proper to the *kroyvets* as a genre, which contains a well-worn pun on the Hebrew and Yiddish term for title-page, *sha'ar*, which also means "gate." The

176See H. Schoeps, *Philosemitismus im Barock: Religions- und geistesgeschichtliche Untersuchungen.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1952. 92-133; ibid. *Barocke Juden, Christen, Judenchristen.* Bern, München: Francke Verlag, 1965. 60-67. For more recent treatments of Kemper's Sabbateanism and its relation to his later Christian theological writings, see S. Asulin, "Another Glance At Sabbatianism, Conversion, and Hebraism in Seventeenth-Century Europe: Scrutinizing the Character of Johan Kemper of Uppsala, or Moshe Son of Aharon of Krakow." *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 17 (2001). 423-70; E. Wolfson, "Messianism in the Christian Kabbalah of Johann Kemper." *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* 1.1 (2001).; M. Eskhult, "Rabbi Kemper's Case for Christianity in his Matthew Commentary, with Reference to Exegesis" in *Religious Polemics in Context: Papers Presented to the Second International Conference of the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions (Lisor) Held at Leiden, 27–28 April 2000*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 2004. On the basis of such compelling evidence, there is little doubt to my mind that our copyist "Johan Christian Jacob Moses ha-Kohen of Cracow" and Johan Christian Jacob Kemper né Moses b. Aaron ha-Kohen of Cracow are one and the same.

title-page is thus explicitly figured as a portal (to borrow Genette's familiar metaphor[177]), beyond which wisdom awaits those righteous ones who enter. In almost every respect, Kemper squarely enmeshes his text in a matrix of generically and religiously familiar allusions, refraining from the slightest intimation that this work is the exception among liturgical collections. Yet in his "colophon," where the details of the manuscript's production are given, he maintains his adherence to formal convention while throwing doctrinal reticence to the wind:

> נכתב בשנת חמשת אלפים וארבע מאות וחמשים ושבעה לבריאת עולם
> למנין שאנו מונין כאן באלטארף המפוארה
> ובשנת אלף ושש מאות וטשעים ושבעה ללידת ישוע הבן משיח יהוה

From a rhetorical perspective, the opening of this passage is utterly unremarkable, indeed formulaic. Many early modern Jewish texts, both in print and manuscript, gave their year according to both the Jewish and Christian calendars, and praised either the city in which they were produced or the reigning monarch. Yet in announcing the Christian year, most Jewish books avoided any reference to how the year was calculated in order to observe the traditional prohibition against explicitly referring to Jesus of Nazareth (although this is not in fact halachically mandated). Yet here everything following the Christian year serves as a condensed confession of faith by a baptized Jew, jarring for its concise and unabashed fusion of traditional rabbinic rhetoric and doctrinaire schismatism. By referring to Jesus as *Yeshua,* instead of the derogatory rabbinic *Yeshu* (or some other, more Latinate alternative),[178] Kemper hews to the Christian Hebraist tradition which retrieves for Jesus a *biblical* Jewish name (see, for example, Neh. 8:7). Further, by describing him as both "son" and *moshiakh* of YHWH, Kemper asserts Jesus' divinity while simultaneously affirming the continuity of Jewish and Christian messianic traditions. Kemper here evolves a technique of rhetorical and thematic juxtaposition, a poetics which dominates the remainder of his personal remarks. Kemper thus establishes an orthodox citational practice reliant upon Jewish liturgy, which is he then recontextualizes amid the heterodoxy of his biographical circumstances:

> כל השערים ננעלו הוץ משערי דמעה להיות לי לעד ולזיכרון לדורי דורות
> חתמתי את שמי הטרוד במלאכ׳ שמי׳ יהן קריסטיאן יאקוב [?]עבר משה כהן
> מקראקא ושינוי השם משנה מזל ואין מזל לישראל

The first citation, "All gates are locked apart from the gate of tears," is heavy with liturgical and theological associations. It derives originally from two locations in the Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 32b and Bava Metzi'a 59a, where R. Elazar says that after the Destruction of the Temple, the gates of prayer were closed, but the gates of tears were not. That is, without the Temple and its expiatory cultic functions, the prayers of Israel go unheard; nevertheless, God would still accept those petitions that were accompanied by tears. This notion, that only the

177See G. Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation.* Literature, Culture, Theory. v. 20. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

178Kemper's use of this particular form was, in all likelihood, very intentional. In his Hebrew commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, *Me'irat Enayim* (1704), Kemper writes, "still today [the Jews] mock [Jesus] by rendering his name without *ayin* as Yeshu, i.e. ימח שמו וזקרו, 'may his name and memory be wiped out.'"

tearful plea is sufficient in the eyes of heaven, later becomes a commonplace in the Jewish understanding of supplication and is ultimately incorporated into the Ashkenazic Yom Kippur liturgy. There it appears in the *Neilah* service at the close of Yom Kippur, via a tenth-century Italian piyyut by Amittai b. Shefatyah of Oria, *Ez'kerah elohim v'ehemayah,* which includes the talmudic intertext: "I have staked my confidence on the Thirteen Attributes [of God's mercy] and on the gates of tears that are never closed" (Nulman 138-39, translation mine).[179] Kemper cites this intertext as an introduction to the topic of his name-change (which itself stands in metonymically for his baptism and conversion) from Moses ha-Kohen to Johan Christian Jacob. He explains that he changed his name in the hope of changing his fortune, and cites as a proof-text the famous talmudic dictum from Shabbat 156a, *eyn mazal l'yisrael.* In its original context, this was understood to mean that "zodiacal fortune" does not apply to the nation of Israel; that is, Israel's fate is not determined by astrological accident but by divine Providence. But Kemper takes the grammatical ambiguity of the Hebrew as an opportunity to lament the fact that "Israel has no luck."

And indeed, Kemper had reason to complain. Before his conversion to Lutheranism, Moses b. Aaron had been an adherent of a mid-century sect of Sabbateans who expected the arrival of the Messiah in 1695. So convinced were they that, according to Kemper, they "refused to clean their houses [see Lev. 14:36], sold all their possessions, slaughtered their cattle, preparing to follow the Messiah to Jerusalem. [...] But because he did not come then either, hope passed away along with the year" (from the preface to Kemper's *Matteh Mosheh*, 1711; see also Schoeps, *Barocke Juden* 61-62). In the wake of this hopelessness and disappointment, Moses b. Aaron was baptized in the Augsburg Confession the following year, and became Johan Christian Jacob Kemper. Soon after, he took a position teaching Hebrew at a German University, probably Altdorf (Schoeps, *Philosemitismus* 93), where he became acquainted with Rector Johan Christof Wagenseil, for whom he worked as a copyist and produced several manuscripts (this Purim play among them) between 1696-97. For Kemper, this was a moment of transition from Sabbatean Jew to Christian Hebraist, marked by trauma and upheaval but also hope for a change of fortune. In this biographical context, his rabbinic citations come to reflect not on the status the nation of Israel and its special relationship to God, but rather on Kemper's own spiritual journey. The first citation thus implies he has surely wept tears enough that God should take heed of his plight, and that by changing his name through baptism, he might escape the ill fortunes of the nation of his birth. As above, this yoking of rabbinic rhetoric to Christian content seems founded on a supersessionist assumption regarding the historical unity of God's identity; namely, that the Jewish God of the Second Temple and Talmud, only accessible through the gate of tears, is the same God who will now look favorably on Kemper's newly minted Christianity. Yet despite this impulse toward theological continuity, Kemper must nevertheless unmoor his Jewish intertexts from their traditional deployments in Jewish liturgy, so as to subvert the interpretations of earlier Jewish poets and exegetes in service of his own Christianizing agenda. Thus, while Kemper stakes a claim for Christianity in affirming the historical continuity of God's identity, he simultaneously introduces an exegetical disjuncture in order to wrest theological authority from his Jewish predecessors.

179See M. Nulman, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Prayer: The Ashkenazic and Sephardic Rites.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993.

The poetics of rhetorical unity and exegetical disjuncture develops further as Kemper introduces another citation from the Yom Kippur liturgy, this time from the Musaf service:

> הפותח את השער אל דופקים בתשובה שייך להאלוף התורני מו׳ מהרר יוחנן
> נקרא בפי כל אדם ראקטור וואגין זייל מנירן בערג כתבתי לכבודו

"The one who opens the gate to those knocking to repent" derives from a ninth century piyyut, *Ha-ocheyz be-yad* (popularly known as *Ve-khol ma'aminim*), most often ascribed to R. Yohanan ha-Kohen (Nulman 156, translation mine). In its original context, the appellation naturally refers to God, but here Kemper, with characteristic irreverence, takes it to name his benefactor Rector Wagenseil, whom he affectionately honors with the title "R. Yohanan." Like Jesus in the previous passage, Wagenseil is also given a Hebrew name, another means by which Kemper requisitions and reapportions Jewish religious authority. In a single stroke, Kemper thus equates Wagenseil with one of the canonical poets of Jewish liturgy, and implies that the rector is possessed of the very same powers of absolution as God himself: emerging from the dire disappointment of 1695, he knocked at Wagenseil's door to repent of his wayward, messianic Judaism and was admitted, as student, scribe, and friend.[180] The ludic malleability of Kemper's (re-)naming audaciously announces the instability (and perhaps irrelevance?) of religious identity itself, boundaries that Kemper feels free to traverse and blur. In destabilizing religious distinctions, the above citation also repurposes the metaphor of the gate, which has been running through the text so far. From the "gate" of the title-page, to the supplicatory "gates of tears," to the opener of the gate of repentance, Kemper collapses these three disparate deployments into the justificatory *leitmotif* of his own conversion. Like the righteous reader who finds wisdom by entering into this text, the ill-fated whose petitions pass through the gates of tears, or the repenting sinners who knock to be admitted and absolved, Kemper reclaims the image of the merciful, benevolent gateway as a means by which to Jewishly narrate and legitimate his own conversion. But at the same time, Kemper's continuous access to the Jewish canon via his citational practice underscores the way that this gate stands forever open, permitting Kemper's free passage between rabbinic text and Christian doctrine.

Nevertheless, this yoking of rabbinic rhetoric and Christian self-explanation does an inevitable violence to the coherence of the Jewish exegetical and liturgical traditions from which Kemper emerges. And indeed, Kemper's later Hebrew works bear out this tendency toward non-Jewish counter-exegesis, forcibly redirecting rabbinic rhetorical and citational materials to affirm a variety of Christian doctrinal positions. Such an inclination requires that Kemper act as a textual and spiritual mediator, deriving his authority from his mastery of the rabbinic tradition but exercising that authority to validate Christian religious understanding. Elliott Wolfson, in his reading of zoharic Christology in Kemper's *Matteh Mosheh*, has characterized this stance as privileging the Jewish exegete over his Christian counterpart, to whom so much of the biblical and rabbinic canon is and forever will be foreign:

> The literary works composed by Kemper display an astonishing blend of rabbinic halachah and Christian spirituality, and the bridge

180At the same time, in designating Wagenseil the "opener" of this gate, Kemper slyly alludes to the fact that the rector is his only intended reader, the one free to open, and thus enter, his book.

> that links the two spheres of religious discourse is the kabbalistic symbolism derived primarily from the zoharic corpus. With great exegetical ease and remarkable flights of speculative fancy, Kemper reinterprets the halachah through the lens of the kabbalah in a Christological light. The intricate weaving of these different strands is reflected in Kemper's somewhat unusual messianic stance as well. According to Kemper, the esoteric import of Christian messianism cannot be fully appreciated unless one has a grasp on the history of rabbinic culture as expressed particularly in the mystical tradition. Beyond trying to persuade Jews of the truths of Christianity, Kemper is implicitly privileging one whose religious path mirrors his own. His works, therefore, can be seen not only as an ongoing attempt at self-legitimization, but as a more subtle affirmation of the Jewish orientation regarding the innate superiority of the Jew as the real Israel who possesses the knowledge of the truth. (1)

And indeed, Kemper's preface too demonstrates how he views his own peculiar confessional history as a journey through the salvific gates of Christianity, which are, at least for him, accessible only via the re-purposed intertexts of the rabbinic tradition. Yet Wolfson's assessment that Kemper affirms the "innate superiority of the Jew [...] who possesses knowledge of the truth" seems somewhat overstated, given the vitriol and derision Kemper lavishes on his former co-religionists. Rather than view Kemper's investment in rabbinic erudition as an elevation of the Jew-as-Jew, it might instead be understood as an argument for the primacy of the Jew-as-reader, announcing the necessity of a Jewishly intertextual exegetical practice to the successful legitimation of Christian doctrine. Kemper and Jews like him (messianic, baptized, heterodox) are thus themselves refigured as points of access, gateways which open both onto Jewish exegetical landscapes and onto Christian revelation, doctrine, and thence, salvation.

Most relevant for our purposes, however, may be the fact that Kemper's preface is doubly allusive. For while his tapestry of liturgical and rabbinic intertexts inform the thematic content of the preface, the rhetorical effects thereby achieved point forward toward the Purim play itself. As we have seen, the *Akhashveyrosh-shpil* engages in an intensive, opportunistic counter-exegesis, reading and dramatizing rabbinic exegeses against the grain, playing biblical characters against type, linguistically and rhetorically distorting liturgical intertexts, and so on. This is especially true of the play's Haman, whose eagerness to demonstrate his facility with Hebrew and the esoteric workings of Jewish ritual is equalled only by his overweening desire to slander the Jewish people. This disposition creates the opportunity for Haman to perform a series of set-pieces, liturgical and ritual parodies, which are virtuosically composed in a such a way as to obscure the ultimate target of their laughter. Is our Jewish audience to laugh at Haman's butchered pronunciation of liturgical Hebrew, his inept and outrageous paraphrases, his pruriently misconstrued portraits of Jewish ritual life? Or are they meant to laugh, irreverently, as though from the outside, at the absurdity and hidden truths of their own practices, a privilege and burden which are solemnly, but compulsorily performed a whole year? The hilarity of Haman's portrayal of Jewish life lies not only in its ridiculousness, but also in its unseemly and transgressive honesty, its exposure of an inner life which at all other times must go unseen and unexpressed. And in certain respects, Kemper's rhetorical stance, whether in this preface or in his

zoharic, Christological researches, mimics this very ambiguity, prizing Jewish sources and practices for their historical and linguistic authenticity while simultaneously teasing from them confirmation of his own anti-Jewish doctrines. Kemper's takes the preface as an opportunity to adapt Haman's liturgical counter-exegesis to his own paratextual purposes, and engages with the trope of the Jewish informer (a term which in Hebrew [מוסר] is directly related to the "slander" or [מסירה] of Haman), usually an apostate, who defames the Jews (with particular focus on their seditious religious rituals) to secular authorities, and the validity of whose testimony is vouchsafed by his mastery of Jewish languages, the biblical and the rabbinic canon. Although Haman was no Jew, Kemper's adaptation of his slanderous liturgical parodies in the play's preface serves as an ironic frame-narrative for the *Akhashveyrosh-shpil* as its readers (though mainly Wagenseil) received it: as itself the product of a Jewish informer, granting his Christian benefactors insider knowledge of Jewish religious and cultural life. This enclosure of the entire play in "the intentional quotation marks" of the informer, to return Bakhtin's figuration, is the most fully realized instance of the very intertextual strategy the preface employed: rhetorical mimicry as a vehicle for interpretive disjuncture. Kemper seizes exegetical authority precisely in his ironic, but pitch-perfect ventriloquization of rabbinic antecedents. Much like the Purim play itself, Kemper's preface capitalizes upon the formal identity of exegesis and parody, and thereby captures both the transmitted text and the copyist's skeptical laughter.

INTRODUCTION

In the prologue to his first book of poetry,[181] the modern Yiddish poet Itzik Manger (1901-69) concludes with the following remarks:

> די טרויעריקע „באַלאַדע" פון די גרייזן (וועריטער, פונקטואַציע), ווידמע
> איך דעם בחור הזעצער. דער לעזער דאַרף נעמען אין אַבט די שווערע
> באַדינגונגען פאַר דרוקן אַ יידישן בוך אין אַלטרומעניע. דאָ פאָדערט נאָך דער
> זעצער פולע אַוטאָנאָמי פאַר זיך און זיין פאַנטאַזיע.
>
> (preface, unpaginated)

As elsewhere in Manger's oeuvre, this disclaimer becomes the occasion for a concise meditation on problems of genre and authorial identity, which come to inform not only Manger's modernist literary experiments but also the metapoetic armature of paratexts and critical essays he generated around them. Manger's first book, *Shtern oyfn dakh: Lid un balade* [Stars on the Roof: Song and Ballad], was published in Bucharest in 1929. It contains the bulk of poems which Manger composed during his twenties, beginning with the ballad "Meydl-portret" (*Kultur,* 1921). Earlier in that very prologue, Manger establishes two approaches to genre in near paradoxical juxtaposition. The first is unabashedly impish, as when he explains: די לידער וואָס זענען געזאַמלט אין דעם באַנד, זענען ניט געאָרדנעט כראָנאָלאָגיש און ניט געטיילט אין ציקלען. מיט אַ באַזונדער פרייד האָב איך זיי כאַאָטיש צעוואָרפן איבערן גאַנצן בוך. באַלאַדע, קריסטוס-ליד און ליד פון בעל שם. The frank pleasure Manger takes in this apparent disorder, his impudent refusal of editorial responsibility, would seem to represent a modernist rebellion against the arbitrary confines of form and traditional genre. By scattering his compositions haphazardly (or at least asserting that this was his aim), so that examples of disparate genres fall cheek by jowl, Manger requires that the reader navigate these poems unaided, without editorial or authorial guidance, an unmediated encounter with the text that defies expectation.

Yet Manger's miniature apologia for the typesetter, in its allusion to a historical past which persists, unaltered in 'Old Romania,' serves to historically destabilize Manger's own purportedly modernist efforts. In the context of the prologue, Manger has just finished dedicating a number of the poems in this collection to his literary colleagues, the first and foremost being "the ballad of the mistakes" [די באַלאַדע פֿון די גרייזן], which he "gives as a gift" [גיב איך אַ מתנה] to Yankef Shternberg. Maintaining the formal conventions of these dedications, Manger then turns to the typesetter, and dedicates to him another "ballad," that of the print errata, one which spans the whole of the book. Crucially, such a formulation does not disclose *who* the author of this ballad might be: poet or printer? In fact, by dedicating this "sorry ballad" to the typesetter, Manger seems poised to take responsibility for the errors in his manuscript. But the prologue's closing lines clarify the ambiguity. Manger explains that in Romania, which includes not only the place of this book's publication, the capital Bucharest, but also Manger's hometown of Chernovitz, the printing of a Yiddish book is beset by difficulties. Not, apparently, due to any technological or economic impediment, but rather because there, in the Old Country, the

181I. Manger, *Shtern afn dakh: Lid un balade.* Bucharest: Farlag Sholem Aleichem, 1929.

typesetter retains a power he has lost elsewhere: namely, the autonomy of his fantasy, his freedom—or perhaps his right?—to impose his own literary imagination upon the manuscript he refashions in print. By figuring the typesetter in these terms, Manger makes clear that the "sad ballad of the errata" is not his own, but that of an ambitious, autonomous, but irresponsible print-artisan. In one sense, Manger has taken a popular authorial stance, dating back to the advent of print, in which the author directs the blame for all errors at the correctors and typesetters of the printing house.[182] But at the same time, he has pointedly departed from this authorial perspective. In so doing, Manger makes full use of this early modern paratextual cliché, while simultaneously blurring the dividing line between modernist poetic production and early print practice.

Though this prologue is the earliest of Manger's references to poetic composition as conditioned by the artisanal culture of print, his preoccupation with literary transmission and its complexities will persist throughout his subsequent collections, culminating perhaps in the midrashic poems from *Khumesh-lider* (1935) [Bible Songs], *Megile-lider* [Megillah Songs] (1936), and *Der shnayder-gezeln Note Manger zingt* [The Tailor's Apprentice Note Manger Sings] (1948).[183] This chapter will examine the ways in which Manger crafted his claims to poetic and exegetical authority based on surviving witnesses to two early modern Yiddish genres: the biblical epic and the Purim play. In his essays on literature, history, and Jewish culture, Manger founds his neo-folkist theory of Yiddish genre on a genetic, evolutionary model of literary historiography. Out of his genetic entanglement of pre-modern and modernist literary genres, I suggest, emerges Manger's preoccupation with early modern material texts (in manuscript and print) and their reproduction and dissemination by empowered textual stewards: printers, correctors, editors, and anthologists. This process of transmission may transform and refashion the traditional texts of the early modern Yiddish canon, but the material continuity of their reproduction serves to vouchsafe their genetic continuity with the literary past. Such an assertion of modern and early modern literary continuity romanticizes Jewish textual transmission, and emerges in Manger's modernist verse as a formal and intellectual opportunity, by which the modern poet may lay claim to the authority and autonomy of the early modern editor. In his poetry, balladic retellings of biblical narrative occasion the use of traditional editorial and paratextual gestures, drawn from Yiddish early print. Similarly, Manger's literary-historiographical essays retrieve and romanticize early modern textual stewardship as the guarantor of literary and historical continuity with the biblical, rabbinic and folk-cultural past. As we will see, formal and metapoetic tactics are required to bridge the gap between early modern Yiddish literature with its distinctive culture(s) of transmission and Manger's contemporary Yiddish verse, its modernist aesthetic and ethical sensibilities. These formal and metapoetic devices culminate in Manger's temporally unstable poetics – simultaneously archaic and anachronistic – to stake out his role as imaginative exegete, parsing, unpacking and ameliorating historical distance. These strategies for generating historical identification in the face of historical distance (while still making use of the 'artistic objectivity' which is its fruit) often seem counter-realistic: linguistic, technological, cultural, and textual anachronism, self-conscious archaism, fictive and parodic transmission histories. I will argue, however, that these works nevertheless pursue Manger's commitment to artistic objectivity which requires, not a literal and

182See Grafton, *The Culture of Correction*.

183I. Manger, *Khumesh-lider.* Warsaw: Ch. Brzoza, 1936; ibid, *Megile-lider.* Warsaw: Farlag Aleynenyu, 1936; ibid, *Der shnayder-gezeln Note Manger zingt.* London: Farlag Aleynenyu, 1948.

photographic documentation of material details, but the development of historically compelling figurations of nearness and distance.

I. MANGER AND OLD YIDDISH VENTRILOQUISM

In 1938, Manger published *Noente geshtaltn* [Familiar Figures], a collection of fictionalized biographical sketches of Yiddish writers, printers, bards, and balladeers from the sixteenth century to the present day.[184] The sketches had originally been published serially in the Warsaw newspaper, *Nayer Folkstsaytung*, and were assembled and amended in their own volume. In his preface, Manger portrays himself as a literary middle-man, a mediator between the obscure past of Yiddish literature and the popular reader. In fact, he was acting not only as intermediary between the past and present of Yiddish literature, but also between the Yiddish literary-academic intelligentsia and the mass market: his impressions of early Yiddish writers and poets are drawn directly from his own readings in Yiddish literary historiography, which in this period had come to flourish as part of a budding Yiddish nationalism. Figures such as Nokhem Shtif, Israel Zinberg, Zalman Reisen, and others provided the raw materials from which Manger crafted his vignettes.[185] Although he neglects to mention this additional layer of mediation, Manger nevertheless explains his choice of title in terms of historical encounter and the intimacy it engenders:

> „נאָענטע געשטאַלטן" הייסט דאָס בוך דערפאַר, ווייל די געשטאַלטן, וואָס
> ציטערן אין דעם בוך, זענען ווייטע און נאָענטע. דעם פּרנס אייזיק וואַליד
> ווירמייסן [ט 17ער י״ה], די בּתולה „עטוואָס אונטער צוועלף יאָרן", געלע [
> 18טער י״ה], פֿאַרבינדט דער זעלבער ליטעראַריש-געשיכטלעכער פֿאָדיממיט
> דעם פֿאָלקס-דיכטער מאַרק מאַרקאָוויטש וואַרשאַווסקי [19טער י״ה] און
> דעם טראַגישן אַרבעטער-דיכטער יוסף באָוסעווער [20סטער י״ה].
>
> (preface, unpaginated 1938)

On one level, Manger's project is an exercise in historical narrative, not only in composing fictionalized prose vignettes, but also in his effort to draw a through-line that would thematically connect them across time and space, generating a single, unbroken chain, an 'alternative canon of Yiddish literature,'[186] which when viewed as a whole, would disclose the aesthetic significance and internal coherence of the Yiddish literary tradition since the dawn of modernity. In effect, he

184I. Manger, *Noente geshtaltn.* Warsaw: Farlag Ch. Brzoza, 1938.

185In his letters Manger makes reference to Nokhem Shtif's literary chrestomathy: N. Shtif, *Di eltere yidishe literatur: literarishe khrestomatye.* Kiev: Operativer Farlag "Kultur Lige," 1929. David Roskies suggests that it was this work in particular which formed the basis for *Noente geshtaltn.* See D. Roskies, *A Bridge of Longing: The Lost Art of Yiddish Storytelling.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995. 391, n. 42. However, Shtif's collection does not include seventeenth-century figures such as Isaac Wallich, Solomon Singer, or the printer's daughter Gele, and thus Manger must have relied upon other resources in crafting the opening two sketches of the 1938 volume. For other possible sources for Manger's vignettes on Isaac b. Moses Wallich of Worms, Solomon Zinger of Prague and Isaac Kitul, see Zinberg, *Geshikhte*, 104-109; Z. Reisen, "Moyshe ben Avrom Avinu Ger Tsedek." *Leksikon fun der yidisher literatur un prese.* Ed. Shmuel Niger, Warsaw: Farlags-gezelshaft "Tsentral," 1914. 398-99; E. Korman, *Yidishe dikhterins: Antologye.* Chicago: L. M. Stein, 1928. 18-19. For a more extensive bibliography of material on Gele, see Korman's introduction, XXXIII-XXXIV; and M. Basin, *Antologye: Finf hundert yor yidishe poezye.* v. 1. New York: Farlag "Dos yidishe bukh," 1917. 79.

186See the very apt description given in Shtern, x.

implies that although these characters are historically removed from us by many centuries, they may be brought close [נאָענט], not only to one another, but also to the popular reader and his or her present. Nearly a quarter-century later, in his afterword to the 1961 edition of *Noente geshtaltn,*[187] Manger makes this ambition explicit when he writes:

> די „נאָענטע געשטאַלטן" זיינען אַ פּרואוו בעלעטריסטיש לעבעדיק צו מאַכן אַ
> ריי געשטאַלטן פֿון אונזער ליטעראַרישן עבר: פֿאָלקס-זינגער, טרובאַדורן,
> בראָדער זינגער, מעשה-דערציילער און בדחנים.
> „נאָענטע געשטאַלטן", ווייל איך האָב זיי דערנענטערט צו זיך פון די
> ווייטן און צייטן כדי זיי בעסער צו זען.
> איך האָב אַ מאָל געטראַכט פון אַ סעריע, וואָס האָט געדאַרפט הייסן
> „ווייטע געשטאַלטן": מאָדערנע אידישע פּאָעטן און בעלעטריסטן האָבן
> געדאַרפט זיין די העלדן פון דער סעריע. „ווייט" מיין איך אין זין פון שאַפֿן אַ
> דיסטאַנץ, פונקט ווי אין „נאָענט" האָב איך געפּרואווט פאַרמינערן די
> דיסטאַנץ.
>
> (515)

In some sense, Manger seeks to imaginatively, fictively entangle us with the recovered history of Yiddish literary creativity, employing literary prose, modernist psychological realism, and painstaking attention to linguistic and cultural detail to generate an immersive (though not strictly mimetic) experience of the past.

The 1938 edition opens with a sketch of Isaac b. Moses Wallich of Worms[188] and his friend, Solomon Zinger of Prague, a wandering troubadour. A brief summary will suffice to give a sense of Manger's interests in these two figures: The sketch opens with Zinger's arrival at Wallich's doorstep. Over a glass of beer, the talk soon turns to poetry and the reader learns that Isaac Wallich is a collector of folk songs, which he unfailingly commits to writing as soon as he's heard them. In this connection, he takes the opportunity to double-check a song of Zinger's, which he heard sung by another in an ale-house. Although mostly intact, a few corruptions had crept into his text, which Wallich 'corrects' according to Zinger's version. His courage bolstered by the second glass of beer, Wallich sings a song of his own devising for Zinger, who is – flatteringly – not unimpressed. They are distracted by the sounds of a funeral procession in the street, and Wallich explains to Zinger that it is a funeral of a wealthy Jewish householder who had suffered great misfortune. Several years earlier, he was blamed for the murder of a Christian child, tortured and sentenced to death. His life was saved only by bribery and a miraculous event: the true murderer got drunk and gave himself away. The pitiful wailing of the householder's daughter reminds Wallich of the songs he heard sung at her wedding, and out of this sorrow, he composes a song of his own about the fleeting nature of life and the inevitability of death. With this transformation of emotion into poetry, the narrator concludes that Wallich could not possibly have known how his work would resonate in Yiddish literature for many generations to come.

The vignette is, in certain respects, dogged in its commitment to historical specificity (insofar as those details were available through current academic research), and Manger strives

187I. Manger, *Noente Geshtaltn*. New York: Itzik Manger Yoyvl-Komitet, 1961.

188For Wallich bibliography, cite Frakes (Early Yiddish Texts) and Matut (Dissertation). Manger likely encountered him through Moyshe Basin's anthology.

to incorporate every fact he has gleaned from reading Felix Rosenberg, Max Erik, and Israel Zinberg, who had included portraits of Wallich and Zinger in their studies of early Yiddish literature.[189] Wallich's collection of Yiddish folk-songs survives in manuscript in Oxford's Bodleian Library.[190] It is thought to date to approximately 1600, and contains examples from diverse genres: wedding and bridal songs, Purim-songs, love songs, lewd or erotic rhymes and social satires. Some of these are anonymous, but others are attributed to specific authors: Leyb Kutnis, Joseph b. Benjamin, Isaac Kitul, Solomon Zinger of Prague, and one final song by Isaac Wallich himself. Rosenberg published a critical edition of the manuscript in 1888, and both Erik and Zinberg had included significant citations in their massive historical surveys of early Yiddish literature (1928 and 1935, respectively). Some of these songs had been reprinted in Basin's 1917 anthology, *Finf-hundert yor yidishe poezye* [Five Hundred Years of Yiddish Poetry], and Zinberg had discovered that others survived in nearly identical form as contemporary Yiddish folk-songs, some of which appeared in Ginsberg and Marek's 1901 collection, *Evreiskiia narodnyia piesni v Rossii* [Yiddish Folksongs in Russia].[191] With this substantial reserve of literary-historical conclusions to support him, Manger's portrayal of Wallich and Zinger draws its texture from the particulars offered by academic research. On the assumption that the songs were collected and the Bodleian manuscript produced by Wallich himself,[192] Manger describes Wallich as scrupulous and voracious in his collecting, eagerly recording and revising everything he heard (8): כ׳האָבּ דאָס ליד גלייך פֿאַרשריבּן ווי עס מיין טבע איז. נון דאָ דער מחבּר בּיי מיר איז, מעכט עס וויסן, אויבּ עס איז ריכטיק פֿאַרשריבּן [...] שלמה זינגער „דער לוסטיק פריילעך ייד“ האָט אַ שמייכל געטאָן. ער קען אייזיק וואַליכס שוואַבקייט, דער דאָזיקער פֿרנס האָט ליב צו פֿאַרשרייבּן יעדעס ליד, וואָס ער הערט, פֿאַרשטייט זיך, אויב ס׳גיט אים געפֿעלט. Similarly, with Wallich's death dated roughly to 1632 and the manuscript to 1600, Manger imagines both Wallich and Zinger as men in late middle age, each noticing the advancing gray in the other's beard (7-8). The sketch itself is peppered with citations of songs from the manuscript – a wedding-song, a Purim-song, a riddle-song – and culminates with Wallich's composition of his elegiac *memento mori*, which in reality concludes the manuscript itself. Finally, Manger carefully scatters references to each and every named poet associated with the manuscript.

This accumulation of reconstructed detail continues in the material and cultural life portrayed in the vignette, contributing to the sensation that the episode takes place at a tremendous historical remove from the reader. The references to the blood libel and miraculous delivery, the streets of the Worms ghetto, and the men's own archaicized Yiddish speech conspire to suggest a window onto a wholly other time and place. The frequent intrusion of the narrator's editorial voice, explaining details of the culture and living conditions which would have been unremarkable to early modern contemporaries, also gives the impression of a didactic,

189See. F. Rosenberg, “Über eine Sammlung von Volks- und Gesellschaftsliedern in hebräischen Lettern.” *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland* 2 (1888): 232-96; Zinberg, *Geshikhte*, 7:90; M. Erik, *Geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur fun di eltste tsaytn biz der haskole-tkufe: 14ter-18ter yorhundert, mit bilder un melodyes.* Warsaw, 1928.

190MS Opp. add. 4º. 136; Neubauer, 2420

191S. Ginzburg and P. Marek, *Yiddish Folksongs in Russia. Photo Reproduction of the 1901 St. Petersburg Edition.* ed. Dov Noy, Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991.

192This assumption has lately been pointed out to be just that by Diana Matut (in her unpublished 1999 thesis), although it had gone uncontested in Rosenberg's description (see Frakes, *Early Yiddish Texts*, 472).

anthropological endeavor, more than a novelistic one.[193] Yet something interesting takes place in his striving to incorporate not only individual facts, but also the broader conclusions of contemporary literary historiography. To give only a single example, Wallich pauses in the midst of comparing his transcribed song to Zinger's performance to observe (8): .אַלַצדינג האָט געשטימט אַ זעלטנקייט, ווייל די וואַנדערנדיקע „נאַרן" האָבן אַ טבע צו פאַרגרייזן די לידער און אפילו זיך אָנגעבן פֿאַר די מחבֿרים, כאָטש זיי זענען עס נישט. No primary sources survive to inform us of Wallich's views on the challenges posed to the collector by the vagaries of oral transmission or authorial anonymity. Instead, Wallich's thought here is strongly reminiscent of the opinions of Manger's academic contemporaries, who were themselves engaged in a contorted, philological attempt to reconstruct Old Yiddish *Urtexts* from the 'corrupt' witnesses they had inherited. At the same time, Wallich's observation may be read as Manger's attempt to banish doubt about his own account: Wallich is relieved to find that his version is almost perfectly 'correct,' and thus so are we, for this detail establishes the surviving documents as intact, reliable witnesses to the recently unearthed literary tradition Manger hopes to portray. Here, as elsewhere in the sketch, Manger immerses his reader in an apparently alien cultural and material context, only to reveal that the intellectual efforts and interests, the very inner lives, of our historical predecessors are identical to our own.

This tension—between external alienation and interior identification—is also expressed in Manger's navigation between the Old Yiddish dialogue of his characters and the decidedly modern Yiddish of their private thoughts. Wallich and Zinger speak a Yiddish that is historically inflected by a variety of archaic forms which have disappeared from modern Yiddish. Although still a far-cry from the 'authentic' Old Yiddish of our primary sources, Manger's archaisms are plainly different both from modern Yiddish and from modern German. In his thirst for citational literalism, Manger also lightly rhymes their speech, mimicking the rise-and-fall of early Yiddish song as represented in the Wallich manuscript. Consider, for instance, Solomon Zinger's remark upon hearing Wallich's new Purim song (11): דאָס פֿורים-ליד איז וואָהל געראָטן, די בחורים וועלן קריגן איין פֿעטן בראַטן און דאַצו פֿיל המן-טאַשן און פֿירניס-וויין צוויי פֿלאַשן. The phrase is loosely iambic, punctuated by feminine rhymes in A-A-B-B, and marked by deviations from the standard orthography employed in this edition (i.e. וואָהל instead of וואָל), and from modern Yiddish morphology (i.e. איין instead of אַ, and דאַצו instead of דערצו). At the same time, it is not completely Germanized (note וועלן instead of ווירדן, and און in place of אונד). In sum, this is a Yiddish like ours but different, strange to modern ears, yet strikingly and transparently familiar. Direct discourse becomes the site of linguistic estrangement, reminding the reader of his retrospective vantage-point. At the same time, even as he creates a sensation of linguistic and literary distance, Manger swiftly closes the gap between character and reader upon turning to the more intimate sphere of private thought. Here is Isaac Wallich composing his elegy:

> דאָס חתונה-בילד אין דמיון און דאָס לוויה-בילד אויף דער וואָרף, האָבן דעם
> גוטן פרומען פֿרנס צערודערט. ער האָט דערפילט שאַרף און וויטאָגלעך די

193In connection with this attention to historical detail and its didactic tone, it is interesting to observe that Manger dedicated *Noente geshtaltn* to the secular Yiddish school system in Poland: דאָס דאָזיקע בוך ווידמע איך דער ייִדישער שול-אָרגאַניזאַציע אין פּוילן. אַ באַשייִדענע מתּנה פֿאַר די שול-טוער, לערער און שילער פֿון די ייִדיש-וועלטלעכע שולן (preface, unpaginated).

פאַרגענגלעכקייט פון אַלץ, און אָט דאָס נאָגנדיקע געפיל האָט ער
מיטגענומען מיט זיך אַהיים, ס׳האָט נישט געוואָלט אָפּטרעטן. דער ווייסער
כלה-שלייער און דאָס שוואַרצע טהרה-טוך האָט געפלאַטערט אין זיין חלום.
דער פריילעכער ניגון פון ר׳ לייב קוטנים כלה-ליד האָט זיך
צונויפגעפלאָנטערט מיטן קדיש-ניגון, וואָס איז געפאַלן ווי אַש אויפן קבר
פונם וואָרמסער בית-עולם.

ער איז געלעגן מיט אָפענע אויגן און געפילט, ווי דאָס נאָגנדיקע געפיל
ווערט וואָרט און דאָס וואָרט ווערט ליד. קודם אומקלאָר, דערנאָך קלאָרער,
קלאָרער, און אָט:

„אַך עדלהייט, אַך עדלהייט,
עס איז דאָך נישט קיין עדלהייט,
וואָס איז דאָ אויף דער ערדן,
אַלצדינג פֿאַרגייט זאָ שנעל, גלייך,
ווער אָדמס קינדער, אָרעם און רייך,
מוזן אַלע צו אַשן ווערדן.“

און סטראָף נאָך סטראָף. בילד אויף בילד. דער צער און די וויזיע פֿון
דער פאַרגענגלעכקייט. דער טויט ער גייט אונז נאָך, ער שלייכט זיך ווי אַ
שלאַנג. „ער האָט נישט קיין דערבאַרמען, זיין אורטייל איז שטרענג און האָט
נישט קיין גענאָד, איינעם פֿריער דעם ווייטן שפּעטער, דעם רייכן אַלס דעם
אַרמען“...

„ווו זענען די הערן אונ פירשטן אַל,
קיניג, קייזער, פּאַפּסט און קאַרדינאַל,
וואָס זענען געווען פֿאַר הונדערט יאַרן?
איר נאָמען וואַר אַלן וואָהל באַקאַנט,
זי מוזטן אין איין אַנדער לאַנד,
דאָ זיין זי הינגעפאַרן“.

(12-13)

In a certain sense, this passage can be understood as an historical translation. Manger recasts the 'transparent' modern Yiddish of Wallich's thought in the specific literary language of his time and place. At the same time it is also a generic translation. The passage begins as sedate novelistic prose which gradually dissolves into the fragmented, imagistic syntax of modernist stream-of-consciousness, and finally recrystallizes in the citation of Wallich's formal verse. The first paragraph, in fact, is entirely composed of complete sentences of some length, which describe Wallich's mental state as though from the outside and from above, using elevated diction (such as פֿאַרגענגלעכקייט, "transience") and psychological nuance (as in the tidy distinction made between images perceived by the senses and those conjured up in the mind's eye). In the second paragraph, the syntax picks up speed by means of brevity and concision, becoming almost

fragmentary in its rush toward poetry: געפֿיל ווערט וואָרט און דאָס וואָרט ווערט ליד. And in the last sentence before song, this urgency peaks with the repeated קלאָרעער, קלאָרעער and the suspended אָט after which, it resolves into verse. Thus far, the historical translation and the generic one map onto one another exactly. Novelistic, realist prose is reserved for thought, and archaizing Yiddish for formal verse. Yet Manger's project is not to preserve these distinctions, which work, in their dialectical alternation, to reinforce the reader's literary and temporal distance from Wallich, but to collapse them. In the second paragraph he proceeds to demolish this neat division in a moment of poetic, and psychic, unity. In the moment of poetic production, Wallich's thought becomes fragmented, modernist („בילד אויף בילד"), as the boundary between personal emotion and literary language begins to break down. At the same time, his imagination is still limned by psychological specificity: sorrow, a vision of life's transience, to be made verse. And mid-thought, Wallich's diction shifts from modern to early-modern Yiddish as the serpentine Death of his imagination becomes poetry. Wallich's poem is neither imagistic nor fragmentary, it bears none of the hallmarks of modernity, whether linguistic or literary. Yet Manger renders the subjective experience of poetic inspiration in precisely those terms, telescoping the psychic distance between early modern and modernist poet, striving to make identification possible across what appears to be insurmountable distance.

Although Manger goes to great lengths to draw Wallich nearer to his intended audience (identified in his 1938 preface as the so-called בריטע לייענער-מאַסן), he had special reason to feel that he and Wallich shared a certain literary, if not poetic, disposition. Though Manger observes that Wallich could not possibly have known how his collection would "unite him with future generations" (13), there is plenty of reason to believe that Manger hoped to achieve exactly that through his own literary endeavors. In the same years when he was composing *Noente geshtaltn* (circa 1935-38), Manger also assembled a collection of his own. *Felker zingen* [Peoples Sing] (Warsaw, 1936) is an anthology of folk poetry from around the world, comprising songs drawn from the Hungarian, Indian, Japanese, French, Roma, "Negro" and many other folk-traditions.[194] Manger seems to suggest in his preface that he was the sole translator of all these poems, by which he likely meant that he produced the Yiddish versions, though not necessarily directly from the original language. More likely, he often worked from translations in languages with which he was more comfortable (German, for instance). He does admit that his choice of poems was not directed by an academic, 'folkloristic,' interest, but rather by aesthetics, and that he was very free in his translation for this reason, reshaping the songs according to his own poetic sensibility (preface, unpaginated). In this sense, his efforts in *Felker zingen* are not unlike those in *Noente geshtaltn*, reshaping strange literary materials into a familiar form, bringing close the temporally, geographically, and culturally distant. Indeed the similarity of these two projects explains to some extent how they both came to be printed by the same press, Ch. Brzoza of Warsaw. Although no exhaustive study of the press has been made, it seems to have specialized in Yiddish literary fiction and poetry, as well as prose nonfiction such as memoirs, often of a political nature. Among its authors were I. J. Singer, Esther Kreitman, and a number of prominent anarchist and socialist activists, such as Isidore Kopeloff and Zusman Segalovich. Manger's vision for an "alternative canon of Yiddish literature" in *Noente geshtaltn* was certainly of a piece with the strongly populist, Yiddishist orientation of the press. Furthermore, Manger's

194I. Manger, *Felker Zingen.* Warsaw: Ch. Brzoza, 1936.

own articulation of his project in *Felker zingen* is strongly reminiscent of the dedication he offered in *Noente Geshtaltn* to the students of the Yiddish secular schools in Poland. In much the same tone, the introduction to *Felker zingen* suggests that he saw this too as a means of inspiring and enriching a contemporary generation of Yiddish readers and writers (preface, unpaginated): דאָס דאָזיקע בוך ווידמע איך די יונגע יידישע פּאָעטן. מיין כּוונה דערביי איז, אַז די שיינקייטן פון די פרעמדע פּאָלקסלידער זאָלן גורם זיין פּאַר זיי די אַנטפּלעקונג פון די שיינקייטן אין אונזער יידישן פּאָלקסליד. דער עמבלעם פון יידישן פּאָלקסליד „די גאָלדענע פּאַווע“ , וועט אפֿשר אַזוי אַרום ווערן דער עמבלעם פון יידישן קונסטליד. Manger expresses quite explicitly and self-consciously the hope that his collection might inform the poetry of the coming generation, just as Wallich's manuscript had Manger's. And just as *Felker zingen*, despite its frank pedagogical and ideological rationale, was born out of more than folkloristic curiosity, so too would Wallich's collection fascinate Manger for reasons more aesthetic than academic.

Manger's tenure in Warsaw, especially during the mid- to late-thirties, was his most prolific decade, and in several of these years he published both a book of original poems and another work, such as an anthology, collection of essays or novella. Thus, as he was researching *Noente geshtaltn*, he was also hard at work on his own poetry, much of which was collected in the volume released the previous year, *Demerung in Shpigl* [Twilight in the Mirror] (1937).[195] There, we encounter his earliest references to Wallich and Zinger. These poems are ventriloquistic and archaizing, written in the early Yiddish voices of the two folk-singers. When compared with the more sophisticated navigation between languages, registers, and genres in his vignettes from *Noente geshtaltn,* these poems are easy to see as early experiments with the techniques of historical imagination required for that project. The poem written in Wallich's voice is crafted to resemble songs from the manuscript as closely as possible, without taxing a contemporary reader's comprehension too far. The vocabulary is even more archaic than that used in *Noente geshtaltn* (as in the use of words like נון ,בעפאָר and דירן) and Manger is careful to draw almost exclusively from the Germanic component of Yiddish. He avoids Slavicisms altogether and employs only one word of Hebrew-Aramaic derivation: מלאך המות. The thematic content of the poem is likewise symptomatic of this striving toward historical verisimilitude. The poet sings of the brevity of life and the fleeting sweetness of love:

נוֹן וויל איך זינגען איין לוּשטיק ליד,
שפּריבט אייזיק וואַליך ווירמייסן,
בּעפּאָר עס ווידר דער מלאך המות
מיך פּוֹן דער ערדן רייסן.

בּעפּאָר עס ווידר דער מלאך המות
מיך פּוֹן דער ערדן פּירן,
וויל איך שפּאַסן נאָך אַיין ווייל
מיט איינער היפֿשן דירן.

די ליבּ איז גאָר איין לוּשטיק דינג
מיט לייבטן זין אוּנד זינדן,

195Manger, Itzik. *Demerung in shpigl: Lid un balade.* Warsaw: Bibliotek fun yidishn PEN-klub, 1937.

זי שפּילט מיט אַלן בלינדע-קוּ
אוּן לאָזט זיך שוועריליך פּינדן.

זי גוּרט אַלס איינע טויבּ אַלהי
אוּן צישט אַלס איינע שלאַנגען
אוּן איבּער דיינען לויף אוּן מי
איז דיר דיין טאַג פֿאַרגאַנגען.

דוּ בּליקסט היניין אינס אָוונט-רויט:
ווּ איז די ליבּ פּאַרפלויגן?
די שאָטן-פּילצל שטרייכלען דיר
די טרען אויס דיינע אויגן.

דו ציטערסט אַלס איין קינד אין וואַלד,
דאַס הערט זיין הערצבע שלאַגן
אוּן מעכסט צוּם זעלביק טראָסטע דיר
אַלס צוּ דען בּוימערן זאַגן:

די ליבּ איז גאָר איין אַרטיק דינג
אוּן האָט גאר קיינע זינדן
אוּן פּינדסט דוּ זי ניט אויף דער ערד
ווירסט דוּ זי אַנדערש פּינדן.

נוּן האָט דאַס שיינע ליד איין ענד
דאַס פּוּן דער ליבּ געזוּנגען
אוּן אַלס עס אייזיק קיטל מאַכט
איז עס מיר אויך געלוּנגען.

It is not difficult to see this poem as a relative of the one that closes the vignette in *Noente geshtaltn*. Both are concerned with the transience of love, life, and the unknown 'other land' or 'somewhere else' that comes after. Certainly, the present poem inclines more toward *carpe diem* than *memento mori,* but both are strong examples of early modern poetic genres appropriate to the aging Wallich's imbricated impressions of wedding and funeral. Even the image of the snake is recycled, in one instance a sibilant image of Love, in the other a figure of pursuing Death. Similar too is the reference to Isaac Kitul in the last stanza, who appears elsewhere in the vignette (9), and suggests that Manger was testing methods for smoothly incorporating the historical particulars gleaned in the course of his research. Even the meta-narrative disclosed in the last stanza, when Wallich favorably compares his poem to those of Isaac Kitul, is reminiscent of the conversation from the vignette in which Wallich's first foray into poetry is warmly received by the professional poet Zinger. Evidently, Manger's reading in early Yiddish literary history had already culminated in a firm persona for Wallich: an aging enthusiast, trying his hand at poetry for the first time, well-aware of what is possible in his art-form but sometimes timorous with regard to his own efforts. In spite of the vast historical and cultural difference between the

poet Manger and his Wallich persona, much of the poem is strongly evocative of other earlier poems in Manger's oeuvre. The preoccupation with impending death and the redeeming sensual pleasures of life appear throughout Manger's writing, in poems like “Dovid ha-meylekh” [King David] (1929), “Khave brengt Odemen dem epl” [Eve Brings Adam the Apple] (1935), “Khave un der eplboym” [Eve and the Apple-tree] (1941), and most 'autobiographically' in “Itsik Manger” (1933).[196] In many of these the same images recur: red sunsets and apples, snakes, wine, the sexualized female body. In this same vein, the second poem from *Demerung in Shpigl*, “Eyn kestlikh lid tsum zingen fun Reb Shloyme fun Progn” [A Delightful Song for Singing by R. Solomon of Prague] (31-32), is also strongly informed by the larger concerns pervading Manger's work. A gently cautionary but essentially humorous paean to wine, this poem – like its companion above – hews very close to the style of medieval and early modern popular song:[197]

איך בין דער לוֿשטיק, פֿרייליך ייד,
גינאַנט רבּ שלמה פֿוּן פּראָגן
אוּן וויל אייך, מיינע ליבן לייט,
פֿיל היפֿשן דינגען זאָגן.

נוּן מעכט איך, אָבער אַלערערשט,
איין גלעזכען יין האָבּן,
איין גלעזכען רויט בורגונדער-וויין
אוּן מיינען גוּמען לאָבּן.

דער וויין, איז גאָר איין קעסטליך דינג,
ער טעט אוּנז אַל דערמייען,
איין וואקער מאַן דער גייט צוּם וויין,
אַלס איינע מייד צוּם פּרייען.

איין וואקער מאַן דער גייט צוּם וויין,
אַלס איינע מייד צוּם רייגן,
אוּן טרינקט ער איינען בעבער וויין,
דא קאָן ער נימער שווייגן.

איין נעריש מאַן, דער לאַבט און וויינט

196See *Shtern afn dakh,* 66; ibid. *Khumesh-Lider.* Warsaw: Ch. Brzoza, 1936. 11-12; ibid. *Volkns Ibern Dakh: Lid Un Balade.* [Clouds over the Roof: Song and Ballad]. Chernowitz-Warsaw-London: Farlag Aleynenyu, 1942. 96-7; and, ibid. *Lamtern in vint: Lid un balade.* [Lantern in the Wind: Song and Ballad]. Warsaw: Farlag Turem, 1933. 50.

197 For an introduction to the genre's history in Western Europe, see the classic work on medieval wine songs: J. A. Symonds, *Wine, Women, and Song: Mediæval Latin Students' Songs*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1884. The genre also plays a prominent role in medieval Hebrew literature via the traditions of Islamic Iberian poetry. See *Wine, Women and Song: Hebrew and Arabaic Literature of Medieval Iberia.* Eds. Michelle M. Hamilton, Sarah J. Portnoy, and David A. Wacks, Newark: Juan de La Cuesta - Hispanic Monographs, 2004. On the interrelation of early modern German wine songs and early Yiddish folksong, see once again D. Matut's *Dichtung und Musik im frühneuzeitlichen Aschkenas*.

אוּן מאַבט דעם ווײַן צוּ שאַנדן,
אוּן נאָרן פֿינדט מאַן הי אין פֿראָגּ,
ווי אין הינער-בערגן-לאַנדן.

איין חכם-מאַן, דער זיצט גאָרְ שטיל
אוּן טרינקט פֿאָרְ אַלַן דינגען,
בּיז די פֿרייד, די שעלמיש מיידּ,
אַנפֿאַנגט איין לוּשטיק זינגען.

אוּן דער דאָרְ מאַבט דעם ווײַן צוּם ליד
דער קאָרְ איין דאַנק בּאַגּערן,
דער ליבּער גאָט מאָג זעלבּיג ליד
אין זײַנען הימל הערן.

אוּן דער דאָרְ מאַבט דעם ווײַן צוּם ליד
אוּן טרינקט אוּן זינגט מיט פֿרייד,
דער פֿינדט נאָד זיינען וואַנדער-וועג,
איין אָרט אין דעם גן-עדן.

Only in the final two stanzas, which turn toward the interrelation of wine and poetry (a topic which Manger's predilection for heavy drinking made personally relevant), does one sense the intrusion of a modern sensibility: "And he who makes of wine a song, / May well his thanks desire, / For God may hear this selfsame song / Sung by Heaven's choir. // And he who makes of wine a song, / And gladly sings, will find / After all his wanderings / A place in Paradise" (translation mine). Although still garbed in pious early modern idiom, this understanding is truly not so far from that which reappears later in Manger's thought. Many years later, in an essay entitled "Mayn veg in der yidisher literatur" [My Path in Yiddish Literature],[198] he writes:

> מאַבט נישט אַוועק דעם פֿורים-שפּילער מיט דער האַנט. אין זיין זכות האָבּ איך אָנגעשריבן די „חומש-לידער" אוּן די „מגילה-לידער": אפֿילו אין מיין „גן-עדן-בוך" איז פֿאַראַן אַ מלאך, וואָס שרייַבט פֿורים-שפּילן. ווייַל באמת וואָס פֿאַר אַ גן-עדן וואָלְט עס געווען אָן אַ פֿורים-שפּיל?
>
> זיכער נישט קיין ייִדישער גן-עדן. די ערשטע וואָס וואָלְטן רעוואָלְטירט קעגן דעם, וואָלְטן געווען די אבות אוּן די צדיקים אַליין:
>
> -- אויך מיר אַ גן-עדן אָן אַ פֿריילעך-מאַבער. צוליב דעם האָט זיך געלוינט אָפּצופּינצטערן אַ לעבן אויף דער ערד, מיט תּפֿילות אוּן פֿאַסטן?
>
> אָבּער צום גליק איז פֿאַראַן אַ מלאך זייַדל, דער גן-עדן פֿאָטאָגראַפֿער, וואָס שרייַבט פֿורים-שפּילן אוּן ס׳איז טאַקע אָן אמתער גן-עדן... (365)

198I. Manger, *Shriftn in Proze.* Tel Aviv: Farlag Y. L. Peretz, 1980. 360-65.

Once again, Manger's experiments with early modern poetics seem to rest on the premise that the spiritual and perhaps ethical significance of poetry remains constant over time, undiminished by the instability of language and aesthetics. What the archaism and generic constraints required by early modern folksong seem to offer, then, is an opportunity for formal and intertextual ventriloquism, an immersive self-contextualization amid Yiddish literary tradition.[199]

Recent scholarship on Manger and his oeuvre has offered studied and thorough-going accounts of Manger's poetic self-fashioning, especially when it took the shape of a repudiation of modernist aesthetics in favor of stock-figures from Yiddish folk-literature: the wandering balladeer, the *Broder zinger,* the Purim player, and so on. David Roskies has described this shift in Manger's literary identity as a calculated, and perhaps even deliberately deceptive, appropriation which Manger later recast in nostalgic, romanticized terms. Of Manger's account (in the aforementioned 1961 essay) of meeting the last of the Brody Singers in a tavern, Roskies explains,

> Manger's ballad revival, as we have just seen, was more a statement of aesthetic than of Jewish ethnic purpose. His interest in the ballad was sparked by reading modern European poetry, not by direct contact with the folk. The opposite, in fact, is true: Manger came home to the folk only *after* reinventing himself as a born-again troubadour. It was in Bucharest, no later than 1929, that Manger found his personal link to a living past. [...] There was never a modern Yiddish writer who came to storytelling or songwriting without a struggle. Manger's is the only honest record of how it happened. At the end of his career, at his sixtieth birthday celebration, he might have claimed always to cherish folksongs heard in his father's workshop, and who would be the wiser? Especially after the Holocaust, it would be comforting to believe that one Jewish survivor, at least, had sprung directly from the folk. [...] So what was it exactly about old Ludvig's drunken doggerel that so inspired Manger? That here was a usable, if somewhat disreputable, past on his own doorstep? That he made Kiddush in Yiddish? Or was it that Ludvig was the last of the Brody singers, in which case whoever came after him would be free to recloak – and betray – that legacy in his own image? (*Bridge,* 245-47)

For Roskies, Manger's identification with Yiddish folk-literature was a final lick of paint on a literary persona that was actually based primarily upon modern European models. Furthermore, because he was a late-comer to this tradition, whose last representatives were already aged and disappearing, Manger was free to adapt what it meant to be a folk-poet to suit his own, essentially European, modernist agenda. Naomi Brenner, though her larger concerns are quite

199While the European folksong grounds Manger's Yiddish wine-song in a popular verse tradition, the high-canonical Hebrew genre, *shir ha-yayin* [song of the wine], simultaneously connects it with the Golden Age of Hebrew poetry in medieval Iberia, and thence with venerated poets like Judah Ha-Levi.This dual affiliation with both high and low literary genres adds historical authenticity and cultural weight to the poem, which could otherwise seem merely a comically archaic trifle.

distinct from Roskies', is also inclined to see Manger's deepening folkist identity in terms of concealment or erasure:

> Manger's self-representation as a tailor or tailor's son conceals his presence as a subversive modernist poet. The return to the folk tradition that Manger advocates in *Getseylte verter* takes over his modernist project; instead of using folk culture as the foundation for a new modernist poetry, his modernist poetry assumes a thoroughly folkish guise, obscuring the traces of its European inspiration and modernist affiliations and sharpening its focus on class divisions. (173-74)[200]

Both Roskies' and Brenner's account stress the superficiality of Manger's folk persona, repeatedly suggesting that it is a disguise, a veneer whose purpose was to distract from his essentially modern(ist) aesthetic and political agendas. Both accounts offer highly successful readings of Manger's evolving poetic persona as expressed through his poetry, poetic manifestoes and (often fictionalized) memoiristic writing. True, it is possible to read *all* of Manger's oeuvre – poetry, manifestoes, memoirs, paratexts, essays, interviews – as part and parcel of an elaborate performance of poetic identity. And it is true that the experienced reader of Manger soon grows wary of anything transparently presented as fact, expecting playful misdirection around every corner. I would suggest, however, that Manger's Old Yiddish ventriloquism and his experiments with early modern subjectivities are emphatically not 'performances' designed to deceive the reader, or to craft an identity that should be understood as Manger's own. While a naïve reader might believe that Manger sees himself as a poet born directly from the folk, misreading his transformation from tailor's apprentice to troubadour as biographical fact, no reader mistakes Manger's description of Isaac Wallich and Solomon Singer for literal, or even literary, autobiography. I wonder, then, whether the recent scholarly emphasis on Manger's techniques of subterfuge and concealment does not itself at times obscure the significance of his explicit literary-historiography, in which he 'academically' articulates his theory of the complex interrelation between folk and "high" literature. There, he understands folk-literature and high literature as interdependent but by no means *identical*. In fact, according to this view, high literature is born out of folk literature in a genetic process of evolution.

II. ANXIETIES OF INFLUENCE: FOLKLORE AND LITERATURE

In his 1939 essay, "Folklor un literatur" [Folklore and Literature] (*Shriftn* 327-34), Manger opens with a call for modern writers to turn back to their folk-culture, away from the enticements of foreign literatures.[201] In describing this threatening literary hybridity, he uses two metaphors in quick succession, both with strongly negative and specifically religious connotations. The first appears in his nightmarish description of German Jewish disillusionment:

200N. Brenner, "Authorial Fictions: Literary and Public Personas in Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature." University of California, Berkeley, 2008.

201I. Manger, "Folklor un literatur." *Shriftn in Proze.* Tel Aviv: Farlag Y. L. Peretz, 1980. 327-334.

וועַן איבערן דייַטש-אַסימילירטן ייִד איז געקומען די גרויסע קאַטאַסטראָפֿע,
וועַן אַ ברוטאַלער פֿעלדפֿעבל-קולט האָט אַ דונער געטאָן: „יודא, הינאָוס!“
האָט זיך דער דייַטשישער ייִד אויפֿגעבאָפֿט פֿון זיין גלייַבבאַרעכטיקונג-חלום,
פֿון זיין דייַטשישן קולטור-טראַנס און האָט געגומען לויפֿן... אָבער אין זיך און
מיט זיך טראָגט ער אַ ממזר – אַ פֿרעמדע שפּראַך און אַ פֿרעמדן ניגון.
(328)

At first glance, the metaphor of bastardization seems unremarkable. Cultural hybridity has often been figured with a variety of negative reproductive metaphors, miscegenation and illegitimacy among them.[202] Neither does Manger shy away from the biological implications of the analogy, but in fact strengthens them when he says that the German Jew "carries" or "bears" a *mamzer* with him. This Yiddish verb טראָגן is specifically associated with the literal mechanics of pregnancy and childbirth, טראָגן, האָבן. One of the most common Yiddish terms for a pregnant woman is a טראָגעדיקע, literally 'one who carries.' The term also functions transitively, so that she "carries" her unborn child [טראָגט אָדס קינד]. And when a child is conceived, his mother is, untranslatably, פֿאַרגאַנגען אין טראָגן. Beyond a Yiddish-language context, the halachic particulars of this category lend further support to the Jewish specificity of Manger's polemic. In strict terms, a *mamzer* is a child born of certain illicit sexual encounters: for example, that of a married woman's adultery, or of incest. According to some accounts, a *mamzer* can only be produced by two Jews, while other sources, especially those hewing closest to the legal language of the Hebrew Bible itself, suggest that a *mamzer* can also result from the union of a Jew and a forbidden non-Jew (such as an Ammonite or Moabite).[203] Manger's explicit identification of the German-Jewish hybrid as a *mamzer* also appears indebted to a homiletical Talmudic etymology, which derives the term from the words מום [physical defect] and זר [alien].[204] Closer to Manger's own moment, this view also appears in *Strong's Concordance* (1890), which sees the term as a form of the root *z-r,* and thus approximately, "to alienate," to render foreign.[205] In this sense, Manger uses the term for the way it names not only illegitimacy broadly construed, but inter-cultural hybridity in particular.

The legal implications of this category are also far-reaching in ways which vastly exceed Western conceptions of bastardy. Though its circumstances are quite varied, the underlying principle seems to be that these are children of sexual unions which *cannot* be legitimized through marriage as legislated in the Torah. A married woman cannot be married to yet another man (where a man might take a second wife, if he happens to impregnate her prior to marriage); similarly, a father cannot marry his daughter under any circumstances, nor can an Ammonite or Moabite ever marry a Jew and produce Jewish children. An ordinary Jew is also prohibited from marrying a *mamzer,* whose future offspring are thereby excluded from the genetic future of the Jewish people. Most significantly of all, *mamzer* is not merely a legal category, but a heritable state. All future offspring of a *mamzer* are also *mamzerim* "unto the tenth generation" [גם דור

202 This lexeme dominates the semantic field of pregnancy to a far greater extent than in English, and its significance should not be overlooked here.

203Shulhan Aruch says only Jews, Strong's Concordance says Jewish father and heathen mother...

204Cf. *Kiddushin* 3:12 and *Yevamot* 76b.

205J. Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.* New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1890. no. 4464.

העשירי] (Deut. 23:3), which rabbinic authorities generally understand to mean "forever."[206] When Manger uses this term to name the literary and linguistic offspring of assimilated German Jewry, their "alien language and alien melody," he does not merely look askance at an illicit union of the Jewish and non-Jewish; rather, he implies that these are offspring which cannot ever be made Jewish, cannot be "married" to traditional Jewish culture, nor generate a future for Jewish literature. In effect, they are cultural still-births, genetic dead-ends (328): און כּל-זמן ער וועט נישט גרינטלעך אָפּטרייבן אָט דאָס פֿרעמדע, וועט פֿאַר אים זיין פֿאַרשטעלט דער וועג צום יידישן.

A problem, these sterile products of cultural hybridity. And its evident solution, "driving out the alien," is only made more disturbing by the metaphor of *mamzerut*, with its attendant implications of illicit kinship, shameful heredity and severed family ties. Driving out one's own children is no mean feat, as Manger acknowledges (328): אַ שווערע אָפּעראַציע. אפֿשר וועט זי גערעטן. Side-stepping the emotional obstacle of kinship, Manger introduces a new metaphor, one untroubled by the *mamzer*'s moral dilemmas:

> אפֿשר וועט אַ יידישן דאָרף-צדיק גערעטן אַרויסצוטרייבן דעם פֿרעמדן קולטור-דיבוק, וואָס רעציטירט נאָך אויף דער וואַנדערונג צווישן גרענצן און פֿעלקער לעסינגס משל וועגן די „דריי רינגען" און שילערס „דאָן קאַרלאָס". (328)

Unlike the *mamzer*, which is genetically related to its Jewish parent, the *dybbuk* is a true alien, a peripatetic soul which opportunistically seizes on a body, whether living or dead, as its vehicle.[207] Physically and psychically an outsider,[208] it occupies a body without the past or present consent of the possessed. This figuration eliminates the problematic agency of a *mamzer*'s Jewish parents (their transgressive, intemperate sexual desire, and the ensuing rejection of its consequences). Instead, Jewish culture is recast as a passive, defenseless, possessed victim, and moral culpability is neatly displaced onto the invasive spirit of a foreign culture. (That the expulsion of the evil spirit is carried out by a traditional exemplar of Jewish righteousness, the pious *tsaddik,* only serves to make the whole endeavor more palatable.) Thus, with the exorcism of a foreign *dybbuk* from the violated body of Jewish literature, it becomes possible to imagine this process of cultural dissimilation as a triumphant "inward consolidation" [אינערלעבער קאָנסאָלידאַציע], as Manger ultimately describes it (328). Literary influence is thereby reconceived as psychic violation, rather than as sexual sin.[209]

206See, for example, *Sifre Deuteronomy*, 248.

207It is interesting to observe that here, as above, Manger makes use of a bodily metaphor for this hybridization. Where the *mamzer* evoked the literal language of pregnancy, the *dybbuk* does so by analogy, an alien presence which spiritually inhabits the body. Indeed, the association of *dybbuk*-possession with pregnancy reaches back to its earliest appearances. For a concise history of this association, see A. Legutko, "Feminist Dybbuks: Spirit Possession Motif in Post-Second Wave Jewish Women's Fiction." *Bridges: A Jewish Feminist Journ*al 15.1 (2010): 6-26. It is thus tempting to see in Manger's discussion a submerged language of feminine somatic subjectivity, accompanied by the creative promise and threat which inheres in parturition.

208The term "*dybbuk*" implies this in one of its full forms, דיבוק מן החצונים, literally the cleaving of a spirit "from the outside." See Gershom Scholem's "*Dibbuk." Encyclopedia Judai*ca. 1st ed. 1971. Print.

209In addition to its association with pregnancy, the *dybbuk* is also etymologically inflected with the dynamics of sexual union. From the Hebrew root ד-ב-ק, the *dybbuk* is a "clinging, a cleaving" of the alien soul with another's

Before turning to the aspects of this essay which concern Manger's theory of genre, we should pause to reflect on the above account as it bears on Manger's literary dynamics, on questions of influence and intertextuality. Recent discussions of these literary-historiographic categories have seen them as oriented along opposing axes. “Influence” accounts are not only diachronic, but historically linear, perhaps even temporally hierarchical, in that they focus on the force one literary figure exerts upon those who come after: transmission and reception are consequently understood as the products of individual agency (or aggression).[210] By contrast, “intertextuality” is, if not specifically synchronic, then temporally egalitarian, downplaying the historical power-relations of tradition and authority for an account of literary and historical continuity: intersections and reverberations. Intertextual accounts of literary dynamics thus often evince a collective, impersonal quality, giving ear to the polyvocal and reiterative.[211] Such a characterization[212] of these two extremes owes a great deal to Michael Baxandall's grammatical 'excursus against influence,' in which he points out that the idea of a historical predecessor X acting on successor Y misunderstands the agent-patient relationship (58-60).[213] In fact, he argues, it is Y which acts on X, appropriating something found there and repurposing it. This is well-trodden ground, and I find these two oft-opposed models useful more for the critical atmosphere they exude than for any empirical value they might possess. Influence-accounts are suffused with combative emotionality: they narrate literary history as cycles of dominance and submission, contest and competition, tradition and iconoclasm, rebellion and rupture. Perhaps inevitably, this kind of criticism is fraught and anxious. Intertextual accounts are sedate by comparison: collaborative and resonant, layering texts in harmonic adumbration, repetition with fruitful variation. Curiously, the emotional timbre of these two models often says more about the critic than about the object of criticism. Manger is a particularly instructive example in this regard (perhaps especially because he far antedates the theoretical discussions cited above, and is thus innocent of their definitions and distinctions). At times, as above, his essay seems like a call-to-arms against the pernicious threat of outside influence. At others, it becomes a paean to the intertextual echo-chamber that is Jewish literary continuity, spanning everything from Genesis to the modernist avant-garde. In essence, Manger's essay subscribes to an influence model precisely when he feels Jewish agency to be compromised, precisely when he feels, whether this is grammatically rational or not, that Jewish literature is about to be overwhelmed by the aesthetic values of their non-Jewish counterparts, when he fears that Jewish literature will

body. But this root also lies at the heat of the primal description of sexual and marital union of the first man and woman in Genesis: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave [דבק] unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh” (2:24). While in the biblical account, this articulation clearly describes a physical reincorporation of woman into man (“because [woman] was taken out of Man” in the prevision verse), the case of the *dybbuk* troubles this sexual dynamic, suggesting the penetration of intercourse, the genetic incorporation of man into woman during conception, and the (perhaps unnerving) embryonic adhesion with which pregnancy begins.

210For the most prominent, perhaps the founding, example of this kind of influence-criticism, see H. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence; a Theory of Poetry.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

211The seminal example in this vein is Julia Kristeva's 1966 essay “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” which, as noted in Chapter 2 above, returns to Bakhtinian claims about the dialogic, intersubjective nature of literature and coins the term 'intertextuality' to describe it and the fundamental ambivalence that accompanies it (39-40).

212J. Clayton, and E. Rothstein, *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.

213M. Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

cease to be itself. In this context, the *dybbuk*-metaphor also becomes a commentary on the dynamics of literary influence. Manger represents influence as a corporeal possession: the Jewish body is merely a husk, an empty vessel from which issues the voice of the possessing foreigner, reciting his national literature.[214] This is the nightmarish fate which the poet strives to avoid in Bloomian influence-narratives: identity helplessly subsumed and ultimately evacuated by one's antecedents. Manger resorts as a critic to this articulation, this "misunderstanding of agent and patient," because he assumes literary dynamics to be a reflection of larger social and political power-relations.[215] In this sense, it is no mistake to see German Jewry of the late 1930's as the object of foreign aggression. At the same time, Manger's uneasy shifting between the metaphors of *mamzer* and *dybbuk* expresses his ambivalence about the suspect agency and possible collaboration of his German Jewish fellows. In contrast to the literary and political anxieties aroused by the threat of foreign influence, Manger's theorization transforms when he turns to an account of intra-cultural literary dynamics. In his discussion of Jewish literary creativity, "intertextuality" and all its attendant associations seem to best describe Manger's ideal of indigenous, Jewish literary practice: piously citational but imaginatively irreverent, galvanized by its compositional freedom within tradition that may be ceaselessly written and rewritten. In a sense, Manger's intertextual ideal is a reaction against the threatening dynamics of influence and the *mamzerim* it produces: literary endogamy is here posited as that "inward consolidation" which preserves and sanctifies national identity.

Yet as Chana Kronfeld has compellingly argued concerning Israeli Hebrew poet Yehudah Amichai and his the poetics of radical allusion, intertextuality need not entail an erasure of the the poetic (or indeed, human) subject from literary dynamics.[216] On the contrary, it can in fact be "rooted in a critical concept of agency" (18), by reinscribing "a historically inflected human agent into the process of rewriting texts of religious and cultural authority" (2). Such a "critical intertextual agency" may be "limited, censored and constrained, yet claims the right to embrace both change and continuity" (20). Kronfeld goes on to suggest that Jewish exegetical literature(s) are positioned to resist both the totalizing universalism of Kristevan intertextuality

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214The two works to which Manger refers in this passage are both German dramas of the late eighteenth century which show the clear imprint of the Jewish Enlightenment and its ethics of emancipation and religious tolerance. Crucially, these are works by non-Jews sympathetic to Jewish thought and Jewish history. Thus Lessing's parable is the most famous portion of his dramatic poem *Nathan the Wise* (1779), which tells the story of a pious and learned Jew in the Holy Land at the time of Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem. The work seems to have been inspired by Lessing's close friendship with Moses Mendelssohn and he takes it as an opportunity to argue for religious toleration. Similarly, Schiller's drama *Don Carlos* (1787) tells the story of the sixteenth century Prince of Asturias, portraying him as a champion of Spanish Jewry amid severe persecution by the Inquisition. However, the historical Don Carlos was no friend to the Jews, as Manger was likely well aware: it was he who presided over the fires of the Inquisition's auto-da-fé at Valladolid on May 21, 1559. The valorization of such a *soyne-yisroel* by a literary giant of the German Enlightenment surely rang chillingly in Manger's ears in 1939, all the more so when the words echoed from the lips of his own Jewish colleagues. (For a further assessment of the Jewish literary reception of Don Carlos, see J. Skolnik, *Jewish Pasts, German Fictions: History, Memory, and Minority Culture in Germany, 1824-1955.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014.

215Manger's belief that a literature is but the historical and political character of the nation writ small is made explicit when he writes in this very essay (330): וועו מען נעמט אין באַטראַכט די אַקטיוו-הערשֶׁישע ראָלע פֿון די ענגלענדער אין דער וועלט-געשיכטע און די פּאַסיוו-הערשֶׁישע ראָלע פֿון די ייִדן אין דער מאָדערנער וועלט-געשיכטע, וועלן מיר אפֿשר פֿאַרשטיין, פֿאַרוואָס איז אַזוי און נישט אַנדערש.

216C. Kronfeld, *The Full Severity of Compassion: The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015.

(which posits intertextuality as an innate feature of *all* texts) and racked Bloomian accounts of violent literary domination thanks to the "centrality of radical rewriting in the Jewish culture of commentary" (34). Regarding Amichai, Kronfeld argues, this resistant intertextual poetics emerges not only from emphasizing the critical subjectivity of the poet, but from a simultaneous deflation of 'high,' canonical sacred intertexts and elevation of 'low' quotidian ones:

> It has long been a critical commonplace that Amichai's poetry is characterized by a reversal of traditional biblical narratives and an inversion of normative rabbinic and liturgical texts; what is less frequently acknowledged, however, is his refusal to privilege his omnipresent radical engagement with traditional forms of Jewish textual exegesis over culturally less privileged citational practices which "recycle" (his term!) snippets of ordinary conversation, popular song, child language, or military slang. (1)

It is precisely this fundamental entanglement of 'high' canonical genres with 'low' folk-culture that Manger wishes to points up in his essay on folklore and literature. And just as Amichai refuses to elevate either sacred canon or poetic subject over those "less privileged citational practices," Manger too grants these folk-intertexts a central place in his theory, . Yet crucially, Manger does not only seek to synchronically level the playing field, by espousing a diverse and egalitarian intertextual account of literary history, but to argue diachronically for folk-literature as the necessary precondition for high literature. In so doing, Manger implies that the modern poet depends for historical continuity, indeed for the very authenticity of his poetic identity, on an intimate engagement with and affinity for the folk-genres of the past.

Grounding his account in a genetic conception of literary history, Manger argues that a culture's high literary genres are the direct descendants of its folk-literature, those popular genres which are alone capable of expressing the very spirit of the people. He poses the question as follows (328): צי איז בכלל מעגלעך אַ לעבעדיקע ליטעראַטור אָן אַ פֿאָלקלאָריסטישער באַזע? דער ענטפֿער: לא מיט אַן אלף. (Naturally, his use of such a distinctive and specifically Hebraic idiom only serves to underscore the point.) Yet Manger does not confine this generalization to Jewish literature in particular, but intends it as a rule of literary historiography in general. His "classic" example is the fate of late Latin poetry (that is, postdating the fall of the Roman Empire), whose virtues he is careful not to discount even as a he describes its compromised status (330): אָן דעם רוימישן פֿאָלקסלעבן, וואָס אָהט זיך אויסגעווירקט שעפֿעריש אין דעם פֿאָלקלאָר, איז די ניי־לאַטיַנישע ליטעראַטור געווען און געבליבן אַ ברכה לבטלה. In effect, high literary genres will languish and eventually perish without direct nourishment from a living, vernacular folk-culture. Yet in alluding to the Hebraic *brokhe levatole,* Manger inflects this thesis with very specific connotations, both legal and theological, and it is thus worth pausing for a moment to unpack its implicit argument. A *brokhe levatole* [lit. a blessing made in vain] is a special and compromised category of benediction. Ordinarily, a blessing invokes the name of God as a prelude and prerequisite to the performance of a ritually significant action: eating, immersing, reading from the Torah, etc. But in the case of a *brokhe levatole* the benediction has been uttered even though

the action cannot be performed.[217] A simple example: one makes a blessing over an apple, only to discover it is rotten and cannot be eaten. In such an instance, the blessing has not only been said unnecessarily, it has also been uttered without the possibility of fulfillment in action. In effect, one has violated the Third Commandment, which prohibits the use of God's name "in vain" (cf. Exodus 20:6 and Deuteronomy 5:10). In a legal sense, then, this is a blessing that not only lacks the force of ritual performance, but is also in violation of a negative injunction (albeit unintentionally). The theological implications are similarly dire, for the harm done by blasphemy cannot be undone. Something perverse as well: seeking to sanctify that which God has made unfit: the rotten apple, the bloodied egg. In this light, Manger's metaphor for literary endeavor unmoored from its folkloric origins takes on a very precise meaning: he imagines literature as a benediction made over vernacular culture, a ritual utterance which sanctifies the mundane materiality of daily life. If, like the apple, the culture of the people is decayed, then the blessing has been made in vain, its sanctification rendered void. And like the blessing made in vain, the attempt to sanctify an extinct culture through literature is not merely unnecessary. In it, Manger sees something vacant, perverse, perhaps even blasphemous: a morbid attempt at consecration uttered over the decomposing. In stark contrast, Manger next turns to an opposing image of fertility and reproduction. Folk culture is pictured as the fertile "black-earth" field from which high literature grows (330). This agricultural figure implies that folklore is the necessary pre-condition for the emergence of higher literary genres; its form and content result directly from the folk-conditions amid which they developed. Following this line of reasoning, he claims, the folk-ballad in English was the precedent upon which the great tradition of English drama was founded, culminating in Shakespeare (330). Manger goes so far as to argue that all cultures which have achieved literary greatness in drama, also possessed a strong history of folk ballad, and offers as examples German and Scandinavian literature, in addition to the English (331). And in this vein, he insists that Jewish literature has failed to produce great dramas precisely because it lacks a tradition of popular ballad. By the same token, Manger attempts to link folk liturgy, as exemplified in vernacular prayers such as *Got fun Avrom* [God of Abraham], with the birth of lyric poetry in modern Yiddish literature. Manger seems, in fact, to hope that this genetic and generic entanglement of folk culture with high literature will serve as the guarantor of literary continuity in the face of the ameliorating forces of foreign culture and historical distance. I would go so far as to suggest that Manger resorts to genetic metaphors for the unfolding of literary history precisely because they offer a powerful image for the ways that high literature and folk literature may be indissolubly linked, without being identical. In this light, Manger is not attempting to inhabit an earlier era and slavishly reproduce its song; instead, he hopes to effect the transformation of "folk-song into art-song." Rather than write the folk-ballads of the past over again, Manger hopes to achieve a transmutation of folk genres into the genres of 'high,' modernist poetry. Manger's relation to Old Yiddish, then, is not one of unmediated identification, but of historiographic experiment encoded in poetic praxis. It is precisely thanks to the vast historical distance between himself and Wallich that Manger's struggle *toward* identification with the past becomes apparent.

217Cf. *Mishnah Berurah* 215:18, and *Orach Chaim* 206:6.

Historical distance, for Manger, is a glaring and immediate problem for the Jewish poet; it offers certain advantages, may in fact be fundamentally necessary for the production of great literature, but it also introduces profound and unavoidable pitfalls. Manger understands it, in fact, to be one of the central riddles of Jewish literary continuity, a concern that may supersede and even condition his experiments with poetic persona. During the period of Manger's war-time homelessness, his identification with historical figures like Wallich becomes plainer than before, undisguised by poetic filigree, sly implication, or academic interest. His collection of poetry, *Volkns ibern dakh* (London, 1942), contains a sonnet entitled "Ikh aleyn" [I myself] (43), in which he expresses his relation to Wallich and Zinger in filial terms: און אָט בין איך, דאָס איניקל פֿון אונזערע „אַלטע אַנרן", / ר׳ אייזיק וואַליך ווירמייסן און ר׳ שלמה פֿון פּראָגן, / פֿונקט ווי זיי האָב איך געטאָן זינגען און זאָגן / פֿון יידישע צער׳ן צווישן גוי׳אישע האַרן און געפֿאַרן. The statement is striking not only for its bluntness, but also for its place in a cycle of poems entitled "Sonetn far mayn bruder Note" [Sonnets for My Brother Note]. This sonnet is preceded by "Tsu mayn bruder" [To My Brother], "Mayn zeyde" [My Grandfather], "Zayn ekselents mayn tate" [His Excellency, My Father], "Mayn mame" [My Mother], and "Mayn shvester Sheyndele" [My Sister Sheyndele]. In the midst of the war, Manger honors the memory of his departed mother and grandfather, and anxiously ponders the fate of his surviving family. He cries out to his brother, asking (38): וואו ביזטו וואו ביזטו איצט, מיין ברודער, / דו וואָס האָסט מיט מיר געליטן און געשטרעבט, / איניינעם מיט מיר חלומות אויסגעוועבט, / וואָס בין איך אין דיר? אַ שיפל אָן אַ רודער. He promises from afar that only good spirits will watch over his father's tired steps (40). The poem to his sister (42) dissolves in fear and despair when she collapses, exhausted, praying for deliverance, in an autumn wood surrounded by SS [אַרומגערינגלט פֿון סס]. The cycle up until this point is a harrowing vision of destruction of the family. Lacking concrete information, Manger's imagination is wracked by nightmarish scenarios born of his own helplessness. Perhaps these poems are even more heartbreaking in retrospect. The collection was published in June-July of 1942 and Note died only a few months later on a collective farm in Uzbekistan, though it is almost certain he never had a chance to read them.[218] Hillel Manger, Itsik's father, had likely already been killed: Chernovitz and the entire surrounding region was ghettoized in the autumn of 1941 and completely liquidated by December. This was probably the most recent information Manger had about the fate of his family, and it may be from the news of the round-ups in October that he imagines Sheyndl fleeing through the autumn woods.[219] In the face of his family's tragic dissolution, Manger crafts his poetic identity by knitting biological kinship and literary lineage together. After establishing himself as the grandson and successor of Wallich and Zinger in the opening quatrain of "Ikh aleyn," his attention turns to his literal grandfather, the wagoneer: כ׳האָב איינגעשפּאַנט דע „באַפליגלטן לאָשעק" פּאַר עטוואַ צוואַנציק יאַרן, / פֿונקט ווי מיין זיידע האָט געשפּאַנט זיינע קאַשטאַנס אין סטאָפּטשעט, / און רייטנדיק גאַלאָפּ בין איך פּאַרפאָרן העט, העט, העט, / וואו די שיינקייט ווישט די טרערן פון אַלע צער׳ן. Rather than juxtaposing biological family against his literary forefathers, Manger figures his own poetic vocation in terms of his grandfather's

218The news of Note's death did not reach Itzik until two years later in 1944. See I. Panner, *Shtrikhn tsum portret fun Itsik Manger.* Tel Aviv: Farlag Ha-Menoyre, 1976. 88.

219Sheyndl ultimately survived the war, although in 1947 she was still in Romania. See Manger's letter to Panner, sent from London and dated June 27, 1947 (*Shtrikhn* 97).

practical one: the classical winged steed of inspiration is equated with the ordinary chestnuts that drew his grandfather's wagon. Having situated himself both in relation to his family and Yiddish literary tradition, the narrator seems convinced that flight into aesthetics will remedy the wounds inflicted by historical persecution, exile, and grief. Like his troubadour forebears, this poet will also transform Jewish grief into great literature, the songs and stories of his people. Yet the self-mockery that pervades the sonnet derives precisely from the knowledge that the historical has become immediately, harrowingly personal, and with one's own family at stake, the limitations of aesthetics are made bitterly apparent. In the final sestet of the sonnet, poetic beauty has been reduced to a grieving woman, trying to ease the passing of a dying world: די אויגן פון דער שיינקייט זענען טונקל טיף און גרויס, / זי טראָגט אויף איר ברוסט אַ קראַנקע רויז, / די אָוונט זון, וואָס געזעגנט זיך מיט דער ערד. In the wake of this realization – that the aesthetic loses its redemptive power in the face of personal and collective catastrophe, Manger revises his theory of literary history to reflect the necessity of historical distance to the composition of enduring national literatures. In his 1958 essay "Khurbm un literatur" [Holocaust and Literature] (*Shriftn*, 387-97), Manger describes historical distance as an essential ingredient in the composition of the high literary genres, epic and drama:

> ווען איך האָב געריידט וועגן היסטאָרישער דיסטאַנץ (און נישט קינסטלערישער דיסטאַנץ) [...] האָב איך געטראַכט וועגן דער עפּישער און דראַמאַטישער געשטאַלטונג, ווו דער קינסטלער זאָל זיין בכּוח צו זען און צו שילדערן, נישט נאָר דעם קרבן, נאָר אויך דעם מערדער.
>
> ער, דער קינסטלער, דאַרף זיין צען מאָל, הונדערט מאָל דאָסטאָיעווסקי, כּדי צו קענען אַרײַנקוקן אין דער קראַנקער נשמה פֿון דעם דייַטשישן, אוקראַיִנישן, פּוילישן און ליטווישן מאַסן-מערדער, וואָס פֿון איין זייַט שרייַבט ער סענטימענטאַלע בריוו צום אייגענעם ווייַב און קינד, אַהַיים, און פֿון דער צווייטער זייַט, הרגעט ער מיט קאַלט בלוט, פֿרויען און קינדער. און אפֿשר וועט די קינסטלערישע געשטאַלטונג פֿונעם חורבן קיין מאָל נישט קומען, ווי ס׳איז נישט געקומען די דראַמאַטישע געשטאַלטיקונג פֿונעם חורבן הבית און ס׳איז נאָר געבליבן די קינה „איכה ישבה בדד", מיט וועלכער ירמיה באַווײַנען נאָך היינטיקן טאָג די גרויסע נאַציאָנאַלע קאַטאַסטראָפֿע.
>
> פֿון גלות-בבל איז אונדז פֿאַרבליבן דאָס ליד פֿון צער און צאָרן „על נהרות בבל", און, כאָטש מיר האָבן שוין די נויטיקע היסטאָרישע דיסטאַנץ, האָבן מיר נאָך נישט קיין עפּאָס און קיין דראַמע, וואָס זאָלן באַהאַנדלען די צוויי היסאָטרישע קאַטאַסטראָפֿעס, די צוויי חורבנות פֿונעם ערשטן און צווייטן בית.
>
> (אמת, פֿאַראַן אַ גרויסער לעגענדע-פֿאָלקלאָר אַרום די צוויי חורבנות, אָבער איך רעד דאָ, נישט וועגן פֿאָלקלאָר, נאָר וועגן קינסטלערישן עפּאָס און וועגן קינסטלערישער דראַמע.)
>
> (388)

In the wake of the Holocaust, Manger claims, Jewish writers do not yet have the historical distance necessary to produce complex belletristic genres. Here Manger returns to the theory of

genre he had elaborated in "*Folklor un literatur*," where he argued that the folklore and folk-literature of a nation can – over the course of its history – evolve into higher literary genres, like epic and tragic drama. But historical distance from the events described was the only means by which to transmute the subjective grief of collective catastrophe into a work of high literature. Historical distance, in short, allows the cultivation of *artistic objectivity*, through which the personal experience of the poet and his nation can be transcended. Yet in spite of Manger's profoundly humanistic faith in the power of historical distance to facilitate empathic and enduring literary accomplishment, he nevertheless concludes his account of Jewish literature after the modern Destruction with a series of questions bespeaking existential, ethical, and aesthetic paralysis (389):

> אַפילו דעם תּנ״ך קען מען אָנרירן, קינסטלעריש איבערגעשטאַלטיקן דורך מענטשלעכע מאָטיוון. אָבער ווי אַזוי קען מען צוגיין מיט אָביעקטיוויטעט צו דער לעצטע קאַטאַסטראָפֿע? געפֿינען מענטשלעכע מאָטיוון אין דעם דייַטשישן מאַסן-מאָרד? איך קען פֿאַרשטיין דעם איינעם דייַטשישן סאָלדאַט וואָס, זעענדיק דעם געטאָ אין פֿלאַמען און ייִדן וואַרפֿן זיך פֿון דעכער און גאַניקעס, ווערט ער משוגע און שרייַט: „מיר זענען באַרבאַרן!" אָבער איך קען נישט פֿאַרשטיין די דייַטשישע אָפּיצירן און זעלנערס, די פֿוילישע מענטשן, וואָס אָהבן צוגעקוקט ווי מענטשן שפּרינגען פֿון באַלקאָנען אין פֿלאַמען און זענען נישט משוגע געוואָרן.
> מיין פֿראַגע איז: צי וועט מען דאָס אַ מאָל קענען פֿאַרשטיין? כ׳האָב מורא אַז ניין!
> כ׳קען נישט אָפּטיילן הבלן פֿון קינען. שילדערן הבלן הייסט אויך קענען שילדערן קינען. צי וועט מען דאָס אַ מאָל קענען?
> דאָס איז די פֿראַגע וועגן חורבן און ליטעראַטור!

Only by portraying "both the victim and the murderer" can one produce art that will survive one's own time and place, yet such a task may truly be psychologically impossible in light of modern history. With such demanding criteria in place, the great elegiac compositions of the Hebrew Bible come to seem a tragically limited literary endeavor. By way of contrast, Manger points to Homer's *Iliad* as the exemplary instance of artistic objectivity, and the literary accomplishments it makes possible:

> איך האָב געהאַלטן ביים אילוסטרירן מיין געדאַנק וואָס איך מיין מיט אַ געוויסער קינסטלערישער אָביעקטיוויטעט, און דער עפּיקער און דער דראַמאַטורג מוז זי האָבן, כּדי די ווערק זאָלן נישט ווערן קיין פּאַמפֿלעט. האָער האָט געשילדערט סיַ די גריכן און סיַ די טראָיאַנער, די שונאים פֿון די גריכן, מיט דער זעלבער קינסטערלישער אָביעקטיוויטעט. דערפֿאַר בלייַבט זיין עפּאָס, ביזן היינטיקן טאָג, דאָס גרעסטע אין דער וועלט-ליטעראַטור.
> (388)

While elegiac commemoration might offer a certain kind of literary immortality,[220] greater still, in Manger's estimation, is the fashioning of a *narrative,* a historical account which views, as though from above, the strivings and sufferings on both sides of a conflict, of multiple and perhaps conflicting perspectives.[221] Manger gives historical distance an essential role in the composition of precisely those genres to which he himself aspires.[222] The problems posed by historical distance are here transformed into advantages: the persistent sense of alienation that arises from identifying with a way of life long-past, the sense that one is an impostor, the usurper of a tradition that is (no longer) one's own, may in fact be the means by which to give a fuller, more humanistic account of the historical past. In this sense, Manger's 'solution' to the problem of historical distance is not its surreptitious erasure or elision. On the contrary, his experiments in historical imagination depend precisely on drawing attention to the layers of temporal and textual mediation which intervene between his source material, his reader, and himself. The problem of Jewish continuity is resolved, not through spurious claims that the past and the present are identical, but through a continuous, transparent and thus inherently exegetical effort to bring near that which is historically, linguistically, and poetically distant.

IV. TEXTUAL ANACHRONISM AND THE MIDRASHIC IMAGINATION

Where *Noente geshtaltn* was preoccupied with generating intimacy and familiarity between the modern reader and Manger's early modern Yiddish authors (albeit by highly literary and self-consciously constructed means), his *Khumesh*- and *Megile-lider* address the problem of historical distance by playfully manipulating narrative chronology, creating a series of mind-bending anachronistic effects which destabilize the temporal perspective of both reader and biblical character. 'Anachronism' could fairly be used to describe a tremendous range of phenomena in Manger's poetry, and could legitimately include any detail of realia or language temporally out of place in the biblical past when his characters presumably existed. As Manger himself points out (prologue to *Khumesh-lider,* unpaginated), the 'landscape' (both temporal and geographic) has been shifted: דער געניטער לעזער וועט זיך כאפֿן, אַז די אַלנדשאַפט אין וועלכער די חומש-געשטאַלטן באַוועגן זיך איז נישט די כּנענ׳ישע, נייערט אַ סלאַווישע. איך האָב געטאַרכט וועגן דער מזרח-גאַליציש׳ער. די אָדזיקע לאַנדשאַפֿ מיט אירע וועלדער פֿאַזע וועג, אירע ווינטל-סעדער אוּן אירע

220To my mind, it goes without saying that the Hebrew Bible, in its elegiac mode as elsewhere, has held up just as well over the course of its history as the Greek epic. Erich Auerbach's masterful comparison of the two in his opening chapter of *Mimesis,* 'Odysseus' Scar,' makes a compelling argument for the ways in which biblical narrative excels the epic in generating complex and nuanced portrayals of human experience, achieving thereby a psychological universality which transcends the cultural particulars of its origins. Nevertheless, we are concerned here with Manger's valorization of historical distance, and thus we will have to bear with him in this vein a little longer.

221 Yet, as Manger points out above, historical distance is no guarantee of artistic objectivity. The Destruction of the Temples, despite having occurred many centuries past, is still a psychological wound which has not permitted the composition of narrative, whether epic or drama. Given these claims, one wonders what Manger might have made of the dramatic epic by American-Jewish objectivist Charles Reznikoff, *In memoriam 1933,* which narrates both the Destruction of the First Temple, the Babylonian Captivity, the Roman occupation, and the Holocaust of the twentieth century through dramatic and documentary collage.

222As we will soon see, his *Khumesh* and *Megile-lider* consistently situate themselves as modernist and modernizing explications of Yiddish epics like *Shmuel Bukh,* although it is debatable whether Manger believed these poems to be successful realizations of his ambitions. For a pessimistic take on his own poetic accomplishments, see the 1955 essay "*Biblishe drame-motivn*" [Biblical Drama-Motifs] (*Shriftn* 338-41).

מאָדנע שטילע דעמערונגען, ציטערט אין מיין זכרון פּוּן גאָר די פּריעסטע קינדער-יאָרן.[223] Due to this whole-cloth re-setting of the narrative, instances of some kind of historical anachronism are legion. They may have to do with specific details of material culture, such as the character's garments: Abraham the Patriarch wears the iconic Hasidic fur hat, the *shtrayml*, at his son Isaac's circumcision (27), and the maid-servant Hagar wears a calico dress on their evening stroll (30). Or they may be technological: Hagar refers to a train's smoke-stack (30), and Eliezer informs Abraham of Isaac and Rebecca's betrothal by telegram (46). Manger is also careful to make it clear that these biblical characters interact specifically in Yiddish: thus the third-person narrative discourse is written in a literary register easily distinguished from the direct discourse of the characters themselves. To choose only a single example among many, the narration may refer to the Patriarch Abraham as אַבֿרהם אבֿינו [*Avrom Avinu*] (27), but when Sarah the Matriarch recites the traditional Yiddish women's prayer "God of Abraham," she pronounces the word אַוורום [*Avrum*], as a Yiddish-speaking woman of Eastern Galicia would (37).[224] Here as elsewhere, special care is taken that each character speak a register or dialect of Yiddish (or even another language) which socially encodes him or her in the broader cultural and historical context of the early twentieth-century: unlike Sarah, the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire refers to Abraham as איבראַהים [*Ibrahim*] during his encounter with Hagar in the desert. Despite the impulse to describe all these details – linguistic, technological, cultural, folkloric – as equivalently anachronistic, I would propose distinguishing between Manger's overall modernization of the biblical account and his use of 'textual anachronism,' when biblical characters possess textual artifacts which imply that the events of their stories have already transpired. Sarah's recitation of "God of Abraham" is a version of this phenomenon, because in praying to the "God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob" she has called her own future grandson, who has not even been conceived yet, by the name his mother Rebecca will give him only many years later. A few lines later, she asks God to promise "a good, full week for all Israel," a name which comes into being only when Jacob himself reaches adulthood, and which will only come to designate the whole Jewish community many generations after that. Likewise, Jacob the Patriarch consults his own pocket-bible to confirm when and where his chance meeting with Rachel will take place:

יעקבֿ אבֿינו שלעפּט זיך מיד
אין שפּעטן אָוונט אַריין –
אָט איז דער ברונעם דאָרטן לינקס,
דאָ מוז עס זיבער זיין.

ער נעמט דאָס חומשל אַרויס:
– "אַוודאי, אַוודאי דאָ

223NB: When citing Manger's paratexts, I have used the earliest available edition. However, citations from the poems themselves are given as they appear in the fine scholarly edition by Dov Sadan and Chone Shmeruk, including its pagination. Where relevant, I have included the original year of a poem's publication in parentheses. See I. Manger, *Medresh Itsik.* eds. Dov Sadan, and Chone Shmeruk, Jerusalem: Hebrew University, Dept. of Yiddish Literature, 1969.

224See the incisive reading of this intertext and of Manger's intermingling of Hebrew and Yiddish more generally in C. Kronfeld, and R. A. Peckerar, "Tongue-Twisted: Between *Mame Loshn* and *Loshn Koydesh* in the Poetry of Itzik Manger." *Poetics Today* (In press).

,איז ווי זשע קומט עס טאַקע, האַ
אַז זי איז נאָך נישטאָ?״ (55)

By the same token, Queen Esther steels her will during the fast in the *Megile-lider* by recalling what is written in the biblical book which bears her name:

דער עיקר: אין דער מגילה שטייט
(אַזוי זאָגט [מרדכי] שטילערהייט),
אַז המן הרשע וועט נאָך זיין
אַ חוזק פֿאַר קינד און קייט (178)

Because these moments draw attention to their own temporal impossibility, they serve to remind the reader of the historical distance Manger has so abruptly collapsed. The notion that the biblical characters are aware – and perhaps also burdened by their foreknowledge – of the stories they helplessly re-enact is given further cultural and historical nuance when we consider that Manger gives these figures access to biblical narrative through generically and materially specific instantiations of Scripture. Thus the characters populating Manger's midrashic poems are not only aware of the narrative contents of the Hebrew Bible, but also of all its subsidiary genres, which have emerged over the course of Jewish literary history. Sarah the Matriarch reads from the early modern Yiddish paraphrase of the Tanakh, the *Tsenerene* (Lublin, 1622), and dissolves yet again in tears, presumably as she reads the story of her own childlessness – though curiously, she takes no comfort from the miraculous announcement of the messengers which she must, of course, find written there as well:

אַבֿרהם אָבֿינו זיצט אויף דער שוועל
און שניצט זיך אַ טייַטל פֿון ביין,
ציטערט פֿון טונקעלן אַלקער אַרויס
דער מוטער שׂרהס געוויין.

„בהמה, שאַ! נו הער שוין אויף!
נאָך רק זי ווייַנט און ווייַנט,
זי האָט שוין מסתּמא ווידער אַ מאָל
די צאינה-וראינה געליינט.״ (23)

Similarly, the princess Michal hears in the summer wind's melody a premonition of David's eventual rise to power, though this comes as no surprise to her because she has already read this story more than once in the biblical epic *Shmuel Bukh* (Augsburg, 1544):

„בת-מלכּה, הער, אַ פֿייַפֿל שפּילט
די גלאָריע פֿנעם לאַנד,
אַ מגן-דוד אויף דער פֿאָן,
אַ תּהילימל אין האַנט.

די שטאָלצע קיניגס-טאָבטער ווייסט,
וואָס אָט דער ניגון מיינט,
זי האָט עס נישט צום ערשטן מאָל
אין שמואל-בוך געליינט. (85)

These insinuations, which here take the form of literary allusion, slyly intimate the belatedness both of Manger's characters and of the poems themselves. Elsewhere, these instances of historical sleight-of-hand take the form, not of literary allusion, but of specifically modern textual materiality. The biblical text with which these characters are familiar is no ancient codex, nor even a Torah scroll – they are, rather, the cheap, marketable, modular editions of biblical literature which became the common Jewish reader's primary point of access to Scripture after the advent of print. When Jacob resorts to his pocket-bible as one would a travel guide, Manger describes this book as a *khumeshl,* which refers specifically to an edition of the first five books of the Tanakh printed as a stand-alone volume. Michal, foreseeing David-as-King, imagines him under a flag bearing a Star of David, with a psalter in one hand. Here again, the term Manger uses is low-register and familiar, *t'hiliml,* a cheap stand-alone edition of psalms meant for daily use. These kinds of books were the products of early modern print: small format, portable, inexpensive, and thus financially attainable, not only for learned and wealthy scholars, but also for the ordinary Jew. They were printed in huge runs, used heavily, worn out, and, because they were in constant supply, replaced. With this level of material detail, Manger insists that his reader envision the biblical characters as readers of the very same sorts of physical document as that of any Jewish reader of the modern period. Thanks to this historically surreal level of detail, reader, poet, and biblical character all at once assume an identical relation to the biblical text: that of belated, and often uneasy, interpreter. In spite of vast intervening historical and cultural distance, this insistence on readerly equivalence lays bare the ineluctable fact of textual mediation: any encounter with Jewish literary tradition, whether the reader's, Manger's, even the Patriarchs', is conditioned by the texts that precede them and the vagaries of their specific material transmission. It is especially interesting, given Manger's interest in the early modern origins of Yiddish literature, that almost none of these instances of textual anachronism pre-date the advent of print. The poems make no direct reference to the material texts of Jewish Late Antiquity or the High Middle Ages, when Jewish textual production was chirographic and almost exclusively Hebraic. By eliding pre-modern Jewish literary history, Manger offers his reader access to the biblical account only through the intervening lens of early modern Yiddish textuality. The fact upon which Manger insists in these moments, the objective reality of which his narrative surrealism is the figurative articulation, is the impossibility of a Yiddish reader's unmediated encounter with the pre-modern past.

One could try to see these surreal exercises in historical imagination as one component of the 'midrashic' nature of Manger's project. The Talmudic exegetical principle that there is neither 'early' nor 'late' in the Torah, *eyn mukdam u-me'uchar ba-Torah* (*BT Pesahim* 5b) provides an exegetical protocol by which to gainsay the narrative chronology given in the biblical account, and it may be that Manger had in mind to apply this principle to the chronology of Jewish history itself. At the same time, one could be tempted to link Manger's departures from biblical narrative to those which occur in the early Yiddish biblical epics, *Shmuel Bukh* among them. Chone Shmeruk has skillfully demonstrated Manger's formal and thematic debt to *Shmuel Bukh,* yet

draws a sharp distinction between Manger's play with temporality and that evident in the biblical epic:

> Über der gedanklichen Verbundenheit mit Erik un Weinreich darf man den prinzipiellen Unterschied zwischen Manger und dem Verfasser des ‚Schmuelbuchs' nicht vergessen. Nicht alle inhaltlichen Abweichungen von der Bibel und den Midraschim, die sich im ‚Schmuelbuch' finden, kann man als bewußtes und absichtliches Vermengen von Epochen, als Umsetzen der biblischen Lebensweise in Begriffe un Auffassungen des Mittelalters, als bewußte Anachronismen erklären. Manche dieser Abweichungen werden ganz einfach aus dem Mangel an historischen Denken erklärt, der unter anderem aus der Auffassung resultiert, daß es ‚in der Tora kein Spät und Früh' gibt, und aus der naiven und selbstverständlichen Spiegelung des Gewohnten un Späten in den biblischen Erzählungen. Es ist zweifelhaft, ob di genannten Abweichungen von der Bibel im ‚Schmuelbuch' von desen Lesern als ungewöhnlich verstanden wurden. Im Gegensatz dazu ist in Mangers ‚Medresch' die Nutzung all dieser Möglichkeiten zum bawußten Prinzip erhoben. Dabei ist die Teilnahme des Lesers einkalkuliert, der aus seiner Kenntnis heraus alles zu genießen weiß, was gegenüber dem knappen Erzählskelett der Bibel, das als Rahmen und Ausgangspunkt des Schriftstellers gedient hat, eine absichtsvolle Neuerung darstellt.[225] (204-5)

In Shmeruk's estimation, the anachronisms of *Shmuel Bukh* are merely accidents of medieval historical naïveté, where Manger's use of the same technique is clearly deliberate, artistic and distinctively modern.[226] As I noted earlier, the idea that anachronism in *Shmuel Bukh* results solely from a pre-modern dearth of historical consciousness has problems of its own.[227] One might reasonably wonder whether the early modern composers and editors of the early modern Yiddish epics actually believed that Israelite soldiers achieved the conquest of the Promised Land because they carried muskets, despite neither biblical text nor any rabbinic commentary containing mention of it. In point of fact, handheld firearms such as those described in the epic *Sefer Yehoshua* in 1594 did not become commonplace in European armies until the sixteenth century.[228] They were, indeed, in the process of *becoming* a staple of modern warfare at the very time that the Yiddish biblical epic reached its peak. Whatever the case may be, Shmeruk makes a further claim when he connects anachronism in *Shmuel Bukh* to the exegetical principle, *eyn mukdam u-me'uchar ba-Torah.* In asserting that this principle is itself the result of defective historical consciousness, Shmeruk seems to suggest that classical rabbinic literature was no

225Ch. Shmeruk, "Itzik Mangers 'Medresch Izik' und seine literarischen Traditionen." *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philo*logie [Sonderheft] (1981): 195-212.

226Shmeruk makes this claim for modern historical consciousness explicit in n. 22, and cites T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" for support.

227See Chapter One, p. 6, and especially n. 7.

228See K. Chase, *Firearms: A Global History to 1700*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

better than the early Yiddish biblical epic at distinguishing the living present from the historical past. Yet it must be said that the use of this rabbinic principle was limited to very specific, technical difficulties arising in the Talmud, which would in no way have permitted for the kind or degree of anachronism evident in *Shmuel Bukh* and in Manger. In the Talmud, this principle is used in the narrow sense that even though verse A may appear after verse B in the Torah, it does not mean that the historical events they describe occurred in that order. The need for such a principle appears at its most obvious when one considers that the Torah is not a linear narrative (the entire book of Deuteronomy stands as witness). In order to compare the halachic portions of Deuteronomy with those of Exodus and Leviticus, the rabbis had to make clear that even though the Deuteronomy is a 'later' book than the others, narratively speaking, the halachic statements made there are historically equivalent to those made in the earlier books. Nothing in this principle provides for the notion that the events described in the Torah are unmoored from linear time. Quite the opposite, in fact, for this principle actually establishes as exegetical law the philosophically sophisticated notion that history and narrative are two *distinct* categories, which may or may not form a one-to-one correspondence. And lest one assume that this principle had drifted far from its strict, Talmudic sense by the time *Shmuel Bukh* was written, it seems to have retained its technical meaning well into the High Middle Ages, where we find it firmly entrenched in the Torah commentaries of Rashi and Abraham ibn Ezra,[229] with which the composer of *Shmuel Bukh* was undoubtedly familiar, even if not all his readers could make the same claim. In short, no muskets for the Israelites. Rather than seeing literary anachronism in *Shmuel Bukh* or Manger as (un)intentionally distorted applications of *eyn mukdam u-me'uchar,* I would suggest that we see both these texts as indebted to an altogether different hermeneutic strain in rabbinic literature, a specifically textual variety of anachronism, which creates Jewish continuity, not through technological, cultural or linguistic specificity, but through the experience of belated readership.

One version of this textual anachronism is present either implicitly or explicitly throughout classical and medieval rabbinic literature, although it hardly receives the kind of exegetical codification and controversy granted *eyn mukdam u-me'uchar:* that is, the rabbinic policy of assuming that Abraham, and often by extension all the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, were Torah-observant (as this notion was understood by the Sages).[230] Yet the rabbis seem to feel little obligation to explain the exact mechanics of this observance. How, in fact, did Abraham come to observe the Torah in full prior to the revelation at Sinai? In *Mishnah Kiddushin* 4:14 (cf. BT 82a), R. Nehorai roots his assertion of Abraham's (textual?) foreknowledge of the entire Torah in two verses from Genesis:

וכן הוא אומר באברהם אבינו עליו השלום (בראשית כד) ואברהם זקן וה׳
ברך את אברהם בכל. מצינו שעשה אברהם את כל התורה כלה עד שלא

229See, for example, Rashi on Exodus 25-27 or Ibn Ezra on Exodus 18. Far from dropping out of sight in the High Middle Ages, this principle actually became a point of significant controversy. In the eleventh century, Rashi held it to be exegetically valid. In the twelfth, Ibn Ezra concurred, while in the thirteenth Nachmanides dissented, claiming "there is indeed early and late in the Torah" [*yesh mukdam u-me'uchar ba-Torah*]. (See Nachmanides on Leviticus 25:1.) That these giants of Jewish biblical hermeneutics were actively espousing diametrically opposed views on this issue gives one a sense of the variety and nuance characterizing medieval historical consciousness.

230See *Mishnah Kiddushin* 4:14; *BT Kiddushin* 82a; *BT Yoma* 25b.

נתנה, שנאמר (שם כו) עקב אשר שמע אברהם בקולי וישמר משמרתי מצותי חוקותי ותורותי.

A crucial slippage occurs here: R. Nehorai conflates Abraham's observance of the laws [*torotai*] given to him by God with the (textual?) Law [*ha'torah*] given to Moses at Sinai. Later, the Amora Rav repeats this argument (*BT Yoma* 28b), though the Gemara goes onto note that Rava or R. Ashi justify the linguistic slippage with reference to the doctrine of the dual Torah: קיים אברהם אבינו אפילו עירובי תשבילין שנאמר תורותי אחת תורה שבכתב ואחת תורה שבעל פה. While Rava and R. Ashi's proposal addresses and resolves the grammatical disjuncture introduced by Rav, it also complicates the picture of Abraham's observance. Before, Rav and R. Nehorai seem to merely suggest that Abraham, perhaps via his special bond with God, was privy to all the requisite *practices* necessary to proper observance (not that he was necessarily a reader or interpreter of the Torah as a text). With Rava and R. Ashi, we have an explicit claim that the laws Abraham received were textually and orally *identical* to those received by Moses, the whole of Israel gathered at Sinai, and indeed which the rabbis themselves were at that very moment reading. This is indeed the sort of textual anachronism practiced by Manger, minus his fascination with the history of the book and its materiality. Abraham the Patriarch assumes the very same relation to the biblical text as its belated rabbinic interpreters, who thereby collapse the historical and exegetical distance between them. And indeed, the Talmudic discussion which prefaces Rav's assertion envisions Abraham as the founder of a scholastic tradition and its subsequent generations, very reminiscent of the academies of the Babylonian Amoraim:

דא״ר חמא בר׳ חנינה מימיהן של אבותינו לא פרשה ישיבה מהם היו במצרים ישיבה עמהם שנאמר (שמות ג, טז) לך ואספת את זקני ישראל היו במדבר ישיבה עמהם שנאמר (במדבר יא, טז) אספה לי שבעים איש מזקני ישראל אברהם אבינו זקן ויושב בישיבה היה שנאמר (בראשית כד, א) ואברהם זקן בא בימין יצחק אבינו זקן ויושב בישיבה היה שנאמר (בראשית כז, א) ויהי צי זקן יצחק יעקב אבינו זקן ויושב בישיבה היה שנאמר (בראשית מח, י) ועיני ישראל כבדו מזוקן אליעזר עבד אברהם זקן ויושב בישיבה היה שנאמר (בראשית כד, ב) ויאמר אברהם אל עבדו זקן ביתו המושל בתורת רבו (בראשית טו, ב) הוא דמשק אליעזר א״ר אלעזר שדולה ומשקה מתורתו של רבו.

By the end of the passage, the role of the Patriarchs as leaders in wisdom is explicitly linked to the transmission of the Torah and the fruits of its study. In the section discussing Eliezer, particularly, the Gemara departs from a genetic model for the transmission of Patriarchal wisdom and shifts to a master-disciple dynamic: the terminology of wise eldership [*zaken*] (of which biological age is the implied guarantor) is replaced by that of intellectual mastery [*rav*] (guaranteed by academic, rather than genetic, pedigree). This rejection of biological lineage in favor of a study-based paradigm for exegetical authority is the rabbinic fantasy of readerly equivalence: like Manger's uneasily reproductive metaphors in “Folklor un literatur,” the rabbis' vision of Jewish continuity turns away from the uncertain entanglements of sexual heredity – whose refusal of physicality extends, perhaps, to material culture – and toward a lineage

generated by shared reading conditions, which they impose on the biblical past as their own belatedness has imposed it on *them*.

The resemblance between Manger's historical interventions and that of the rabbis is more than merely formal. There are, in fact, moments when Manger's poems seem to put into practice, and deduce incredibly evocative detail from the hermeneutic precepts of midrash. The doctrine of Patriarchal Torah observance offers many opportunities for this kind of reading. On occasions when it seems that one of the Patriarchs is in violation of some commandment, as when Abraham prepares a meal of milk and meat for the divine visitors in Genesis 18:5-8, the Sages are quick to offer explanations that would obviate the transgression.[231] It is certainly no coincidence that Manger follows suit at precisely this moment in his *Khumesh-lider,* where he offers a careful revision of the menu (25): מיַן שׂרה האָט אָנגעגרייט / רייז מיט מילך און קימלברויט. In many ways, this version is very faithful to the biblical account, in which Abraham offers the visitors bread, which he then orders Sarah to prepare with "fine-ground meal" [קֶמַח סֹלֶת], and selects a calf for slaughter, which he presents with curds and milk. The text does not make clear whether both Abraham and the visitors partake, or only the visitors: וְהוּא-עֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם תַּחַת הָעֵץ, וַיֹּאכֵלוּ. In his poem, Manger carefully attends to many details from the biblical text and tries to find Ashkenazic equivalents: the fine flour becomes the commonplace but *heymish* staple, *kimlbroyt,* for which Sarah is given credit, as in the Tanakh itself; the milk too remains, this time served with rice, rather than the forbidden veal. By making the meal entirely *milkhiks,* Manger takes the rabbinic principle of Patriarchal Torah observance and writes it back into the fabric of the narrative. Humorously juxtaposing the the mundane and familiar foodways of Eastern European Jewry while simultaneously preserving and underscoring faithful kosher observance, Manger offers a more radical solution than the rabbis might have, but one which nevertheless preserves a core precept of rabbinic exegesis.

Still, the above example demonstrates only that Manger adhered to certain midrashic practices (beyond parroting the explications offered by the rabbis themselves). Rather than portraying Manger as ventriloquizing rabbinic exegesis, however, I am also concerned with attending to the ways in which he crafted his modern Yiddish metapoetics around the anxieties which inhere in reading the Tanakh, as they did for the rabbis. Indeed, Manger does far more than algorithmically execute the hermeneutic protocols of midrash. By troubling his biblical characters with scriptural foreknowledge, he participates in a rabbinic tradition which saw biblical figures as equally perturbed, on a profoundly personal level, by the act of reading and interpreting. A famous midrash from the medieval compilation *Yalkut Shimoni* on Numbers 20:25 reads like Manger's poetry made prose:

> אמר ליה הקב"ה למשה עשה טובה ואמור לו לאהרן על המיתה שאני בוש לומר לו. אמר ר' הונא בשם רבי תנחום בר חייא מה עשה משה השכים בשחרית והלך לו אצל אהרן התחיל קורא אהרן אחי ירד אצלו, א"ל מה ראית להשכים ולבא כאן היום, א"ל משה דבר מן התורה הייתי מהרהר בלילה ומתקשה לי הרבה לכך השכמתי ובאתי אצלך, א"ל ומהו הדבר, א"ל איני יודע מה היה הדבר, אלא אני יודע שבספר בראשית הוא, הבא אותו

231See, for example, BT Bava Metziah 86b-87a, although new explanations continue to be produced by the Tosafists in the thirteenth century, Hasidic rabbis in the nineteenth century, and so on.

ונקרא בו, נטלו ספר בראשית וקראו בו כל פרשה ופרשה ועל כל אחת ואחת אמר יפה עשה ויפה ברא הקב"ה, וכיון שהגיעו לבריאת אדם אמר משה מה אומר לאדם שהביא מות לעולם, א"ל אהרן משה אחי לא תאמר בדבר הזה אין אנו מקבלין גזרת אלקים וכו' היאך נבראו אדם וחוה והיאך זכו לי"ג חופות שנאמר בעדן גן אלקים היית והיאך אכל מן העץ ונאמר לו כי עפר אתה, א"ל לאחר כל השבח הזה כך וכך הגיעו, אמר ליה ואני ששלטתי במלאכי השרת ואתה שעצרת את המות לא סופנו לכך עוד כמה שנים יש לנו לחיות עוד כ' א"ל קטנות הן היה יורד ויורד עד שהזכיר לו יום המות מיד הרגישו עצמותיו של אהרן גועו א"ל שמא בשבילי הוא הדבר א"ל הן, מיד ראו אותו ישראל שגרעה קומתו שנאמר ויראו כל העדה, א"ל אהרן לבי חלל בקרבי ואימות מות נפלו עלי א"ל מקובל עליך למות א"ל הן.

Although this midrash is not textually anachronistic in a technical sense (since it takes place after the Sinaitic revelation), it nevertheless enacts the same drama of readerly anxiety that we saw above in Manger's portrayal of Sarah's weeping over the *Tsenerene*. Aaron's terror at his own death is here indistinguishable and in fact dependent upon with his readerly realization that the word of the Torah [*dvar torah*] is meant for him personally. As Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg remarks: "The result of this reading of biblical narrative is much more than the conveying of information: Aaron not only learns of his death, but experiences its imminence, in a dialectical mode of fear ('his bones quaked') and acquiescence" (xviii). And indeed, Aaron's dread is both physical – his quaking bones, his shrunken stature – and metaphysical – his deadened heart, his existential terror. The dawning understanding that the fate of one's own body is already inscribed in Scripture elicits a simultaneous psychological transformation. As she goes on, Zornberg comes to see the foreknowledge bestowed through reading as the spiritual compensation for this existential anxiety: "Strangely, with all the terror of such an intimate reading comes a sense of destiny, of existing in the mind of God, of being oneself the subject of God's word" (xviii). For Zornberg, the terror of intimacy with God is counterbalanced by this 'sense of destiny,' as though recognizing oneself 'the subject of God's word' is equally to step into an empowering form of subjectivity. Yet beyond his terse acquiescence ("Yes..."), we see little in Aaron's response of this redeeming sense of divine regard. Rather than gratification that he 'exists in the mind of God,' Aaron's (meta)physical reaction evokes a loss of personal autonomy: a surge of reflexive, autonomic shuddering, bodily diminution, and the psychological death of the heart. It is as though the hyperactivity of Aaron's autonomic nervous system at this moment bespeaks the simultaneous dissolution of his voluntary psyche, his free will, his capacity for self-determination. The confidence and self-possession of his earlier stance ("my brother, surely you would not say...") is displaced by the imminence and immanence of divine intervention.

This loss of personal autonomy which accompanies the death of the body is here not so far from the loss of autonomy which comes from reading Scripture as a foretelling of personal fate. Earlier I asked why Manger's Sarah weeps over the *Tsenerene* and its story of her barrenness. Reread in this light, that episode suggests that the source of Sarah's sorrow is not despair that she will *never* have a child, but the pain of paralyzed hope, messianic in its frustration, waiting for redemption from suffering which she herself has no power to alleviate. Indeed, when Manger's Sarah articulates her own suffering, she never asks *if* she and Abraham will have a child, but *when*. Abraham's answer to Sarah's wailing is that offered all frustrated

messianic hopes: בטחון, מיין ווייב. To Abraham's mind, the gap between Sarah's feelings on this topic and his own does not need to be explained through Sarah's ignorance of Scripture. Instead, the gap results from the difference in their faith: his perfect and hers defective. Yet as Sarah goes on to make clear, this is merely not the metaphysical pain of wondering when, but the acute pain of the frustrated body and its lack (21): אַוורעמל, דו הערסט, אַיעדע נאַכט / הער איך ווי ס׳כליפּעט מיין לייַב. And this thwarted maternal urge infects her every limb (22): [ישמאל] און אַז איך נעם דאָס קינד צו זיך אויפֿן שויס / און סע שמייכלט אַזוי קלוג און גוט, / ווערן מיינע אויגן פֿייַכט און גרויס / און ס׳ווערט מאָדנע טרויעריק מיין בלוט. Reading the *Tsenerene* torments Sarah – not because it predicts no child, and not necessarily because of faltering faith – but because it revives ever anew her desire and its bodily frustration. The threat to happiness, here, is not merely ignorance of Scripture, but the onus of foreknowledge which reading it confers. Nonetheless, there is a profound narrative divide separating the midrash of Aaron's death from Manger's portrayal of Sarah. As I suggested above, the rabbis are interested, not only in embedding biblical characters in the messy and complicated conditions of their own reading, but also in guaranteeing the authority of their own interpretive legacy. By establishing an unbroken chain of textual transmission (as exemplified in the Patriarchs-as-Sages midrash from *BT Yoma*) the rabbis shore up the interpretive pedigree of their own painfully belated position. In the midrash of Aaron's death, the fantasy of infallible interpretation (guaranteed by unbroken transmission) appears in the figures of God and his proxy Moses, who shepherds Aaron's process of interpretation toward its intended, 'correct' conclusion. However frightening Aaron's confrontation with the scriptural evidence of his own inevitable end, it is still to be preferred over the risk of errant, unaided, and belated exegesis, which threatens the rabbinic reader. But for Manger's characters, as indeed for his reader, no God intervenes to guide the course biblical history, nor that of belated Jewish reading. In turning away from direct revelation and inerrant transmission as the co-guarantors of scriptural interpretation, Manger offers his own alternative to the rabbis' fictive lineages of exegetical transmission: a historiographic, materialist, and Yiddishist portrait of textual modernity.

V. PARATEXT AND POETIC ETHICS

The collapse of historical distance which Manger achieved in *Noente geshtaltn* by psycho-linguistic means and in *Khumesh-lider* via textual anachronism, appears elsewhere in his oeuvre as a metapoetic strategy. In the August-September 1945 issue of the monthly journal, *Yidishe Kultur,* Manger published four poems based on the biblical books of Samuel,[232] all of which would eventually be included in his 1948 collection, *Der shnayder-gezeln Note Manger zingt.* In the journal, they were gathered under the title, "From the *Shmuel Bukh*," gesturing back to their biblical sources in I and II Samuel, while simultaneously embedding them in the epic tradition of early modern Yiddish literature. The poems are not radically different in form, tone, or content from Manger's earlier biblical poetry. In addition to the paratextual allusion to the *Shmuel Bukh*, every one of the four poems makes liberal use of textual anachronism, which Manger uses once again as an occasion for his character's Jewishly exegetical engagement with

232I. Manger, "Funem Shmuel-Bukh." *Yidishe Kultu*r (1945): 24-26.

the biblical text.[233] Thus, the prophet Samuel is said to have interpreted David's rise to power in the house of study, as though reading from the Tanakh itself (25):

אַ פֿויגל טשוויטשערט אין דער לופֿט:
-- הערט, ר׳ ישי, הערט,
אַ קרוין, אַ תהילימל און אַ שווערד
איז אייער דוד׳לען באַשערט.

ר׳ ישי טראַכט: די זעלבע רייד
האָט דער אַלטער נביא שמואל
געזאָגט נעכטן מנחה-צייט
אין דער אַלטער „קאַלטער שול“:

The princess Michal, reflecting on this prophecy, registers little surprise, given that she herself has read the *Shmuel Bukh* more than once (25):

„בת מלכה, הער, אַ פֿייפֿל שפּילט
די גלאָריע פֿונעם לאַנד,
אַ מגן-דוד אויף דער פֿאָן,
אַ תהילימל אין האַנט.“

די שטאָלצע קעניגס-טאָכטער ווייסט,
וואָס אָט דער ניגון מיינט,
זי האָט עס נישט צום ערשטן מאָל
אין שמואל-בוך געלייענט.[234]

233Elsewhere anachronistic Jewish textuality abounds in references to post-biblical devotional practice. The prophet Samuel's mother Hannah sings him a lullaby describing the crickets in evening as praying the *Ma'ariv* service.

זאָגט דער דריטער אַלטער ייד,
וואָס דרייט דעם פּאַפּיראָס:
-- ״די גרילן זעגן מערב שוין
אין פֿייכטן זומער-גראָז, (24)

This is altered in the 1948 version, so that the crickets are reciting the *Shema*.

זאָגט דער דריטער אַלטער ייד,
וואָס דרייט דעם פּאַפּיראָס:
׳די גרילן לייענען קרישמע שוין
אין פֿייכטן אָוונט-גראָז, (104)

It is an apt revision. Jewish children are traditionally taught very early to recite the *Shema* before bed, an image particularly appropriate to Hannah's lullaby to the infant Samuel. Further, the original Shmuel Bukh itself contains an anachronistic reference to reciting the *Shema,* though this is now believed to be a specifically post-biblical practice. See Turniansky's “On Old Yiddish Biblical Epics,” 31.

234This is surely one of the most extreme forms of textual prestidigitation in Manger's oeuvre: not only are the

David's father, Yishai, ironically asks, "What's next?" with the idiom, "Vos far a sedre geyt?" and thereby implies that current affairs are themselves a Torah portion to be read (24):

ר׳ ישי שמייכלט: „געהערט אַ נייס,
דאָס ווייסט דאָס קינד און קייט,
דו זאָגּ מיר בעסער, חברה-מאַן,
וואָס פֿאַר אַ סדרה גייט?"

Finally, in the kind of poignant narrative prescience that pervaded the *Khumesh-* and *Megile-lider,* Abigail awaits her lover David, preparing herself to "play out the biblical romance, as it is written in I Samuel" (25):

אביגילס אויגן ווערן מאָדנע גרויס,
זי ווייסט און זי איז גרייט
צו שפּילן דעם ביבלישן ראָמאַנס
ווי אין שמואל אלף שטייט.

In many ways, the most prominent alteration Manger makes to these later poems rests in his play on the double-meaning of "romance," as both a love affair and a literary genre. The attempt to write a "biblical romance" demands in a cosmopolitan, European setting distinct from the small-town Ashkenazic environs of the *Khumesh-lider.* This change of scene may already be discerned in Manger's portrayal of non-Jewish royalty in the persons of Ahasuerus and Vashti, who are wrapped up in the pleasures of their sensual, cosmopolitan court.[235] Yet in his *Shmuel Bukh* poems, Manger wants to suggest a chivalric atmosphere in the Kingdom of Israel, and in this particularly he begins to mimic the secularizing tendencies of the early modern biblical epic. Just as that *Shmuel Bukh* referred to David with courtly epithets, Manger's Abigail, lounging in silk pajamas, fantasizes about David from the comfort of her boudoir, and calls him her musketeer (25-26). At the same time, as though to suggest the Jewishness of his characters, Manger mingles cosmopolitan worldliness with details drawn from Ashkenazic folk-culture to parodic and estranging effect. Thus, a pastoral melody from Wolin, redolent of country rye-bread, sings through Michal's Titian-like hair (25):

זינגט אין אירע טיציאַן-האָר
אַ וואָלינער פּאַסטאָראַל,
וואָס שמעקט ווי דאָרפֿיש קאָרן-ברויט
און זילבערט ווי אַ קוואַל:[236]

poems themselves part of the *Shmuel Bukh*, but the very characters therein described are also their readers. Perhaps this was too much even for Manger, which might explain why he downplayed the *Shmuel Bukh* conceit in the 1948 collection, retitling the gathering of biblical poems *Der shnayder-gezeln Note Manger lernt Tanakh*.

235Manger himself describes the Esther story of the Megillah as a "courtly Persian legend," and suggests that the stylistic constraints of that genre demanded the erasure of 'low' and 'comic' figures, such as Fastrigose and Fonfose (preface, unpaginated).

236That Manger selected a master of the Italian Renaissance as the closest association with Michal's hair seems no

Curiously, in spite of these efforts to evoke the setting of the *Shmuel Bukh*, Manger never attempts the kind of Old Yiddish ventriloquism which appears in *Noente geshtaltn,* hewing almost without exception to a modern Yiddish lexicon and syntax. Even the sole exception offers a tidy illustration of the later Manger's misgivings about writing at length in an archaic idiom. In Hannah's lullaby, Manger uses the archaic verb "*zegn*" (lit. 'bless') for the crickets' observance of the evening prayer service. By the time he revised these poems for inclusion in the 1948 volume, he had replaced this turn of phrase with the more recognizable (though still long-attested) "*leyenen krishme*." Almost all these revisions were minor changes in word-choice, punctuation, and spelling. Beyond the construction of a more European courtly setting for his biblical characters, Manger seems to ignore those elements of *Shmuel Bukh* which are most striking: his stanzaic form is notably distinct, and far from the rolling, long-form narrative of the biblical epic, the poems themselves are, like those of the *Khumesh-* and *Megile-lider,* best described as internal monologues, capturing moments of repose and reflection rather than action. Given these substantial differences, it is not unreasonable to wonder why Manger insisted on linking his poems with the *Shmuel Bukh* in the first place. Yet as Manger's further paratextual interventions will suggest, this allusion to *Shmuel Bukh* served a purpose more metapoetic than formal or thematic.

Though many elements of the *Khumesh-* and *Megile-lider* had implicitly gestured toward their early modern Yiddish inspiration, the paratextual framing of the poems from *Yidishe Kultur* represents Manger's first explicit reference to an early modern literary work as the model for his biblical-midrashic poetry. And lest we imagine that Manger was merely using an archaic term ('*Shmuel Bukh*') to name the *biblical* books of Samuel, the poems are accompanied by excerpts from a letter Manger wrote to the editor (24):

> אין אַ שוידערלעכער שטימונג האָב איך זיך אַוועקגעזעצט שרייבן דאָס „שמואל-בוך".
> דערמיט דערפֿיל איך די צוואה פֿון דעם ווונדערבאַרן שניידער-געזעלן נטע מאַנגער, ע״ה, וואָס האָט אין זיינע לעצטע בריוו, וואָס האָבן מיך דערגרייכט, מיך כסדר דערמאָנט.
> „געדענק דאָס ׳שמואל-בוך׳, ס׳איז אונדזער יליאַדע, דער אַלטער אַנאָנימער מחבר פֿונעם ׳שמואל-בוך׳ האָט געוואוסט, געפֿילט אין וואָס ס׳גייט, אין אַ נאַציאָנאַלן עפּאָס – די שפּראַך אין זיין צייט און מעגלעך זיין טאַלאַנט האָבן נישט געקלעקט דערויף. דערפֿאַר מאַן איך עס פֿון דיר, נאָך די חומש און מגילה לידער, דאָס ׳שמואל-בוך׳...

accident, when we consider that not only was Titian contemporaneous with the Italian printings of Shmuel Bukh, but also with those classics of early modern Italian Yiddish, *Bove-Bukh* and *Pariz und Viene*, with their Jewish princesses and knights.

Here, Manger, by his own account and via the supporting voice of his brother,[237] establishes the *Shmuel Bukh* as the antecedent, inspiration, and paradigm upon which his current poems are modeled. In Note's exhortation, the *Shmuel Bukh* encapsulates – not a specific poetic style – but several key literary and historical premises, which come by extension to define the contours of Manger's current project: that the historical *Shmuel Bukh* was, in its conception, a Jewish Iliad, (i.e. a national epic); that it failed to realize this ambition for reasons both linguistic and poetic; that Manger and modern Yiddish are at last in a position to tackle the challenge once more; that this new *Shmuel Bukh* would be a natural continuation of the work done in the *Khumesh*- and *Megile-lider.* In effect, Manger is tasked with composing a new Yiddish Iliad, which would achieve—both poetically and linguistically—the aims of a national epic.

Before we reflect on the significance of the national epic for Manger's later poetics, it is worth recalling that Manger had already experimented with this kind of paratextual framing in the *Megile-lider.* There, he introduced the collection with a preface pointing up the continuities of his own work with early Yiddish biblical genres (preface, unpaginated): די לידער, וואָס זענען געזאַמלט אין דעם ביכל, זענען ווידער-אַמאָל אַ שטיפעריי אַזאַ, אויפן שטייגער פון די פּוּרים-שפּילער אין אַלע צייטן. To underscore this point about the affinity of his *megile* and those of the past, Manger begins by describing his poems as yet another biblical retelling, composed with the same piety and playful solemnity as their predecessors: אין דעם ביכל ווערט דערציילט די אַלטע, שיינע מעשה פון דער מלכה אסתר, וואָס האָט, איניינעם מיט איר פעטער מרדכי, זיך פעסט אַ נעם געטאָן צו המן הרשע אוּן אים סוף כּל סוף גובר געווען. זייער זכות זאָלן אוּנז ביישטיין, היינט אוּן אַלעמאָל, אמן סלה. The modest literary claims ("*di alte sheyne mayse*"), colloquial register ("*fest a nem geton*"), and folk pieties ("*haynt un ale mol, omeyn seyle*") conspire to give the impression that Manger is an unpretentious craftsman, working in a popular dramatic genre with a long history but little prestige. Immediately following, however, the preface pivots to address the differences between Manger's work and its antecedent Purim plays with recourse to a piece of fictional literary historiography:

> אמת, די מעשה ווערט דאָ דערציילט אַביסל אַנדערש. די אָפּיציעלע מגילה-שרייבער האָבן למשל פאַרשוויגן אַזאַ וויבטיקע געשטאַלט, ווי דער שנייִדעריוּנג פאסטריגתא, הגם זיין פאַרצווייפלטע ליבע צו אסתר המלכה אוּן זיין אַטענטאַט אויפן מלך אחשורוש, האָבן דעצידירט וועגן אַ סך וויבטיקע געשעענישן.
>
> אפילו דעם אַלטן פרוּמען שנייִדער-מיינסטער פאָנפתא האָבן די אָפּיציעלע כראָניקאַרן פאַרשוויגן. ווייזט אויס, אַז זיי האָבן נישט געווואָלט פאַרשוועכן די פּערסישע הויף-לעגענדע מיט אַזעלכע פּראָסטע חיי וקיים.
>
> -- הייסט עס, זיי האָבן געפאַלשעוועט דעם היסטאָרישן אמת – וועט טענה׳ען דער לעזער אוּן וועט זיין גערעכט. [...]
>
> דער מחבר פון די מגילה-לידער אָהט זיך פלייסיק באַמיט אויסצוגעפינען די פאַרשוויגענע געשטאַלטן. ער האָט יאָרן-לאַנג געפאָרשט

237I have not personally discovered whether this letter to Itzik from Note is held in the Manger archive at the Hebrew University. It may no longer exist, or may itself be a fiction of one sort or another. For our purposes, I am only concerned with the way in which Manger puts these ideas into play, in order to shape the reception of his post-war biblical poems.

אין פאַרשידענע אַרכיוון, ביז ס׳איז אים געלונגען זיך צו באַגעגענען מיטן
שנייַדער-געזעלן פאַסטריגתא אוּן מיט זיין אַלטן מיינסטער פאָנפתא.

Here, Manger's invention of these two Romantic proletarian characters is ironically and imaginatively transfigured: a wrong done to the historical record, which modern historical skepticism and rigorous documentary research methods are singularly positioned to redress. By taking this stance, Manger's modernist experiment with historical imagination claims to accurately transmit the Yiddish literary past, not through naïve fantasies of textual incorruptibility, but by virtue of its very distance from the "official chroniclers'" moment of textual falsification. Where the exegetical validity of the rabbis' midrashim was guaranteed by fictions of direct revelation and unbroken transmission, the interpretive freedoms claimed by Manger's modern verse are vouchsafed by formal literary affinity and the scientifically superior techniques of modern literary-historiographic research, even when its conclusions are invented.

In fabricating these fanciful transmission histories, Manger portrays his biblical poems as skeptical, but interpretively valid revisions of early modern Yiddish literature, in a fashion remarkably similar to Note's eventual exhortation regarding the *Shmuel Bukh*. Yet by the mid-forties, with the end of the war and the tolling of its losses,[238] Manger's metapoetic experiments have shed some of their cheeky preciousness, and turned toward subtler uses of intimation and poetic ambiguity. In *Yidishe Kultur,* his poem "Michal" concludes with a reference to the poet himself, which introduces – or perhaps maintains – an uncertainty central to his project of Yiddish literary continuity (25):

זי הויבט זיך אויף. איר זיידן קלייד
רוישט דורך דער זומער נאַבט...
– – – – – – – – – – – –
אַ יידישער פּאָעט האָט מיד
דאָס שמואל-בוך פֿאַרמאַבט.

Earlier, we saw Michal interpreting the political vicissitudes of the nation in light of the Old Yiddish epic. And here, as with Michal, it seems that the poet, Manger, has set aside his reading to rub his tired eyes. But other possibilities remain, left open by the vague indefinite article ("a Yiddish poet"). Is this poet Manger himself, or the original *Shmuel Bukh* composer, whom Note had already conjured in his brother's imagination? Indeed, these last two lines refuse even to make clear whether the poet writes or reads the *Shmuel Bukh* before him. The series of dashes which Manger places between Michal's mise-en-scène and that of the poet is a graphic evocation of the covers of a book snapped shut, blocking the biblical princess from view. Have we, the readers, just witnessed a moment of historical poetic composition: the *Shmuel Bukh* author laying down his pen, wearied by his efforts? Or is this a scene, not of composition, but of revision: the modernist Manger rewriting *Shmuel Bukh* in the language of his own time, making full but exhausting use of his own (greater?) talents to fulfill the potential of this national Yiddish epic? As our earlier readings in Manger's Old Yiddish ventriloquism might suggest, this ambiguity is

238The poems in the 1945 issue of *Yidishe Kultur* are dedicated to Manger's former lover, Rachel Auerbach and the surviving remnants of Polish Jewry: געווידמעט רחל אויערבאַך און די רעשטלעך פֿון די פּאָילישע יידן מיט ליבשאַפֿט און טרויער.

not merely intentional, but in fact essential. As long as "a Yiddish poet," any Yiddish poet, is indistinguishably both reader and writer of *Shmuel Bukh*, Manger has succeeded in retrieving for his own moment the neglected past of Yiddish literary history.

In spite of this empowering conflation of reading and writing, past and present, the paratextual tactics Manger used in *Yidishe Kultur* nevertheless conspire to immeasurably raise the literary and cultural stakes of his project: where the prefaces to both the *Khumesh*- and *Megile-lider* minimized their significance – merely a bit of mischief ("*a shtiferay aza,*" and "*nokh a mol a shtiferay aza*") – now Manger is to write an epic to rival Homer, as weighty for Yiddish, the Jewish people, and even world literature as Homer was for classical antiquity. Small wonder Manger shudders with trepidation as he sits down to write. Note's letter claims that the value of the historical *Shmuel Bukh* lies in the fact that its author knew what a national epic was all about, and that his strivings, though they fell short, were in pursuit of this ideal. But Note does not pause to define what he means by a national epic, other than by analogy with the Iliad. What must a work of Jewish literature accomplish to be deemed a national epic? What poetic talents must the author of a such a work possess?

As we have already seen, Manger himself turns to the Iliad in the post-war period as an emblem of supreme literary accomplishment, and this because it exemplifies artistic objectivity:

> איך האָב געהאַלטן ביים אילוסטרירן מײַן געדאַנק וואָס איך מײַן מיט אַ געוויסער קינסטלערישער אָביעקטיוויטעט, און דער עפּיקער און דער דראַמאַטורג מוז זיך האָבן, כּדי די ווערק זאָלן נישט ווערן קיין פּאַמפלעט. האָמער האָט געשילדערט סײַ די גריכן און סײַ די טראָיאַנער, די שונאים פֿון די גריכן, מיט דער זעלבער קינסטלערישער אָביעקטיוויטעט. דערפֿאַר בלייַבט זײַן עפּאָס, ביזן היינטיקן טאָג, דאָס גרעסטע אין דער וועלט-ליטעראַטור.

For Manger, the epic is opposed to the lyric precisely in its capacity to represent, objectively, prismatically, the full range of human ethical and emotional experience. Earlier in that same essay on the Holocaust and literary production, Manger insists that the only genre in which it is currently possible to write about the destruction of European Jewry is the lyric. Far from words of praise, his statement is founded on the notion that the lyric is only suited for the expression of subjective, local and highly charged emotion (387): איז אין איצטיקן מאָמענט דער איינציקער לעגיטימער אויסדרוק ׳דער לירישער זיפֿץ׳, די קינה, די עלעגיע, דער אויסגעסריי פֿון צער און צאָרן. He goes on to point out the precedents for this response in the history of Jewish collective grief: the biblical elegy, the book of Lamentations, and the psalm of exile, *Al naharot bavel* [By the waters of Babylon]. In the immediate wake of the nation's trauma, its authors are as yet limited in literary expressiveness by their very historical proximity to the Destruction, that is, their overwhelming identification with its victims. To progress to other genres, more sophisticated ones in Manger's estimation, they will need to achieve a psychological scope beyond what the subjective, elegiac, and psalmic lyric can provide; this psychological scope is only achievable through the accumulation of historical distance. Prior to the Holocaust, in his essay on folklore and literature, Manger offered a more literary and less historical explanation for the Jewish failure to produce great epic or drama. That account insisted on the notion that the ballad, the lyric's antithesis and complement, never developed in Jewish literature. Folk-ballad, as Manger

sees it, is the foundation upon which later belletristic genres are built and without it a national literature cannot acquire the narrative force or psychological objectivity necessary for long-form narrative or dramatic conflict.[239] As noted above, Manger names this aspect of poetic consciousness 'artistic objectivity,' and considers it the prerequisite for the composition of the 'high' literary genres, epic and drama. Leaving the Iliad, he expands on artistic objectivity with reference to Chaucer's "Prioress's Tale" (*Shriftn* 388):

> איך האָב איבערגעגעבן מײַן אינטערוויוּער אַז פֿון דער מעשה וואָס ווערט דערציילט אין דער קענטערבערי-פּאָעמע דורך דער אויבער-נאָנע, אַ מעשה וועגן אַן עלילת-דם, איז נישט געדרונגען, אַז טשאָסער איז געווען אַן אַנטיסעמיט. די מעשה איז זיכער דערציילט געוואָרן אין די מאָנאַסטירן פֿון יענער צייַט. די פֿרומע קריסטלעכע שוועסטער האָבן געגלויבט אין דער באָבע-מעשה, און די קינסטלערישע אָביעקטיוויטעט האָט געפֿליכטעט טשאָסערן צו שילדערן אַזאַ קאַטולישע נאָנע, מיט אַלע אירע פֿאָראורטיילן, אָבערגלויבענישן, און מיט דער גאַנצער פֿרומקייט וואָס איז אונדז פֿרעמד, וואָס פֿאַרדריסט אונדז, וואָס אפֿשר האָט זי פֿאַרדראָסן אויך אים, טשאָסערן אַליין, דעם רענעסאַנס-מענטש, אָבער אַזוי איז זי געווען די פֿרומע אויבער-נאָנע און אַזוי איז געווען די לעגענדע וועגן עלילת-דם.

No matter his prior commitments (ethnic, cultural, political, ethical), the artist is responsible for portraying the whole of a person, a culture, a conflict, a relationship, all the while laying aside the distorting lens of personal identity. And this is a demand both on the historical imagination and the measure of one's capacity for empathy, for psychological insight which extends beyond one's own subjectivity. Just as Chaucer had to fully account for the Prioress, so an author hoping to narrate (and not merely lament) Jewish history is responsible for an authentic representation of the experience and inner life, not only of the persecuted, but also of the persecutor, not only of the hero, but also of the villain, the foil, the clown, even the seemingly insignificant female figure who hovers at the margins of male narrative. In this light, Michal, Abigail, and Hannah's insightful exegeses on their own circumstances may be reread as midrashically supplementing the biblical account with precisely the kind of stereoscopic objectivity which Manger considers constitutive of the epic.

The four poems "from the *Shmuel Bukh*" were ultimately included in Manger's 1948 volume of poetry, *Der shnayder-gezeln Note Manger zingt.* The second half of the collection, entitled *Der shnayder-gezeln Note Manger lernt Tanakh,* consists entirely of poetic dramatizations of episodes from I and II Samuel, mostly involving King David and his women. As noted above, Manger's primary departure from the program he had established for the *Khumesh-* and *Megile-lider* rests in his framing of these poems as possessed of great national and literary import. Yet dramatizing the David story offers Manger a further opportunity which

239It is essential to stress, however, that Manger composed his essay on folklore and literature in 1939, before the Jewish national catastrophe of his generation had occurred. Afterwards, in writing of the Holocaust and literature, Manger articulates an identical account of genre, but abandons his formal or aesthetic justifications, turning instead to wholly psychological explanations for his theory. It is as though, having experienced these losses himself, he can no longer fault the lamenting Jeremiah or the exiled Psalmist for their grief-stricken collapse into lyric subjectivity.

had not previously been available to him, one which adds further depth and nuance to the metapoetic nature of his undertaking: namely, that David is both a character in the Tanakh and also one of its canonical authors. Manger returns several times to the notion that David is both dramatic (or perhaps epic) hero, brought low by the vagaries of history and personal folly, and yet at the end of his life, the Psalmist, privileged with theological intimacy, gifted with literary genius, and yet burdened by his ethical obligations as national poet. Here, the ambiguous slippage between poetic reading and rewriting of Scripture becomes not only a sign of privilege and divine election, but also a trap in which the poetic imagination is entangled and finally yoked to a national literature's collective imperative. In Manger's rendition, David's transformation from pipe-playing shepherd into Psalmic harpist comes to emblematize the poet's ambivalence about the gravity of his vocation, the obligatory intertextuality of an exegetical poetics, and his ethical debt to the nation and its literary future.

Three poems from the 1940's distill this ambivalence and, when read together, offer a vivid portrait of Manger's David-as-poet: at first innocently gifted, too clever, destined for tragedy, and later old, sorrowful, his cleverness turned to wisdom, his talent refocused by, yet also constrained in service of, divine purpose. The young David makes his first appearance in "Shmuel ha-novi un der pastekh Dovid" [The Prophet Samuel and the Shepherd David] (1948) at the moment of his encounter with Samuel (I Samuel 16:11-12),[240] when the naïve boy still lazes on the hillside, playing a pan pipe and singing ditties to his sheep:

אויפֿן בערגל נעבן דער מיל,
אונטער אַן אַלטן באַרנבוים,
פֿייפֿלט דוד דאָס פּאַסטוכל.
דיווינטן דעכען קוים:

„העי, זילבערוואָלָ, דו שעפֿעלע ווייס,
האָב נישט קיין מורא פֿאַר די וועלף,
פֿאַראַן אַ גאָט דאָרט אין דער הויך,
אַ פֿאָטערל וואָס העלפֿט.

העי, טינטערל, דו שעפֿעלע שוואַרצס,
האָב נישט קיין מאָרא פֿאַר דער נאַכט,
פֿאַראַן אַ גאָט דאָרט אין דער הויך,
אַ פֿאָטערל וואָס וואַכט.

העי, לעקישל, דו ציגנבאָק,
שפּרינג וואָיִעווע אום אין פֿעלד,
צופּ דאָס גראָז און פֿאַרשוין די בלום,
און האָב הנאה פֿון דער וועלט".

נאָר וועט איז דער אַלטער, גראָער ייד,

240Manger alters the setting for dramatic effect: in the original, David is brought in from tending the sheep at Samuel's bidding. As such, the encounter in the field is Manger's invention.

אויף זיין שטעקן אָנגעשפּאַרט,
וואָס שטייט פֿאַר אים גאָר אומגעריכט,
באַטראַכט אים שטום און וואַרט?

ס׳איז שמואל הנביא פֿון דער „רויטער בריק",
ער ווינט דאָרט איינער אַליין --
אַן אַלטער בחור, אָן ווייב אָן קינד
און עלנט ווי אַ שטיין.

די נביאה – טענה׳ט ער – איז זיין ווייב,
ביז הונדערט און צוואַנציק יאָר,
ווייל פֿונקט ווי אַ ווייב שרייט זי און שעלט
און דערגייט אים זיינע יאָר.

איצט שטייט ער און קוקט אַוועק פֿאַסטוכל:
אָט דאָס איז דער פֿאַרשוין,
וואָס וועט פֿאַרבייטן אם ירצה השם
דאָס פֿייפֿל אויף דער קרוין?

ער נעמט די רויטע פֿאַטשיילע אַרויס
און ווישט אָפּ די טראָפּנס שווייס
און ס׳פֿאַרשמעקט מיט תהילים און פֿידל-שפּיל,
געמישט מיט אַלדאָס בייז. (105-106)

Here, the young David's song bespeaks the child-like innocence of his theology: God is a protector, a shepherd, a provider of sweet grasses and safe passage. And just as the shepherd minds his flock, so the Lord safeguards all, white sheep, black sheep, and billy goat alike. Indeed, the little song seems a folkloric rendering of Psalm 23, traditionally known by its opening as the "Song of David" [*mizmer le-Dovid*], which famously compares God's watchful presence to a shepherd guiding his flock through grassy meadows. But in Manger's poem, the shepherd's song breaks off with the arrival of the prophet. This youthful David is not yet the Psalmist, and without the experience of war, intrigue, and betrayal which will characterize his kingship, he is not yet in a position to compose the later verses of Psalm 23, which darken with the valley, death, and the presence of evil. And indeed, the end of Manger's poem itself foreshadows David's eventual transformation through Samuel's sense of foreboding, which intimates that the composition of the psalms will be inextricable from the "evil hap" that befalls David.

A more mature poet, made savvy and ambitious by life at court, attends King Saul. Manger composed the poem "Sho'ul un Dovid" [Saul and David] (1942) on I Samuel 16:23, in which David plays his harp to soothe the king's troubled spirit:

„ביסטו דער שפּילער אויף דער האַרף,
וואָס פֿאַרטרייַבט די בייזע גייַסטער?"

„יאָ, מײַן מלך!“

„נעם די האַרף, מײַן קליינער מײַסטער,
מאַך דעמ קראַנקן מלך פֿריילעך.“

„הער, איך שפּיל:

„פֿון דער באַרגקייט אין יהודה
נידערט שטיל אַ זומערנאַכט,
שטיל און קלאָר –
ווילדע רויזן אין איר גאַרטל,
אויפֿן קאָפּ געקרייַזטע האָר
פֿינקלט בליצט אַ קרוין גינגאָלדיק.

זאָגט זי צו דעם לעצטן פֿאַסטעך,
וואָס איז נאָך אין פֿעלד פֿאַרבליבן:
-- פֿאַר וואָס האָסטו נישט די סטאַדע
אָוונטצייַט אַהיים געטריבן?
איצט ביסטו אין פֿעלד אַליין.“

זאָגט דער פֿאַסטעך:
ניין אַליין!
דו ביסט דאָ און דו ביסט שיין
און איך וויס אַז שיין איז הייליק.“

לאַכט די נאַכט: „דו קליינער שטיפֿער,
פֿאַר וואָס זאָגסטו נישט די וואָר?...
יאָ, ס׳איז אמת, ווייַל ביים חונף,
זענען נישט די אויגן קלאָר,
ווי בייַ דיר, מײַן ליבער, קליינער.“

און זי טוט אים אָן איר קרוין:
-- „אַ מתּנה דיר מײַן שיינער.“

ציטערט אויף דער מלך שאול:
„זאָג, ווי הייסט דער קליינער פֿאַסטעך,
איז זײַן נאָמען דיר באַקאַנט?“

„קיינער קען אים נישט אין לאַנד,
און זײַן קרוין איז נאָך אַ חלום.“

„איצט הער ווייַטער:
אויפֿן ווייַסן פֿערד אַ רייַטער
קומט צו רייַטן פֿון די וועגן
דורכגענעצט פֿון זומערריגן,
ס׳שמעקט פֿון אים מיט פֿרישן היי,
גייט דער פּאַסטעך אים אַנטקעגן,
זייַנע אויגן – שטערן צוויי,
און ער רופֿט דעם רייַטער: נביא!
און דער רייַטער רופֿט אים: מלך!“

ציטערט אויף דער מלך שאול:
„זאָג, ווי הייסט דער פֿרעמדער רייַטער,
איז זיין נאָמען דיר באַקאַנט?“

„קיינער קען אים נישט אין לאַנד,
און זיין וואָרט איז נאָך אַ חלום.“

מורמלט שטיל דער קראַנקער מלך:
„הער, דו קליינער האַרפֿן-שפּילער,
שטעל אַוועק די האַרף אין ווינקל,
איך בין מיד,
ס׳ווערט די מיט-נאַכט שאַרפֿער, קילער
און דיין ליד
האָט נישט אויסגעלייזט מיין טרויער,
נישט געלייַטערט מיר מיין חלום.“

„גוט נאַכט, מלך!“

„גיי בשלום!“ (199-201)

David's skill in composition has advanced by leap and bounds when compared to his earlier efforts with the sheep. As ever, Manger is especially sensitive to genre, even when retelling the same scene (such as the shepherd David's auspicious encounter with the prophet Samuel). Here, his David has set aside the crude shepherd's pipes in favor of the royal harp. Having outgrown the simple, monosyllabic rhymes and rolling scansion of the folksong, he takes a more intricate approach to form: evoking the medieval ballad, he composes in trochaic tetrameter and an ornately alternating rhyme-scheme. At the same time, Manger's poem as a whole strains toward the dramatic in a way that even his biblical poems in *Khumesh-lider* do not. Thus, while the harpist David performs his virtuosic rendering of the ballad, Manger crafts nearly the entire poem as dialogue. Manger has written elsewhere of the genetic entanglement of epic and drama (by which he seems to mean specifically tragedy), especially in the case of King Saul. According to his theory, the primitive folk-ballad ultimately gives rise to the more sophisticated, belletristic

genres of epic and drama (*Shriftn* 330-31). With this assumption, he goes on to lament the fact that Saul, an ideal tragic hero, has achieved no realization in Jewish drama (the state of which Manger never ceases to bemoan, cf. *Shriftn* 339). In this light, the present poem may itself be viewed as a demonstration of Manger's literary-historiography: David, in the guise of court-bard, fashions a ballad which Manger the post-Romantic poet frames and re-fashions as tragic drama. And indeed, David's song is not a slavish imitation of the archaic ballad; at times it is more more reminiscent of the genre's later iterations as early modern romance, such as Keats' *La Belle Dame sans Merci* or Shakespeare's Puck.[241] It is this layering of generic techniques and thematic allusions which serve to substantiate Manger's palimpsestic vision of literary history. At the same time, it is a snapshot of the gradual maturation of the poet, whose youthful fascination with baroque intertextuality suggests all at once literary erudition, historical self-consciousness, and a belabored focus on poetic technique.

This David, technically expert and politically shrewd, has grown in skill but not in wisdom. He is still optimistically ambitious, gas-lighting the afflicted king and dreaming of his own rise to power. If we consider that this David is the future Psalmist, then God's absence from his song makes for a conspicuous lacuna. At the same time, we see foreshadowed those moral shortcomings which will torment him later in life: seducing the lady Night prefigures his sexual misadventures, and his thinly-veiled ambition to overthrow Saul points grimly forward to Absalom's rebellion. Without these devastating experiences, David is still a far cry from the Psalmist, in whom poetic dexterity and moral rectitude are yoked in service of a purpose both creative and sacred. Only in Manger's "*Dovid ha-meylekh un Avishag*" [King David and Abishag] (1948) is the Psalmist at last recognizable in the old king who cannot sleep and turns from his psalter to contemplate the young woman asleep in his bed:

דער מלך מישט דאָס תּהילימל
(ס׳איז טיפּע מיטן-נאַבט)
אין דרויסן פֿאַרן טויער שטייט
אַ זעלנער אויף דער וואַך.

דער מלך מורמלט: „גרויסער גאָט,
איך ווייס אַז דו ביסט דאָ
אין מיר און אין מיין תּהילים
אין יעדער מינדסטער שעה."

ער הייבט זיך אויף – געגנוג פֿאַר היינט
מיט גאָט ברוך הוא גערעדט,
און ווי אַ שאָטן שאַרט ער זיך

241*La Belle Dame san Merci* is iambic tetrameter, a rhythm Keats thought appropriate to the archaic ballad, but drops the final foot of the fourth line. (Manger adopts a similar strategy in many of his biblical ballads, including the song of David and Samuel above). Shakespeare wrote much of the fairies' dialogue in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in catalectic trochaic tetrameter, in which each line ends on a stressed beat. Here, Manger uses catalexis for contrast between masculine and feminine rhymes. One might also note the thematic similarities between Keats' seductive lady and Manger's flirtatious and feminine personification of evening, or the recasting of the prophet Samuel as a mounted knight. Manger's references to Keats and Shakespeare in his literary-historiographic essays make these suggestions more than mere speculation (cf. *Shriftn* 330).

פֿאַמעלעך צו צום בעט.

אַבֿישג שלאָפֿט, זי אָטעמט שטיל.
און הער – זי רעדט פֿון שלאָף,
און פֿון איר חלום שמעקט אַרויס
אַ טאָלעקע מיט שאָף.

אַ וואַסער און אַ נאָדלוואַלד,
אַ דאָרף-לבֿנה גרויס,
אַן אַלטער פֿרומער ליפּעבוים
וואָס היט דער מאַמעס הויז.

אַ טרויער און אַ נאָגעניש,
אַ בענקעניש וואָס ציט
אַוועק פֿונעם מלכס תּהילימל
צו אַן אייגן ליד.

דער מלך טראַכט: אַ מאָדנע זאַך –
זי ליגט אין הוילן העמד,
נאָענט צו מיר און מיין באַריר,
און דאָך אי ווייַט אי פֿרעמד.

ער בייגט דעם אַלטן ווייַסן קאָפּ
און קושט דאָס דאָרף אין איר
און קושט דעם אַלטן ליפּעבוים
וואָס היט דער מאַמעס טיר.

און מיט שטילע מידע טריט
גייט ער צוריק צום טיש.
אַ שטילער זיפֿץ. אַ גלעט די באָרד,
און דאָס תּהילימל אַ מיש. (101-2)

This David has set aside the passions of youth; political advancement and sexual appetite have given way to a devout poetic practice which demands the renunciation of human intimacy both physical and emotional.[242] Abishag herself is abstracted, a symbol of the natural innocence that David has lost over the course of his evolution. And thus it seems no coincidence that Abishag's remembered and dreamt-of countryside is not so different from the surroundings in which the young shepherd sang. She had the linden, he the pear tree. He sat by the mill, she by the river, pasturing the sheep. David does not kiss Abishag herself, but rather kisses through her, as though

242This vision of David's relationship to Avishag also has roots in certain aggadic assumptions. In the rabbis' assessment, Moses' detachment from his wife and family was the necessary condition for his intimacy with God. (See, for example, *Sifre Numbers* 12:1-8.) So here, Manger represents David's poetic vocation as something which both elevates and disrupts his capacity to engage the everyday.

yearning to close distance between his past and present. And this is the only indulgence he allows himself before turning back to his holy work.

Once again, Manger carefully layers and interleaves the generic markers of David's poetic practice. As with the Yiddish poet of "Michal" who reads/writes the *Shmuel Bukh*, Manger endows David with an anachronistic relationship to the biblical text itself. Thus, despite David's traditional status as author of Psalms, here he also serves as its reader, appearing to leaf through his little psalter in much the same fashion as a pious Ashkenazic Jew might. Indeed, "*zogn t'hilim*" served a liturgical, meditative and (in the case of a death) apotropaic ritual purpose in Ashkenazic religious life, and the very pious would often extend the textual obligations of the three daily prayer services to include a set number of psalms. The poem further makes clear that David understands his work with the psalter as a kind of communion with God, both a conversation and a process of theological articulation. In this fashion, Manger styles David's composition of Psalms as both poetry and prayer, writing and reading. And indeed, this is no surprise when one considers that Manger had long associated prayer with poetry, especially the lyric. In his first collection of poetry, *Shtern oyfn dakh* (1929), Manger begins with an expressionistic articulation of the generic distinction between prayer and ballad (preface, unpaginated): באַלאַדע און תּפֿילה. די טונקלע זעונג און דאָס ליכטיקע שטאַמלען וואָס פֿיבערט אין די אויגן און אויף די ליפּן ערב נאַבט. This metaphor neatly divides the purposes and formal qualities of each genre: ballad is dark, hallucinatory yet prophetic, visual but also narrative, as in David-the-harpist's performance for King Saul; prayer a distinctively oral mode, effortful but luminous, like the Psalmist's midnight wrestlings with God's word.[243] Later the same year, Manger published a poetic manifesto elaborating this characterization, "*Balade – di viziye fun blut*" [Ballad: Vision of the Blood] in which he describes the ballad as a confluence of hallucinatory narrative and prophetic visualization (*Shriftn* 307): און מיט ווילדן עקסטאַז ווערט געבוירן די קפֿקר-טאַט, אויפֿן הינטערגרונט פֿון דער נאַבט. דאָס צעשויבערטע זינלאָזע געלעבטער פֿון מענטשלעכער פֿאַרצווייפֿלונג. די גרויסע מיסטישע וויזיע פֿון אונדזער בלוט – באַלאַדע. In contrast, "prayer," personal and supplicatory, is figured in the prologue as a "bright stammering...on the lips" a timorous, lyrical "I" to which, in Manger's manifesto, the restless blood of the ballad is inimical (307): דאָס איז די וויזיע פֿונעם אומרויקן בלוט: דאָס איז דער אויפֿברויז, וואָס פֿאַרווישט דעם שטילן סענטימענט, די שטילע לירישע נשמה-וויבראַציעס.[244] And this characterization of prayer and the lyrical "I" is finds expression in

243 Although allusively subtle, Manger's description of both genres has its roots in the biblical imagery surrounding prophecy. The visionary articulations of the poet and his feverish lips recall the scene of Isaiah's vocation, in which a angel presses a live coal to his lips, bestowing the power to prophesy (6:6-7). This in turn brings to mind the rabbinic midrash regarding Moses, whose speech impediment was attributed to his mouth being burned in childhood by a hot coal (*Shemot Rabbah* 1:31), also through the intervention of an angel, incidentally. When Moses himself is called to speak for God, he objects that he is but "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exodus 4:10, literally, "heavy of mouth" and "heavy of tongue"), a statement from which the rabbinic tradition deduces Moses' speech impediment. Most commonly, it is supposed that Moses stammered, and his "uncircumcised lips" (Exodus 6:12) are meant to evoke this defect. Yet God replies, "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh a man dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? is it not I the Lord?" (Exodus 4:11). Manger assembles these somatic aspects of prophetic calling in his description of both ballad and prayer: visionary eyes, stammering lips, the fever of angelic intervention.

244 It is perhaps also significant that Manger encodes "prayer" as Jewishly distinctive, and this in marked contrast to "ballad." This is in part a linguistic effect: the very word for prayer that Manger selects is "*tfile,*" of Hebrew derivation, and specific to Jewish prayer. Similarly, Manger associates prayer with a certain time of day, "the

Manger's vision of David's poetic work, a piously intertextual effort which attempts to repurpose the collective language of liturgy in order to give voice to subjective interiority and personal emotion. Take, for example, David's words as he stands in the wood in grief before the dead Absalom:

דער אָוונט, אַ באָרוועסער הקדש-ייִד,
מישט די בלעטער פֿונעם וואַלד,
עלעהיי אַ תּהילימל: אין מיטן וואַלד
די פֿאַרלוירענע געשטאַלט

פֿונעם אַלטן מלך: אַ סאָוועט שרייַט
פֿון דער וויַטנס שאַרף: או-הו,
און דער אַלטער מלך מורמלט פֿרום:
ממעמקים, טאַטעניו. (96)

Here, David's enunciation raises a number of interesting questions, which go of necessity unanswered, as they did for the "Michal" poet. Are we witnessing a moment of original poetic production? Or is David resorting, as a pious and righteous Jew would, to the psalm of grief and distress to express his own loss? The slippage between imitation and originality, citation and composition, is itself situated at the crux of Manger's anachronistic poetics. By ameliorating historical distance and its anxieties, as the rabbis did before him, Manger constructs Jewish poetry as both subjective (in his sense) and collective expression. At the same time, the lyric, rather than offering an opportunity for expansive, 'objective' literary expression, is already yoked to distinctively Jewish prayer traditions leading back to the Psalms themselves, a generic lineage which Manger dismisses in "Holocaust and Literature" as a mere 'sigh' or 'outcry,' which, in failing to transcend its own time and place, cannot come to fruition either as epic or drama.

The poem of King David and Abishag addresses this problem directly. For all the old king's chastened piety, the poem nevertheless contains one of Manger's most striking poetic articulations of this clash between 'epic' objectivity and Jewishly devout lyricism. David's yearning, while it focuses on the provincial environs of Abishag's memory, is still framed in poetic terms: "And now a sorrow and an ache, / A yearning deep that gnaws, / Would set aside King David's psalms / To sing its own sad song." The underlying notion seems to be that the psalms, perhaps in both form (lyric) and content (praise and supplication), do not organically arise in David alone. Rather, they are the product of the relationship between David and God, a result of their daily talks and the theological implications of that intimacy. They are the product of the individual poet molded and bounded by the ultimate and unequivocal authority of the divine tradition from which he emerged (or the national history of which he is a part). Inevitably, then, these songs are generically and topically delimited, aesthetic and ethical constraints laid

evening before nightfall," which is both an especially significant moment in Manger's personal poetics, and also the halachic definition of *Minchah*, the time-bound commandment to pray in the late afternoon prior to sunset. Halachic sources often describe the time-frame as "two and a half hours before nightfall" (CITE). Further, Manger's descriptions of prayer seem to veer inevitably toward other Jewishly inflected metaphysical categories, such as "soul" [*neshome*]. By embedding Jewish categories in his generic formulation of "prayer," Manger already begins to suggest the weighty implications of genre for the representation of authorial identity.

upon the poetic imagination. Despite this national, spiritual, and poetic duty, which now binds the aged king, Abishag and her dreamscape rekindle a creative impulse independent of the loftier demands of sovereignty and scripture. Not only is this song distinct from psalms, but it seems to actively compete, seeking to supplant them in David's poetic imagination. The desire for a "free" poetic expression here strains against the demands of Jewish intertextuality, yearning for a literary modality that would move beyond devout citation. At the same time, it is important to note that these lines are grammatically ambiguous; once again, it is not entirely clear whose yearning poetic imagination is described, and while David is one compelling possibility, it is worth considering whether Abishag herself does not represent a competing poetic perspective. The last five poems of *Der shnayder-gezeln Note Manger lernt Tanakh* narrate Abishag's story, and four of those five are composed in third-person limited, dedicated solely to the evocation of Abishag's inner life, in much the same 'stereoscopic' style as that which characterized the poems of other Scripturally marginalized women: Michal, Abigail, Bathsheba, and Hannah.

These are not the only occasions on which Manger sets about righting the injustices of Scriptural bias, which privileges the male, Jewish, politically and historically prominent figures around whom the biblical account was crafted and whose misdeeds it seeks to excuse. Returning once again to the literary and ethical merit of artistic objectivity in "*Khurbm un literatur*," Manger describes the outrage he encountered in response to his portrayal in the *Khumesh-lider* of the non-Jewish maidservant Hagar, who becomes Abraham's concubine:

> ...אַ סך ייִדן האָבן מיר פֿאַרגעוואָרפֿן מיינע לידער וועגן הגרן: סטייַטש, ווי אַזוי האָבן איך געוואַגט צו זאָגן: „אַזוי פֿירן זיך די אבות מיט די לאַנגע פֿרומע בערד?“
>
> דער גאַנצער טעות איז געווען דאָס וואָס זיי האָבן געמיינט, אַז איך, דער פּאָעט, האָב עס געזאָגט. אין דער אמתן האָט דאָס געזאָגט די באַעוולהטע דינסט וואָס האָט אַ ממזר פֿון בעל-הבית און ווערט אין אַ שיינעם טאָג אַרויסגעוואָרפֿן, צוזאַמען מיטן קינד, אויף דער גאַס. אמת, דער בעל-הבית האָט אַ שיינעם נאָמען אין שטעטל, אַ פֿרומער ייִד, וועגן וועלבע אַלע רעדן דאָס שענסטע. נאָר זי פֿילט איר וויטיק! פֿון איר רעדט אַרויס אַן עוולה וואָס ס׳איז איר אָפּגעטאָן געוואָרן! איך וואָלט געוועון געזאָגט אַ קינסטערלישן ליגן, וועו איך גיי נישט אַריין אין דער פּסיכאָלאָגיע פֿון דער באַעוולהטער דינסט און אַנשטאָט „אַזוי פֿירן זיך די אבות מיט די לאַנגע פֿרומע בערד“, וואָלט איך געזאָגט „גוט האָט איר געטאָן, ר׳ אברהם. אַ מצווה אויף מיר!...עטצ. עטצ.“ (389)

Here we see a clear instance of Manger's resistance to blind, chauvinistic piety. In this context, his own poetic commentaries on the Tanakh become, by virtue of their stereoscopic objectivity, an opportunity to cancel the debts owed those under-represented and unexpressed interiorities that were suppressed in the telling of a monolithic ethno-religious history. Much like Abishag, Hagar also receives a substantial share of the *Khumesh-lider* – a full three songs in succession – told from her perspective and sympathetic to her plight. On the one hand, Manger sees this project, not as a political one (feminist or otherwise), but as part of the poet's ethics, his philosophic commitment to psychological realism, which is essential to the composition of a

'great' and enduring national literature. On the other hand, despite painting himself as a hero of literary realism, over and against the cries of parochial apologists and canonically instantiated prejudice, Manger is quick to reframe his efforts as authoritative, precisely because they partake of traditional exegetical practices:

> אַפילו דער מדרש האָט געזען אַן עוולה אין דעם ענין און פֿרובירט פֿאַרריכטן
> די עוולה מיט דעם וואָס ער זאָגט, אַז נאָכן טויט פֿון שרהן האָט אַברהם
> ווידער גענומען אַ ווייַב און איר נאָמען איז געווען קטורה. זאָגט דערויף דער
> מדרש אין בראשית רבה פֿרק כה: „קטורה – דאָס איז הגר און געהייסן האָט
> זיך אַזוי ווייַל אַלַיץ וואָס זי האָט געטאָן איז געווען גוט און איינגענומען ווי
> קטורה (געווירצן)".
>
> הייסט עס, אַז דער מדרש אַליין, די יידישע חכמים האָבן גפֿעונען
> פֿאַר נויטיק צו פֿאַרריכטן די עוולה וואָס איז אָפּגעטאָן געוואָרן כלפי הגרן,
> דורך דעם וואָס אברהם האָט זי צוריקגענומען פֿאַר אַ פֿרוי נאָך שרהס טויט.
> (389)

The notion that exegesis (and its poetic descendants, like *Shmuel Bukh* and Manger's own oeuvre) is itself the compensation for the misdeeds of scriptural bias, is implied by Avishag's own romantic valuation of poetry as the measure, not only of love, but of personal worth. When describing her own resentment of David's indifference toward her, Avishag understands this slight in metapoetic terms:

> און דער מלך וועט שפילן אויף דער האַרף,
> ווען די שטערן וועלן גרויס,
> און זי וועט זיין אין זיין תּהילימל
> די סאַמע שענסטע רויז. (98)

Yet soon she realizes her purpose there: she is to be nothing more than the king's hot water bottle, and that, in exchange for her young body and beautiful hair, she's promised just a single line in the Tanakh (103-4):

> דער מלך דוד איז אַלט און פֿרום
> און זי אַליין איז „עט,"
> זי איז דעם מלכס וואַרעמפֿלאַש
> וואָס וואַרעמט אים דאָס בעט.
>
> [...]
>
> אמת, ס׳זאָגן קלוגע לייַט,
> אַז זי טוט אַ ווילע זאַך
> זיי זאָגן איר אַפֿילו צו
> אַ שורה אין תּנ״ך.

אַ שורה פַֿאַר איר יונגן לייַב
און פַֿאַר אירע יונגע האָר.
אַ שורה טינט אויף פּערגאַמענט
פַֿאַר אַ גאַנצער וואָר. (103-4)

Instead of her dreamt-of role in David's own poetic imagination, Avishag will receive – as Manger's reader, from a post-biblical vantage-point knows – a mere line in II Samuel. This injustice consists, not merely in the political use made of an innocent, but also in the discrepancy between her historical sacrifice and literary compensation she is offered in return. At the same time, Avishag's naïve desire to be immortalized in David's psalms arises from her foundational misunderstanding of genre: David's psalms, by their very definition, are no 'biblical romance' that would remember her beauty for the ages. The very constraints of this genre – its obedience to divine and national destiny, its purpose as prayerful lyric – exclude her, together with the sensual and secular value of her youth. The "own song" which beckons might, then, be, if not Abishag's, then at least the love-song that David owes her, which would repay the debt still owed: a verse of Scripture is, after all, a mere pittance when weighed against the "entire truth" of her lived experience. Here, as elsewhere, Manger's biblical poetry can be read as an effort to right the wrong done Abishag, a young girl's potential gone to waste, and for which she is poorly compensated. As his attack on the 'official' chroniclers in the preface to the *Megile-lider* made clear, Manger is also concerned with righting a wrong done the historical record: in dispensing with artistic objectivity, and the full range of human experience it commits to portray, the composers of the biblical canon succeeded only in eliding the suffering of those small, marginal figures who are inevitably (to Manger's mind, at least) ground up in the indifferent gears of national history.

Note Manger died on a collective farm in Uzbekistan in 1942, and after the end of the war Manger dedicated the modernist *Shmuel Bukh*, *Der shnayder-gezeln Note Manger zingt,* to his brother, explaining: "This book repays a small portion of the great debt I owe Note Manger, the tailor's apprentice. Without him, my work would not have been possible. He slaved away all his young life, so that I might live parasitically off the proceeds" (unpaginated). Like the wronged Abishag, Note himself becomes the victim of history here, whom Manger seeks to repay in poetic currency. In spite of all his protestations, Manger's poetic endeavor is finally motivated – not by an uncompromising principle of artistic objectivity – but by profoundly personal intimacy, and the grief its loss engenders. For Manger, as for the Psalmist, personal emotion and the catastrophes of Jewish history both impose their own demands (now consonant, now conflicting) on the poet and his poetics. In this context, the historical imagination, constantly striving to overcome and offset the human suffering incurred by the relentless passage of time itself, turns to poetry as an antidote to the ills of history, though perhaps one whose remedies come often – or only – too late.

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