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PROTO YIDDISH MORPHOLOGY

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Yiddish comparative linguistics has been concerned much more with phonology than it has with morphology. This is neither novel or shocking. Historical reconstruction generally shows the same lack of proportion, the reasons for which are not hard to see: Phonological change is 'regular' in various senses, morphological change isn't; morphology is tied up with syntax in ways that make it hard to get a grip on, whereas phonology is relatively autonomous; and the linguistic realism of the reconstruction is probably more fraught with uncertainty for morphology that it is for phonology (see Hall 1950, 1960; Lloyd 1985; Pulgram 1961). In plain English, it is usually harder to reconstruct historical morphology that it is to reconstruct historical phonology.

The comparative method has been routinely applied to the reconstruction of various historical stages of Yiddish phonology. Thanks to the pioneering efforts of (among others) Fischer 1936 (= Bin-Nun 1973), Max Weinreich (1960a), and Uriel Weinreich (1958), we have a good understanding of the outlines of Proto Yiddish phonology even in the earliest forms of the language. Herzog (1965: 161–164) reconstructs vowel systems for Proto Southern Eastern Yiddish, Proto Northeastern Yiddish, and Proto Eastern Yiddish generally, and his reconstructions seem reasonable and sound to me. Reconstruction of the Proto Yiddish consonant system is even simpler since the various modern dialects disagree very little except in their vocalism.

There hasn't been very much in the way of a sustained effort to reconstruct early Yiddish morphology. Max Weinreich (1980), in the most comprehensive historical statement of the development of Yiddish to date (though his *Geshikhte* is at least as much a sociocultural history as it is a linguistic one), naturally touches on morphological developments again and again, as does Bin-Nun in the historical and sociological sections of his book (1973: 20-173), likewise Birnbaum (1979). Mieses (1924), in *Die jiddische Sprache*—his wonderful great pudding of a book consisting of long stretches of incomparable linguistic madness interlarded with unexpectedly brilliant *aperçus,* does what most others have done who write on the historical developement of Yiddish: pay sedulous attention to vowels and morphemes and lexical items, but not try anything bigger. This is at most very mild criticism: It isn't fair to criticize scholars for *not* doing something they didn't set out to do. It is simply an accurate statement of the research history to say that the systematic reconstruction of Proto Yiddish morphology has not yet been done.

The fact is that anyone who has ever written about the historical origins of Yiddish, and in particular about the German component, cannot avoid commenting on *some* oddity or other of historical morphology, e.g. the *ets/enk* pronouns of archaic Mideastern Yiddish, a feature anciently Bavarian (*pace* Marchand 1960: 40), or suffixes such as the diminutive *-l* and the intensive diminutive *-ele.* (See for example Birnbaum 1954 and Max Weinreich

1954.) Nonetheless, the reconstruction *per se* of Proto Yiddish morphology has not been undertaken.

Certain specific problems in morphological change in Yiddish have, on the other hand, attracted extensive and detailed treatments. I am thinking here of the collapse in Northeastern Yiddish of the three gender system of early Yiddish *der/dos/di* to two, *der/di* (or four or seven, depending on how one likes to count these things, cf. Herzog 1965: 101–124 and Wolf 1969). But this is obviously a late development specific to Lithuanian Yiddish and isn't 'Proto Yiddish' (which I date, I suppose, around 1200–1350). No German dialect has given up the three way gender distinction, though random shifts in individual words from one gender to another happen all the time in German dialects (see Schirmunski 1962: 443–445).

I think it might be a useful exercise to apply the comparative method to the reconstruction of Proto Yiddish morphology, to postulate from available dialect evidence what the earliest recoverable morphology was like. That this would require a lengthy monograph heavy with footnotes rather than a short paper hardly needs stating, but I think that it is possible in a paper even as brief as this one to discuss a few of the problems and to reach some preliminary conclusions which may tell us something about the origins of Yiddish. And that ultimately after all is what we are trying to do—to say true and interesting things about the origins of the Yiddish language.

The basic procedure involved in applying the comparative method involves comparing features found in the modern dialects and postulating the most plausible ancestral structure from which the later developments can be derived. We reconstruct a three gender system for Proto Yiddish because Mideastern Yiddish (MEY) has three genders and because the two genders of Northeastern Yiddish (NEY) are easily derived from a three gender system (and because of 'relic' morphological alternations like NEY *di bet* 'the bed', *af der bet* > *afn bet* 'on the bed'). It wouldn't make sense to derive the three gender system of Mideastern Yiddish from a putative *der/di* opposition in Proto Yiddish. Noun plurals formed by addition of the suffix *-im* (*poyer/poyerim* 'peasant') occur in all dialects of Yiddish, so one reconstructs a plural suffix *-im* for Proto Yiddish even though a suffix of that shape is not found in any of the variants of Middle High German (MHG)—and it is Middle High German of *some* kind from which Yiddish comes (an observation that must always be accompanied by all sorts of well-known qualifications, see Max Weinreich 1980: 422–433).

Certain sweeping generalizations can be made on the basis of a fairly superficial comparison of Northeastern and Mideastern Yiddish forms (I doubt incidentally that the addition of Southeastern Yiddish will alter significantly the reconstruction of morphology that results from NEY:MEY data, so I will deal here only with the latter two dialect areas). In the verb system we reconstruct for Proto Yiddish the following simple form classes and tenses: infinitive, imperative, past participle, present indicative, and present participle. All are found in cognate form in Mideastern Yiddish and Northeastern Yiddish. We do not reconstruct a preterite because no preterite is found solidly anywhere on Eastern Yiddish language territory. However, and this is the kind of thing I had in mind in saying that a monograph is ultimately needed to do the topic full justice, we *would* have to reconstruct a preterite if Western Yiddish were included in the date since earliest texts from Western Yiddish have preterites (cf. Birnbaum 1979: 146–149 and Bin-Nun 1973: 42–45). Preterite forms of the copula (*vor/vorn* 'was, were') are used by some writers of the second half of the nineteenth century such as Ayzik Meyer Dik (Max Weinreich 1980: 517),

though I tend to regard these as more likely affectations, *daytshmerizmen,* than inherited Eastern Yiddish forms. (But if they aren't, if in other words *vor/vorn* are in fact genuinely Eastern Yiddish, then all that does is further secure their position in the reconstruction of Proto Yiddish).

In adjectives we reconstruct a comparative ending *-er* and a superlative ending *-st*. That at least is straightforward. A more interesting question arises in regard to the number of adjective declensions in Proto Yiddish. Looking only at Northeastern and Mideastern Yiddish we would reconstruct one, but the inclusion of Western Yiddish would force us to reconstruct two, 'strong' and 'weak'. Middle High German used one set of adjectival endings after definite articles (*der blinde man* 'the blind man', *diu kleinen kinder* 'the little children'), a different set after indefinite articles and when no article is present (*ein blinder man* 'a blind man', *kleiniu kinder* 'little children'). There is no distinction in any variety of Eastern Yiddish: *der blinder man, di kleyne kinder, a blinder man, kleyne kinder.* At least some dialects of Western Yiddish maintain the strong:weak distinction, e.g. Alsatian Yiddish (Zuckerman 1969: 50–52), as does Standard German (for what that's worth).

Obviously it is vitally important to include Western Yiddish in the data for the reconstruction of Proto Yiddish; I chance a guess that Western Yiddish, whatever Western Yiddish actually *was,* will be possibly even more important for the reconstruction of Proto Yiddish morphology than it is for the reconstruction of Proto Yiddish phonology. (My formulation 'whatever Western Yiddish actually *was'* is a coy allusion to long standing and unresolved problems about the medieval German–Jewish nexus and the interpretation of documents, see Marchand 1959, 1960; Max Weinreich 1960b and Herzog 1978: 47–48). Methodologically it is probably best to reconstruct a Proto Eastern Yiddish on the basis of Eastern dialects alone and a Proto Western Yiddish on the basis of Western dialects alone, and then to reconstruct Proto Yiddish from the juxtaposition of the two. Among other things this procedure should make it clearer what is to be regarded as an innovation in Eastern Yiddish. In the instance of the adjective declensions we would attribute to Proto Western Yiddish strong and weak declensions and to Proto Eastern Yiddish a single undifferentiated declension; Proto Yiddish would then be reconstructed with two declensions, and the disappearance of the distinction is correctly seen to be an Eastern innovation.

Standard Yiddish has a single reflexive pronoun *zikh* in all persons and numbers: *ikh lern zikh, du lernst zikh, er lernt zikh, mir lernen zikh, ir lernt zikh, zey lernen zikh* 'to learn'. Birnbaum (1979: 250), speaking presumably in the first instance of Mideastern Yiddish, states that 'in the 1st and 2nd person most speakers do not use the real reflexive pronoun (*zex*) but the personal pronoun (*mex, dex, aax*)'. This usage is common in Mideastern Yiddish. One should consult the files of the Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry to see how widespread the occurence of reflexive *mikh, dikh,* etc. is—and to try to detemine whether the distinctions that Birnbaum observed have anything to do with the influence of the 'hidden standard' (Schaechter 1969). The Middle High German situation is complex (cf. Paul and Mitzka 1960: §146, §217) but differentiated by person and number, as early Western Yiddish appears to be (Birnbaum 1979: 146–152). Presumably we would reconstruct Proto Yiddish with both strong and weak declensions.

It would be easy to continue in this way, stating big and fairly obvious generalizations about Proto Yiddish morphology and pointing out along the way aberrations that will eventually require scores of footnotes to explain. My purpose here, however, is more

programmatic. I want to demonstrate ways in which paying some attention to a systematic reconstruction of early Yiddish morphology may enlighten us about the origins of the German component of Yiddish. It will be adequate to my purposes to deal with one more category of Proto Yiddish morphology, the noun plural.

There are six major types of plural formation in both Northeastern and Mideastern Yiddish and, therefore, in Proto Yiddish:

A. Plural marked by *-n*.

B. Plural marked by *-s*.

C. Plural marked by umlaut alone.

D. Plural marked by *-er* (with obligatory umlaut if the noun has a back vowel).

E. Plural marked by 'zero' (no change, i.e. singular identical with plural).

F. Plural marked by *-im*.

(I subsume here under B two genetically distinct modes of pluralization: a) the 'Vov-Sof' ending *-(e)s* on words of Hebrew or Aramaic provenance, and b) an *s*-plural, the murky origins of which I will later discuss, on nouns not from Hebrew or Aramaic. Thus, for a): *melukhe/melukhes* 'state', *os/oysyes* 'letter of the alphabet', *kholem/khaloymes* 'dream'; for b): *feder/feders* 'pen', *hering/herings* 'herring', *bobe/bobes* 'grandmother'. *Synchronically,* in Proto Yiddish, I cannot see any reason to distinguish the two; I mean the two kinds of *s*'s must have *sounded* the same, which is why I treat them as a single way of forming plurals—synchronically).

Certain of these categories (A, D, E) derive more or less directly from the German component. A plural marked by *-n* was characteristic in Middle High German of feminine *ô*-stem nouns and *n*-stem nouns of all three genders, thus MHG *sache/sachen* 'thing', MHG *mensch(e)/menschen* 'person', compare Standard Yiddish (StY) *zakh/zakhn* and *mentsh/mentshn*. Almost no plurals in Middle High German were formed by umlaut alone (two exceptions: *bruoder/brüeder* 'brother', *vater/veter* 'father'), so that something similar to StY *tog/teg* 'day' would not have been possible. Umlaut plus *-e* is found in masculine *a*-stems (*gaste/geste* 'guest') and feminine *i*-stems (*kraft/krefte* 'strength'), and umlaut plus *-er* is found in strong neuter nouns such as *lamp/lember* 'lamb'. Zero plurals are found in assorted stem classes in Middle High German, e.g. *hirte/hirte* 'shepherd', *man/man* 'man', and *wort/wort* 'word'.

The number of nouns taking plurals in *-n* and *-er* (with automatic umlaut if a back vowel is present) has increased dramatically in Yiddish as compared with Middle High German. Thus, StY *veg/vegn* 'way', *tish/tishn* 'table', *yor/yorn* 'year', *tsimer/tsimern* 'room' versus MHG *wec/wege, tisch/tische, jâr/jâr, zimer/zimer(e);* and StY *shteyn/shteyner* 'stone', *boym/beymer* 'tree', *noz/nezer* 'nose' versus MHG *stein/steine, boum/boume, nase/nasen*.

Most of the radical realignments we find in pluralization in the German component are the consequence of a single change in Yiddish: loss of final unstressed *-e* (apocope). If there is a single internal change that has done more than apocope to mould the countenance

of Yiddish I am not aware of it. It triggers more changes than anything else that happened in the history of Yiddish. Apocope often leads to homonymy between singular and plural, thus singular:plural *boum:boume* would become *boum:boum.* This is an ambiguity which Germanic languages generally, with the exception of North Germanic, do not gladly tolerate. The Germanic 'drift' is toward the requirement that a morphological opposition singular:plural must be manifested at the phonetic level by a phonetic accretion in the plural. Morphological 'transparency' is the order of the day. A Middle High German plural such as *nähte* 'nights' (Sing. *naht*) is doubly marked, once by umlaut, once by the suffix *-e;* and apocope still leaves a marked plural, a situation preserved in StY *nakht/nekht,* also StY *hant/hent* 'hand', *gast/gest* 'guest', and *zun/zin* 'son'. This establishes an analogical model for plural marking by the device of umlaut alone, paving the way for StY *tog/teg* 'day', *barg/berg* 'mountain', *shukh/shikh* 'shoe', and many others. Category C has grown enormously in size over time.

The number of zero plurals is small in Yiddish since a zero plural violates the 'transparency' principle discussed in the preceding paragraph. One would predict that the zero plurals called for in Standard Yiddish (e.g. *fish/fish* 'fish', *hor/hor* 'hair', *briv/briv* 'letter') will not always be the plurals found in folk speech. There is in general a good deal of fluctuation in plural formation in Yiddish though often for other reasons (see Uriel Weinreich 1960 and Herzog 1965: 150–156, 167–170).

The origin of the *s*-plural in Yiddish is a mystery. This form of plural is at home nowhere in *High* German territory, so it is not clear where this common, productive plural of Yiddish came from—whether from Romance (which Bin-Nun 1973: 28 argues for), whether from Low German (where it is frequent), whether from the Hebrew and Aramaic component. (There is an extensive discussion in Max Weinreich 1980: 408–412.) I think Low German can safely be ruled out since it has had no impact anywhere else on the structure of Yiddish. I find the arguments for a Romance origin (Loez) interesting and suggestive but not overwhelming: All that the Yiddish language itself tells us for certain about Romance influence is that a few lexical items were borrowed at a very early date. Anything beyond that is conjectural (though far be it from me to argue against making conjectures: I say only that the evidence for Romance influence comes almost exclusively from outside the language itself). To my mind the most reasonable assumption is that it all goes back to the common Hebrew plural 'Vov–Sof' present in numerous Yiddish words such as *milkhome/milkhomes* 'war', *matone/matones* 'present', and *mishpokhe/mishpokhes* 'family'. And again this is a natural consequence of apocope, which left Yiddish bereft of suffixes with which to signal phonetically the singular:plural distinction, so that whatever marking devices happened to be handy (like *-s* and umlaut) were generalized.

The *-im* plural is from the Hebrew and Aramaic component, no mystery there. It has extended itself into the German component in a handful of words (*poyer/poyerim* 'peasant', *dokter/doktoyrim* 'doctor'). One can only speculate about the cultural matrix of these few words that made them adopt this non-Germanic plural (**poyern* has always seemed perfectly reasonable to me).

There is obviously much more that can be said about this interesting and complex corner of historical Yiddish morphology, the noun plural. It is, from the perspective of a Germanist, a fascinating mixture of regular development from well known historical sources (Middle High German and Hebrew/Aramaic), fusion, sweeping analogical restructuring, and *hapax legomena.* The topic will no doubt someday attract the monograph it deserves.

Let me now turn to asking the kinds of questions for which this sketch of Proto Yiddish morphology was intended as a springboard. The major focus of my research interest in Yiddish has always been the question of origin, specifically the question of the dialect of medieval German from which Yiddish most directly derives, the question of the 'foundation dialect'. In other places I have argued for the Bavarian (more precisely, Bavarian–Austrian, or Austro–Bavarian) origin of Yiddish (King 1980: 422, and in Faber and King 1984: 396–399). There are important East Central German dialect traces in Yiddish to be sure, but they are swamped by the Bavarian ones. As we said: 'We do not think it can be seriously disputed that of all of the German dialects that have left an imprint on Yiddish, Bavarian has played the leading role by far, with East Central German in second place, and with *no other* German dialect having significant impact' (Faber and King 1984: 398).

The arguments we made for this conclusion almost all came from phonology: apocope, loss of final devoicing (and, this is absolutely crucial, the *causal* relationship between apocope and the loss of final devoicing, cf Kranzmayer 1956: 79), early unrounding of front rounded vowels, loss of vowel length, lack of umlaut in verb forms. The only morphological features cited in linking Bavarian and Yiddish were the *ets/enk* duals and the diminutive system.

Does the sketch of the reconstruction of the system of Proto Yiddish morphology I have attempted here help us in locating the German origins of Yiddish? The answer is both Yes and No. The loss of the strong:weak distinction in adjective declensions isn't found on German-speaking soil as far as I have been able to determine (by which I mean that I find no evidence of it in the most detailed and comprehensive treatment of German dialectology available to date, namely Schirmunski 1962: 470–471). The use of the third person reflexive pronoun (German *sich,* StY *zikh*) without diffferentiation as to person and number is found to some degree and in opulent variety throughout both High and Low German territory, but nowhere that I can find to the extent of Yiddish (Schirmunski 1962: 451–453). The absence of the preterite is almost uniform in Upper German, though often preserved in the verb 'to be' (as in Western Yiddish) and in the verb 'to have' (Schirmunski 1962: 489–491). The comparative *-er* and the superlative *-st* of Proto Yiddish are pretty much uniform over the German speaking territory.

None of these morphological features appears to be useful in locating the German dialect origin of Yiddish, though I have to stress the preliminary nature of this conclusion: It is not always easy to wade through all the data from German dialectology and make sense of *anything*.

The system of noun pluralization, on the other hand, offers important evidence about origins. No High German dialect forms plurals by adding *-s* or *-im*. That of course would not be expected. But if we leave aside those two categories of plural formation we are left with four:

1. Plural marked by *-n*.

2. Plural marked by umlaut alone.

3. Plural marked by *-er* (with obligatory umlaut if the noun has a back vowel).

4. Plural marked by 'zero' (no change, i.e. singular identical with plural).

Almost the identical system for forming noun plurals is found in Upper Austrian, which is a major representative of the Bavarian–Austrian dialect. Keller (1961: 218–220) describes one of the Upper Austrian dialects in great morphological detail, and he lists five ways of forming the plural of nouns in this dialect (his informants were from Linz and Gmünden). Four of those, adjusted for the phonetic differences in the dialect, are identical with those reconstructed above for Proto Yiddish. The fifth is a plural marked by change of lenis to fortis in a small group of masculine nouns where the plural is indicated by a change of final consonant only. In the conventional orthography of the dialect, *Grif/Griff* 'grip', *Fiisch/Fisch* 'fish', *Tiisch/Tisch* 'table', *Fleg/Fleck* 'spot' (Keller 1961: 219–220). This relic category of plural formation is a consequence of a specifically Bavarian innovation, the 'Middle–Bavarian Lenition' (Keller 1961: 214–215).

Keller (1961: 218–219) attributes the other four forms of pluralization in this Upper Austrian dialect to two historical processes—the loss of a former final *-e* (apocope), and the preservation of the Middle High German ending *-en* and its extension as a plural suffix; and both are precisely the major factors in the emergence of the Proto Yiddish system of plural formation, as we saw. Also umlaut has pushed past its historical domain in this dialect, just as it did in Yiddish—and for the same reason, the need to preserve a morphological distinction at the phonetic level.

In short, the system of noun plural formation we are required to reconstruct for Proto Yiddish is found to parallel almost exactly the situation in a major dialect area of Bavarian. As far as I have been able to determine, no other German dialect family has precisely the same system.

The questions that I am asking are basically ones of genetic affiliation and degree of closeness. Where does Yiddish fit in the context of German dialectology? Where does Yiddish fit in terms of its historical relationship to German (see Althaus 1972)? What kinds of evidence do we look at when we are trying to determine which German dialects played leading roles in the formation of Yiddish?

I think it is high time we began to pay closer attention to morphology in addressing questions of the origins. I say this partly because morphology has been neglected. But more importantly I say this because a number of serious linguistic scholars from different times and of different persuasions have argued that morphology is more resistant to change than are the other components of a grammar (see for example Dauzat 1927: 49–55 and Uriel Weinreich 1953: 67, both citations taken from Markey 1978: 61). The way the argument goes is that the lexicon is most subject to change, then phonology, then syntax, and finally morphology. This hierarchy seems about right to me based on my experience of languages and historical change, and if true then it means that morphology is precisely the area we ought to be looking at first in trying to establish genetic relationships in general and genetic relationships of the various German dialects to Yiddish in particular. (And, again assuming the hierarchy is correct, it means that relatively little weight should be given to lexical correspondences—or the absence of them: which is the reason why it has never bothered me that a typically Bavarian word like *Ertag* 'Tuesday' is completely absent from Yiddish). It is significant, I think, that Edward Sapir, in most of his writings, placed the greatest weight on morphological similarities in establishing genetic relationships (see almost any of Sapir's papers in Mandelbaum 1963).

The theme of this conference is the origins of the Yiddish language, a theme that continues a venerable and noble tradition of inquiry in Yiddish linguistics. As Bin-Nun says: 'Die

Frage nach dem Ursprung beschäftigt die jiddische Sprachforschung von Anfang an'. There are many legitimate ways to approach the question of origins, and I claim no primacy for my own. But I do not think we can get to the heart of the matter without settling the question of the German 'foundation dialect' from which Yiddish is derived. And on this question all the linguistic instruments so far agree: Bavarian matters most.

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PREFACE

ON THE FIRST WINTER SYMPOSIUM

Yiddish linguistics is a small field focusing upon a minority language. Nevertheless, as a subject of human enquiry the discipline has a proud and intellectually complex history spanning nearly five centuries. Fascination with a language stretching at its geolinguistic peak over a huge portion of Europe, one that comprises the familiar Germanic with the exotic Semitic, is first documented in the works of early sixteenth century Christian scholars of Hebrew and Aramaic in Germany. By the early seventeenth century, Johann Buxtorf the Elder (1609: 639–669) produced a highly sophisticated survey of the language, that was surpassed only in the eighteenth by Chrysander's (1750a, 1750b) studies and Friedrich's (1784) lexicographical and dialectological compendium. Alongside this academic interest, inspired at the outset by the spirit of European Humanism, a host of extraneously motivated works on the language were published, among others, by missionaries, anti-Semites and writers of business people's manuals (see Katz 1986).

The rise of the 'Science of Judaism' movement amongst German-Jewish scholars in the early nineteenth century led its leaders to research Yiddish linguistics tangentially (Zunz 1832: 428–442) but their socially conditioned biases against the language precluded followups. In the arena of general linguistics, the ascent of the comparative method encouraged the incorporation of Yiddish into the orbit of both Germanic linguistics (Saineanu 1889 and Landau 1896) and Hebrew philology (Lebensohn 1874) by the late nineteenth century. In the twentieth, Yiddish linguistics came into its own by redefinition as a research discipline in and of itself, rather than a satellite of another, by its modern founder, Ber Borokhov (1913a; 1913b). His works posthumously inspired the golden era of Yiddish linguistics in interwar Eastern Europe. Its crowning achievement was the establishment of the Yivo Institute in Vilna in 1925 (See Shtif 1925 and Weinreich 1925).

The annihilation of most of Yiddish speaking European Jewry and its scholars by the Nazis and their collaborators, and the resulting irrecoverable loss of a vast quantity of unpublished work, are tragedies of immense proportions. Nevertheless, Yiddish linguistics as a university field of professional research was able to reemerge and to blossom anew, in good measure due to the lifework of Max and Uriel Weinreich, who both escaped the Nazis thanks to the coinciding of the Fifth International Congress of Linguists in Brussels, 28 August–2 September 1939, with the German invasion of Poland. Max Weinreich, a delegate from Vilna, read a paper on the origins of the Yiddish language at that Congress (Weinreich 1939), to which he had brought his teenage son Uriel. Max Weinreich at City College, and Uriel Weinreich at Columbia University, both in New York, succeeded in bringing Yiddish linguistics into the postwar mainstream of Western academia. Their broadly conceived approach incorporates research in linguistic theory benefitting from the fertile testing ground provided by Yiddish as well as study of the history and structure of Yiddish and its interaction with its Germanic, Semitic and Slavonic cognates. The emergence of Oxford as a centre of Yiddish Studies, with an emphasis upon linguistics, would not have been conceivable were it not for the Weinreichs' legacy.

Two factors are particularly conspicuous in the development of Yiddish Studies at Oxford. First is the Bodleian Library's vast Yiddish collection, deriving chiefly from its acquisition in 1829 of the Oppenheimer Collection which has long attracted Yiddish researchers to Oxford (see Judd 1983: 12–13). Second, and in a sense the key catalyzing force, is the work of the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, an associate institute of the University, founded in 1972 by Dr David Patterson to provide for the expansion and enhancement of Jewish Studies at Oxford University. From the very outset, Yiddish Studies were incorporated into the Centre's agenda. The early and consistent assistance of Mr Ron May, formerly Senior Assistant Librarian of the Department of Oriental Books in the Bodleian Library, Professor Chone Shmeruk and Professor Chava Turniansky, both of the Yiddish Department of Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and of Professor Marvin Herzog of the Linguistics Department at Columbia University, New York, is gratefully acknowledged.

In a closely coordinated array of activities collectively subsumed by its *Oxford Programme in Yiddish,* the Centre organizes courses, conferences and publications in the field of Yiddish language and literature, while providing doctoral supervision for the University's graduate research students who have come to Oxford from America, Israel, Great Britain and Europe to work on theses in the field. At the Centre's initiative, degree options in Yiddish Literature have been introduced into the BA in the University's Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages and the MPhil and MSt in Modern Jewish Studies in its Faculty of Oriental Studies. Two international conferences were organized jointly with Hebrew University and Columbia University in 1979 and 1983. Since 1982, the Centre has offered the *Oxford Summer Programme in Yiddish Language and Literature,* an intensive one month summer course at which some three hundred students from twenty-two countries have studied Yiddish language, literature and linguistics in a rigorous academic framework. While many individuals and institutions have helped to facilitate these and other advances, the overriding factor in their successful establishment has been the dedicated support and wise counsel of Dr Patterson, the University's Cowley Lecturer in Postbiblical Hebrew, and Professor S. S. Prawer, its Taylor Professor of German Language and Literature.

In the years since Uriel Weinreich's untimely death in 1967, the wider intellectual interest in Yiddish linguistics which he did so much to foster has continued to grow. Research is pursued by scholars in the fields of General Linguistics, German, Hebrew and Aramaic, and Slavonic, as well as those in the adjacent disciplines of folklore, history and comparative literature. The number of specialists in Yiddish linguistics per se has multiplied severalfold in the course of the last decade.

The need for both an annual meeting and the swift publication of its work is felt more acutely with each passing year. By establishing the yearly *Oxford Winter Symposium in Yiddish Language and Literature,* the Centre hopes to inspire new research by providing an annual forum of international scope that is sharply focused upon a single coherent issue, while facilitating the publication of its papers on a regular basis in the *Winter Studies in Yiddish* series, of which this is the inaugural volume.

The first Winter Symposium was opened on Sunday evening, 15 December 1985 by Dr Patterson, who read a telegram of greetings from the dean of Yiddish linguists, Professor Solomon A. Birnbaum, just over a week before Professor Birnbaum's ninety-fourth birthday. A welcoming speech was delivered by Dr Geza Vermes, Reader in Jewish Studies at the University of Oxford and Professorial Fellow at Wolfson College, Oxford.

The organizers are proud that the volume begins with the two papers sent by Professor Birnbaum to the Winter Symposium. Both deal with crucially important methodological strategies that have been sadly neglected. The first outlines the paleographic method which he pioneered for dating Old Yiddish manuscripts. The second sketches the strategies for discovering etymologies, or more precisely, for avoiding self delusion via false etymology. By debunking all of the heretofore proposed etymologies for the target item—thought to be one of the oldest in the language—without proposing a new one, Professor Birnbaum delivers the powerful and timely message that etymological searches must be conceived in a spirit of professional restraint and within the structural context of amply attested phonological and morphological change in analogous noncontroversial items. The systematic and cautious extrapolation from the known to the unknown underlies both of Professor Birnbaum's papers.

The organizers are equally proud that two young scholars, Christopher Hutton and Dov-Ber Kerler, both doctoral candidates in the University of Oxford, make their academic débuts in this volume. Mr Hutton's paper studies the double and triple negative in older Yiddish texts, drawing inferences on the reconstruction of the oldest stages of the language. Mr Kerler succeeds in abstracting theories on the origins of Yiddish from the work of interwar Soviet Yiddish linguists, whose conspicuous concerns were oriented toward normativist issues.

It is known from the history of ideas that new bursts of intellectual energy in a field of human enquiry are from time to time characterized by a number of independently generated analogous results. The first Winter Symposium will perhaps best be remembered in the history of Yiddish linguistics for relocating the presumed origins of Yiddish to the Danube Basin while rejecting the traditionally accepted Rhineland. This stampede was presaged as long ago as the 1920s by the lonely voice of Matisyohu Mieses (1924: 269–318). In recent years it was launched by Robert King's (1979: 7) question, "Where is Loter?" By the first Winter Symposium the notion of a rather more easterly origin of the language is supported in varying degrees and via diverse research strategies in the papers of Faber, Jofen, Katz, King and Wexler. At the same time, the Rhineland theory itself yields new modification in Fuks's paper.

To ensure rapid publication, a deadline requiring Winter Symposium participants to submit final versions of their papers within three weeks of the Symposium was strictly enforced. It is regretted, but not unexpected, that not all participants were able to meet this requirement and it is hoped that papers not included will appear elsewhere in due course. The reader is invited to peruse the schedule of papers actually read before the Winter Symposium. It appears on p. 143.

The scholars whose work appears on these pages come to Yiddish linguistics with varying academic backgrounds and styles. Apart from requiring adherence to the bibliographic format adopted, editing has been kept to a minimum. One important exception concerns the nomenclature of Yiddish dialectology. The confusing term "Central Yiddish", used ambiguously both for the dialect whose heartland is Congress Poland (Prilutski 1920: 79) and for the parts of Hungary and Czechoslovakia intermediate between Western and Eastern Yiddish (Birnbaum 1979: 95) is deleted throughout. This dialect, popularly known as "Polish" is consistently referred to as *Mideastern Yiddish*, contrasting with the two other principal varieties of Eastern Yiddish—*Southeastern Yiddish* (popularly "Ukrainian") and *Northeastern Yiddish* (popularly "Lithuanian") which are nonambiguous and are retained untouched (see Katz 1983: 1020–1021).

Where linguistic accuracy in the narrow sense is not at stake, Yiddish names, concepts and bibliographic citations are transcribed, as is traditional in the field, according to the system of the Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, with some modification. The system is based upon approximations of English orthographic values for phonemic units of Standard Yiddish, which is closest to Northeastern Yiddish in its phonemic inventory. Its salient features are [c]→*ts*, [č]→*tsh*, [j]→*y*, [ǰ]→*dzsh*, [š]→*sh*, [x]→*kh*, [ž]→*zh*, [ɛ]/[ə]/[ɪ]→*e*, [ɔ]→*o*. An exception is made in the case of Professor Birnbaum's paper, where his own transcriptions are retained at his request.

While fully adequate for the transcription of modern (=Eastern) Yiddish names and bibliographic references, where a closer phonetic transcription of one or another of the dialects would serve only to complicate matters unnecessarily, the Yivo system was not designed to cope with the rather different phonemic system of older forms of Western Yiddish. The present volume introduces a modified version adapted to Western Yiddish works written and published on Western Yiddish speech territory. Its key features are as follows. Vowels 24 (Mideastern [aj] ‖ Southeastern and Northeastern [ej]), and 44 (Mideastern and Southeastern [ɔj] ‖ Northeastern [ej]), merged as unitary [ā] in the West, are transcribed *aa*. Vowels 42 (Mideastern and Southeastern[ɔj] ‖ Northeastern [ej]), and 54 (Mideastern [ɔu]/[ō]/[ɔ̄] ‖ Southeastern [ɔu]/[u] ‖ Northeastern [ɔj]/[uj]), generally merged as unitary [ɔu] in the West, are transcribed *ou*.

The Winter Symposium's exceptional organization is principally due to the talents of Ms Jean Nightingale, the Oxford Centre's Administrative Secretary, who serves as Administrative Director of the Oxford Programme in Yiddish. Warm thanks are also due to Christopher Hutton and Dov-Ber Kerler who spared neither time nor energy to ensure the success of the project from the day it was conceived. John and Elsie Roberts, steward and housekeeper of Yarnton Manor, the Oxford Centre's early seventeenth century estate, arranged for a hearty welcoming supper. The hospitality of St Cross College in organizing a wine party at the Winter Symposium's conclusion is thankfully acknowledged.

The appearance of the volume is due to both the vision and the efficiency of Pergamon Press. The organizers are particularly grateful to Dr Ivan F. Klimeš, Associate Publisher and Director of Pergamon Press, and to Ms Sammye Haigh, Managing Editor for Social Sciences and Ms Jane Buekett, Journals Production Controller, for their invaluable advice and assistance at each stage of the project. Ms Marion Aptroot (Wolfson College, Oxford), Ms Devra Asher (St Cross College, Oxford) and Mr David Schneider (Exeter College, Oxford), kindly gave of their time to assist in proofing. Sincere thanks are due to Roy Harris, Professor of General Linguistics in the University of Oxford, to Mr Robert Maxwell, publisher of Pergamon Press, and to Ms Elizabeth Maxwell, for making this book possible.

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Dovid Katz
Oxford, January 1986