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TWO OF WEINREICH'S FOUR RIDDLES REVISITED

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Sound changes occurring in the same language do not necessarily have anything to do with each other. They need not interact at all, and it is not often that one of them is any kind of precondition for the other. The fact that *ū* became *au* in English around 1400 (*hūs* > *house*) had nothing to do with the earlier change *k* > *č* (*kinne* > *chin*), which predates written Old English. The Grimm's Law consonant changes were independent of the vowel changes (*o* > *a*, etc.) that took place between Indo-European and Germanic.

There are, however, sound changes that predispose other sound changes to happen, and the class of such changes — which I will call CAUSALLY RELATED — is an interesting one. One well-known category is the set of so-called push chains and drag chains noted by André Martinet (1955, p. 59). William Moulton, in a brilliant series of articles in the early 1960s (Moulton, 1960, 1961a, 1962), demonstrated cause-and-effect relationships between changes in different parts of what he called PHONOLOGICAL SPACE. For example, the allophonic range of low back vowels he found to vary directly according to the presence or absence of a low front vowel in the system. From empirical findings like this we can begin to grope toward explanations of Martinet's push chain/drag chain phenomena, and of 'functional' ideas in general.

Yiddish dialectology provides some of the more interesting and better documented instances of causally related sound changes. NEY (Northeastern Yiddish) has *o* and *u* in the stressed syllables of, for example, /milxome/ 'war' and /nomen/ 'name', /zun/ 'sun, son' and /hut/ 'hat'. I use what Weinreich (1958, p. 223, fn. 1) called the 'ethnographic present' in reference to the Yiddish-speaking Jews of Eastern Europe, the majority of whom were murdered by the Germans during World War II. MEY (Mideastern Yiddish) has undergone two sound changes, *o* > *u* and *u* > *i*, so that the words cited for NEY are in MEY /milxume, numen, zin, hit/, with length in [i] in certain areas and dialects (cf. Herzog, 1965, pp. 165–174 for the details). The isogloss for *o* > *u* is virtually identical with the isogloss for *u* > *i* (Herzog 1965, p. 170), and the situation is an implicational one:

NEY: Neither *o* > *u* nor *u* > *i*
MEY: Both *o* > *u* and *u* > *i*.

The causal aspect of the two changes is clear, the teleology that of falling dominoes: *o* > *u*, *u* > *i*. (I have simplified things in various ways here for the sake of exposition. The initial change was in the *long* vowels only, *ō* > *ū* and *ū* > *ī*. There was another shift *ā* > *ō* earlier that I left out because it was pan-Yiddish and didn't therefore create dialect differences in contemporary Eastern Yiddish. It is the subsequent loss of phonemic vowel length in NEY that makes the simplified presentation I have adopted here reasonable.)

It is with another pair of changes in Yiddish dialects that the present article deals. The

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two changes are loss of vowel length (in certain dialects) and loss of the rule of word-final devoicing of obstruents (in certain dialects). Edward Sapir, in one of the earliest (1915) works in serious Yiddish linguistics, described a dialect of NEY in which both these changes have occurred. He speaks of 'two great revolutions' that have taken place in Yiddish (Sapir, 1915, p. 255), and I do not feel that his choice of words — 'revolution' — is an extravagance, at least not for the loss of vowel length. One doesn't quite know what to make of a Germanic language that has given up vowel length (or tenseness) altogether. I don't know of a single dialect of German that has lost vowel length (except Bavarian, which unlike NEY does at least have allophonic long/tense: short/lax vowel distinctions), and I know of no dialects of German that allow voiced (actually lenis) obstruents in word-final position (except, again, for almost all dialects of Bavarian — cf. Kranzmayer 1956; Map 22 — and some dialects of Swiss German and Low German). MEY, on the other hand, is very much like Modern Standard German, having both vowel length contrasts *and* a rule of final devoicing. SEY (Southeastern Yiddish) goes with NEY rather than MEY, which is not surprising given the settlement history of the Jewish Ukraine (Herzog, 1969).

In an article that is famous equally for what it says about the explanation of sound change as for what it says about Yiddish dialects, 'Four Riddles in Bilingual Dialectology', Uriel Weinreich (1963) discusses four curiosities of Yiddish dialectology. These are: (1) the loss of vowel length in NEY and SEY but not MEY; (2) the loss of final devoicing in NEY and SEY but not MEY; (3) the loss of distinctive /h/ in a geographical band that crosses all three dialects; (4) merger of the hushing sibilant /š ž č/ with the hissing sibilants /s z c/ in parts of NEY.

The 'riddles' referred to in the title of his paper arise out of the geographical distribution of these four sound changes and the coterritorial match. It turns out that the presence or absence of a given linguistic feature in an Eastern European language is not a good

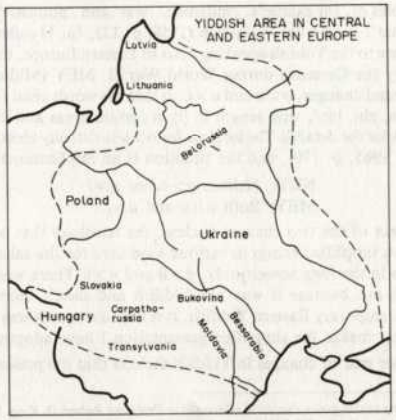

Fig. 1.

predictor of whether the coterritorial Yiddish has or lacks that feature. The fit is poor. Consider vowel length.

The approximate distribution of the length feature is shown in Fig. 2, where the light areas (whether cross-hatched or not) indicate Yiddish dialects which have preserved the Germanic features of vowel length, whereas the dark area (whether cross-hatched or not) corresponds to those in which this feature has been lost. [All of these maps are taken from Weinreich (1963) with a few trifling modifications of terminology.]

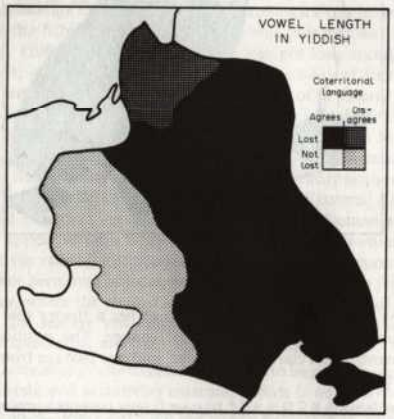

Fig. 2.

In Poland, Carpathorussia and Transylvania, where the coterritorial languages have no vowel length, Yiddish has it; in the north, Yiddish has lost the opposition even though Lithuanian, Belorussian and Latvian have it.

Figure 3 shows similar discrepancies regarding the feature of voicing in word-final position.

Yiddish agrees in lacking final devoicing with Western Lithuanian, Central and Standard Latvian, Southern Belorussian, and Northern Ukrainian as well as the non-contiguous Western Hungarian; it agrees in having final devoicing with Polish and Slovakian. On the other hand, Yiddish does not have final devoicing where Northwestern and Eastern Latvian, Northern Belorussian, and Southwestern Ukrainian have it; and Yiddish has final devoicing where Rumanian and Eastern Hungarian do not. Herzog (1965) which is later than Weinreich (1963) and which uses more extensively the files of the *Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry*, does not materially alter the isoglosses for length and voicing presented in Weinreich (1963) and, therefore, here. Cf. Herzog (1965, pp. 197–200, 220–223).

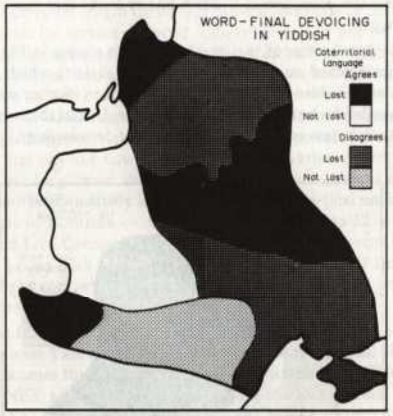

Fig. 3.

Behind this view of the cause of sound change lies a theory that invokes EXTERNAL CONTACT as the primary initiator of linguistic change. The position is articulated by Weinreich with characteristic clarity and vigour, and one passage from his paper is worth citing in its entirety:

> Imagine a language family A B C D in which language D alone possesses a certain feature, *f*. We consider the feature an innovation in D. How did it arise? Was it stimulated by some earlier structural peculiarities of language D? The idea is attractive; the possibility of explaining changes in a language by reference to the structure of the language itself is one of the significant achievements of linguistics in the past few decades. But suppose it turns out further that language D has been used by a population which also speaks another, unrelated language, Q, and that language Q (perhaps like its sister languages, R, S, T) has long possessed feature *f*. Most linguists, no matter how impressed with the achievements of diachronic structuralism so far, would probably still feel relief at the chance to attribute the rise of feature *f* in language D to the contact of D with Q. For the linguist concerned with the integral history of a language, the imitation of outside models remains, by and large, a more plausible cause of change than the pressures within the system (Weinreich, 1963, p. 335).

I agree. On reflection, however, it becomes obvious, as Weinreich is at pains to develop in his paper, that a routine, mechanical confrontation of the synchronic facts of one language with the synchronic facts of another language sharing the same territory is an engaging but shallow kind of linguistic play and should not be encouraged. Just because the Yiddish of Poland today has one thing and the Polish of today's Poland something else is not necessarily bizarre. It could well be that the Yiddish of Poland adopted a certain feature from Polish 400 years ago, when relations between Gentiles and Jews in Poland were closer throughout the social registers than they were later, and that Yiddish kept that feature over the years while Polish lost it. In other words — this is Weinreich's solution to the four riddles — synchrony is not enough: we have to relate the development of Yiddish dialects to the history of Jewish settlement. And we have to fold in subtle considerations such as the fact that most of the languages of Eastern Europe such as Lithuanian and Latvian

have never had much *structural* influence on Yiddish whereas Polish, at certain periods, has, profoundly (as in stress and accent, cf. Green, 1969).

I will go through one case — final devoicing — in detail in order that the reader may more clearly comprehend the uniformly *external* nature of the explanation that Weinreich advances. (Throughout all of the following quotations from Weinreich, it will be noticed that he speaks of 'final voicing' where I speak of 'the loss of final devoicing'. The difference is in principle an empirical one, but, in this discussion, is as much stylistic as anything else).

Weinreich assumes that the Yiddish carried east by emigrating Jews had a rule of final devoicing, just as Middle High German did. Polish lacked such a rule initially, but innovated one in the course of the fifteenth century. 'Yiddish was thus exposed to a final-voicing system between, say, 1200 and 1450. Perhaps this was not long enough for Yiddish to become affected by it; or if Yiddish did acquire the possibility of final voicing then, it abandoned it again with the influx of unvoicing speakers of W[estern] Yiddish between 1450 and 1550'. In Eastern Slavic (Ukrainian, for example) final devoicing was also an innovation at some point during this period, but the dating seems to be less certain than it is for Polish. 'In East Slavic territory, therefore, Yiddish was presumably exposed from 1350 onwards . . . to final-voicing systems, and could have easily acquired this distinctive possibility there . . . Again the unvoicing of coterritorial E[astern] Lithuanian and of dialectal Latvian had no effect on Yiddish. Both E[astern] Rumania (Moldavia) and Transylvania would appear to have been settled by W[estern] Ukrainian and S[outhern] Polish Jews without the voicing distinction in their dialects; the exposure to Rumanian and Hungarian has not been long or intimate enough to introduce the feature locally. But in W[estern] Hungary, where the contact with the Hungarian system of final voicing has lasted much longer, the feature was independently introduced into the local W[estern] Yiddish dialect'. All quotations are from Weinreich (1963, p. 353).

What are the characteristics of this explanation? It is, to begin with, resolutely *external*, as I said: it is completely and exclusively external. Which is odd only to the extent that Weinreich, as a student of André Martinet's, was not a member of that club of linguists organized around the reductionist conviction that *all* sound change is externally conditioned, that structure never causes change. One need only read Weinreich (1958) to see how ample and eclectic his procedure customarily was — no one ever did historical linguistics better than Uriel Weinreich, mostly in articles on Yiddish often appearing in out-of-the-way places and in a language (Yiddish) not accessible to most linguists.

My second observation is that we really know so little about most of the language contact situations that his proposed explanation requires (how many Jews living in Western Hungary, or the Ukraine, or Latvia *were* bilingual in 1450? Or 1500?), or about the historical chronologies involved. Weinreich's explanation calls, not just for speculation (which is fine, no problem there), but for information of the most finely detailed, obscure, impossible-to-obtain kind regarding languages and dialects of languages of Eastern Europe (Western Ukrainian, Eastern Lithuanian, etc.) and their affinities with Yiddish. In principle one could disprove Weinreich's explanation by showing that some language which in his solution ought to have influenced Yiddish in fact did not; in practice we will likely never obtain the kind of data we need. Information about Jewish life, demography, settlement, and linguistic preference in Eastern Europe until about 1650 is wretched in quality and reliability (cf. King, forthcoming). One must be so careful. It is this greyed and gapped background of factual uncertainty that lies behind Weinreich's (1963, p. 349) statement: 'In the hope

of challenging the historian to give a better account of things, the linguist may be permitted the construction of a chronology of his own which, without contradicting any known facts of history, explains the known facts of the language'. Taxonomically, then, the argument belongs to the category of substrate and superstrate and adstrate, *post hoc* all the way, as wispy and unempirical as everything else that attends the invocation of a 'stratum' causality.

In King (1980, pp. 403–408) I lay out an alternative explanation for the voicing distribution in Fig. 3. The explanation is a mixture of internal and external conditioning of sound change, for the details of which I refer the reader to the article. Basically, my view is that the rule of final devoicing was lost (as a consequence of early apocope) in Yiddish even before the majority of Jews had left Germany. The rule remained lost in all varieties of Eastern Yiddish except in Poland, where it was reintroduced under the influence of Polish (which itself had innovated the rule) in the fifteenth century. My explanation has the advantage of hewing rather hard to the known historical facts, and my theory is also technically simpler in that it provides a natural single explanation for the non-contiguous areas with final voicing (the black areas in Fig. 3), whereas Weinreich must appeal to poorly motivated, wholly independent and fortuitous coterritorial linguistic influences, see King (1980, p. 407).

Let me quote part of my conclusion:

> If we assume that the Jews emigrating from Germany brought final devoicing with them, then we provide an explanation for a single dialect fact about Yiddish: that CY [=MEY] [. . .] has final devoicing. We lack completely a convincing explanation of why Yiddish in every other part of Eastern Europe lost one of the most natural rules a phonologist is likely to encounter. The coterritorial hypothesis lacks credibility, for the influence of every Eastern European language except Polish has been minimal and limited mostly to lexical items. [. . .] If, however, we assume that Yiddish had lost final devoicing already in Germany [. . .], then of course it is no mystery why most of the Yiddish of Eastern Europe lacks final devoicing. The reacquisition in CY of that rule [. . .] under Polish influence and at a time when Polish itself was innovating final devoicing places very little strain on our imagination, especially so since our knowledge of Polish-Jewish relations during the period in question makes that influence sociologically plausible (King, 1980, p. 408).

Sound change is an interplay between internal and external causation. One must, with Uriel Weinreich (in the lengthy quotation from 'Four Riddles' cited earlier), feel relieved when there is a good case for external conditioning at hand to account for a sound change. I think any linguist would. It is natural, surely, to prefer explanations only a fool would deny to explanations that require a modicum of faith in somebody's theory of language change. But even the most fanatical, relentless give-me-the-facts-nothing-but-the-facts contemner of all theory must *sometime* run out of strates to appeal to, and at that point, all the instruments agree, the smart thing to do is to search for a cause of change internal to structure itself. (Which sentence is as good a way as any other of encapsulating the last century and a half of progress in historical linguistics.)

My view is exactly that of Yakov Malkiel's (1968, p. 27): 'While it is well known that students of explicative historical linguistics tend to lean either in the direction of "substratum theories" (external influence) or in the direction of "structural modifications" (internal influence), little attention has been paid to the wisdom of positing, under certain conditions, the agency of complex, as against simple, causation, which might bridge the resultant gap'. My explanation (King, 1980) of the loss of final devoicing rests on both internal and external causation; the explanation I will propose relating the loss of vowel length to the loss of final devoicing will do so as well. It is always a question of balancing things, of moderation.

But I have digressed. The matter at hand is the question of the relationship between the loss of vowel length and the loss of final devoicing. First of all, however, let us try

to gain clarity on the business of their causal relationship. *Are* they causally related? I argue that they are. There is first of all the striking congruence of the geographical distribution. Figures 2 and 3 show clearly that the area in which Yiddish has lost final devoicing is almost exactly the same area in which Yiddish has lost vowel length. We noticed earlier that the areas where *o>u* and *u>i* in Eastern Yiddish coincide (cf. Herzog 1965, Figs 5:2–5:8; Figs 5:14–5:15) stimulate one to enquire whether there is a *structural* connection between the two. So too I am encouraged to wonder whether there might not also be a structural connection between the loss of vowel length and the loss of final devoicing. NB: The coincidence of isoglosses for two changes does not necessarily imply a causal relation — there must be some structural connection, some structural reason why one change leads to the other. In American English, for example, the isogloss for /u/ versus /o/ in *poor* coincides very nicely with that of /u/ versus /ju/ in *due*, but there is no structural connection between the two and hence no causal relationship, cf. Kurath and McDavid (1961, Map 42; Map 63). Or to reduce to even deeper absurdity, the isogloss for lexical variation between *mud dauber* and *dirt dauber* [an ungainly flying insect that gathers mud] runs about where the ones for *poor* and *due* do, see Cassidy (1985, p. xxix).

As far as structure goes, there is a well-known (though poorly understood) intrinsic connection between vowel length and voicing in the following consonant, at least in languages like German and English, see Heffner (1960), Dinnsen and Garcia-Zamor (1971). The fundamental relationship here is that vowels tend to be longer before voiced consonants than before voiceless consonants, whether universally or not we do not know, cf. Lehiste (1970, p. 27). In Germanic, in any case, vowels tend, for whatever reason, to be longer before voiced consonants than before voiceless ones. (This is as good a place as any to thank my colleague Robert T. Harms for his many suggestions for things to think about regarding vowel length and voicing and for his reminders that simply because something is phonetically true in Germanic does not make it universal.)

So, what we have in regard to vowel length and word-final voicing in Yiddish is this: all and only those Yiddish dialects that have lost vowel length have also lost the rule of word-final devoicing (Figs 2 and 3); vowel length and consonantal voicing are intrinsically related. Recalling that Sapir's word for the thing was 'revolution', I have to say that I find it virtually inconceivable that there is *no* causal relationship here. (Though we should all remind ourselves each day of what Charles Sanders Pierce observed, that nothing is inconceivable to a man who sets seriously about the conceiving of it.)

It is one thing to establish that a causal relationship between two phonological changes exists; it is another thing altogether to trace step by step just *how* that causal relationship was manifested. Let me propose an explanation.

Following Weinreich (1958, pp. 237–239, 252–254) and Herzog (1965, pp. 161–164) and ignoring certain minor problems of reconstruction that appear to me to be only marginally relevant to my concerns, I reconstruct the stressed vowel system of Proto Eastern Yiddish (PEY) as follows:

i	u	ĭ	ū	ei
e	o	ē	ō	ai
a				ou

Proto Eastern Yiddish splits into two parts: Proto Southern Yiddish (PSY) via rules such as *ai*>*ā*, *ō*>*û*, *u*>*i*, *û*>*ĩ*; and Proto Northeastern Yiddish (PNEY) without change. PSY then produces present-day MEY by means of the changes: *ei*>*ai*, *ē*>*ei*, *u*>*u*/*ū*, and *ou*>*ō*. PNEY yields present-day NEY by undergoing the changes: loss of vowel length, and *ou*>*oi*. (I have taken this from Herzog, 1965, pp. 161–164.) We thus obtain contemporary vowel systems of the following configurations:

Mideastern Yiddish				*Northeastern Yiddish*	
i	u	ĩ	ū	i	u
e	o	ei	ō (ou)	e	a
a		ā		a	
	ai	oi		ei ai	oi

Until now I have followed the traditional usage of modern Yiddish dialect phonology in speaking without qualification of vowel 'length' in MEY. But it is not as easy as this. There is a great fragility regarding the feature of vowel length in MEY; as Weinreich (1958, pp. 234–235) puts it. '[T]he character of CY long vowels is not unequivocal'. The long: short distinction in the mid front vowel *e* has been replaced by a diphthongal contrast, and *ou* is a regional variant of *ō*. The geographical incidence of long *ĩ* is very restricted, and the difference between long and short *i* is as much quality, tenseness, or diphthongality as it is length. Weinreich (1958, p. 235), following Prilutski (1920, pp. 133–135), demonstrates that the various realizations of /u/ are in complementary distribution: [u:ə] in final syllables before *t, z, n, r, l;* [u:] in word-final position; [ʊ] elsewhere. In fact, the only *really* long vowel in MEY is low central *a*. Long [a:], as in MEY [tsa:t], Standard Yiddish (StY) *tsayt* 'time', is as much a genuinely long vowel as it is a solid part of the MEY phonological stereotype together with [i] for StY [u] ([hint] vs [hunt] 'dog') and [u] for StY [o] ([tuk] vs [tog] 'day'). Roman Jakobson (1953, p. 77), in a little-known article of his on Yiddish, contents himself with the limpid observation that MEY has 'a kind of' long vowel.

But I'm not sure it is wise to make too much of the suspect phonetic nature of vowel length in MEY. The fact is that *no* German language or German dialect really has long: short vowel oppositions the way languages like Finnish and Hindi do, where the difference between long and short is overwhelmingly one of duration alone. Germanic 'long' vowels are always tenser and more diphthongal in nature than their unmarked counterparts, and there are usually tongue-height differences as well (see, on German, Moulton, 1956). And whatever problems there are with vowel length in MEY, the fact remains that NEY has for vowel contrast *nothing:* no length, no tenseness, no offglide, no tongue-height movements toward the periphery of the vocal tract. As much as we have to cloud the statement that 'MEY has length' with qualifications, we needn't add a single disclaimer to the statement that 'NEY has no length'. And this fact makes NEY unique among languages derived from German and German dialects.

The stressed vowel system of Classical Middle High German (MHG) is usually reconstructed as follows [see Moulton (1960, 1961a, 1961b); I have collapsed contrasts in

the mid front vowels into a single *e* and *ē*, the better to facilitate the presentation of the development to PEY]:

i	ü	u	ī	ū	û	ie
e	ö	o	ē	ō	ô	uo
	a			ā		üe

To go from this vowel system to the one we have reconstructed for PEY requires the changes: unrounding of front rounded vowels (*ü>i, ǖ>ī, ö>e, ȫ>ē, üe>ie*); *ā>ō*; diphthongization of the long high vowels (*ī>ai, ū>au>ou*); and monophthongization of the falling diphthongs (*ie>ī, uo>ū*).

What happened to make MEY keep and NEY lose vowel length? I believe it was a combination of internal triggering mechanisms and external influence. Let me outline a solution.

I begin by observing that the long vowels of Middle High German were relatively low in frequency, e.g. the relative frequencies of MHG /i/ and /u/ were 4.7% and 2.3%, those of /ī/ and /ū/ 1.8% and 0.3% (King, 1967, p. 13). In themselves low frequencies mean nothing: the quantitative factor of frequency doesn't seem to play much of a role in historical change. But subsequent to MHG there occurred several changes that increased the predictability of long vowels, eroding thereby their phonemic status; and if their frequency was low to begin with, it is not likely that their stability in the system was enhanced by an erosion in their phonemicity.

The major change that took place in late MHG was what Eduard Prokosch (1939, p. 140) called STANDARDIZATION OF QUANTITY: short accented vowels in open syllables are shortened. There were in Classical MHG four kinds of accented syllables: open-short (*ne.men* 'to take'), open-long (*nā.men* 'took'); closed-short (*dah.te* 'covered'), closed-long (*dāh.te* 'thought'). Toward the end of the MHG period the first and fourth types disappeared; *nemen* became *nehmen* with a long stressed vowel, *dāhte* became *dachte* with a short stressed vowel. The effect of standardization of quantity was to make the occurrence of long vowels more predictable, since some of them (like [e:] in *nehmen*) would now be rule-produced and not phonemic. Only Alemannic and a few Rhine Franconian dialects of German escaped the standardization of quantity.

A second pair of changes reducing the incidence of long vowels, both in early New High German and Proto Yiddish, was the diphthongization of the long high vowels *ī>ei, ǖ>öy, ū>ou* and the monophthongization of the diphthongs *ie>ī, üe>ǖ, uo>ū*. The original long high vowels were marginally more frequent than the original diphthongs (King, 1967, p. 13), so that the final effect of this interchange was to reduce the relative frequencies of the long high vowels even further.

The arguments for a southeastern German origin rather than a western German origin for Yiddish are to my mind now overwhelming (King, forthcoming), so that it is worth at least a sidelong glance at the situation in medieval Bavarian. It is a well-known fact of German dialectology that Bavarian does not have phonemic vowel length (Keller, 1961, p. 204; Kufner, 1957; Kufner, 1960). All obstruents are voiceless and are distinguished only by the intensity opposition fortis: lenis. Vowels have long and short allophones

conditioned by the fortis or lenis nature of the following consonants. Keller (1961, p. 207) states the distribution for an Upper Austrian dialect as follows. 'Every vowel phoneme has two variants: a long one in an open syllable or if followed by one or more lenis consonants including a nasal plus lenis consonant, and a short one if followed by one or more fortis consonants including a nasal plus a fortis consonant'. The predictability here arose essentially as a Bavarian outcome of the standardization of quantity which I discussed above. Moreover, short vowels were also lengthened in monosyllabic words before originally lenis consonants (LEICHTSCHLUSSDEHNUNG), and even under certain conditions before originally fortis consonants and certain consonantal clusters (SCHWERSCHLUSSDEHNUNG) (cf. Keller, 1961, p. 204; Kufner, 1957).

Actually there is very little length in *any* Bavarian vowel, that is to say, it is tenseness rather than duration that is most relevant in the distinction. As Zwirner (1959) found, the ratio of average duration of long and short vowels decreases from 1.8 in the northwest and southwest to 1.3 in the east and 1.1 in the southeast, i.e. in Bavaria. A ratio of 1.1 or even 1.3 simply means that 'length' is the wrong word to be using — it is something other than duration that is marking the difference between vowels that are perceived as long and those perceived as short. The STAFFELLANDSCHAFT of regularly decreasing vowel duration from west to east in Germany is one of those quirky, drift-like facts about language for which no ready explanation is at hand. Weinreich (1963, p. 339, fn 9) comments that 'We thus see in Yiddish a remarkable, and so far quite mysterious, extension of the pattern discovered in German by E. Zwirner. . . . In NE and SE Yiddish it now appears, this ratio reaches the limiting value of 1.0'.

We saw that vowel length in the late MHG was already problematic — low in frequency, partly the result of rule — quite independently of Yiddish or what later happened in Yiddish. But observe how much further the status of length eroded in Proto Yiddish if Proto Yiddish was even remotely like medieval Bavarian. There were rules lengthening vowels in open syllables, before lenis consonants, perhaps elsewhere — all of this in addition to the phonemically long vowels that Bavarian and Proto Yiddish had inherited from MHG. The way that Bavarian ultimately coped with its swirling mess of length problems was to give up phonemic vowel length altogether and regulate phonetic vowel length by a simple rule. I think Yiddish dealt with it differently, in one case (MEY) more conservatively, in another (NEY) more radically.

I do not care to press the case that Proto Yiddish was like medieval Bavarian in vowel length or in its vocalism at all. Quite the contrary: I think all the specifically Bavarian innovations ('Schwerschlussdehnung', etc.) came too late to have been shared by Yiddish [they took place after 1500, see Kufner (1957)]. I do, however, assume that the Yiddish being exported from Germany to the Slavic east in the late Middle Ages (say between 1200 and 1400) had at least part of the same complexity in vowel length as all of the dialects of late MHG (excluding Alemannic) did. I specifically (and conservatively) assume phonemically long vowels and the existence of rules lengthening short vowels in open syllables and/or before lenis obstruents. Bin-Nun (1973, p. 253) gives an assortment of environments in which lengthening in Yiddish took place; from this array I think it is clear that Proto Yiddish possessed at least what I have imputed to it regarding lengthening rules. The lenis:fortis opposition in consonants was replaced in Yiddish by a voiced:voiceless one; it was Jakobson's (1953, p. 82) view that this was due to Slavic influence, and I have no reason to quarrel with his opinion. I also assume that Proto Yiddish had undergone

apocope, thereby making the rule of final devoicing opaque, between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. This led to loss of that rule sometime during that period (King, 1980).

Jews emigrating to Poland prior to 1400 came face to face with a Polish containing long vowels, for Polish eliminated length only at the turn of the fifteenth to the sixteenth century (Klemensiewicz *et al.*, 1955, pp. 58f). The period prior to 1650 was on the whole one of good relations between Jews and Gentiles in Poland, favourable both economically and socially (Dubnow, 1916, pp. 66–102). Jews were active in trade emanating from Poland throughout eastern Europe and into Germany, and there were strong Jewish ties with the Polish nobility (Ben-Sasson, 1976, pp. 639–641). We are entitled to assume a good deal of Polish–Yiddish bilingualism among Jews at this time.

The presence of vowel length in Polish would reinforce the retention of vowel length in Yiddish, as would the presence of vowel length in the German spoken by the Christian Germans who flocked to Poland at the same time (Ben-Sasson, 1976, pp. 565–566). Given the complex vowel length situation I assume the Jews from Germany had taken with them, it is possible (though not essential to my explanation) that German–Jewish linguistic contact exerted some normative effect on Yiddish, fixing long vowels in part according to non-Jewish German linguistic models.

I observed earlier that Polish innovated word-final devoicing in the course of the fifteenth century (Klemensiewicz *et al.*, 1955, p. 130, fn. 15), and I argued (King, 1980) that the MEY of Poland reintroduced final devoicing under Polish influence from this period. It is also probable that the speech of Gentile immigrants in Poland from Germany exerted pressure in favour of final devoicing, for these German speakers came mostly from the northern and eastern provinces of Germany (Bach, 1950, p. 181). These are regions of German without apocope and with final devoicing, and, we notice, *with* vowel length.

I think the favourable Gentile–Jewish situation in Poland during this period (before 1650) strongly favoured Polish and non-Jewish German influence on Yiddish. It is not far-fetched to assume that Jews, carrying with them a Yiddish with vowel length and no final devoicing, were influenced by Polish to keep vowel length and to innovate final devoicing, and by German to normalize to some extent the incidence of vowel length in their Yiddish.

This has all been explanation by external causation. One more argument, this time involving internal causation, must be developed here to complete the account of what I think happened in MEY and to provide a reason why vowel length is linked to the fate of final devoicing. It seems to me that the existence of final devoicing helps secure phonemic vowel length in this situation. Recall my assumptions: Proto Yiddish, the Yiddish taken from Germany to Poland, had apocope, no final devoicing, phonemic vowel length, and length predicted by rules lengthening vowels in open syllables and/or before voiced obstruents. I further assume (not that it really matters, as far as my explanation is concerned) that long *ā* had become *ō* during Proto Yiddish times [notice that *ā*>*ō* is pan-Yiddish, and that the change is early in Bavarian (cf. Kranzmayer, 1956, p. 20; Kufner, 1960a)].

I will use the singular and plural of 'day', 'city'/'state', and 'glass' to illustrate what I am talking about. In Standard Yiddish these are *tog/teg, shtot/shtet,* and *gloz/glezer.* In MEY they are [tu(:)k]/[teik], [ʃtu:t]/[ʃteit], and [glu:z]/[gleizer]. MHG has *tac/tage* (from underlying *tag/tage* via final devoicing) and *stāt/stēte* with underlying phonemic vowel length. Late MHG lengthening in open syllables leads to plural *tāge,* which then by analogical transference gives the singular a long vowel *tāc.* Apocope would make the singular and plural of 'day' identical, so a quasi-umlauted analogical plural *teg* is adopted. MHG

'glass' was *glas* /glaz/, a neuter *a*-stem with zero plural, but the plural gains the ending *-er* analogically. I assume for Proto Yiddish the underlying forms /tog teg štōt štēt gloz glezer/. If the Vowel Lengthening rule ('Lengthen vowels in open syllables and/or before voiced obstruents') then applies followed by Final Devoicing, we will have the derivations:

	/tog teg	štōt štēt	gloz glezer/
Vowel Lengthening:	tōg tēg	---- ----	glōz glēzer
Final Devoicing:	tōk tēk	---- ----	glōs -----
	[tōk tēk	štōt štēt	glōs glēzer]

It would be simpler to derive [tōk tēk] directly from underlying /tōk tēk/ without going through Vowel Lengthening and Final Devoicing. It would be simpler to derive [glōs glēzer] directly from underlying /glōz glēzer/ without going through Vowel Lengthening. It would be simpler, therefore, to posit phonemic length in 'day' and 'glass' just as in 'city', i.e. to posit underlying forms /tōk tēk štōt štēt glōz glēzer/ (from which the contemporary MEY forms are easily derived). The addition of Final Devoicing contributes to the opacity of the Vowel Lengthening rule (which calls for long vowels before *voiced* obstruents and in *open* syllables) because that sequence of the two rules produces forms like [tōk tēk glōs] with derived long vowels before *voiceless* obstruents and in *closed* syllables. Vowel Lengthening having become opaque is lost, and rule-predicted length now becomes phonemic. This is what I meant when I said that it seems to me that the presence of final devoicing helps secure *phonemic* vowel length in this situation, the MEY situation of Poland. It is also likely that the later change of *ai* > *ā* in MEY, by increasing the incidence of long vowels, helped further strengthen the status of length in the area.

What about NEY in Lithuania? Jewish settlements in Lithuania date from the end of the fourteenth century, and Jewish settlers from Germany intending to stop in Poland often continued on to Lithuania and made it their home (Dubnow, 1916, pp. 58–59). In spite of its dynastic alliance with Poland, Lithuania retained total autonomy in the conduct of its affairs; and by 1623, when the Kahals of Lithuania withdrew from the Council of the Four Lands, the independence of the Lithuanian Jewish community was complete.

The linguistic influence of Lithuanian on Yiddish, in every sphere of language, has always been insubstantial in comparison with the influence of Polish (Weinreich, 1963, p. 350). While the cultural development of Poland during the time in question was not exactly advanced, that of the Duchy of Lithuania was distinctly retrograde. The relations of Jews and Gentiles in Lithuania were not as close as those in Poland. One would not expect much bilingualism, and *a priori* one would not expect any significant impact of the Lithuanian language upon the Yiddish with which it shared territory. What has been said here about Lithuanian goes for Latvian as well, the second language sharing NEY language territory. We know little about the cultural situation at this time of Jews in Belorussia (Weinreich, 1969), the third language in NEY territory. The fact that we *do* know so little argues for a lack of influence from Belorussian on Yiddish at this time. Thus, whether Lithuanian or Latvian or Belorussian at the time had final devoicing or not, I don't think it would have made much difference: the Yiddish of the area would not have been disposed to innovate it, had no reason to do so. This guess about external influence, or rather the lack

of it, was the basis of my explanation (King, 1980) for the absence of final devoicing in NEY: it didn't have it when its speakers arrived, and the coterritorial languages exerted no pressure to add it.

If Lithuanian, Latvian and Belorussian did not influence Yiddish one way or the other in regard to final devoicing, I assume that the same would be true of vowel length. Yiddish, carried to the northeast with a complex vowel length situation, would not receive reinforcement to keep length, unlike the Yiddish carried into Poland. Moreover, absent final devoicing, the phonemic status of vowel length would not be strengthened as I argued it might have been when final devoicing was present to act on the output of the lengthening rule.

Recall that the long vowels had progressively become less frequent through various changes since the *Blütezeit* of Classical MHG. Their phonemicity had lost ground and increased in ambiguity with the innovation of vowel lengthening rules. In NEY the coterritorial languages lacked what it would have required to dispose Yiddish toward preserving its vowel length. There were fewer German settlers to exert pressure in favour of normative models. Final devoicing, which might have aided the phonemicity of vowel length, was absent. The change *ai*>*ā* did not penetrate into NEY.

Bavarian sorted out its vowel length complexity by ending up with a simple governing principle regulating length: long vowels before lenis consonants, short vowels before fortis consonants. And we note that the external factors favoured keeping some semblance of vowel length (or tenseness or whatever) since Bavarian — at least the border dialects — lived cheek by jowl with length-preserving dialects of German. All of the other dialects, including Low German, maintained phonemic vowel length, and most, with the exclusion of Alemannic dialects, had vowel length produced by rule (cf. Darmstadt Hessian, Keller 1961, pp. 161–199). The presence of length in all of the dialects in Germany mutually reinforced the retention of length in the others through language contact — contact absent in NEY.

NEY sorted out its vowel length complexity by an act of dramatic simplicity: it abandoned vowel length altogether. Long vowels merged with their short counterparts. Phonemically ambiguous, low in frequency, the long vowels were problematic. Yiddish in the northeast was surrounded by indifferent or hostile populations speaking languages that lacked the cachet to strengthen or even support any feature of Yiddish, let alone one as precarious as vowel length. My impression is that vowel length in NEY went out with a whimper rather than a bang, so orphaned had its status become. If it was, in Sapir's words, a revolution, it was a remarkably quiet and tidy one.

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Edited by
DOVID KATZ

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Papers from the Second Annual Oxford Winter Symposium in Yiddish Language and Literature, 14–16 December 1986

Editor: Dovid Katz

Wolf Corob Fellow in Yiddish Language and Literature at the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies and Leslie Paisner Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford

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CONTENTS

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PREFACE

ON THE SECOND WINTER SYMPOSIUM

In the half century preceding the Second World War, a number of talented scholars researched Yiddish dialectology in three directions. First, there were proposals for classification of major dialect areas (e.g. Saineanu, 1889, pp. 14–16; Landau, 1896, p. 47; 1901, p. 34; Ayznshtat, 1908, p. 95; Landau and Wachstein, 1911, p. xli; Borokhov, 1913; Birnbaum, 1918, p. 16; Prilutski, 1920, p. 79; Mieses, 1924, p. 1; M. Weinreich, 1940, pp. 69–71). Second, there were analyses of the dialects represented in selected older texts, including Glikl of Hamel's memoirs (Landau, 1901), Henele Kirchhain's *Simkhes hanefesh* (Fleiss, 1912) and the Hamburg manuscript of a rhymed Yiddish version of the book of Esther (Korman, 1930). Finally, there were descriptive studies of the spoken varieties of select areas, among them Eastern Galicia (Viler, 1924; 1926), Kurland (M. Weinreich, 1923, pp. 193–240; Kalmanovitsh, 1926), and Lodz (Gutman, 1926). In Soviet Russia, Veynger's researches (summarized in Veynger, 1929), led, after his death, to the publication of a Yiddish language atlas limited to the political boundaries of the Soviet Union (Vilenkin, 1931).

In spite of this and much more, Yiddish dialectology was by and large a one-man show. That man was Noyakh Prilutski (Prylucki), who was born on 1 October 1882. Prilutski compiled huge collections of high-precision dialectological and folkloristic data which he published in a series of impressive volumes (e.g. Prilutski, 1912, 1914, 1917a, 1917b, 1920, 1921, 1924, 1933, 1937, 1940). The mapping of his data remains a major goal of Yiddish dialectology. When it is accomplished, the resulting atlas will provide an astoundingly detailed picture of prewar Yiddish.

Prilutski's vision of Yiddish dialectology combined his notion of the 'territorial principle' as paramount in language history, with more practical goals that were closely intertwined with the cultural and literary renaissance of Yiddish culture in interwar Eastern Europe (Prilutski, 1930). Prilutski was somehow able to fit Yiddish dialectology in with his other rather time-consuming activities. These included running a private law practice, serving in the Warsaw City Council, editing the Warsaw Yiddish daily *Moment*, leading the folkist party and serving as its representative in the Polish Parliament. On a visit to the United States on behalf of the homeless in the Ukraine, he was received by President Warren G. Harding. After migrating to Vilna during World War II, Prilutski was murdered by the Nazis in August of 1941.

Prilutski is the twentieth century grandmaster of Yiddish dialectology. His ability upon first acquaintance to pinpoint the village whence a Yiddish speaker hailed is legendary. Isaac Bashevis Singer (1956, p. 197), in his *Mayn tatns bezdn shtub (My Father's Court)*, recalls his father's visit to Prilutski's Warsaw law office to seek advice on how to counter a swindler who had forged a promissory note for 600 rubles. Prilutski asked the elder Singer, after hearing him utter two words, whether or not he was of the district of Lublin. He was. Prilutski further enquired as to whether or not he was a native of Tomashov. He was.

After the Second World War, Beatrice Silverman-Weinreich's recordings and Jean Jofen's unpublished 1953 Columbia University dissertation demonstrated that it was after all possible to obtain reliable data from emigré informants. The present volume contains revised excerpts from Jofen's thesis. The task of masterminding a full-scale atlas of both Western and Eastern Yiddish was undertaken by the young Uriel Weinreich (U. Weinreich, 1960a; 1963a). Weinreich's life project, the *Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry* took full advantage of structural dialectology, a worldwide approach to seeking and interviewing informants, and computer technology. His Atlas was in an advanced stage of preparation at the time of his untimely death, at the age of 40, in 1967. The project is now directed by his former pupil, Professor Marvin I. Herzog, at Columbia University in New York. Its publication is eagerly awaited by the Yiddish scholarly world. Likewise, publication of Uriel Weinreich's *Outlines of a Descriptive Yiddish Dialectology. Provisional Structural and Lexical Index to the Yiddish Language and Culture Atlas* (U. Weinreich, 1960b), a 'guidebook to the Atlas', is awaited with impatience.

In a series of highly original and influential papers, Uriel Weinreich brought Yiddish dialectology into the forefront of general linguistics. Yiddish was his laboratory for advances in the theory of structural dialectology (U. Weinreich, 1954), multilingual dialectology (U. Weinreich, 1952, 1958a), historical and comparative dialectology (U. Weinreich, 1958b, 1963b, 1964), and the theory of language change (Weinreich, Labov and Herzog, 1968). His work inspired his students to praiseworthy achievements (e.g. Herzog, 1965; Zuckerman, 1969).

It is evident from the contents of this volume that research in the late 1980s is focusing upon Western Yiddish and the application of Yiddish dialectology to the study of older Yiddish and non-Yiddish monuments (cf. the papers of Aptroot, Hutton, Katz, Kay, Kerler and Rosenfeld). The notion 'literary dialect' is examined by Kay in older Yiddish women's poetry, and by Schneider in modern Yiddish drama. King's paper carries forward some of the most intriguing structural questions posed by Uriel Weinreich in the early 1960s. Hiley reports on his startling discovery of an unknown vowel in Mideastern ('Polish') Yiddish, which he calls the /ej/ phoneme, which has hitherto been confused with Mideastern Yiddish $aj_{22/24}$. If his findings are instrumentally confirmed, 'Hiley's vowel' may become known as vowel 14, thereby filling the hole in the series 04 (historical diphthongs) in Max Weinreich's numbering system (cf. M. Weinreich, 1960; Herzog, 1965, p. 228; Katz, 1983, pp. 1021–1024).

Also evident from the second Winter Symposium is the gratifying growth of Oxford as a centre for research in Yiddish Studies. Six Symposium papers were read by graduate research students in Oxford University's Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages and Literature. They are Marion Aptroot (Wolfson College), Dafna Clifford (St Cross College), Christopher Hutton (Wolfson College), Devra Kay (St Cross College), Dov-Ber Kerler (Lincoln College) and David Schneider (Exeter College). Chris Hutton has since taken up an assistant professorship in Yiddish at the University of Texas at Austin. Johannes Brosi, of Winterthur, Switzerland, a participant at the Symposium, has since commenced doctoral research in Yiddish dialectology at Hertford College, Oxford.

It is a pleasure to thank the people who assisted in the organization of the Second Winter Symposium and the production of this volume, second in the *Winter Studies in Yiddish* series. The talents of Jean Nightingale, Administrative Director of the Oxford Programme in Yiddish at the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, ensured a successful

event. Sammye Haigh, Managing Editor for Social Sciences at Pergamon Press, and Jane Buekett, Supervisor in Pergamon's Production Department, spared no effort to ensure swift publication. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr David Patterson, President of the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, and to Dov-Ber Kerler, the Centre's junior research fellow in Yiddish Studies. Their consistent support, generous assistance and wise counsel were invaluable.

The heroes and heroines of conferences are not always counted from among the readers of papers. One of the beloved personalities at the second Winter Symposium was its official photographer, Sharon (Chavele) Chazan, a brilliant art photographer whose work on Jews in London's East End won her wide acclaim. Her Winter Symposium photos of Robert D. King elucidating the details of an intricate dialectological map, and of Jean Lowenstamm and Alex Derczansky debating in French between sessions, appeared in a number of periodical publications in Britain, the United States and Israel.

Sharon Chazan was tragically killed in October 1987, at the age of twenty-four. This volume is dedicated to her memory.

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