



Becoming Jewish Americans: Popular Culture and Protest in Yiddish New York

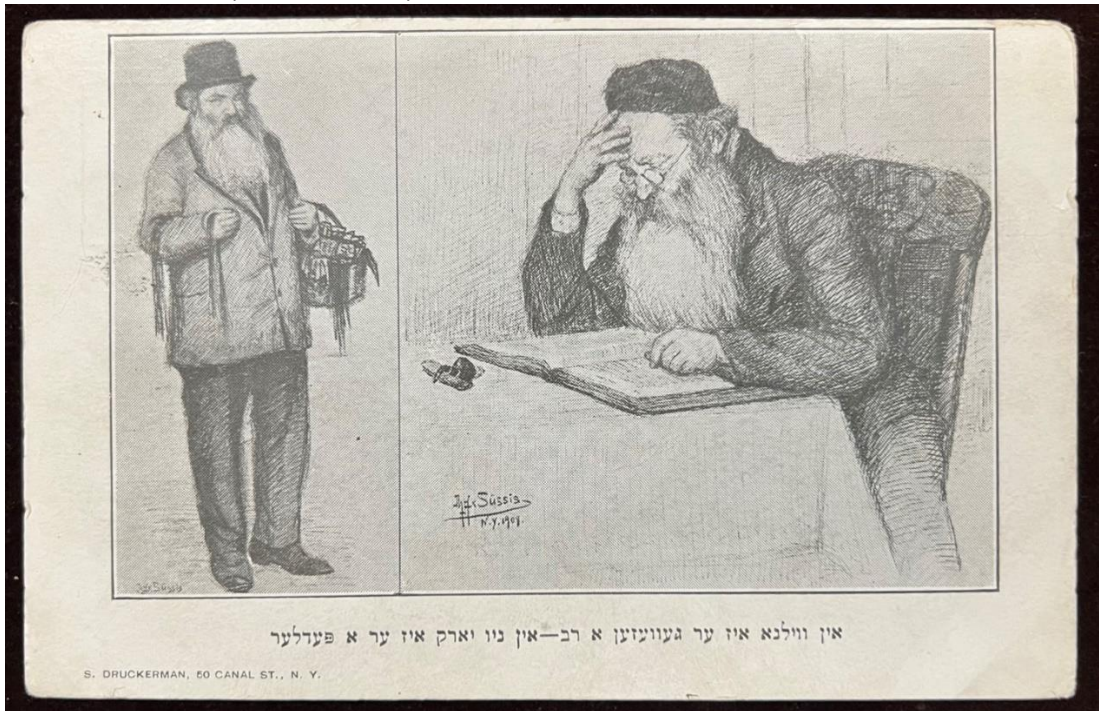
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Annabel Cohen is a third year PhD Student in Modern Jewish History at JTS and the curator of the exhibition “Living Yiddish in New York”, currently on display in the JTS Library. She has a Research Masters in History with distinction from University of London, for which she was also awarded Best Overall Performance at Masters level and Best Dissertation. In between her undergraduate and graduate studies, Annabel worked as a researcher at the Wiener Holocaust Library. Annabel teaches Yiddish for YIVO, the Workers’ Circle, and in September will be starting a new post teaching Yiddish language, history and culture at the Sorbonne University, Paris, where she is spending the year conducting research for her PhD. She also works as a translator of Yiddish and is one of this year’s Yiddish Book Center translation fellows, for which she is translating the memoirs of Jewish Communist Gina Medem. She publishes her translations relating to Ashkenazi Jewish Women’s religiosity on a blog www.pullingatthreads.com. She has also given classes on this subject at JTS, Yale, Wheaton College, City College New York, Yiddish New York and Yiddish Summer Weimar.

Undzer Hagadah Shel Pesah (Nyu Yorker Shul Komitet, 1954)

<p>Leader of the Seder: We are free citizens of our great America. We celebrate the festival of Passover, as our hearts desire. Do you know why? This is because the first generations of Americans, non-Jews and Jews, came here from countries where they were harassed and persecuted. Here, in America, they implanted freedom for everybody. Today we benefit from this freedom, and we continue the traditions of free America. Let's hear some lines from the poem, which is engraved on the magnificent freedom statue:</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">אַנפֿירער פֿון סדר :</p> <p>מיר זיינען פֿרייע בירגער פֿון אונדזער גרויסער אַמעריקע. מיר פֿייערן דעם יום-טובֿ פֿסח, ווי אונדזער האַרץ גלוסט. ווייסט איר פֿאַרוואָס? דאָס איז דערפֿאַר, ווייל די ערשטע דורות אַמעריקאַנער, נישט-יידן און יידן, זיינען געקומען אַהער פֿון לענדער, וואו מען האָט זיי געפֿלאַגט און גערודפֿט. דאָ, אין אַמעריקע, האָבן זיי פֿאַרפֿלאַנצט פֿרייהייט פֿאַר אַלעמען. היינט געניסן מיר דערפֿון און ציען ווייטער די טראַדיציעס פֿון דער פֿרייער אַמעריקע. לאַמיר הערן עטלעכע שורות פֿון דעם ליד, וואָס איז אַיסגעקריצט אויף דער זערגלעכער פֿרייהייטס-סטאַטוי :</p>
<p>Child A: Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame. "Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" [In Yiddish – which stands open wide"] - Emma Lazarus</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">קינד א :</p> <p>דאָ ביי אונדזער ברעג וועט גריסן אינדז באַקאַנט אַ פֿרוי אַ מעכטיקע מיט פֿאַקל אויפֿגעשטעלט, ווי בליץ געפֿאַנגענער צעלויכטן און צעהעלט. די מוטער פֿון פֿאַרשמויסענע! דער פֿאַקל אין איר האַנט גליט אויס אַ ברודֿ הכּא צו וועלט פֿון ראַנד צו ראַנד, און נעמט אַרום צוויי האַפֿן שטעט מיט מילדן בליק באַזעלט.</p> <p>„ווער דאַרף דיין יחוס, אַלטע וועלט! — זי רופֿט מיט שמועס ליפֿ: „מיר גיט די אַרעמע, פֿאַרמאַטערט און פֿאַרשמאַכט, געשטיקטע מאַסן, גאַרנדיק נאָך פֿרייהייט און נאָך לופֿט, — אין שפּלות אויסגעשפיגן און פֿון דיין ברעג געבראַכט, דערלאַנג זיי מיר, די היימלאַזע פֿון שטורעם אויסגעפֿרוואוּט, איך הייב דעם לאַמפֿ ביי שפּיגל-טיר — אַ ברייטער אויפֿ געמאַכט.“</p>

Postcard: In vilne iz er geven a rov, in nyu york iz er a pedler
 (In Vilna he was a rabbi, in New York he's a peddler).
 New York: Druckerman, Canal Street, 1908.



Postcard: In der heym iz er geven a shuster, in nyu york paskent er shayles
 (At home he was a cobbler, in New York
 he's an expert in Jewish law).
 New York: Der groyser kundes



Postcard: In der heym iz er geven a bal-tfile, in amerike iz er an italyanisher tenor
 (At home he was a prayer leader, in America he's an Italian tenor).
 New York: Der groyser kundes.



Postcard: J. Kerer, A gants yor iz er a bartender in a salon in coney island, un af rosh hashone un yom kiper vert er a khazn in a shul (All year he's a bartender in a salon in Coney Island, and on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur he becomes a cantor in a synagogue).



Amerike iz Eyn Goldn Land – unknown, JTS archives

<p>The whole world is only full of swindle Everybody strives towards one goal Old and young They look forward to robbing and making money They don't want to work They work when nobody sees One hears them say They complain about America But such a thing is unheard of Because America is a golden country You just have to be clever You mustn't shy away from any kind of disgrace Then you'll make enough money</p>	<p>די גאַנצע וועלט איז נאָר מיט שווינדל פֿיל אַ יעדער שטרעבט צו איין ציל פֿון קליין ביז גרויס קוקן זיי אַרויס צו ראָבעווען און צו מאַכן געלט אַרבעטן דאָס ווילען זיי נישט זיי אַרבעטן ווען קיינער זעט נישט מען הערט זיי זאָגן אויף אַמעריקע זיך באַקלאָגן דאָס קען מען קיין מאָל אין דער וועלט וויל אַמעריקע איז אַ גאָלדן לאַנד מען דאַרף נאָר זײַן זייער קלוג מען דאַרף נישט קערן פֿיר קיין שאַנד דאן מאַכט מען געלט גענוג</p>
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Di Grine Kuzine – Yankl Brisker (Trans. Jacob Leiserowitz/Hyman Prizant)

<p>My cousin from the old country came over. She was beautiful as gold, the "greenhorn." Her cheeks were rosy like blood oranges; Her feet were just begging to dance.</p> <p>She skipped instead of walking; She sang instead of speaking. Happy and merry was her demeanor. Such was my cousin.</p> <p>I went to the lady next door, Who has a little millinery store. I got my greenhorn cousin a job there— So long live the Golden Land!</p> <p>Many years have since past. My cousin has turned into a wreck. She got her 'paydays' for many years until nothing was left of her.</p> <p>Under her blue, beautiful eyes black bags have appeared. The cheeks, those red oranges, have aged and lost their greenhorn glow.</p> <p>Nowadays, when I meet my cousin and I ask her, "How are you, greenhorn?" She answers me with a crooked expression: "Columbus's land can go to hell!"</p>	<p>es iz tsu mir gekumen a kuzine, sheyn vi gold iz zi geven, di grine. di bekelekh vi royte pomerantsn, fiselekh vos betn zikh tsum tantsn.</p> <p>nit gegangen iz zi, nor geshprungen; nit geredt hot zi, nor gezungen. freylekh, lustik iz geven ir mine. ot azoy geven iz mayn kuzine.</p> <p>ikh bin arayn tsu mayn "nekst-dorke," vos zi hot a "milineri-storke." a job gekrogn hob ikh far mayn kuzine— az lebn zol di goldene medine!</p> <p>avek zaynen fun demolt on shoyn yorn, fun mayn kuzine iz a tel gevorn. paydays yorn lang hot zi geklibn, biz fun ir aleyn iz nisht geblibn.</p> <p>unter ire bloye sheyne oygn shvartse pasn hobn zikh farsoygn di bekelekh, di royte pomerantsn, hobn zikh shoyn oysgegrint in gantsn.</p> <p>haynt, az ikh bagegn mayn kuzine, un ikh freg zi: "vos zhe makhstu grine?" entfert zi mir mit a krume mine: "az brenen zol kolombuses medine!"</p>
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Mayn Rue Platz (My Resting Place) – Morris Rosenfeld

<p>Don't look for me where myrtles grow, You will not find me there, my beloved. Where lives wither at the machines, There is my resting place.</p> <p>Don't look for me where birds sing, You will not find me there, my beloved. A slave am I, where chains clang. There is my resting place.</p> <p>Don't look for me where fountains spray. You will not find me there, my beloved. Where tears flow and teeth gnash, There is my resting place.</p> <p>And if you love me with true love, Then came to me, my good beloved, And light up my gloomy heart, And make sweet my resting place.</p>	<p>nit zukh mikh, vu di mirtn grinen! gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats; vu lebns velkn bay mashinen, dortn iz mayn rue-plats.</p> <p>nit zukh mikh, vu di feygl zingen! gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats; a shkلاف bin ikh, vu keytn klingen, dortn iz mayn rue-plats.</p> <p>nit zukh mikh, vu fontanen shpritsn! gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats; vu trern rinen, tseyner kritsn, dortn iz mayn rue-plats.</p> <p>un libstu mir mit varer libe, to kum tsu mir, mayn guter shats; un hayter af mayn harts dos tribe, un makh mir zis mayn rue-plats.</p>
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