

“Laughter through Tears”: Jewish Humor in the Aftermath of the Holocaust

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Gelekhter durkh trern—that is how Moyshe Nudelman titled his 1947 book on humorous and satirical works in postwar Poland, which was published in Buenos Aires as part of the multi-volume series *Dos poylishe yidentum*. The title was a tribute to Sholem Aleichem, the iconic Yiddish writer who was often praised for his ability to express “laughter through tears.”¹ Yet what, we may rightly ask, could have been humorous about Jewish life in postwar Poland and Germany? In the immediate aftermath of the war, Zalman Grinberg, the first leader of the liberated Jews in postwar Germany, marked the liberation from the German camps in a speech at St. Ottilien in late May 1945, telling his fellow survivors: “We are free now, but we do not know how to begin our free but unfortunate lives. . . . We have forgotten how to laugh, we cannot cry any more, we do not comprehend our freedom yet, and this because we are still among our dead comrades.”²

A few years later, writing in the United States in 1951, Irving Kristol eulogized the passing of Jewish humor in an article in *Commentary* magazine, noting: “Jewish humor died with its humorists when the Nazis killed off the Jews of Eastern Europe, though it seems likely that even without the intervention of Hitler this humor would not long have survived the disintegration of the ghetto community from which it drew its inspiration.”³ As others at the time noted, it seemed that European Jews were far too traumatized to laugh, and that Jewish children raised without a childhood “were children who could not laugh. . . because they have seen things which killed their laughter.”⁴ Nonetheless, as unlikely as it may seem, Grinberg and Kristol were mistaken, and Nudelman was correct: Jews in postwar Germany and Poland had not only *not* forgotten how to laugh, they actively sought out opportunities to laugh, even through tears. An examination of humor in the displaced persons (DP) camps reveals humorous songs, theater, jokes, literature, and art. I argue that these functioned as one means by which people tried to process the recent traumas of the war, to cope with the enormity of the destruction, and to endure the seemingly endless and unnatural stay in Germany after the Holocaust. Humor helped them to maintain a sense of psychological advantage while also serving as an outlet for subversive observations on the state of DP camp politics, the seeming powerlessness of the DPs in relation to

the international agencies that ran their lives, and the nature of their interactions with the surrounding German population. This article will examine several manifestations of Jewish humor in the aftermath of the Holocaust, analyzing the functions of this humor and pointing to some of the continuities and discontinuities between prewar, wartime, and postwar Jewish humor.

Jewish Humor before and during the Holocaust

In some ways, Jewish humor in the aftermath of the Holocaust continued the wartime deployment of humor as one available means for engaging with the terrible reality that confronted them. And of course, wartime humor was an outgrowth of the distinctly Jewish humor of prewar Eastern Europe, especially as found in popular Yiddish literature of the late 19th century and onwards. Along the lines of Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett and Michael Wex's thoughts on this subject, the tone that had emerged in East European Jewish humor was characteristically fraught with undertones of persecution and suffering—indeed, it was a reverse evocation of what others might take as the Jews' incapacity for laughter, given the stark dilemmas of their lives. As Sholem Aleichem, surely one of the chief practitioners of this double-inflected wry comedy, put it: "Aftselakhis nisht geveynt," which is to say, "holding back one's tears and laughing out of spite."⁵ In defining Sholem Aleichem's humor, Kirschenblatt-Gimblett and Wex have suggested that he combined the three major approaches to Jewish humor classified by Elliott Oring, namely:

the transcendental, the defensive, and the pathological. The transcendental seeks to define humor as a response to the often unpleasant conditions of Jewish life in Eastern Europe; humor is meant to help the Jewish people bear up under the burdens imposed upon them and to console them in their suffering—"laughter through tears." The defensive approach (which devotes considerable attention to the self-critical and self-mocking in Jewish humor, as well as to its anti-gentile aspects) sees humor as a preemptive social strategy; while the pathological hews more closely to Freudian ideas about the hostility and aggression that Freud finds at the root of all humor.⁶

Freud himself suggested that he had rarely seen a people so capable of laughing at itself as the Jews.⁷ Or, as David Roskies put it, Jews had succeeded in developing a finely honed ability to "laugh off the trauma of history."⁸

How did this humor prepare Jews to confront the Nazi onslaught? As Steve Lipman argues in *Laughter in Hell*, before and during the war, Jewish humor drew on legacies of earlier catastrophes and thus contained a great deal of self-mockery, both stressing Jewish shortcomings and inverting antisemitic stereotypes, as in this classic joke from Berlin of the 1930s:

Altmann and his secretary were sitting in a coffeehouse in Berlin in 1935.

"Herr Altman," said his secretary. "I notice you're reading *Der Stürmer*! I can't understand why you're carrying a Nazi libel sheet. Are you some kind of masochist, or, God forbid, a self-hating Jew?"

“On the contrary, Frau Epstein. When I used to read the Jewish papers, all I learned about were pogroms, riots in Palestine, and assimilation in America. But now that I read *Der Stürmer*, I see much more: that the Jews control all the banks, that we dominate in the arts, and that we’re on the verge of taking over the entire world. You know—it makes me feel a whole lot better!”⁹

We can see here a theme that would repeat itself during and after the war in Jewish humor: power imparted to the powerless by means of an inversion of hierarchies. If powerlessness implied the inevitability of despair, mock self-empowerment implied a complex subversion of both despair and false hope. As one of the survivors interviewed by Chaya Ostrower explained, “without humor we would all have committed suicide. We made fun of everything. What I’m actually saying is that [humor] helped us remain human, even under hard conditions.”¹⁰

During the war, jokes often took the long view, imagining a future reckoning with Hitler, Hans Frank, and other enemies. As one set of Yiddish rhymes sung in the Warsaw ghetto (and recorded in Nudelman’s postwar collection) suggested:

Vos darfen mir veynen, vos darfen mir klogen, mir veln noch Frankn a Kaddish noch zogn
(Why must we cry, why must we wail; we’ll yet live to say Kaddish for [Hans] Frank)...

Lomir zayn freylech un zogn zich vitsn; mir veln noch hitlern shive noch zitsn... (Let us be happy and tell jokes; we’ll yet live to sit shiva for Hitler)...

Di sonim, vos firm undz dort keyn Treblinka, zey veln doch vern in dr’erd ayngesunken...
(the enemies who drive us to Treblinka will yet be sinking in the ground)...

¹¹

Jokes recorded by Shimon Huberband, a member of the Oyneg Shabes archival project organized by Emanuel Ringelblum, captured the ghetto inhabitants’ bitter and often religiously inflected humor. Many of the jokes mocked Hitler or else poked fun at the unlimited Jewish capacity to endure persecution, as in the following examples:

- We eat as if it were Yom Kippur, sleep in succahs, and dress as if it were Purim.
- Jews are now very pious. They observe all the ritual laws: they are stabbed and punched with holes like matzoes and have as much bread as on Passover; they are beaten like *hoshanas*, rattled like Haman; they are as green as *esrogim* and as thin as *lulavim*; they fast as if it were Yom Kippur; they are burnt as if it were Hanukkah, and their moods are as if it were the Ninth of Av.
- A teacher asks his pupil, “Tell me Moyshe, what would you like to be if you were Hitler’s son?” “An orphan,” the pupil answers.¹²

Laughter was a way for Jews to affirm that they were indeed still alive and had not yet given up hope; survival was still possible and, at the very least, the Jewish people would outlast the German efforts to exterminate them and “God willing, dance on German graves (*im yirtseh hashem tantsn oyf daytshe kvorim*).”¹³ Wartime humor also continued the prewar function of satirizing Jewish society, politics, and communal institutions. The hit songs of the Lodz ghetto by Yankl Hershkowitz subversively chronicled life in the Lodz ghetto under the leadership of Chaim Rumkowski, the chairman of the Judenrat, through irreverent wit and wordplay, as can be seen in two verses of his best-known punning song, “Rumkowski Khayim”:

Jews are blessed with life (Khayim),
 Life (Khayim) from the land of the dead,
 Life (Khayim) from the house of life (Khayim) [i.e. the cemetery],
 Rumkowski Khayim and his great miracle.
 He knows how to make miracles, oy,
 Every day just like that,
 Cry for help, oy, oy, oy,
 A second question, oy,
 Khayim says, "It's good like this."¹⁴

Even concentration camp inmates had their own brand of gallows humor, and their repertoire included jokes about food, sexual humor, and scatological humor.¹⁵ Activists in the DP historical commissions created after the war collected examples of humor and wartime folklore as part of their broader documentation projects—which, as historian Laura Jockusch has suggested, “functioned as a poignant affirmation of “*mir zaynen do* [literally, we are here].”¹⁶ According to Israel Kaplan, academic secretary of the Central Historical Commission in Munich and editor of the Jewish historical commission’s journal *Fun letsten hurbn*, which collected expressions coming from the “mouth of the people” (*dos yidisher folkmoyl*): “The expressions, mottoes and witticisms which were created by and circulated among the captives contained within them the power to comfort and encourage the broken-hearted . . . even during the back-breaking work, with the guards straining over them, following every movement with hostile eyes, ears strained to hear every syllable.”¹⁷

Kaplan’s research on humor and wartime folklore demonstrated the unifying function of humor. After the war, this humor helped forge a collective identity for the survivors, also known as *sheerit hapeletah* (the surviving remnant).¹⁸ As Kaplan noted, Jews throughout occupied Europe had developed an underground language, often based on Hebrew and including coded references to liturgy and biblical texts, to refer to various aspects of daily life in the ghettos, camps, and in hiding. Thus, the term *ya’aleh* (literally, to rise up) had various meanings: in the holiday liturgy, the *ya’aleh veyavo* prayer was a supplication for Jewish prayers to “rise and come before (God),” whereas in ghetto parlance, *ya’aleh veyavo* could be used to refer to the arrival of a German officer (who was “coming”), and a *ya’aleh* referred to a Jewish social climber—one who rose in the ranks of the Judenrat or the Jewish police.¹⁹ Kovno ghetto songs frequently referred to the latter, as in the phrase “yeder ya’aleh hot a kale, un politsei, hot tsu tsvei . . .” (each *ya’aleh* has a bride, and the police(man) has two . . .) Kaplan also detailed the various terms used to refer to precious staples such as “bread” or, in this case, “money”:

Towards the end [of the war] there were Allied Marks, issued by Allied nations. These were called: HALLELUJAHS. The Allied mark had higher value than the Reichsmark. After Liberation, a popular expression was: ALLIED YEARS. When someone, especially a woman, gave her age, and it did not seem right, the listeners inquired: Aren’t the years “Allied”?²⁰

In addition to folk sayings, the historical commissions collected examples of jokes and curses used by victims under Nazi rule, among them, “Hitler should lie so deep

in the ground that a rabbit can run by on a summer day," "Hitler should grow like an onion, that is, with his head in the ground," "Hitler should have a wooden head and glass eyes..." and "Hitler should eat one worm a day... and on Sunday, two."²¹

Finally (as will be seen) allusions to Hitler as Haman and the belief that he would meet the same end as Haman were common. One joke included in Lipman's collection and told both during and after the war went as follows:

Hitler, not being a religious man, was inclined to consult his astrologers about the future. As the tide of the war worsened, he asked, "Am I going to lose the war?" Answered affirmatively, he then asked, "Well, am I going to die?" Consulting their charts, the astrologers again said yes. "When am I going to die?" was Hitler's next question. This time the answer was, "You're going to die on a Jewish holiday." But when... on what Jewish holiday?" he asked with agitation. The reply: "Any day you die will be a Jewish holiday."²²

Jewish Humor and Entertainment in the DP Camps

Gradually, in the aftermath of liberation, the *sheerit hapeletah* emerged from the catastrophe to form a vibrant, active, and fiercely independent community that played a prominent role in diplomatic negotiations leading to the creation of the state of Israel. According to Allied policy, a displaced person was defined "as any civilian who because of the war was living outside the borders of his or her country and who wanted to but could not return home or find a new home without assistance."²³ Displaced persons were initially divided into categories by place of origin into those from enemy and Allied countries (Jewish DPs were in fact a small percentage of the total number of refugees, forced laborers, and POWs displaced by the war). Germany and Austria were divided into American, British, and Soviet zones of occupation, plus a small area in the southwest of Germany that became the French zone of occupation. The majority of the Jewish DP population in May 1945, perhaps some 35,000 out of 50,000 liberated, was to be found in the American zone of occupation in Germany, many of them near Munich.²⁴ Soon after liberation, Jewish survivors began to search for surviving family members. With the assistance of American Jewish chaplains, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) established a central tracing bureau to help find surviving family members. For those Jewish DPs who made the decision to remain in Germany, the majority chose to live in a DP camp (generally German military barracks, former POW and slave labor camps, tent cities, industrial housing, and the like), whereas approximately 15,000 German Jewish survivors chose to rebuild their prewar communities in German cities. Those survivors who remained in the camps faced deplorable conditions: poor accommodations, no plumbing, no clothing, rampant disease, continuing malnourishment, and a lack of any plan on the part of the American military.

By the summer of 1945, the Jewish survivors had organized among themselves to represent the needs of the surviving Jewish population. In the American zone, they formed the Central Committee of Liberated Jews, headed by Samuel Gringauz and Zalman Grinberg; in the British zone, a committee with the same name was led by

Yossel Rosensaft. In the wake of a report on DP camp conditions that was submitted by U.S. envoy Earl Harrison, American authorities under the leadership of General Dwight D. Eisenhower worked to ameliorate conditions for Jewish DPs, moving Jews to separate camps and agreeing to the appointment of an adviser for Jewish affairs. With the arrival of more than 100,000 Jews fleeing continued persecution and antisemitism in Eastern Europe over the course of 1946—many arriving with the Bricha (lit. “Escape”) movement, whose goal was to bring survivors to Palestine—the Jewish DP population reached 250,000 in Germany, Italy, and Austria by the beginning of 1947 (approximately 185,000 were in Germany, 45,000 in Austria, and 20,000 in Italy). In the absence of relatives, many survivors quickly created new families, as evidenced by the many weddings and the remarkable birthrate among the surviving population in the first year after liberation. With the assistance of representatives from UNRRA, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the Jewish Agency, and other organizations, schools were established throughout the DP camps. While still living in a transitional situation, hoping for the possibility of emigration, DPs quickly put together communal frameworks in hundreds of DP camps and communities across Germany, Italy, and Austria.²⁵ The largest camps, among them Landsberg, Feldafing, and Föhrenwald in the American zone of Germany, and Bergen-Belsen in the British zone, boasted a vigorous social and cultural life that included newspapers, theater, Zionist youth movements, and athletic clubs, alongside historical commissions and *yeshivot*.²⁶ The DPs also took an active role in representing their own interests: numerous political parties (mostly Zionist in nature, with the exception of the Orthodox Agudat Israel) administered camp committees and met at annual congresses. As we shall see, DP politics provided fertile ground for satire.

As evidenced by the creation of numerous theatrical troupes, a musical culture, a flourishing Jewish press, and a hunger for any form of entertainment, Jewish humor in the DP camps was a means of regaining a sense of normalcy after the war. As was the case during the war, it also served as a coping mechanism to deal with suffering and trauma and to counter absurdities of the postwar situation. Jewish DPs were acutely aware of the intense irony of their continued existence in postwar Germany. In various ways, they noted this irony, whether in a casual photo of Jewish youths sitting in front of the Wannsee train station, or in the appropriation of Nazi estates for kibbutz work—some 40 farms were created for this purpose, administered by young Zionists. One of the estates had belonged to Julius Streicher (publisher of the infamous *Der Stürmer*), who was awaiting trial in nearby Nuremberg.²⁷ The estate was renamed Kibbutz Nili, an acronym for the biblical phrase “*netzah yisrael lo yeshaker*” (the Eternal One of Israel will not prove false). According to one of the kibbutz leaders: “This is one of the greatest Jewish satisfactions . . . to be able to see Hebrew writings and slogans like “*Am Jsroel chaj*” (the People of Israel live), [and] “*Necach Jsroel loj jeszaker*” at Streicher’s palace; thus we have named our new kibbutz, the first agricultural school in Bavaria.”²⁸ When showing around an American visitor, one of the kibbutz members pointed out two dogs, named Julius and Streicher, explaining: “They obey and protect us! It’s a pity to humiliate innocent animals with such swinish names. But we couldn’t resist the temptation.”²⁹ A different (and perhaps unintended) form of irony was apparent in anti-British demonstrations that protested the continuation of immigration restrictions and the blockade of Palestine, at which

banners would carry proclamations such as “We demand the eradication of the camps”—a call to liquidate the DP camps in Germany that alluded as well to the former concentration camps; or a text in Yiddish that read: “We want to return to our home in the Land of Israel”—a demand to return to a home these stateless Jews had never known, in a land where Yiddish would not be spoken.³⁰

Historical allusions to Hitler as Haman continued to be popular in the postwar period. In his collection of postwar humor, Nudelman included an imagined letter from Haman to the remaining Jews of Poland that expressed jealousy of Nazi innovations: “My repressive methods were so primitive, so naïve, so clumsy. I had no ghettos, no Gestapo...no *akcies*, no concentration camps, and not even any crematoria (!).”³¹ Understandably, the first Purim celebration after liberation was a long-awaited holiday in the DP camps. In Landsberg, survivors organized a week-long Purim carnival that featured a symbolic burning of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* (which had been written in the local prison in 1924), a contest for best-decorated apartment house, a parade of workers, schools, kibbutzim, and various organizations, and of course, the wearing of costumes. The *Landsberger Lager Cajtung* reported that, at the entrance to Landsberg: “Hitler hangs in many variations and in many poses; a big Hitler, a fat Hitler, a small Hitler, with medals and without medals. Jews hung him by his head, by his feet, or by his belly” (see Fig. 8.1).³² Leo Srole, the UN-appointed welfare director for Landsberg and one of the organizers of the 1946 Purim carnival, later recalled: “It was (a day) of such elation, I had never seen anything like it...Hitler and Haman now had their due.”³³ As a poster from Landsberg announced: “In the city where Hitler wrote his *Kampf*, the Jews will celebrate the greatest Purim *hey-tow-szin-wow* [the transliteration of the Jewish year 5706], the Purim of Hitler’s downfall!”³⁴

In contrast, the first Passover after liberation was characterized by as much irony as joy, given the increasingly peculiar condition of survivors who were “liberated but



Figure 8.1. Purim carnival at Landsberg DP camp, 1946, from the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York.

not yet free,” in the words of Abraham Klausner, an American Jewish army chaplain. Klausner officiated at the first official Passover seder in Munich and facilitated the publication of the *Survivor's Haggadah*, written by Yosef Dov Sheinson and printed by the military press with the insignia of the U.S. Third Army.³⁵ In his preface to the haggadah, Klausner (never one to miss an opportunity for rhetorical flourish) highlighted the symbolic association of Egypt with Germany for those from the “CIC [Counter-Intelligence Corps], CID [Criminal Investigation Division], the ICD [Information Control Division], the UNRRA, and the American Joint Distribution Committee” who would be attending the seder, coming to “the city of Munich, there to relate as of old, the miracle of freedom. . . . [In] their hearts they felt very close to all that which was narrated. Pharaoh and Egypt gave way to Hitler and Germany. Pitham and Ramsees faded beneath fresh memories of Buchenwald and Dachau.”³⁶ The *Survivor's Haggadah* noted the ironies of continued Jewish oppression and enslavement on the “festival of freedom”—perhaps nowhere more poignantly than in its updated version of “Dayenu”:

Had He scattered us among the nations but had not given us the First Crusade, we would have been content. Had He given us the First Crusade but not the Second, we would have been content. Had He given us the Second Crusade but not the Blood Libel, we would have been content. Had He given us the Blood Libel but not the persecutions of the Third Crusade, we would have been content. Had He given us the persecutions of the Third Crusade, but not the Badge of Shame, we would have been content. Had He given us the Badge of Shame but not the persecutions of the Black Plague, we would have been content. Had He given us the persecutions of the Black Plague but not the Inquisition, we would have been content. Had He given us the Inquisition but not the pogroms of 1648–49, we would have been content. Had He given us the pogroms of 1648–49 but not the slaughter of 1919 in Ukraine, we would have been content. Had He given us the slaughter in Ukraine but not Hitler, we would have been content. Had He given us Hitler but no ghettos, we would have been content. Had He given us ghettos but no gas chambers and crematoria, we would have been content. Had He given us gas chambers and crematoria, but our wives and children had not been tortured, we would have been content. Had our wives and children been tortured but we had not been forced into hard bondage, we would have been content. Had we been forced into hard bondage but not been made to die of hunger, we would have been content. Had we been made to die of hunger but not of disease and torture, we would have been content.

All the more so, since all these have befallen us, we must make *Aliyah*, even if illegally, wipe out the *Galut*, build the chosen land, and make a home for ourselves and our children for eternity.³⁷

In this radically revised version of what was originally a hymn of praise, God is sarcastically “praised” for an endless litany of punishment and persecution. In addition, through its use of historical references, the postwar “Dayenu” placed the most recent round of Jewish suffering within the longer history of Jewish persecution, again suggesting the eternal strength of the Jewish people.

In addition to processing events of the very recent past through symbolic inversions, acts of revenge, or demonstrations of resistance, DP humor—in the form of songs, music, theater, and literature—also satirized the nature of Jewish life in postwar Germany. As Shirli Gilbert has noted, music in the DP camps functioned in several ways: as pure entertainment to restore some sense of normalcy to the abnormal

surroundings (as with Henry Baigelman’s band, The Happy Boys); as a means of lamenting the lost past or expressing hope for the future; and as a vehicle for humor and satire.³⁸ The Happy Boys’ song, “We Long for Home,” while acknowledging the homeless and stateless condition of the DPs, for whom every path to home seemed blocked, declared that “one must keep hoping, it can’t be otherwise, then life can be full of beauty, charm, and happiness . . .”³⁹ Henny Durmashkin, who sang in the Vilna ghetto and later performed extensively with the St. Otilien orchestra in DP centers across Germany,⁴⁰ not only recorded the plight of the Jewish DPs—their longing for “different times” and their desire to leave Germany for “Eretz Israel”—but also ridiculed the policies of UNRRA and the Joint, as in her song “Joint’l,” which concludes: “These overflowing pledges, these promises to be/Have left us still in tatters, nothing have we!”⁴¹ In another song, “I Want Different Times,” Durmashkin directly articulated the subversive function of humor during the war, while also expressing longing for a former self that would never return:

Listen to my little story
 Listen hard and true
 I am a girl, and am not sorry,
 And I can laugh at you.
 I turn the ghetto upside down
 And poke fun at commanders
 The trusties look at me and frown,
 To me they’re silly ganders.
Refrain: I want different times
 An end to wandering . . .
 I want to be another thing
 As I once was.⁴²

UNRRA, though meant to provide relief and assistance to the DPs, was also a frequent target of criticism for the perceived lack of assistance it delivered. Another song recorded by Leo Schwarz tells the story of ten UNRRA cars meant to deliver much-needed supplies. One by one, the cars in the song disappear, along with their essential provisions, until there was only “one UNRRA car/Gone tears and care!/ They opened the doors—It was bare!”⁴³

Like music, Yiddish theater in the DP camps served the dual function of restoring normalcy through a popular form of entertainment and channeling the trauma and grief of the recent past. Stars of the Yiddish stage in New York, including Molly Picon, Jacob Kalich, and Herman Yablokoff, toured the DP camps and were greeted by adoring fans who were familiar with their work from the interwar period.⁴⁴ In 1947, Yablokoff, a native of Grodno and a star of the Second Avenue theater world who was best known for his role as *Der payatz* (the clown), toured the DP camps in Germany, Austria, and Italy, where he gave more than 100 performances for 180,000 Jewish DPs. Yablokoff was overwhelmed by the response of the crowd (“applauding so hard they refused to leave”); he was also repeatedly thronged by crowds after his shows who asked: “What’s going to happen to us? What will be the end?” A letter from JDC child welfare officer Millicent Diamond that was written following Yablokoff’s visit to Rosenheim testified to the tremendous impact he had on the children of the camp:

[A]fter the first hour of this artist's performance one could see the change over from wrinkled brows, worried and dull expressions . . . to bright-eyed, laughing and shining faces, full of interest and completely absorbed in the delightful show. . . . Temporarily they had been able to forget their miseries and the daily drudgeries of their life. . . . Besides being a stage artist, Mr. Yablokoff seems to have also the promise of being an excellent social worker.⁴⁵

More important, perhaps, than hosting outside performers, the Jewish DPs also created their own theater, establishing a great number of theater troupes that regularly performed the works of such classic Yiddish playwrights as Sholem Aleichem, S. Ansky, and Avraham Goldfaden.⁴⁶ Jacob Biber organized the first Jewish theater group in the U.S. zone in the Föhrenwald DP camp, putting together a variety show that premiered on October 28, 1945. As Angelika Konigseder and Julianne Wetzel note, the first performance was so successful that the group was invited to perform for the Jewish DPs in Feldafing. Biber recalled in his memoirs the therapeutic aspects of performing Jewish theater again not only for the audience of survivors but for the surviving performers themselves:

The theater hall in Feldafing was large enough to accommodate most of the DPs (about two thousand individuals), but we were most touched by the rows of sick people lined up on hospital cots in front of the stage. Feldafing had a sanatorium for tubercular patients, and all the survivors with that illness had been transferred there. When the show was running, I looked out from behind the curtain and saw pleasant smiles on their skeletal faces. Some of them were still wearing their striped concentration camp clothes. Others were covered with white sheets, but their eyes peering out from the covers expressed their eternal gratitude and satisfaction once again to see Jewish children performing. I saw tears in their eyes rolling down the hollowed cheeks. Shedding a few tears myself, I breathed a silent prayer: "Thank you, God, for giving me the strength to accomplish some good." I suddenly felt a sensation of relief in my heart. The guilt I had carried in me for the sin of surviving, while so many of our loved ones had suffered and died, had somewhat diminished. I suddenly felt that my efforts were worthy, and that, perhaps, there was reason for all of us to hope again.⁴⁷

Yiddish theatre in the DP camps was enhanced with the arrival of a number of professional theatrical performers over the course of 1946–1947. According to one report, there were at least 60 amateur groups appearing in the DP camps between 1945 and 1949.⁴⁸ These presented revues, folk and partisan songs, recitations of poems, and original skits and songs about DP camp life. The Munich Yiddish Theater, active between 1946 and 1949, offered dramas and comedies by Dovid Pinski, Goldfaden, Aaron Glanz-Lyeles and Jacob Gordin to an estimated 400,000 spectators (this figure must have included Jews and non-Jews, or repeat performances)—including many who had entered the camp gates as children and had never seen theater before. According to Baruch Graubard, the "fate of the Munich Yiddish Theater . . . was directly connected with the fate of the She'erit Hapleitah" as a whole. The group developed in stages, influenced by immigration and the arrivals and departures of actors and directors.⁴⁹ Under the influence of leading figures such as Israel Becker and Alexander Bardini, the Munich Yiddish Theater drew on the strength of performers and directors with prewar theater experience in Moscow, Kiev, Warsaw, Vilna, Kattowitz, and elsewhere. (Becker would in fact leave the group in order to make the first postwar film produced in the DP camps, *Lang ist der weg.*) Baderech, a Yiddish theatre

group based in Berlin, performed works by Sholem Aleichem and Molière as well as original shows with titles such as *Di sonim tsulokhes* (To spite our enemies), *Nekomeh* (Revenge) and *Di nazis in gehinom* (Nazis in hell).⁵⁰ These titles indicate that theater, beyond entertaining a DP public eagerly in search of entertainment, was also used to creatively channel the anger, bitterness, and ultimate desire for revenge on the part of the surviving Jews. According to Graubard, Yiddish theater in the DP camps represented an entirely unprecedented stage in Jewish theater, when a "state theater" supported by the Central Committee of Liberated Jews was composed of "actors who were a part of the [Jewish] public and a representative of their will" to fulfill the ideal of artistic truth.⁵¹

Beyond cultural events, there was an abundance of humor expressed in everyday life. Leo Schwarz, the highest-ranking JDC official in the American zone in 1946–1947, put together a file dealing with Jewish humor in the DP camps (available in the YIVO Archives in the Leo Schwarz papers). He noted various slang terms in use, including those terms collected by Kaplan that were used to refer to wartime experiences, alongside material from DP periodicals that also captured some of this sensibility. Included in his "humor" files was a volume of *Freiheit*, an illustrated periodical published by the liberated Jews of Lampertheim in August 1946 that contained a collection of jokes making the rounds of the DP camps, among them one concerning the ongoing baby boom, titled "Modern Times":

A young man came into a baby carriage store and asked for the price of 12 carriages.

Owner: "Why do you need twelve all at once?"

Young man: "Yesterday was one month since I was married and my wife gave birth to a child. Why should I buy a carriage every month? I'll get a whole year's supply at once!"⁵²

Afn tsimbl (On the Cymbalom), a satirical magazine that seems to have been published only once, included various ironic observations on life in the DP camps.⁵³ One quite revealing section, titled "A Modern Lexicon," poked fun at the realities of Jewish DP life and politics (Fig. 8.2):

PRESIDENT: a person who, although he travels by automobile, never arrives anywhere, except at a banquet. . . .

SECRETARY: says what he doesn't remember and remembers what he hasn't said; small in the eyes of others, big in his own.

COMMUNAL WORKERS (*askanim*): people who make machines from paper and paper from machines.

COMMITTEE: a weed that grows out of ruins and cannot be uprooted.

MEETING: a gathering where the audience sits on the stage and doesn't get a chance to laugh. . . .

MEMBER OF SHEYRES HAPLEYTE: A person whom three Jews organize; four inform; five help; six agitate; they all make collections for him, while he starves to death.

The same volume included satirical articles dealing with various aspects of DP life and politics. For instance, the fact that many Zionist leaders of the Jewish DP population (among them Zalman Grinberg, Samuel Gringauz, and the ardently Zionist American Jewish chaplain, Abraham Klausner) wound up in America was the subject of ridicule in an article detailing the many accomplishments of "Moshe Zilberberg, Zionist activist, fighter in the Warsaw ghetto, and presidium member of the Z.K. [Central Committee] of the Liberated Jews in Germany, leader of Feldafing, editor of



Figure 8.2. “A Modern Lexicon,” from the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York.

Dos fraye wort,” etc., who makes the decision to relocate to Lynn, Massachusetts.⁵⁴ In similar fashion, a letter purportedly from a mother in Munich to her daughter in New York informed the daughter that her father had become a leftist Zionist, which meant that after sending everyone to the Jewish state, he and her mother planned to come live with her in New York.⁵⁵ The joke section of the same volume, titled “Der

va’ad halotse” (the wit committee) was a play on words of the so-called “rescue organization,” the Va’ad hatsole. A rhyming ditty lampooned the nature of non-profit fundraising intended to assist (or rescue) the DPs:

The begging firm (*betl-firme*) knows well the *meloche* [work]
 Of *tsedakah* campaigns with publicity *blague* [brats]
 They sing: “In *schnorring* lies the *mazel broche* [the key to success]”
 They *schnorr* from Miami to *Chicageh*.⁵⁶

Another joke in the volume made light of the means employed by DPs to sustain themselves, including black marketeering:

The *sheyres hapleyte* society is composed of two philosophical schools of thought:
 a. (The majority) “Rationalists,” those who live from rations [provided by UNRRA and JDC]
 b. (A minority) “Mystics” (*mistiker*), those who live from filthy (*mistike*), shady businesses . . .⁵⁷

Another satirical volume, *Unzer beyzim* (Our broom) included humorous and pointed cartoons satirizing life in the DP camps (see Fig. 8.3).⁵⁸ In the cartoon pictured at top right, two men ridicule a Zionist leader at a DP banquet, with the caption reading: “Why is he screaming so much about Israel? Because he is going to America tomorrow . . .” Other cartoons made light of DP society, the black market, the baby boom, the overcrowding in the DP camps, the slow and belabored attempts of the UN to arrive at a political solution of the refugee problem, and the continuities of prewar and postwar antisemitism. In the last example, the year 1937, with its “*shlekhte semitn*” (bad Jews) is juxtaposed with 1947, “*Di Schlachtensee mitn*” (a punning reference to the DP camp at Schlachtensee, near Berlin).

This finely developed postwar satire seemed to reach its pinnacle just as the DP camps began to close. In *Gelekhter durkh treern*, Nudelman imagines what might have been if “Sholem Aleichem were alive today,” in the position of someone forced to choose between emigration to Brazil, Chile, or Venezuela.⁵⁹ By 1947, as Tamar Lewinsky has noted, relief workers and visitors were describing with amazement the shtetl-like infrastructure and outlook of the camps and their social institutions.⁶⁰ For instance, the Yiddish poet Shmerke Kaczerginski described the Pocking camp (near Waldstadt) as being like a Jewish shtetl from twenty or thirty years back, “but here it is even more Jewish, really a piece of Jewish life taken out from a book, as if in a fantasy.”⁶¹ At the end of the DP period, writers recreated these postwar shtetls with a mix of nostalgia and humor, through parodies that combined the prewar model of the shtetl with a satirical look at the bittersweet postwar reality. One of these writers was Baruch Graubard, who documented Jewish daily life in Munich in a DP camp.⁶² Graubard’s satirical volume, *Geven a sheyres hapleyte*, included a section on “Yankl Batlan,” editor of the DP newspaper, and another one about a “Dr. Kopegeh,” who decided to form a political party.⁶³ There was also a chapter discussing the levels of Hebrew knowledge among the *Sheyres hapleyte*, and a profile of “Yoshke Paskudnik” [Yoshke no-goodnik], described as “a ‘hero’ of our times.” The cover of Graubard’s volume,



Figure 8.3. *Unzer beyzim*, from the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York.

which satirized the broken tree insignia of the *sheerit hapeleitah* with caricatures of Jewish DP types hanging off the tree, also symbolically commented on this unique period in Jewish history when survivors from all over Europe would be concentrated in DP camps, forming a collective identity on the blood-soaked soil of postwar Germany (Fig. 8.4). The recreated shtetls noted by Kaczerginski may have easily been mistaken for an illusion: could it be that Jews from all over Europe had once again been concentrated in one place, this time in replicas of prewar shtetls? What would Sholem Aleichem or Mendele Mocher Seforim have made of this situation? And what it did it mean to laugh at satires of a prewar culture that had been almost completely destroyed? It seems that humor was both a tool of survival and a means of examining an almost absurd philosophical conundrum after the war. In Graubard's eyes, it may have also been a sign of healing: once the DP camps could be viewed through the lens of Sholem Aleichem's Kasrilevke or Mendele's Kabzansk, then European Jews, and European Jewish humor, had come full circle—indeed, they had both survived.

Conclusion

Jewish humor did not die in the Holocaust. In fact, it is unclear whether the Holocaust did anything to change Jewish humor. If anything, an examination of humor in the



Figure 8.4. *Geven a sheyres hapleyte*, from the Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York.

DP camps reveals that Jews depended on humor to endure the period after liberation, both as a psychological weapon to grapple with what they had endured under the Nazi threat and as a source of coping with the displacement of the postwar period. After the war, humor was a poignant affirmation of *mir zaynen do*—we are (still) here—a declaration that the Jewish people had not disappeared and indeed could at times have the last laugh. Jokes and other sayings told by Jews in ghettos and camps manifested the many functions of humor identified by survivors in Ostrower's study: the aggression and anger of the oppressed, the self-humor that was typical of Jewish life, the dark gallows humor of those who felt death was imminent, and the humor of last resort, which expressed the absurdity of life under such impossible circumstances. In addition, as Israel Kaplan demonstrated, humor had a critically important social function during and after the war: namely, maintaining social cohesion under extreme circumstances while also embracing the wit and resourcefulness of the oppressed and celebrating it in the aftermath of the war. Postwar humor, in the form of humorous songs, theater, jokes, literature, and art, functioned on various levels that adapted to the realities of Jewish life in liberated Germany: as a means of processing the recent trauma of the war; asserting Jewish endurance in the wake of the destruction; enduring the implausible situation of continued Jewish existence in postwar Germany; confronting the hypocrisy of British policy; and uniting Jews in their "laughter through tears," by this means providing them with an assurance that life would continue, even after the greatest trauma the Jewish people had ever endured.

Notes

1. Nudelman's volume was a collection of jokes and humorous essays from Jewish life in postwar Poland, Germany, and France. *Gelekhter durkh trern* was also the name of a 1928 Yiddish film based on Sholem Aleichem's *Motl Peysi, the Cantor's Son*.

2. Yad Vashem archive, 033/1122 (Zalman Grinberg speech at concert marking liberation, June 10, 1945, Munich).

3. Irving Kristol, "Is Jewish Humor Dead? The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Joke," *Commentary* 12 (November 1951); discussed in Steve Lipman, *Laughter in Hell: The Use of Humor during the Holocaust* (Northvale: 1991), 133.

4. YIVO (Jewish DP periodicals collection), reel 31, *Unzer weg* (Our way) English edition, article by Ernest Landau, "Those Who Cannot Laugh," 1.

5. Quoted in Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett and Michael Wex, "Humor: Oral Tradition," *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, online at yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Humor/Oral_Tradition (accessed 21 January 2015).

6. *Ibid.*; see also Elliot Oring, *Jokes and Their Relations* (Lexington: 1992), 119.

7. Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: 1963), 133.

8. David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1984), ch. 7.

9. Quoted in William Novaks and Moshe Waldoks, *The Big Book of Jewish Humor* (New York: 1981), 61. For a variant telling, see Lipman, *Laughter in Hell*, 197.

10. Chaya Ostrower, *Lelo humor hayinu mitabdim* (Jerusalem: 2011), 69.

11. Nudelman, *Gelekhter durkh trern*, 113. See also Lipman, *Laughter in Hell*, 137 and Ruth Rubin, *Voices of a People: The Story of Yiddish Folksong* (Champaign: 2000), 432. Hans Frank served as governor-general of occupied Poland's General Government territory.

12. Shimon Huberband, “Wartime Folklore” (no date), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum archives (hereafter: USHMM), RG 15.079M, reel 8, Ringelblum Archive, I/109, published in Huberband, *Kiddush Hashem: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Poland during the Holocaust*, ed. Jeffrey S. Gurock and Robert S. Hirt (Hoboken: 1987), 113–129.

13. Nudelman, *Gelekhter durkh tremn*, 114.

14. “Rumkowski Khayim,” song by Yankl Hershkowitz from the Lodz ghetto; USHMM, Acc. 2000.134 (Joseph Wajsbilat collection); for song notes and an alternate translation, see Gila Flam, *Singing for Survival: Songs of the Lodz Ghetto* (Champaign: 1992), 40.

15. For a detailed analysis of concentration camp humor, see Ostrower, *Lelo humor hayinu mitabdim*. Thanks to Carol Zemel for suggesting the distinctions between the social functions of humor in ghettos, camps, and in hiding during the war.

16. Laura Jockusch, “A Folk Monument to Our Destruction and Heroism: Jewish Historical Commissions in the Displaced Persons Camps of Germany, Austria, and Italy,” in *We Are Here”: New Approaches to Jewish Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany*, ed. Avinoam J. Patt and Michael Berkowitz (Detroit: 2010).

17. Israel Kaplan, introduction to *Dos yidishe folksmoyl in nazi klem*, quoted in Lipman, *Laughter in Hell*, 143; see also Boaz Cohen, “Representing the Experiences of Children in the Holocaust: Children’s Survivor Testimonies Published in *Fun Letsten Hurbn*,” in Patt and Berkowitz (eds.), *We Are Here*,” 23.

18. The term *sheerit hapeletah* is found in the writings of the Prophets; see, for instance, Micah 4:6–7 and II Kings 19:30–31. Use of the term links the notions of destruction and redemption; from 1943, Yishuv leaders used the term “remnant” to refer to what remained of European Jewry, believing that Jewish survival and the realization of Zionism remained possible despite the destruction. See Dalia Ofer, “From Survivors to New Immigrants: *She’erit Hapletah* and *Aliyah*,” in *She’erit Hapletah, 1944–1948: Rehabilitation and Political Struggle*, ed. Israel Gutman and Avital Saf (Jerusalem: 1990), 306–307.

19. Israel Kaplan, *Fun letsten hurbn*, vol. 1 (August 1946), 23; also discussed by Roskies in *Against the Apocalypse*, 187.

20. Translation from YIVO archives, RG 294.1 (Leo W. Schwarz papers), reel 46/1305 (p. 45).

21. Yad Vashem archive, M1PF/186 (“Curses at Hitler’s Expense”).

22. Lipman, *Laughter in Hell*, 201–202.

23. SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) guidelines on the care of DPs and refugees in Germany were published on December 28, 1944 as “Administrative Memorandum No. 39.” See as defined in Arieh Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States, and Jewish Refugees, 1945–48* (Chapel Hill: 2001), 14.

24. For detailed surveys of the Jewish DP population, see reports compiled by the JDC in YIVO, RG 294.1 (Leo W. Schwarz papers), reel no. 1032–1037. For more on postwar refugees, see Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*. On UNRRA, see George Woodbridge, *UNRRA: The History of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration* (New York: 1950).

25. Yehuda Bauer, *Out of the Ashes: The Impact of American Jews on Post-Holocaust European Jewry* (Oxford: 1989), 203. Bauer counts 60 camps, 14 children’s centers, 40 hospitals, and 39 training camps (*hakhsharot*) in the U.S. zone of Germany alone.

26. On the life of Jewish DPs in postwar Germany, see, for example, Ze’ev Mankowitz, *Life between Memory and Hope* (Cambridge: 2002); Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton: 2007); and Margarete Myers Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany* (Cambridge: 2009).

27. Nudelman’s humorous volume included a chapter on the “excitement” of the Nuremberg trials, where “Everyone sleeps. The Tribunal sleeps. The public sleeps. The newspaper correspondents sleep. The accused sleep. The only ones who don’t sleep are the ‘righteous’ among the accused....” (Nudelman, *Gelekhter durkh tremn*, 94).

28. YIVO library (Jewish DP periodicals collection), reel 1/1, *Landsberger Lager Cajtung* 11 (21 December 1945), article by Baruch Chita, “Di Wajs-Bloje Fon Iber Strajchers Palac” (p. 4). The newspaper, written in Yiddish, was printed in Latin letters (since there was no Hebrew type at the time) and was transliterated in accordance with Polish pronunciation.

29. Leo Schwarz, *The Redeemers* (New York: 1953), 100.
30. Examples found in the USHMM photo archives include photo no. 38309 (political demonstration at the Wetzlar DP camp) and photo no. 96435 (protest at the Neu Freimann DP camp).
31. Nudelman, *Gelekhter durkh treyn*, 42.
32. YIVO, 294.1 (Leo W. Schwarz papers), reel 1/1, *Landsberger Lager Cajtung* (22 March 1946).
33. Leo Srole, quoted in Elliot S. Horowitz, *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton: 2006), 91; Toby Blum-Dobkin, "The Landsberg Carnival: Purim in a Displaced Persons Center," in *Purim: The Face and the Mask*, ed. Shifra Epstein (New York: 1979), 52–59.
34. YIVO, RG 294.2 (DP camps and centers in Germany), MK 483, reel 61/753, "Poster from Landsberg for a Workers' Purim Carnival in Landsberg" (15 March 1946).
35. Abraham Klausner, *A Letter to My Children from the Edge of the Holocaust* (San Francisco: 2002), 108.
36. Found in Saul Touster (ed.), *Survivor's Haggadah* (Philadelphia: 2005), 8; originally published by the U.S. Army in 1946.
37. *Ibid.*, 62–63. I am grateful to Atina Grossmann for this suggested addition, which was made as a comment to a wonderful panel on Jewish humor at the 44th annual AJS conference in Chicago (18 December 2012).
38. See Shirli Gilbert, "'We Long for a Home': Songs and Survival among Jewish Displaced Persons," in Patt and Berkowitz (eds.), *We Are Here*, 289–307. Gilbert notes, for example, that Henny Durmashkin, who survived the war in the Vilna ghetto and elsewhere, recorded in her memoir this snippet from a song that she wrote while in the Fürstenfeldbruck DP camp: "UNNRA, JOINT and ORT/Hand us tiny crumbs./and butter their own bread/with tidy sums" (found in Durmashkin-Gurko, "Songs to Remember," in *Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance 1939–1945*, vol. 3, ed. Isaac Kowalski [New York: 1986], 631).
39. See Gilbert, "'We Long for a Home,'" 296–297. Text of "Es benkt zikh nokh a heym" (We Long for Home) in USHMM photo archives, photo no. 3184, courtesy Henry Baigelman.
40. Durmashkin-Gurko, "Songs to Remember," 629–630, cited by Gilbert, "We Long for a Home," 307 (n. 31).
41. YIVO, RG 294.1 (Leo Schwarz papers), reel 46/1214, Henny Durmashkin, Munich (August 1949), "Joint'l."
42. *Ibid.*, 1217, Henny Durmashkin, "Chwil Cajten andere [I want different times]."
43. *Ibid.*, 1236.
44. Nahma Sandrow, *Vagabond Stars: A World History of Yiddish Theater* (Syracuse: 1996), 354.
45. YIVO, RG 294.1 (Leo Schwarz papers), reel 35/1034, letter from JDC child welfare officer Millicent Diamond (International Children's Center on Chiemsee in Kreiss Rosenheim) to Celia Weinberg (JDC 5th district director) regarding visit of Herman Yablokoff (19 July 1947). Yablokoff's tour led to a United States Army Certificate of Merit and to the discovery of his niece, the only survivor among all his European family. See online source at milkenarchive.org/people/view/all/754/Yablokoff,+Herman (accessed 26 January 2015).
46. See Angelika Konigseder and Juliane Wetzl, "Displaced Persons, 1945–1950: The Social and Cultural Perspective," in *Post War Europe: Refugees, Exile and Resettlement, 1945–1950* (Gale Digital Collection, online at www.gale.com/DigitalCollections); see also *idem*, *Waiting for Hope: Jewish Displaced Persons in Post-World War II Germany* (Evanston: 2001), 121.
47. Jacob Biber, *Risen from the Ashes: A Story of the Jewish Displaced Persons in the Aftermath of World War II* (San Bernardino: 1990), 27.
48. Sandrow, *Vagabond Stars*, 354.
49. YIVO (Jewish DP periodicals), reel 1/4, *Hemshekh*, article by Baruch Graubard, "The 'She'eit Hapleitah' Stage in Yiddish Theater," 21.
50. YIVO, RG 118 (German theater after liberation), box 26.
51. Graubard, "The 'She'erit Hapleitah' Stage in Yiddish Theater," 26.

52. YIVO, RG 294.1 (Leo Schwarz papers), reel 46/1207, article by A. Dornfeldn, “Humor and Satire.”

53. *Ibid.*, 1239. Tamar Lewinsky dates publication of the journal to September 23, 1949 (or 1950, according to Schwarz); see Lewinsky, *Displaced Poets: Jiddische Schriftsteller im Nachkriegsdeutschland 1945–1951* (Göttingen: 2008), 210–211.

54. Moshe Zilberberg was indeed a Zionist leader in Feldafing—in all likelihood, he actually did end up in Massachusetts, where a relative of his was living. See Mankowitz, *Life between Memory and Hope*, 82 and YIVO, RG 294.1 (Leo Schwarz papers), reel 46/1246.

55. YIVO, RG 294.1 (Leo Schwarz papers), reel 46/1251, “Letter from Munich to New York.”

56. *Ibid.*, 1246.

57. *Ibid.*, 1250.

58. YIVO, RG 294.2 (DP camps and centers in Germany), reel 62/492.

59. Nudelman, *Gelekhter durkh trern*, 222.

60. See Tamar Lewinsky, “Dangling Roots? Yiddish Language and Culture in the German Diaspora,” in Patt and Berkowitz (eds.), “*We Are Here*,” 327.

61. Lewinsky, “Dangling Roots,” 327, citing Shmerke Kaczerginski, “Bitokhn, amkho!” in *Shmerke Katsberginski ondenk-bukh* (Buenos Aires: 1955), 425.

62. Baruch Graubard, *Geven a sheyres-hapleyte: notitsbukh fun Moyshe Yoslen* (Munich: 1949). The satires previously appeared in the Po’ale Zionist newspaper *Bafrayung*.

63. The name Yankl Batlan literally meant “Yankl the impractical” or “Yankl the idle”; Dr. Kopegeh may have been a play on kopeck, a coin worth one-hundredth of a Russian ruble.