

The grey Jewish establishment of shopkeepers and petty dealers spat the Jewish intelligentsia organically out of itself: this mass left not the slightest room for intellectual activity on its plateau of immobility. It drove such activity away, and if a Jewish writer, seemingly by force, did at one or another time attempt to bring a Jewish intellectual into the *shtetl*, he was eventually obliged to turn him either into an impractical speculative thinker or into a solitary outcast there.

This circumstance was an extreme sign of unique, 'perfectly Jewish' immobility — the signifier of a preserved life that was 'complete' and 'had no need' of improvement of any kind from a new progressive element, whatever it might be, that called itself intellectual — the *shtetl* no longer had anything more to learn from its own intelligentsia.

At first this attitude limited the possibilities of the new Yiddish literature: the intellectual was left with nothing more than a bare outline — an outline that could very often be dynamic, meandering, but without any connection whatever to the life around it.

In general, this monochromatic Jewish life has slipped into the new Yiddish literature a monochromatic grey material that excludes the colourfulness of classes, and consequently narrows to the point of choking the Yiddish prose writer's full range of expression, and almost completely restricts his intuitive selection of types. An average shopkeeper, a poor shopkeeper, a rich shopkeeper, a broker — everything revolves around trade. One keeps his merchandise at home, another keeps it elsewhere, a third is forever running round it and never looking at it, but all belong to the same way of life, to the same class. With such a dearth of colouring, the Yiddish prose writer very often found himself in the position of a chef who is given the same raw ingredients day in and day out, and is then ordered to prepare a tasty new dish from them every time. This has resulted in limited talents dying out among Jews immediately after their first prose work; only graphomaniacs or exceptionally great masters who could synthesize well were able to survive and leave many volumes behind them.

For example, during the course of his whole life, Sholem Aleichem's luminous eyes saw on the Jewish horizon nothing more than four types: the broker, the worker, the Jewish orphan, and the harried Jewish housewife. All the rest of his types, apart from minor exceptions that are no measure of his creative ability, were not new, but a new synthesis of the old Tevye with the old Menakhem-Mendl and Motl the cantor's son.

The same can be said of the Yiddish poets whom the monotonous gelidity of Jewish life drove away, just as it generally drove away the Jewish intellectual. The Yiddish poet, one might say, was that capable, banished intellectual who, instead of going off to what was alien, went off into himself, into moods of solipsism — this is particularly true of our new poets in America.

But now Yiddish literature in Soviet Russia has entirely different perspectives.

From year to year, the class shift of the Jewish population, the inescapable

imperative to productivization dictated to it by the socio-political attitudes in the country, destroys more and more of grey Jewish monochromatism and fills Jewish life with ever more colours.

Perhaps Russia is not the only country that has given the Jews equality before the law. Jews also have equality before the law in America and, on paper, in other countries as well. Jews have always cried out, 'We want equality before the law', but the great majority intended to do nothing more than utilize this legal equality to strengthen their position as a socially monochromatic trader class. Equality before the law meant being able to keep the shop open whenever one wanted to, both on the Sabbath and on Sunday; it meant being freely able to send one's children to alien schools and alien universities; it meant not bearing any creative responsibility oneself.

Soviet Russia is, however, the only country that gives not solely on paper, but with an iron hand and in full consciousness demands also that the equality she gives be used. She demands that Jews select from among themselves a stratum of farmers, an army of workers, ranks of her own teachers and officials, Jewish schools and technical colleges, Jewish judges, Jewish lawyers, Jewish Soviets with Jewish militias, Jewish agronomists, Jewish departments in the universities, Jewish scholars and professors, Jewish leaders and government ministers. She unites the Jewish intelligentsia with the Jewish masses, she analyses and paints grey Jewish life with a kaleidoscope of colours, and consequently she also creates new Jewish possibilities for the new Jewish artist.

Somewhere there on the steppes occupied by Jewish farming villages, somewhere at the machine in the factory or in the workshop of the Jewish craftsman, this new Jewish artist is already ripening. Following sunrise and sunset behind the plough, filing his way between running rails of iron and steel, returning home from his work — everywhere he finds himself, he pauses in thought for a moment, and fills his eye with the surrounding colourfulness of newly flourishing Jewish life. Colourful fertilization, the song of labour and of self-sacrifice for world liberation — this will be the content of the new Yiddish book he will write; this will be the content of the new Jewish art in Soviet Russia.

Well, and what about destruction, the destruction of the Jewish majority who are deeply affected by the declining Jewish *shtetlekh* and have been shoved out of their economic position by the new way of life?

Certainly, the new Jewish artist will also see destruction around him, unavoidable destruction crying to the heavens — the full severity of the law, the rod of social justice, poverty and need, fearful cries of woe against violent death — all this, but with the perspective of a new, young regeneration, with a more assured hope of a steady, slow — perhaps very slow — renewal.

Soviet Russia is a revitalized powerful country which will not permit itself to be enslaved, a country with natural riches that wants to and must build itself up. It is filled with a constructive lust for life, it has need of countless building hands, and for the ruined Jewish masses, for all those that have hands to assist this work, the future is bright and glowing.