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Yiddish and Relation To The German Dialects

Bryan Witmore
University of South Carolina

YIDDISH AND ITS RELATION TO THE GERMAN DIALECTS

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Bryan Witmore

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Accepted by:

Kurt Goblirsch, Director of Thesis

Lara Ducate, Reader

Lacy Ford, Senior Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

In an attempt to balance the complex, multi-component nature of Yiddish with its more homogenous speech community – Ashekenazic Jews –Yiddishists have proposed definitions for the Yiddish language that cannot be considered linguistic in nature. Instead, Yiddish is often seen as a cultural phenomenon. Closely related to the issue of what Yiddish is, is how Yiddish came about. This paper addresses these two issues by comparing Yiddish to German dialects in an attempt to demonstrate Yiddish's linguistic proximity with German and also to approach a hypothesis for the origins of Yiddish.

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INTRODUCTION

YIDDISH STUDIES AND ITS HORIZONS

In his book *Yiddish: A linguistic introduction,* Neil Jacobs claims that Yiddish originated in the German-speaking lands by some estimates as early as the 9th Century CE (45). But, like many historical facts about Yiddish, the exact timing and place of origination remains a mystery. The origins of Yiddish have thus been a topic of intense scholarly debate for a number of reasons. The complexity of the language invites analysis from practitioners of multiple disciplines. Linguistically alone, Yiddish draws on Slavic, Germanic, Romance, and Semitic languages. Yiddish studies are even more complicated and obscured by historical realities. The Holocaust, for instance, cast a long shadow over the emergence of Yiddish studies in the 20th Century. Essentially, the first Yiddishists wanted to distance Yiddish from German because of the tense relationships that persisted between Yiddish and German speakers after World War II (Jacobs 5). The legacy of the Holocaust haunted Yiddish studies to the extent that early Yiddish scholarship adopted a narrative of separation between German and Yiddish, despite the clear linguistic and historical connection between the two languages. To tell the story of the origins of Yiddish, one of the key scholarly tasks was to navigate the tense political environment that surrounded German-Jewish relations.

Of premier importance for early work on Yiddish are the contributions made by Max Weinreich. His work *History of the Yiddish Language* is a seminal work in the field, and was actually published in Yiddish originally. Everyone involved in Yiddish studies,

especially those working with the topic of Yiddish origins, must engage with Weinreich's thesis In essence, Weinreich thought the origins of Yiddish were in the Rhineland, in a strip of land that derived from Lothringen the name Loter. The major Jewish settlements in this area were found in Speyer, Worms, and Mainz. To prove this thesis, Weinreich evaluated the linguistic components of Yiddish, concluding that the Romance element was a mixture of Judeo-Northern French and Judeo-Northern Italian, languages that Weinreich terms "Loez" (1-3). The German element that Weinreich takes for original is West Middle German. Thus Weinreich posits a later addition of Slavic elements to enter Yiddish after the time of its essential formation. As for extra-linguistic evidence, Weinreich takes into account old texts written by the Jewish communities of Worms in particular. He also considers the presence of Yiddish among Jews in Northern France; the scholar Rashi, for instance, has Yiddish glosses appear in his works (6). In summary, Weinreich saw Jewish communities migrating to Loter from Northern France and Italy, settling in the cities along the Rhine: Speyer, Worms, Mainz, Cologne, and others. These communities then branched out eastward until in the 19th Century, Yiddish was spoken from France to Russia.

Weinreich defines Yiddish as a "fusion language" (29). By using this term Weinreich begins to unfold an interpretive nexus composed of culture and linguistic material to shed light on Yiddish. What he means to indicate by the term "fusion language" is that Yiddish is its own language. Yes, it has component parts that correspond to other existing languages: German, Hebrew, Romance, and Slavic languages. But, Yiddish resists definition as a whole through a sum of its parts. Instead, as Weinreich intends with his nomenclature, Yiddish is a language system in and of itself,

albeit one that appropriates material from other distinct language systems. To understand component parts of Yiddish, the linguist must allow Yiddish to define the program. Take, for example, the semantic difference between German *Buch* and Yiddish *buch*. Both lexical items have a similar signifier, but because of the existence of the Hebrew-Aramaic term *sefer* in Yiddish that denotes a holy book, the semantic domain of *buch* is limited to secular reading material. Because an analogous term in German is lacking, German must employ the adjective 'holy' to differentiate between the two (Weinreich 30-32). So, in this instance, if one defined the German component of Yiddish exclusively in terms of German, then *buch* would receive a semantic domain that Yiddish does not extend to it. The term would no longer be Yiddish.

All in all, Weinreich's work created a trend in early Yiddish studies that limited the impact of German in the formation of Yiddish to the German component of Yiddish, not the language as a whole. Instead of seeing Yiddish as a German dialect or as a derivative language, practitioners of this mode of Yiddish study establish Jewishness as the guiding principle of Yiddish development and definition. Solomon Birnbaum, in his *Yiddish: A Survey and Grammar*, is a good example of this. Birnbaum follows Weinreich in his definition of Yiddish. Birnbaum attempts to demonstrate that the Jewishness of Yiddish should serve as its basis of definition. To do this, Birnbaum surveys the various understandings of Yiddish as reflected in the titles assigned to it historically. He finds that Yiddish has been assigned the titles of 'mixed language', 'creolized', 'corrupted', 'jargon', 'dialect', and 'Judeo-German'. Yet each of these titles assigns Yiddish a derivative or dependent status that does not comport with the overarching Jewish milieu of its origin. Birnbaum settles on 'Jewish language' as the appropriate title for Yiddish.

This is largely true. Yiddish is distinctly Jewish. It originated with and developed within Jewish minority communities in Europe. Yiddish is also a language as it is an "oral and written means of communication and expression of a clearly defined cultural group" (Birnbaum 3-8).

But, Birnbaum also tries to fit Yiddish within the context of other Jewish languages that developed in Europe and Northern African among the Jewish diaspora. According to Birnbaum, Yiddish shares with Dzudezmo and Loez in an unbroken chain of Jewish tradition that links these disparate languages with the languages of ancient Israel (9-15). The framework of Jewish languages does describe a major sociolinguistic factor that went into shaping Yiddish. Whether or not the Jewish factor provides an adequate criterion for defining the various languages spoken by Jewish communities is contestable. Ultimately Birnbaum singles out one sociological factor as the basis of his definition for Yiddish, where a linguistic definition would take the sociological and the specific phonological, morphological, and syntactic features into account. Thus grouping Yiddish with Loez on a minimum because of their shared Jewish milieu seems linguistically arbitrary.

But, Jacobs fleshes out the Jewish language hypothesis in greater detail. He notes that there are four types of Jewish language: 1) languages that mirror a coterritorial language but with Semitic elements, 2) calque languages that relexify the Hebrew scriptures, 3) ones that share identity with a coterritorial language and its majority status, and 4) languages that emerge from an uninterrupted chain of Jewish languages. The Jews who developed Yiddish spoke Loez, their ancestors likely spoke Yavanic (a language originating with Greek), and so on back to spoken Hebrew (Jacobs 6-7). The goal behind

such an assessment is to place Yiddish within a larger linguistic tradition. As a language tradition then, Yiddish is inseparable from its Jewish cultural milieu.

Weinreich's concept of a "fusion language" and Birnbaum's concept of a "Jewish language" work together. These concepts insist that Yiddish is both an amalgamation of many languages, and yet not the sum of its parts. Instead, Yiddish operates according to its own internal cultural criteria that are inseparably linked to Judaism and specifically that particular interpretation and practice of Judaism among the Jewish communities of Central Europe. But, as a language system, Yiddish must be understood in terms of its phonology, morphology, and syntax. This paper will argue that, in large part, Yiddish most closely resembles certain German dialects in its phonological features. Yet, this demonstration will be undertaken with the understanding that the German dialects alone do not fully describe the phenomenon of Yiddish. The advantage the perspective from the German dialects gives is that it enables Yiddish linguistic material to be classified in a way that aligns with traditional linguistic analyses and groupings of languages.

An initial study of Yiddish and its origins unearthed an issue pertaining to Yiddish's German dialect of origin that this paper will investigate. The phonological evidence seems to suggest that Yiddish employs consonant features of both West Middle German and those of East Middle German and Bavarian. This paper will attempt to answer the questions of Yiddish's closest dialect affiliation in an attempt to show that 1) due to the proximity of Yiddish linguistic features to a variety of German dialects, Yiddish can be linguistically analyzed to fit within the Germanic languages, and 2) that Yiddish does in fact originate with East and South German dialects.

To attempt to demonstrate these points, this paper will compare Yiddish linguistic features of phonology with German dialect descriptions from German speech islands in Italy, as well as the dialects of Austria, Bavaria, East Franconia, and Thuringia. The following chapter will first present the sociolinguistic background of Yiddish. In an attempt to chart the trajectory of Yiddish, this chapter will also include a history of Yiddish that traces its development through the stages that Weinreich terms the Early, Old, Middle, and New Yiddish periods. Following the history of Yiddish, the language features of Standard Yiddish and, where necessary, the Eastern dialects will be compared to select German dialects. The second chapter will compare Yiddish phonology to German dialect phonology with a focus on the vowel system. The third chapter will present the consonant system of Yiddish in comparison to that of the German dialects. Finally, the findings of this investigation will be summarized and conclusions as to the origins and classification of Yiddish will be drawn.

CHAPTER 1 THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC ORIGINS AND HISTORY OF YIDDISH

As we have seen, Yiddish should be considered a part of a language tradition that extends diachronically and synchronically, connecting Yiddish to other Jewish languages. This chapter will consider the sociolinguist origins of Yiddish by surveying the history of Jews in Medieval, Early Modern, and Modern Europe.

Michael Brenner provides a helpful overview of significant events in the lives of Medieval Jewish communities in his book *Kleine Jüdische Geschichte*. According to Brenner, Judaism spread into Europe as a consequence of Alexander the Great and his conquests and program of Hellenization (41). The rise of Rome and the reorganization of the Mediterranean's government also played a role here. Jews first Hellenized and then Romanized, moving West with the shifting centers of world powers. Rome expanded into Europe as Ancient Greece had not. This gave Jews access to the continental interior. By 321 CE evidence of a synagogue in Cologne emerges. But for centuries there is not any material evidence of Jewish settlements along the Rhine. They seem to have receded with the vanishing Roman Empire. The next documentary evidence of Jewish people in German territory is the testimony of Karl the Great's court documents. These describe a Jew named Isaac who served as the king's emissary to Bagdad in 801 CE (Brenner 103). Some argue that this earliest phase of Jewish presence in German lands begins the history of Yiddish.

The Jewish population was sparse during the times from about 800 to 1250 CE, also known as the Early Yiddish Period. Most Jews lived in Muslim territory, while the largest Jewish minority in Christian territory was located in Byzantium (Brenner 103). Ashkenaz, the Jewish term for German territories, was a backcountry outpost in the Jewish world. Here the culture of Ashkenaz developed as did its language, Yiddish. But as a religious minority, Jews faced a number of social challenges. Jews had few rights, although in the 11th and 12th Centuries they were taken under the emperors' direct care (Weinreich 178). The Emperor's protective arm, however, also had the negative effect of placing the Jews in a class of their own. They enjoyed distinct advantages over the common serf, such as access to the courts. Jews stood out for both their religious practices and their legal status.

Jews occupied a tenuous place in medieval society, a place of uncertainty and marginalization that remained their lot until World War II. The first large-scale persecution of Jews began with the Crusades in 1096. Rights for Jews were curtailed and taxes were levied for religious non-conformity. Furthermore, the IV Lateran Council of 1215 contained a Papal decree that banned Jews from public office and from being seen in the streets on Easter. It also decreed that Jews wear clothing that clearly identified them as Jewish. Not all of these laws came into force immediately, but they clearly show that anti-Semitic sentiments were on the rise in Europe. And indeed, Jews were blamed for calamities large and small thenceforth (Brenner 104-107).

These significant social changes and events that impacted Jews in the Middle Ages also influenced the development of Yiddish. Perhaps the greatest force influencing language in this period is that of forced migrations. During the Middle Ages Yiddish

came into contact with more varieties of German and began to spread into Slavic speech territories. Franz Beranek in his article "Jiddisch" recounts that Jews began to migrate towards Eastern Europe beginning around the 13th Century (1962). Indeed, by 1500 the cultural and population center of Ashkenaz had shifted to Eastern Europe. This period is known as the Old Yiddish period. During this time, as Weinreich would argue, Ashkenaz expanded to Slavic lands, but also south into northern Italy. The basic foundation of the German component of Yiddish was solidified, and Yiddish speakers received the Tiberian vocalization of Biblical Hebrew through an influx of Babylonian scholars, a period which Weinreich calls the "Babylonian Renaissance" (726).

The period immediately following the Old Yiddish period is the Middle Yiddish period. Its beginnings can be traced to a momentous event in Ashkenazic life. Rabbi Jacob Pollack moved from Germany to establish his Talmudic school in Poland. This single event gave the Eastern Ashkenazim the religious legitimation they needed to be self-sufficient. The Middle Yiddish period is marked by spiritual movements that effectively separated Eastern Europe's Judaism from Western Europe's (Weinreich 724). This precipitated a population shift in which the whole Yiddish speaking population spread out to what would be its largest territorial occupation, from Russia to France (Jacobs 45). Dialects developed during this period in concert with this new population distribution. An increase in geographic dispersion led to the growth of language distinctions that came to characterize Yiddish dialects. All in all, five distinct dialects began to develop during the Middle Yiddish Period (Birnbaum 95). Four of the dialects will be dealt with below.

The dialects are designated by geographic distribution of vowel realizations. Western Yiddish is distinguished from all eastern dialects by its realization of Proto-Yiddish /ei/ as a long monophthong /a;/. The Eastern dialects, Central Yiddish, Southeastern Yiddish, and Northeastern Yiddish all retain a diphthong in this instance. Proto-Yiddish /ei/ is realized as /aj/, /ej/, and /ej/ respectively. Where Western Yiddish has *fla:sh* 'meat', Central, Southeastern, and Northeastern Yiddish have *flajsh*, *flejsh*, and *flejsh* respectively. Another key vowel realization that distinguishes the dialects is that of Proto-Yiddish /å:/. In Western Yiddish this vowel is realized as /o:/ as in *blo:zn* 'blow'. In Central Yiddish this is rendered *blu:zn*, in Southeastern Yiddish, *bluzn*, and in Northeastern Yiddish *blozn*. Together, Proto-Yiddish /ei/ and /å:/ are sufficient to make this four-way distinction (Jacobs 32-33).

The 18th Century witnessed the advent of the Enlightenment and the beginnings of Jewish assimilation into German culture. For Yiddish-speaking Jews this period was known as the Haskalah. For language historians, it is called the New Yiddish period. It was a time of transition characterized by even more pronounced separation between Eastern and Western European Jewry (Birnbaum 95). The West was far more progressive in terms of assimilating to the surrounding non-Jewish cultures. In a context where cultural integration was the goal, Yiddish lost any prestige it had and was seen only as a relic of traditional, separatist Judaism. The East, on the other hand, held onto Yiddish and many of the trappings of what had traditionally defined Ashkenazic Jewry (Jacobs 10). The conservative Chasidic movement in the East answered the Haskalah in the West. In the East, old styles of writing were retained and loan words from New High German were limited to bureaucratic domains (Weinreich 459).

The population of Yiddish speakers was somewhere around 12 million at its peak in the 19th Century. This equaled or surpassed the contemporaneous populations of Irish, Czechs, and Dutch (Beranek 1960). New colonies of Yiddish speakers were being built in Palestine and in the Americas. But, this period also witnessed the most horrific episode in Jewish history. With the rise of Nazi Germany and the events of the Holocaust, Ashkenaz was indelibly changed. Jews from France to the Russian front were uprooted and strewn all over Europe. Many fled before German troops arrived, and added their numbers to the well-established diaspora communities over seas. But sadly, 11 million European Jews died in the Holocaust. This drastic demographic loss and reassembly played a significant role in shaping Yiddish today. Luckily for Yiddish studies, Max Weinreich escaped Europe with his son Uriel, both of whom advanced the discipline in the United States of America. What is known as standard Yiddish today is a compromise language that is composed largely of the Northeastern Yiddish dialect. This dialect seemed to be favored by Weinreich and other academics who took on the task of standardization. The dialect area where Weinreich started The Institute for Jewish Research, the major think-tank behind the standard language, was in the heart of the Northeastern Yiddish territory. But, some other Eastern Yiddish dialect features also remain in Standard Yiddish (Jacobs 287-288).

Despite the tragic loss of an inestimable wealth of Yiddish speakers, the Yiddish that contemporary linguists still have access to remains of vital importance for understanding Yiddish and its origins. By looking at features of Yiddish, linguists can make fairly reliable claims about the language's origins.

Weinreich, for instance, supports his theory of Yiddish's origins by linguistic evidence that points to a Rhineland provenance (1-3). The linguistic data that influence Weinreich's conclusion on this matter is the presence of Loez words in the Yiddish vocabulary and the presence of non-affricated manifestations of German /p/ such as *epl* and *kop* that indicate a partial Old High German consonant shift, a feature present in some Rhenish dialects of German. From the presence of these Loez words, the unaffricated German /p/ in medial and final position, and with corroborating historical evidence, Weinreich determines the Rhineland to be the location of Yiddish's origins. He also concludes that the original Yiddish speakers must have developed Yiddish on a Loez substratum. As evidence for this, Weinreich points to the Loez words that persist across dialects in the Yiddish lexicon. In this way, Weinreich connects linguistic features to historical Jewish demographic shifts (438-439). This has become a long-standing theory, and is still used in depictions of Central European Jewish history today. Brenner, for instance, posits exactly the same story of origins (102).

According to Weinreich's theory, the problem of the Loez component is solved; it was the original language of the Jews who moved to the Rhineland. His theory also makes sense of the seemingly jumbled mass of Yiddish's German component parts. Because the northern Rhineland was in a transitional linguistic zone where traits of both Low German and High German coexisted, it seems that both Low German and High German elements could also coexist in Yiddish's phonemic system. Furthermore, the historical evidence also corroborates Weinreich's theory. The earliest suspected Yiddish linguistic fragments come from the Rhineland communities. The Worms *Mahazor* from 1272, for instance, contains the first suspected sample of Yiddish (Weinreich 6). Also,

early Ashkenazim maintained that their ancestors did indeed first arrive in the Rhineland via Northern Italy and Eastern France (Brenner 101).

Despite the prominence of Weinreich's theory, most recent scholarship challenges his proposed origins of Yiddish. These scholars point out problems with Weinreich's emphasis on the Loez elements of Yiddish, provide alternative explanations for the unique features of the German component of Yiddish, and emphasize the importance of the Slavic element to the origins of Yiddish.

Paul Wexler, for one, opposes Weinreich on the significance of the Loez component. In "Reconceptualizing the Genesis of Yiddish in the Light of its non-Native Components," Wexler argues that the "Judeo-Romance substratum is far less important than Weinreich… imagined" (135). In the light of emerging research in the areas of Judeo-Greek and Judeo-Slavic, the Loez hypothesis becomes suspect. There are four distinct problems with the Loez hypothesis: 1) the Age of Loez elements in Yiddish is not established, 2) Middle High German also shares many Yiddish Romanicisms, 3) there was possible Jewish presence outside of the Rhineland in Anhalt, Saxony, and Bohemia at the time of Yiddish's origin, and 4) Jewish populations from Northern Italy through the 8th Century would likely have been Greek-speaking like the coterritorial Italian population (Wexler 136).

Wexler goes on to write that Judeo-French elements have localized realizations; mostly Yiddish speakers in the Rhineland use Loez terms. By contrast, non-German elements that are first present in Bavarian and East Franconian diffused over the whole of the Yiddish speaking population (Wexler 137). Wexler concludes that there must have been two distinct Jewish communities in German lands, one Romanized in the Southwest

and one Hellenized and Slavicized in the Southeast. Because of the Southeastern community's broad linguistic influence and because of Western Yiddish's close proximity to German, Wexler argues that Yiddish originated in Bavaria and Western Yiddish has a different story of origins altogether (Wexler 140).

Leo Fuchs further corroborates Wexler's hypothesis. In his article "The Romance Elements of Old Yiddish," Fuchs points to archeological evidence that places a continuous Latin speaking community in the Rhineland through to the 10th Century. On this basis Fuchs argues that a Latin-speaking Jewish community lived in the Rhineland since the time of the first archeological finds of Jewish settlements there: 4th Century CE. Fuchs argues that this Jewish community adopted German after Latin became irrelevant for interpersonal communication. This hypothesis would explain the existence of the Romanized element of Western Yiddish and support the view that the Western Yiddish speaking population is unique (Fuchs 24-25).

An initial analysis of the German component in Yiddish yields similar historical conclusions. The German linguistic contribution to Yiddish is by far the largest and most significant. As Weinreich writes "the German component is the largest in quantity; there is no corner of the language, be it sounds, forms, words or word combinations, in which we do not encounter German fusion material" (418). And while the figures Beranek reports may not be entirely accurate, he lists the vocabulary contribution of German to Yiddish as high as 70% (1967).

When and where Yiddish adopted its German material is still much debated. Evidence suggests that Yiddish began to take over Germanic linguistic material as early as the Old High German period. In support of this claim, Alice Faber argues in

"Ashkenazic Whole Hebrew and Ashkenazic Origins," that the Ashkenazic [s] realization of Biblical Hebrew /t/ could be explained by the Old High German consonant shift which affected "post vocalic voiceless consonants" (19) In the article "Pre-War Theories on the Origin of Yiddish," the Russian Yiddishist Veynger makes a similar claim based on widespread evidence in Yiddish of the Old High German consonant shift, although Middle High German could have made the same contribution (64). Other historical evidence previously mentioned certainly corroborates this claim.

But, the time of Yiddish's origin is not as highly debated as its location. Most significantly, the study of the German component of Yiddish helps establish the place of Yiddish origin. Dovid Katz links the German component of Yiddish to Bavarian and East Franconian in his article "Proto Dialectology of Ashkenaz" (47). Weinreich keyed West Middle German as the original component dialect of Yiddish, but many linguists now disagree (438). Dovid Katz summarizes the dissenting group's argument when he writes "nobody has found points of congruence with Rhineland dialects of German" (55). Also, if Ashkenaz began in West Germany, one would expect Southwest German dialect features to appear in Yiddish. But, this is simply not the case (Jacobs 15). Instead, linguists have found a large correspondence of Yiddish's German component with Bavarian and East Franconian (King 80-82).

Yiddish resembles Bavarian and East Franconian both phonetically and morphologically. Yiddish devoices /b, g, d/ before /l/, for instance, much like Bavarian, but unlike other German dialects. Yiddish has worlds like *gupl* and *neipl* where standard New High German has *Gabel*, *Nebel* (Beranek 1968-1970). Vowels in Yiddish were also unrounded: German *über* was realized as *iber*. The umlaut present in German 2nd and 3rd

person strong indicative verbs was lost in Yiddish just as in Bavarian: *du trägst, er trägt* was realized as *trogst, trogt*. Apocope also occurred in Bavarian and Yiddish during the Middle High German period; Middle High German *bloume, tage* became Yiddish *blum, tag* (Jacobs 16).

But, Yiddish also evidences the lack of the Old High German consonant shift in how it realizes /p/, unlike Bavarian and East Franconian, but similar to West Middle German. Where New High German affricates /p/ initially, medially, and finally, Yiddish does not. New High German has *Pferd, Apfel, Kopf*, whereas Yiddish has *ferd, epl, kop*. In terms of vowels though, Yiddish does follow the East Franconian pattern. The Middle High German pattern of monophthongization can be seen in Yiddish and East Franconian: /ie, üe, uo/ became Yiddish /i, u/. Yiddish also retained full vowels in unstressed prefixes like East Franconian; New High German *bekommen* is realized as *bakumen* (Jacobs 16-17). Yiddish also mirrors East Franconian realization of Middle High German /ei/ and /ou/ with the long monophthong /a:/ (Weinreich 439-445).

In terms of morphology, Yiddish also seems to align with Bavarian in the pronouns it uses, in its diminutive formation, and in its plural markings. Robert King argues this point based on Proto-Yiddish plural markers in his article "Proto Yiddish Morphology." King also notes that not much work has been done in this area of study other than correlating Yiddish and Bavarian second person singular and plural pronouns *ek* and *enk*, and the Yiddish use of the Bavarian/East Franconian diminutive /l/ and intensive diminutive *–ele* (73). What King finds is that Yiddish has six ways to mark plurals: 1 – with the ending *–n*, 2 – with umlaut, 3 – with the ending *–er* accompanied by an umlaut if the accented vowel is a back vowel, 4 – no marker, 5 – with the ending *–im*,

and 6 – with the ending *–s*. The final two markers are easily correlated to Hebrew-Aramaic masculine and feminine endings. The first four, however, show strong affinity to the pluralization morphology of Upper Bavarian. King also argues that these morphological features were realized both in Yiddish and Bavarian by the same processes: apocope and preservation of *–en* (73-78).

This phonetic and morphological evidence strongly indicates Bavarian as the originating dialect for the German component of Yiddish. Besides the evidence from the German component of Yiddish, the Bavarian hypothesis has the added support of placing Yiddish origins in a region where contact with Slavic languages was possible. Weinreich, on the other hand must explain the Slavic elements as an accretion beginning in the 13th Century with the mass migrations of Yiddish speakers to Eastern Europe. But, Yiddish syntax and the widespread impact of Slavic aspect on Yiddish argue for a fundamental role of Slavic language in the formation of Yiddish (Weinreich 33)

Most likely then, Yiddish was born within the Jewish communities in the eastern and southern German territories. This geographical designation would have encompassed East Middle German as well as Bavarian dialect areas. Yiddish was influenced strongly by those German dialects and the other languages occurring along the Danube in the early Middle Ages. With good probability, it seems, the settlements of the Rhineland and the language that developed there was a distinct language from Yiddish. With the proximity of Yiddish to eastern German dialects, it seems most probable that Yiddish began in Bavarian speaking lands and expanded westward and eastward to include the Rhineland and the Netherlands. In its northward and eastward journey, Yiddish extended into Russia and from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Finally, Yiddish traveled overseas to Palestine and

the Americas in diaspora communities. Nathan Susskind would even argue that for such humble origins, Yiddish grew and changed to become the most significant Jewish language to ever exist (128-129).

With these general features of Yiddish in view it seems that the best place to being for a comparison between Yiddish and the German dialects would be with Upper Bavarian and northwards along the eastern frontier of German speaking territory. Upper Bavarian and the speech island of Lusern will be of particular interest here. Middle Bavarian may also prove beneficial for analysis as it occupies the area of the Danube corridor. East Franconian clearly has some phonological similarities to Yiddish, and thus will also serve as a point of comparison. Thuringian will serve as an interesting point of comparison as it is a solid Middle German dialect, and not as tainted by Bavarian as East Franconian. Finally Western Bohemian will be considered as it represents, like Yiddish, a mixed dialect by how it appropriates elements of various Middle and Upper German dialects.

CHAPTER 2

THE YIDDISH VOWEL SYSTEM IN COMPARISON TO THAT OF THE GERMAN DIALECTS

The Vowel Phonemes

Standard Yiddish has eight vowel phonemes: the monophthongs /a, e, i, o, u/ and the diphthongs /ej, aj, oj/. The monophthongs are opposed in these examples: *nas* ‘wet,’ *nes* ‘miracle,’ *nis* ‘(I) sneeze’ or ‘nuts,’ *nos* ‘sneeze (noun),’ *nus* ‘nut’; the diphthongs by *vejn* ‘wine,’ *vajn* ‘cry,’ and *vojn* ‘to reside’ (Jacobs 90).

As mentioned above, the Standard Yiddish langue in general corresponds to Northeastern Yiddish. This is true of the vowel system as well. A major correspondence is evident in the lack of phonemic length oppositions in Standard Yiddish and Northeastern Yiddish. All other Yiddish dialects have some form of vowel length distinction (Jacobs 92).

In contrast to the state of things in Yiddish, the German dialects analyzed here all display phonemic vowel length. Moreover, the southernmost German dialects also display a vowel system that exceeds that of Standard Yiddish. In the dialect of Lusern (Luserna, Italy), the contrast of length is present between /a: ~ a/, /e: ~ e/, /i: ~ i/, /o: ~ o/, and /u: ~

u/. This particular dialect also boasts a broad range of diphthongs, although it seems as though Bacher is listing the entire inventory here, and not just the phonemic diphthongs, the dialect of Lusern contains the following: [oa, öa, ai, au, aü, ea, ia, ua, üa]. Unlike the monophthongs in the dialect of Lusern, the diphthongs seem to have variation of umlaut only, not of length (Bacher 161). All the diphthongs in Lusern are classified as falling diphthongs; they have an initial stress followed by a short vowel in a weak position.

In the relic dialects of the high valleys of Tirol, Eberhard Kranzmeyer recorded the vowel system as one not highly differentiated from the surrounding dialects. It seems safe to assume then, that in the relic areas in Tirol a similar state of vocal affairs exists as that of the Lusern dialect. Kranzmeyer, however, does note three vowel features that make this dialect unique. The first of these is the preservation of MHG final e; the second is the preservation of vowel color in the MHG prefix *ge-*. If a *j*, a nasal or liquid, or any consonant appears after the prefix, the MHG vowel *e* > *i*, or *ĩ*: *giiükxt* 'itched', *gĩmoxt* 'did' (Kranzmayer 1960: 171). The third distinctive feature of this relic region's vowel system is the manner of articulation of /ü/ and /ö/. These fronted vowel sounds are formed purely by tongue position and not by tongue position accompanied by a rounding of the lips as in the *Bühnenaussprache* (Kranzmayer 1960: 175).

In Primus Lessiak's account of the dialects of Carinthia, the vowels are not given as having a clear opposition of length. For an inventory, Lessiak lists [i, ö, e, a, u, o, ə, iə, ea, oa, uə, æi, au, oi, ui] all without length distinction (11). Lessiak writes about vowel length as highly variable and not reducible to categories of long or short. In his words, "die ursprünglichen (historischen) unterschiede zwischen kürze und länge haben einem völlig neuen, phonetischen princip weichen müssen. Wenn ich im allgemein von 'kürze'

und ‘länge’ rede, so sind darunter nicht irgend welche absoluten grössen zu verstehen” (Lessiak 39). Instead of a length distinction, Lessiak proposes a relative scale for vowel assessment. How vowels appear and form within syllables is more important to Lessiak than how one might assess a vowel without a context. Lessiak thus describes the vowels as being lengthened or retained in opened syllables, while in closed syllables, Lessiak writes of shortening or retention of shortness (39-40). Indeed, the syllable seems to be the starting point for Lessiak’s assessment of Carinthian vowels.

In a related topic, albeit a somewhat removed one, Anton Pfalz addresses sound combinations in the Middle Bavarian dialect of the Marchfeld. Here Pfalz notes that the vowels of the Marchfeld dialect were transformed. The historical sound clusters *ail, aul, al, ol,* and *ul,* changed into a number of diphthongs. For instance, *ail, aul,* and *al* became *æü*, while *ol* became an *oi*, and *ul* became *ui*. Related, yet working towards monophthongization, *el, il,* and *ül,* became *ö,* and *ü* respectively (1911: 246-247). Pfalz gives no mention of vowel length in this particular case. But, he does give an inventory of vowels, which seems to indicate the existence of a length distinction in the Marchfeld dialect. These are [i, į, e, ę, ü:, ü, ö:, ö, o:, o]. Along with this length distinction, it seems as though at least [ea, ia, oa, ua] can be added to this dialect’s inventory (Pfalz 1911: 245). Furthermore, Pfalz find the same vocal situation in East-Middle Bavarian as in the Marchfeld dialect (1936: 16-17).

Moving northward, Hans Batz investigates the Bamberg dialect with a similar methodology as that of Lessiak. Here Batz evaluates the syllable structure to ascertain the distinction between vowels. He does include a historical component in his analysis, charting the vowel development of MHG *a, â, ou, ei* > East Franconian [a]. Batz also

charts the development of MHG *ei, ou* > [a:] (9). But, aside from this Batz argues that there are five degrees of vowel distinction based on types of syllables occurring in Bamberg. The first of these is the extra-long syllable. These syllables occur when a syllable is accented and closed, as in *šlo:x* 'hit', and *ro:t* 'wheel'. The second of these is normal length, which occurs in MHG open syllables: *šwooxə* 'brother in law', and *šlooŋ* 'to hit'. The third of these is shortness, which is apparent in closed, accented syllables: *fådə* 'father', *maxŋ* 'to do'. The fourth degree of vowel distinction is half-shortness, which is apparent in final syllables, unstressed syllables, and in enclitic and proclitic pronouns: *nå:ma* 'name', *haiən* 'to marry', *ic ge:* 'I go', *dåŋ ge: i* 'then I will go'. Extra-shortness is the fifth degree of vowel distinction, and happens with vowel epenthesis as in the cases of *såərɪc* 'coffin', and *dolɪc* 'dagger', where an *ɪ* occurs between the liquid and stop. This also happens when *ə* is standing in for *–er*: *boərɪŋ* 'to borrow', *wuəšt* 'sausage', *di:ə* 'you (dative)'. As Batz notes, this changing of *–er* to schwa is a feature characteristic of this dialect. Long consonants, however, do not appear in this dialect, and thus cannot influence syllable structure (Batz 7).

Unlike East Franconian, Northeast Thuringian underwent a different vowel development. Otto Kürsten and Otto Bremer chart this development as changing MHG *i:, u:,* and *iu*, to the diphthongs /aə/ and /ao/. Northeast Thuringian also monophthongized the MHG diphthongs *ei, öu,* and *ou* to [e:] and [o:] (Kürsten 2). Just like Batz' view on East Franconian, Kürsten sees in Northeast Thuringian five grades of vowel distinction: extra-long, long, short, semi-short, and extra-short (11-12).

Extra-long syllables are closed with a long vowel, or open with a long vowel: *hu:d* 'hat', *a:l* 'eel', *be:n* 'leg', *he:m* 'home', *o:x* 'also', *sa:* 'say', *ha:* 'have', *glo:*

‘complain’ cf. Standard German *klagen*. Long syllables are open medially occurring syllables with an accented long vowel: *wa:xn* ‘cart’, *ga:we* ‘to give’, *la:we* ‘to live’, *he:we* ‘to lift’, *re:xl* ‘rule’. Long syllables also occur as closed unaccented syllables with long vowels: *graŋke:d* ‘sickness’ cf. Standard German *Krankheit, gugu:k* ‘yu-hoo’. Short syllables are when a short vowel appears in an open syllable medially or finally: *fale* ‘to fall’, *bele* ‘pill’, *lox* ‘hole’, *dax* cf. Standard German *doch, lo:fe* ‘to run’, *gaiwe* ‘sheef’, *tsa:ne* ‘ten’. Diphthongs also compose short syllables with each part of the diphthong contributing a short vowel: *haos* ‘house’, *aes* ‘ice’, *laede* ‘people’, *blaue* ‘to turn blue’, *mae* ‘May’, *ae* ‘egg’ (11). Half-shortness appears in the second part of the diphthongs except when in final position. It also occurs in unaccented syllables before the main stress: *haos* ‘house’, *aes* ‘ice’, *betsa:le* ‘to pay’, *gefa:le* ‘to please’, *tsaráese* ‘to tear’, *fara:de* ‘to betray’, *lawándx* ‘alive’, *harjexn* ‘Lord Jesus!’ (12). Extra-shortness appears when a vowel is inserted: *khorəb* ‘basket’, *khaləx* ‘chalk’. Just like East Franconian, there are no long consonants in Northeast Thuringian (12).

In his research into the dialects of Western Bohemia, Heinrich Gradl lists an extensive sound inventory for the Western Bohemian dialect of Nordgau. Gradl detects in this territory the sounds [a, e, ë, i, o, ö, u, ü, a:, æ, e:, i:, o:, œ, û, iu, ei, ie, au ~ ou, aü ~ öu, uo, üe] (34-97). From this presentation, it seems clear that the Nordgau dialect has distinctive length. Like the other German dialects, it also seems as though the vowel inventory is quite expansive. Gradl maintains that vowels are long before simple consonants and short before consonant clusters or forits consonants. In old single syllable words, however, the vowel was stretched before hard consonants and consonant clusters. But, if a single syllable word was created by apocope, then the consonant becomes hard

again and the vowel shortens. There are also in-between categories that Gradl describes as ‘unterlang’ and ‘überlang’ which may compare to the categories of ‘short’ and ‘extra-long’ proposed above (99).

Diphthongs

Yiddish has both rising and falling diphthongs. These are made up of a vowel in combination with a glide, either *j* or *w*. Jacobs notes that the presence of a rounded glide in a given dialect often corresponds with the presence of distinctive vowel length (93). Western Yiddish and Central Yiddish have /ou ~ au/ and /ou/ respectively while Northeastern Yiddish and Southeastern Yiddish both lack diphthongs with round glides, as well as distinctive vowel length.

Of interest here is how Northeastern Yiddish treats historical glides. Diachronic *w* becomes *v* intervocalically: Proto-Eastern Yiddish *zauər* becomes Northeastern Yiddish *zaver* ‘sour’. Word-final *w* is deleted as Proto-Eastern Yiddish *blou* > Northeastern Yiddish *blo* ‘blue’. But, if a vowel initial suffix is added, *w* reappears as *v* as in *blo* > *blovər*. The round glide will also be substituted by *j* before a consonant as in Proto-Eastern Yiddish *haut* > Northeastern Yiddish *hojt*. Northeastern Yiddish also inserts glides to break up vowel sequences. Glide insertion happens when the first vowel in a sequence is a full vowel. Where Standard Yiddish has *oə* as in *toəs* ‘mistake’ or *rəfuə* ‘remedy’, Northeastern Yiddish has *oj* in *tojəs*, *rəfujə*. Glide insertion also occurs to break up hiatus: *id* ‘Jew’, but *di-j-idn* (Jacobs 93-94).

Glides in Southeastern Yiddish – the other dialect without distinctive vowel length – act differently than those in Northeastern Yiddish. In Southeastern Yiddish, glide

hardening does occur: *w* > *v* intervocalically. And, *j* is used to break up hiatus much like it is in Northeastern Yiddish. Southeastern Yiddish, however, does not regularly substitute or insert glides like Northeastern Yiddish does (Jacobs 95).

Central Yiddish on the other hand has distinctive vowel length, and therefore is not motivated to avoid a vowel-vowel sequence. Central Yiddish thus does not delete, insert, harden, or substitute glides. The only situation that Central Yiddish needs to avoid is vocal over-length: a three-mora sequence. Central Yiddish maintains a *w* in the second part of diphthongs and in monosyllables.
Thus *bo:x* 'belly', *ho:s* 'house,' and *aro:s* 'out' can all be analyzed as [bowəx], [howəs], [arowəs]. This happens with *j* as well in the following situations: *hojx* > [hojəx] 'high'. This is important as breaking and drawl only affect vowels. With the appearance of these processes operating on Central Yiddish glides, it seems that interpreting glides as vowels is appropriate for this dialect. Other evidence to support this analysis comes from the lack of *–l* diminution after *j*, where all other consonants permit *–l* diminution (Jacobs 96-97).

When comparing the dialects of German with those of Yiddish some continuity and some discontinuity emerges. Both Yiddish studies and German studies seem to be interested in the nature of a diphthong. As Jacobs presents above, some Yiddish dialects seem to invite a vowel + consonant evaluation of a glide, while other seem to use diphthongs as a vowel + a vowel.

Debates about diphthong assessment are just as common in German linguistics. While the studies cited here seem to present a united interpretation of diphthongs, this is far from the case. Kranzmayer, for instance, presents the dialects of the Tirol relic areas as having overlong syllables composed of geminates and diphthongs: *hoəßßn* 'heißen',

šlouffn ‘schlafen’, *šprouxxe* ‘Sprache’, *raxxn* ‘rauchen’, *kxrouppfn* ‘Krapfen’, *hoəttßn* ‘heizen’ (1960: 178-179). Yet, he does not suggest that this extra-length somehow informs the consonantal or vocalic nature of the second part of a diphthong. Lessiak, on the other hand, seems to voice the majority opinion when he asserts that *j* is vocalic for the Carinthian dialect of Pernegg. He illustrates this point by demonstrating that *j* conforms to the vowel color of proceeding vowels: *üunkx* ‘young’, *öokkl* ‘Jacob’, *iösəs* ‘Jesus’, and *ee:gr* ‘Hunter (name)’. Lessiak uses the sign of *i* to refer to the non-syllabic ‘palatalvokale’. As for non-syllabic *u*, Lessiak assigns it to the second, non-stressed part of an original *Zwielaut* as in *ma-ur* ‘wall’ (12). Gradl seems to agree with this assessment as well when he writes that “der am Ende von *i*-Diphthongen zu einem folgenden Vokale hinüberleitet, gehört noch zum *i* und braucht nicht geschrieben zu werden” (143). Batz’ treatment of the dialect of Bamberg, which has the unique feature of diphthong length, does not provide any further illumination here. His simple proposition is that both component parts, except for in /a:i/, and /å:i/, are short (10). Kürsten and Bremer’s assessment of Northeast Thuringian is identical in that they maintain that diphthongs are composed of two short vowels (11).

For a more in-depth discussion of the evaluation of diphthongs, a look at N.S. Trubetzkoy’s book *Grundzüge der Phonologie* and the surrounding discussion may prove instructive. In this book, Trubetzkoy proposed three phonetic criteria and three phonological criteria for evaluating phonemes. Towards evaluation as a unit phoneme the phonetic criteria are as follows: 1- No part of the sound divides between syllables, 2- The sound’s duration does not exceed that of other phonemes, and 3- The sound is produced by a homogenous articulatory movement (Trubetzkoy 56-57). The German diphthongs

easily fit all of these criteria. They never split between syllables, they have a similar length to long vowels, and there is an unmistakable gliding motion of the articulatory apparatus in their production – diphthongs are produced with one motion. Yet, these criteria only assess the diphthongs phonetically, and do not assign them a phonemic value. As Trubetzkoy writes, "not every diphthong of movement has to be evaluated as monophonemic" (57). Yet, Trubetzkoy feels comfortable stopping with this evidence, and determines that the German diphthongs should be considered unit phonemes.

Yet, the question of Trubetzkoy's three phonological criteria remains. This is where debate arises. Norbert Morciniec challenges Trubetzkoy's evaluation of the diphthongs as unit phonemes by insisting on the applicability of Trubetzkoy's phonological criteria. These criteria are: 1-Sounds that appear where the language allows no phoneme clusters should be considered unit phonemes, 2- A sound should be considered a unit phoneme if this evaluation produces symmetry in the language's phonemic inventory, and 3- A sound must be considered a unit phoneme if a component part of that sound cannot be interpreted as a variant of another phoneme.

Morciniec argues for the applicability of all Trubetzkoy's phonological criteria with varying emphasis. He especially emphasizes the diphthongs' composition of two phonetic elements calling them "Lautverbindungen" (62). This is important for Morciniec as he uses this fact to evaluate Trubetzkoy's third phonological principle as it applies to the German diphthongs. The first element of the diphthongs [ɑ, ɔ] are clearly the phonemes /a/ and /ɔ/. But, the second component parts [ɪ, ʊ] are unique in their non-syllabic combination. Morciniec argues that these are combinational variants of /i/ and /u/ which are also realized as [j] when preceding a vowel (Morciniec 64). If this assessment

were correct, then the diphthongs would not of necessity be considered unit phonemes, but biphonemes.

Morciniec also argues for the diphthongs' evaluation as a biphoneme. To do this, he looks at the function of the diphthongs as presented in the minimal pairs *Greis*: *Graus*, *aus*: *Eis*, and *Eule*: *Eile*. He notes that the second component parts of the diphthongs in the first two cases function as the smallest elements of sound that differentiate meaning, and that the first component of the last pair distinguishes meaning. Morciniec concludes that the diphthongs' component parts distinguish meaning and that they are therefore to be considered biphonemes (63-64).

In support of Morciniec's position, the evaluation of the diphthongs as biphonemes would appeal to Trubetzkoy's second phonological criteria – such an evaluation would indeed create symmetry in the phonemic inventory. But, Morciniec' assessment of the non-syllabic [ɪ, ʊ] as variants of /i/ and /u/ may be problematic.

Pavel Trost picks up on this problem, and argues that such an assessment may need to be constrained by Trubetzkoy's first phonetic principle, namely that unit phonemes never divide between syllables. Trost argues that the non-syllabic [ɪ, ʊ] only occur after accented [ɑ, ɔ] and always form syllables with [ɑ, ɔ]. The syllable structure of German would be complicated if they were formed as vowel plus vowel and vowel plus consonant (Trost 548-549).

Scholars in this field do not clear up the debate either. In fact, while George Heike feels comfortable assigning biphonemic status to affricates, he refrains to comment on any conclusion the diphthong debate may have. Heike's last sentence addressing the diphthongs simply hints at his leaning toward the unit phoneme: in the "Stadtkölner

Mundart" no parts of the diphthongs correlate (43). Another hint at Heike's leaning may be his definition of the diphthong: "unter Diphthongen versteht man auditiv wahrmehmbare artikulatorische Bewegungen innerhalb *eines* vokalischen Silbenkerns" (43). Alongside Heike, Werner Otmar seems to side with a unit phoneme evaluation; he includes diphthongs as unit phonemes in his phonemic inventory (23). Fox also supports a unit phoneme assessment of the diphthongs (43).

But these scholars also mention some interesting information in support of a biphonemic assessment. Werner, for instance, notes that "a German word cannot be composed of a single vowel, but one can be composed from a diphthong (Ei)" (33). He goes on to mention that "four consonants can follow a single vowel (Arzt, where z= /ts/), but only three can follow a diphthong maximally as in *einst*" (33). Similarly, Richard Wiese cites Moulton's 1956 work that demonstrated diphthongs to be "phonotactically equivalent to the sequence of a short vowel plus a long consonant" (15). Fox mentions that analyzing the diphthongs' final /i/ and /u/ as consonants would make diphthongs conform to the existing syllable model of vowel plus consonant. The negative side of this, however, is the creation of two consonants that do not correspond to any freestanding consonant in the German language (Fox 45).

In short, scholars seem to lean towards assessing the diphthongs as unit phonemes. Yet, this is still just a tendency. Those working with German diphthongs all seem to agree with Werner when he writes, "Eine eingehende phonemische Klärung steht aber noch aus" (35). Related to Werner's sentiment, Fox writes that any system of phonemics will be a system based on scholarly compromise (46). The debate is one of shifting opinion that has yet to be settled.

With the abovementioned tension operative in both German and Yiddish linguistics, it seems best to move onto phonetic comparisons and functions of glides within each language system. As stated above, Yiddish displays a correlation between distinctive length and the presence of a rounded glide *u*. Yiddish also demonstrates glide hardening when a vowel ending is butted against a glide. Finally, Yiddish *j* also serves to break up hiatus.

In the German dialects there is no discernable correlation between phonemic vowel length and the presence of a *u* glide. This is because all the dialects of German have a *u* glide and a phonemic vowel length distinction. In the dialect of Lusern, Bacher describes the diphthongs [au, aü, ua, üa] as present. Bacher also describes the vowels of this dialect as being short or long (161). Similarly, Lessiak cites the dialect of Pernegg as having the diphthongs [uə, au, ui] (11). While Lessiak does not commit to analyzing the vowels of this dialect as simply long or short, he does assert that a system of length is in place in this dialect, even if that system has more degrees of shading (Lessiak 39-40). Gradl also records the dialect of Nordgau as having a length distinction as well as rounded glides in diphthongs. These are presumably [iu, au ~ ou, aü ~ öu, uo, üe] (34-97, 99). Batz also records the dialect of Bamberg as having a phonemic length distinction (9). This, however, does not correlate with a lack of a *u* glide. The Bamberg dialect at least has the diphthong /au/ (10). The lack of a correlation between a *u* glide and phonemic vowel length in the German dialects appears simply because the conditions for such a correlation do not exist.

As for the feature of glide hardening that Jacobs notes in Southeastern and Northeastern Yiddish, the German dialects do seems to show some correspondence.

Lessiak notes that in Carinthia, *j* becomes [g] in some instances, such as *širgŋ* 'to sue', *friəgr* 'earlier', and *fœigl* 'next to' (158). Kranzmayer also notes that in the relic areas of Tirol the same phenomenon occurs as in Northeast Yiddish. In the high valley Tirol dialects, *plo* 'blue' occurs without *–w*, but when a vowel initial ending is placed on the adjective, the form *a plowər* 'a blue one' is formed. Apparently the relic areas of Tirol keep alive what was common in MHG: *blâ-blâwer* (Kranzmayer 1960: 183). Similarly, in the dialects of Western Bohemia, Gradl notes that *j* is only retained initially and only in loan words. The most common adaptation of *j* is a shift to [g] in all positions of this dialect (Gradl 143). Batz also records a similar phenomenon is the Bamberg dialect. Here *j* becomes [c] after [i] as in *faicala* 'violet (botanical)' (Batz 34). Kürsten and Bremer also record the dialect of Northeast Thuringia as shifting *j* to [g]*: garmid* cf. Standard German *Jahrmarkt* 'yearly market'. But, *j* also becomes [x] after [r, l, n, v]: *ladwarəxe* 'lozenge', *liləxe* 'lily', *bedrseləxe* 'parsley', *khadšdanəxe* 'chestnut', *khafx* < MHG *kävje* 'cage' (Kürsten 41).

As for the ways that the German dialects break up hiatus, they do some divergence from the way in which Yiddish does so. For example, Lessiak notes that in Southern Bavarian, the old MHG *ê* and *ô* were diphthongized to be [ea, oa]. Furthermore, *l* and *r* remained unchanged. This is not the case in Northern Bavarian dialects. Here, the *l* developed post-vocalically into an *i*-like sound, while *r* changed post-vocalically before consonants and in final position to schwa. From there this schwa came to serve as a way to break up hiatus (Lessiak 7). From this analysis, it seem that Northern Bavarian dialects do have a way to break up hiatus, the means that they employ seem to differ from those of Yiddish.

Yet Lessiak also points out that in Carinthia, glides do play a role in breaking up hiatus, just like in Yiddish. For instance, the examples *du(u)a* 'you too', and *du(u)engl* 'you angel' both display the used of a rounded glide to break up hiatus (Lessiak 23). Furthermore, the words *fo-ir* 'fire', *læ-ir* 'lyre', *ša-ur* 'shower', *frœi* 'free', *pau* 'building', and *noi* 'new' all display the use of glides intervocalically (Lessiak 43).

Unlike Southern Bavarian dialects, East Franconian does not seem to employ a glide to break up hiatus. Instead, Batz records the Bamberg dialect as using an *n* for this purpose: *duni* cf Standard German *tue ich* 'I do', *braune* < MHG *brâwe* 'brow'. This *n* is also inserted after conjunctions and before the pronoun *sie* 'you (plural)': *dåsnsi* 'that you'. This *n* also assimilates to place of articulation of previous consonants; with the conjunction *op*, *n* becomes *m*: *obmsi* 'if you' (Batz 40). It would seem then, that Yiddish shares more in common with Upper German dialects than with Middle German in this regard.

Nasalization and dental epenthesis

As for nasalization in Yiddish, it is not distinctive in any dialect. Nasalization occurs before a nasal + fricative sequence as in *dinstik* [dĩstik] 'Tuesday,' *kamf* [kãf] 'battle,' *finf* [fĩf] 'five'. But nasalization is not the only strategy for resolving nasal + fricative sequences. Yiddish also employs dental stop epenthesis for this purpose. For instance, *ejn* 'one' has the variations [ẽjs] ~ [ejnts], *ganc* 'entire' varies from [gãs] ~ [gants], and *vonsə*s 'moustache' varies from [võsəs] ~ [vontsəs] ~ [vontsjəs] (Jacobs 98).

Jacobs also argues that Yiddish has a higher frequency of inserting a dental stop under certain phonological conditions than does Standard German. Yiddish, for instance,

has *haldz* ‘neck’, *gandz* ‘goose’, and *mentš* ‘person’ where Standard German has *Hals, Gans,* and *Mensch* . Yiddish also has some phonological outliers that have /t/ or /d/ where phonologically unconditioned – *demolt* ‘then’ vs. German *damals,* and *gəvejntləx* ‘usually’ vs. German *gewöhnlich*. There are also the absence of /t/ where German has it: *ojps* ‘fruit’, *mark* ‘marketplace’, *kunts* ‘trick’ vs. German *Obst, Markt, Kunst*. But these are all instances indicating historical development and not a part of Yiddish synchronic phonology.

One regular epenthesis occurs in the process of constructing the diminutive with syllabic /l/. When this /l/ is inserted at the end of a noun ending with /n/, then a /d/ is inserted to break up the sequence of *nl*. This occurs for such words as *bejn* ‘bone’, *nign* ‘melody’, and *šejn* ‘pretty’ where diminutives are formed as *bejndl, nigndl,* and *šejndl*. This occurs where n and l are temporarily in the same syllable: *bei-nl*. The *d* epenthesis corrects this situation to be *bein-dl*.

A second type of dental stop epenthesis is found between *n* or *l* and a following sibilant: *gandz* ‘goose’ cf. Standard German *Gans, haldz* ‘neck, throat’ cf. Standard German *Hals,* and *mentš* ‘person’ cf. Standard German *Mensch*. This phenomenon, however, may not be related to syllable structure at all. Instead, this dental epenthesis may reflect various historical accretions (Jacobs 127-128).

In unstressed vowels, nasalization occurs when the root ends with a nasal as in *kimən* [kimə̃] ‘come’. Word final *n* in unstressed syllables may also be dropped to create a situation of free variation between [ə] and [ə̃]. But n-deletion does not just occur finally as in *ganvət* vs. *ganvnt* ‘steals’. This uncertainty has led to hypercorrection in

stressed syllables: *štrundl* for *štrudl* ‘strudel,’ *angərəs* for *agərəs* ‘gooseberries’ (Jacobs 99).

The situation with nasals and nasalization in the German dialects seems very similar to that of Yiddish. The dialect of Lusern seems to have similar nasalization patterns as Yiddish, although the motivation for nasalization seems to be somewhat different. In Lusern, when a vowel precedes /n/, it nasalizes: *khũšt, mũs, ũaləvə*. /n/ also assimilates to the place of articulation for preceding consonants as in *vümf*, *mumpfl*, *hampfl* (Bacher 179). But the dialect of Lusern does not seem to have the same interest in coping with a nasal + fricative sequence. Instead, it does seem to try and avoid nasal + liquid sequences. This is evident in the insertion of a homorganic consonant after a nasal and before the diminutive suffix *–lə*: *štemblə, mendlə* (Bacher 170).

Lessiak records the situation in Carinthia as one where nasalization is developed only in a limited sense. For nasalization to occur, there must be a nasal consonant after a vowel. Also, where a nasal has been lost in final position, the preceding vowel does not retain its previous nasalization. This seems to align with the state of affairs of *n* in unstressed syllables in Yiddish. But, Lessiak also records that nasalization is both progressive and regressive: *pãm* ‘tree’, *štãn* ‘stone’, and *nõs* ‘wet’. When the environment contains more than one nasal consonant, the vowel is more heavily nasalized: *nõm* ‘name’ (Lessiak 24-25). This feature seems to differ from Yiddish.

But, where the dialect of Pernegg and Yiddish align closely is in their shared use of epenthesis surrounding nasals. In Pernegg *-nl* > *-ndl* in *andləfe* ‘eleven’, *andlötse* ‘alone’, *woršœindla* ‘possibly’, *špendlin* ‘yellow plum’, *rœindlin* ‘type of cake’, *khondl* ‘can’, *mandl* ‘little man’, *prindl* ‘little fountain’. *–nr* > *-ndr* as in *tondr* ‘thunder’, *sendr*

‘alp’, *mandr* ‘men’, *pandr* ‘leg’, *khlandr* ‘little one’, *šeandr* ‘beautiful one’, *andr* ‘one’, *mœindr* ‘my’, *sœindr* ‘his’. *–lr > -ldr* as in *hildrn* ‘echo’, *fildrn* ‘to stuff’, *tröldrn* ‘to shake’, and *poldrn* ‘to clatter’. *–ml* becomes *-mbl* when both *m* and *l* belong to the same syllable: *himbl* ‘sky’, *šimbl* ‘horse’, *sombln* to collect’, *mumbln* ‘to mumble’, *sembl* ‘bread roll’, *drembl* ‘to beat’. *-nš > ntš* as in *mentš* ‘human’, *wuntš* ‘wish’, *wintšn* ‘to wish’, and *flentšn* ‘flesh wound’. But, *ms* and *ns* do not change: *pemsl* ‘paint brush’, *ploamsuəx* ‘flower hunt’, *gons* ‘goose’, and *hanse* ‘Hans’. There is also sometimes a dental epenthesis between a spirant and an *l*: *tipftl* ‘dapple’, *perštlin* ‘harsh’, *waxtln* ‘to flutter’, and *šaxtl* ‘little forest’ (Lessiak 27-29).

Pfalz observes that the dialect of the Marchfeld has a somewhat similar, but somewhat divergent pattern of nasalization to that of Yiddish and Upper Austrian. Pfalz notes that /m, n, ŋ/ affect preceding vowels so long as the arrangement reflects a historic vowel + nasal pattern. When /n/ occurs finally, it loses its consonant status, and simply assimilates to the preceding vowel: *khõ:* ‘can’, *šõ:* ‘already’, *biĩ:* ‘stage’, *sũ:* ‘son’, *šaĩ:* ‘appearance’. This is observably different from the dialects of Carinthia that drop nasalization along with a final /n/. But, this nasalization pattern in still on the continuum present in Yiddish for nasalization in weak positions. In Middle Bavarian, /n/ between vowels retains its consonant qualities: *mõ:nə* ‘men’, *khĩ:nə* ‘can (able to)’, *šaĩ:nə* ‘to shine’. /n/ also retains its consonant character when followed by a consonant, usually /d/: *wind* ‘wind’, *grũnd* ‘ground’, *bõnd* ‘band’. /n/ is also preserved finally in words such as *brũn* ‘spring’, *i rĩn* ‘I run’, where historically the word ended in a geminate (Pfalz 1911: 245-246). A Unique feature of this dialect may be the instances where /d/ is deleted where /n/ appears finally, such as in *reen* ‘to talk’, *boon* ‘to bathe’, *foon* ‘thread’, *laain*

‘to suffer’, *boon* ‘ground’, *loon* ‘to load’ (Pfalz 1911: 247). Labials force assimilation of nasals. For instance, where a word ends in [pn], this is often realized as [pm]: *gripm* ‘crib’. The affricate /ds/ is reduced to [ns] when an *n* precedes it: *gõ:ns* ‘entirely’, *šwõ:ns* ‘tail’, *dõ:ns* ‘dance’ (Pfalz 1911: 250). [d] also serves as a transitional sound that breaks up *nl* sequences: *mãndl* ‘man (dim.)’, *hendl* ‘chicken (dim.)’, *khe:əndl* ‘grain (dim.)’, *he:əndl* ‘horn (dim.)’, *di:əndl* ‘girl (dim.)’. *m* works regressively in Lower Austrian to inform the place of articulation of preceding consonants. Before m, [d] > [b] and [t] > [p]: *do šde:d mə dsai:dli au:f > do šte:b mə dsai:ldli au:f* ‘one awake early there’, or *en ho:d mentšə gmu:ã > en ho:b…* ‘he had plenty of daughters’ (Pfalz 1911: 252).

Gradl presents the states of nasalization in Western Bohemia where *n* appears as a nasalized vowel or as a consonant. In this dialect, /n/ appears initially, medially before dental stops and between vowels, and finally after *r*: *nauma* ‘name’, *auna* ‘without’, *turn* ‘tower’, *lind* ‘gentle’, *rund* ‘round’, *hent* ‘hand’, *šant* ‘shame’, *winta* ‘winter’, *mantl* ‘coat’, *menš* ‘human’. /n/ is also geminated: *gaunna* ‘crook’, *bunna* ‘bean’, *hanna* ‘hens’. Like Yiddish in some regard, /n/ disappears medially in *fufdsea* ‘fifteen’, *fufdsi* ‘fifty’, *elf* ‘eleven’, *salitta* ‘saltpeter’, finally in *šäi* ‘pretty’, *šai* ‘barn’, *tro* ‘throne’, *dso* ‘tooth’, *dsei* ‘tin’, and initially in *ouš* < MHG *nuosch* ‘canal’, *ardsissn* ‘narcissus’, *awa* or *awrl* < MHG *nebeger* ‘awl’, *iasd* ‘nest’, *ewl* cf. Standard German *nebel* ‘fog’, *ewa* cf. Standard German *neben* ‘next to’, *estl* ‘nettle’. Yet, no nasalization is retained where /n/ is deleted. Like Yiddish and Upper Austrian, /n/ becomes a nasalized vowel after simple vowels: *hĩn* ‘to there’, *dsĩ* ‘tin’, *bĩ* ‘bee’, *kriã* ‘horseradish’, *še* ‘pretty’, *dseã* ‘teethe’, *sã* ‘to be’, *ã* ‘a’, *klã* ‘small’, *bã* ‘leg’. /n/ regularly becomes *ŋ* before all guttural consonants. /n/ also becomes [m] in some exceptional cases: *bimsn* ‘rush (botanical)’, *klumsn* ‘cleft’, *dums*

‘vapor’, *pemsl* ‘paint brush’, *dsam* ‘fence’, *flemma* ‘to sob’. Furthermore, *n* becomes *m* when the deletion of a dental stop places it in contact with a bilabial: *Brambach* < *brandbuoch* (place name), *Limperx* < *lintperch* (place name), *grumbauer* < *grundbauer* ‘gudgeon (fish)’, *hempful* cf Standard German *handvoll* ‘hand full’. Similarly, /n/ becomes [m] before all labials: *fimf* ‘five’, *samft* ‘gentle’, *semft* ‘mustard’(Gradel 111-114). Much like Yiddish, but perhaps to a more limited degree, Western Bohemian inserts a [t] in loan words between nasals and [š]: *puntš* ‘punch’, *pintš* ‘Pintscher (name)’, *trantšian* ‘to carve’, *brantš* ‘sector’(Gradl 130).

Batz also notes some unique features of nasals in the Eastern Franconian. Batz contends that nasalization is not a prominent feature of this dialect. In fact, the nasalized vowels are indistinguishable from non-nasalized vowels (Batz 7). But, this does not mean that Eastern Franconian does not have interesting uses for /n/. For instance, [n] is inserted in order to break up hiatus, as mentioned above. The presence of [n] also reduces [d] to [n] as in *fina* < MHG *vinden* ‘to find’, *ic fin* < MHG *ich vinde* ‘I find’, *hunət* < MHG *hundert* ‘hundred’, *wune* < MHG *wunder* ‘miracle’, *khinə* < MHG *kinder* ‘children’, *anə* < MHG *ander* ‘other’ (Batz 47). It would seem that the Bamberg dialect took a different path from Yiddish in regard to dental epenthesis. Where Yiddish inserts dental stops surrounding nasals, East Franconian seems to simply assimilates dental stops in a nasal environment.

Like Western Bohemian but unlike Yiddish, Northeast Thuringian has *menš* ‘human’ without any evidence of dental epenthesis. But unlike Upper Austrian, this dialect does have a dental epenthesis in *gands* ‘goose’ (Kürsten 45). The variation here

may reflect some underlying historical development that does not allow for neat categorization.

Stress and vowel color

The two main distinctions for Yiddish unstressed vowels are position, either pre-tonic or post-tonic, and schwa derivational status. Yiddish permits more vowel color in pre-tonic position than in post-tonic position. In fact, all short vowels and diphthongs can occur pre-tonically: *i* in [i]*ndústrijə* 'industry', *e* in *h*[e]*fkéjrəs* 'neglect', *a* in *m*[a]*pólə* 'fall', *o* in *k*[o]*ntáktn* 'contacts', *u* in *k*[u]*ndéjsəm* 'pranksters', *ə* in *b*[ə]*héjme* 'cow', *oj* in [oj]*fánəm* 'ways', *ej* in [ej]*rópa* 'Europe', and *aj* in *m*[aj]*xóləm* 'treats'. In dialects where vowel length is phonemic, only long monophthongs are barred from pre-tonic position. These usually shorten to the short monophthongs presented above.

All pre-tonic coloring is derived from the Hebrew-Aramaic and Slavic components of Yiddish or imported with an internationalism. The German component reflects Germanic fixed word stress on the root. Yiddish therefore only has a limited range of vowel coloring for pre-tonic unstressed vowels that derived from its German component. The possibilities for unstressed pre-tonic vowels in the German component are [a], [ə], and [i]. These all occur in inseparable prefixes such as *bakúmən* 'receive', *antlójfn* 'runaway', *farvérn* 'forbid', *cəgéjn* 'dissipate', *dergéjn* 're ach by walking', *gə-*([gi]) *zogt* 'said', and *avék* 'away'. Prefixes *ba-*, *ant-*, and *a-*, show a development different from Standard German and Middle High German, which have *bekommen* and *entlaufen*, and *enwëc* respectively (Jacobs 100).

But Yiddish dialects in general do show a tendency towards reducing vowel color in pre-tonic position, favoring [a], [ə], and [i] for replacements (Jacobs 101). Some dialects drop pre-tonic *ə* all together in favor of innovative consonant clusters: [gnéjvə] for [gənéjvə], [mlámәd] for [mәlámәd], and [lvónə] for [ləvónə]. This does not occur, however, if resulting initial consonant clusters are unacceptable like *tlm-* in the case of *talmídəm* > *tlmídəm*. Yiddish does not reduce pre-tonic unstressed vowels in closed syllables. Yiddish also preserves vowel color before consonant clusters, but reduces to schwa before a consonant-vowel series: *mufkórəm* 'libertines' and *muclóxəm* 'successful people', but *məšəmódəm* 'apostates from Judaism' and *mətərófəm* 'madmen'. But pre-tonic *o* and *u* are maintained in internationalisms: *kusín* 'male cousin', *kusínkə* 'female cousin', *kokét* 'flirt', and *koridór* 'corridor' (Jacobs 102).

Post-tonic vowels are more straightforward. The tendency is clearly towards post-tonic reduction with the exception of internationalisms. While Swedish and Standard German have [a] in *tema/Thema* and [o] in *eko/Echo*, English has reduced the [a] in *Thema* to Ø, but kept the [o] in *Echo*. Yiddish shows the same tendency towards internationalisms. In Yiddish it is *témə* and *éxo*.

But unlike Internationalisms, Slavicisms with post-tonic vowels are generally all reduced to schwa in Yiddish: *blótə* < *błoto* 'mud', *káčkə* < *kaczka* 'duck', and *kójləč* < *kołacz* 'hallah'. Nouns ending with schwa are usually assigned feminine gender, but nouns with a full vowel at the end usually receive masculine gender. This may or may not reflect the degree to which these words are integrated into Yiddish. Non-Germanic vocabulary is allowed some degree of variation in post-tonic vowel coloring, as are contemporary Yiddish toponyms: *gumi ~ gumə* and *tókyo* 'Tokyo'

or *jokaháma* ‘Yokahama’. There is also dialectal variation on how final vowels are realized. Northeastern Yiddish prefers [i] in rendering word-final schwa, whereas other dialects prefer other vowel qualities for schwa (Jacobs 103-104).

The German dialects largely support this assessment of a limited vowel color in pre-tonic unstressed syllables. Indeed, out of the seven or so dialects surveyed here, only the dialect of Lusern and the relic areas of Tirol seem to preserve some pre-tonic vowel color. In Lusern the prefixes *be-*, *ver-*, and *zer-* all became *bo-*, *vor-*, and *zor-*. But, even in this dialect this is somewhat of an exception. The prefix *ge-* for instance reduced to *gə*, and even *zer-* usually reduces to *dər-* (Bacher 169-170). Apart from prefixes, vowels generally weaken to schwa in pre-tonic position, either to *ə* or to a schwa of lower articulation. OHG *also* > Lusern dialect *əso*, MGH *aleine* > *əlũa*, and MHG *dâ(r)niden* > *dənībm* (Bacher 173). In the Tirol relic areas, the MHG prefix *ge-* is preserved, with the realization of the vowel as [i] as in *giiükxt* ‘gejuckt’, *gimoxt* ‘gemacht’, *ginütßt* ‘genützt’, *giläkxt* ‘geleckt’, *giraft* ‘gerauft’ (Kranzmayer 1960: 171).

As for post-tonic vowel realizations the German dialects presented here largely show a tendency towards apocope. In the dialect of Lusern [ə] is only retained after final voiced consonants [b, d, g]: *garbə*, *štaudə*, *štiagə*, *trüabə*, *gerādə*, *khluagə*, *i gloabe*. Also [ə] is retained where an underlying MHG word ended in a voiced consonant: *umə* < MHG *umbə*, *palə* < MHG *baldə*. This dialect further reduces post-tonic vowels by replacing them with syllabic consonants, for instance, *schopən* > *schopm*, *schiabən* > *schiabm* (Bacher 171-172). In general, post-tonic vowels have no color: MHG *–tac* > *tə* as in *wer(ch)tə* or *suntə*, MHG *–woche* > *ə* as in *mitə* ‘Wednesday’, *-lach* > *-lə* as in *lailə*. In some cases the vowels drop out altogether in favor of new consonant clusters: MHG –

feil, -voll > fl, vl as in *wolvl*, *arvl*, *mumpfl*, *hampfl*. MHG *–teil* > *tl* as in *viartl* (Bacher 173). The dialect of Lusern seems to capture the general trend although Eastern Franconian does have instances where full vowels appear in final position: *glai:a* ‘bran’, *lai:a* ‘to lend’, *rai:a* ‘row’, *šrai:a* ‘to scream’, *šnai:a* ‘to snow’, *wai:a* ‘to bless’ (Batz 27).

CHAPTER 3

THE YIDDISH CONSONANT SYSTEM IN COMPARISON TO THAT OF THE GERMAN DIALECTS

The Consonants

Yiddish has a rich consonant system due to the many language systems contributing to Yiddish. In comparison with German, Yiddish employs voicing to a much greater extent. While German /s/ is realized as /š/ before consonants and /z/ before vowels, Yiddish has the oppositions of /s ~ z ~ š ~ ʒ / before consonants and vowels. Yiddish opposes /x/ and /h/ initially as in /xojv/ 'debt' and /hojf/ 'courtyard', whereas Germanic /x/ became /h/ initially, and lost any opposition between /x/ and /h/ initially (Jacobs 108).

Eberhard Kranzmayer's *Historische Lautgeographie des gesamtbairischen Dialektraumes* corroborates Jacob's assessment of the German dialects. As Kranzmayer writes, there are only four sibilants in the Bavarian speech territory. These include a sharp *s* as in Standard German *essen* 'to eat', *Wasser* 'water', and *Fuß* 'foot', a voiced *z* sound as in the Standard *sehen* 'to see', *Hase* 'hare', and *Wiese* 'medow', a voiceless *s* as in *Mist* 'dung', and *Haspel* 'reel', and a *š* sound as in *dreschen* 'to thresh', and *Fisch* 'fish' (Kranzmayer 1956: 88-89). But of most interest here is how the German dialects use voice to distinguish these sibilants and in which environments this occurs. In seems that

Cimbrian does have *z* initially before consonants and vowels: *znaidar* ‘tailor’ ~ *zehen* ‘to see’. But, the voiceless *s* as in *Mist* only appears initially before consonants as in *stoan* ‘stone’, or *spekx* ‘cured ham’. The other two sibilants seem to only occur medially or finally as in *essn* and *wassr*, or in *drešn* and viš. The same extensive use of voicing as is present in Yiddish is absent from Cimbrian. Even in areas where some Slavic influence prompted the adaptation of the sibilants, this led to a convergence of sounds instead of a plurality. For instance, in Slovenian areas of northern Italy and southern Austria, the Cimbrian *zehen* is realized as *žäiγn*, *znaidar* as *žnaidar, misse* ‘mass’ as *mešše*, and *kerssa* ‘cherry’ as *kzaršša* (Kranzmayer 1956: 88). The other dialects surveyed here seem to display a similar sibilant and voicing combination. As for the contrast of /x ~ h/initially, there seems to be no German parallel for this as *x* only appears medially or finally as in the high valley Tirol dialects *moxxn* ‘to do’ and *malxxn* ‘to milk’ (Kranzmayer 90, 94). Although, some Upper Austrian dialects do retain the affricate [kx], this is an unlikely source for Yiddish /x ~ h/ initial distinction as Yiddish does not have /kx/ in its phonemic inventory.

Yiddish consonants are generally distinguished by the opposition of fortis versus lenis or voiced versus voiceless. Some Western Yiddish dialects may have a three-way distinction of voiceless (fortis or lenis) vs. voiced (lenis only). In Eastern Yiddish /p, t, k/ are unaspirated. The /r/ is realized as an alveolar or uvular trill [r/R] depending on the dialect. Palatalized consonants do play a role in Yiddish phonology: *nit* ‘not’ ~ *n’it* ‘brownness (of crust)’, *polkə* ‘drumstick’ ~ *pol’kə* ‘Polish woman’. But, /l’/ and /n’/ are only marginal phonemes in Eastern Yiddish (Jacobs 109-111).

In some Central Yiddish varieties /l/ becomes [l'] before [i] and [e], after [i], after [*j*] in a diphthong, and after [k] or [g]. But this does not hold true throughout Yiddish dialects. Some varieties of Northeastern and Southeastern Yiddish palatalize all consonants before /i/ and /e/. Because palatalization seems to be context dependent, it is difficult to classify palatalized consonants as phonemes. But, [s', t', d', z'] do occur in environments where [s, t, d, z] occur: *kit'kə* 'type of hallah' vs. *mitə* 'stretcher', *s'erp* 'scythe' vs. *sejxl* 'brains'. Still, Jacobs maintains that the functional load of the palatalized consonants is too low to warrant phonemic status. The palatalized consonant are also unstable, sometimes becoming affricates: *tir* 'door' can be [t'ir] ~ [tsir] and *dir* 'you' can be [d'ir] ~ [dʒir] (Jacobs 114).

The German dialects compare more readily to these consonant features. Much like Yiddish, the dialect of Pernegg has fortis consonants /p, t, k/ and voiceless lenis consonants /b, d, g/. Fortis consonants only occur initially, while lenis consonants have a broader distribution and can be elevated to the same strength as a fortis consonant. /d/ has some peculiar attributes in that it always becomes fortis finally after sonorants and when it occurs between sonorants. Examples of this include *khint* 'child', but *khindr* 'children', *šulde* 'guilty', and *fintn* 'to find', but *finde* 'finding' (Lessiak 18). Furthermore, Lessiak posits a system of distinction similar to that of his vowel length distinction continuum. In Lessiak's view, there seems to be a continuum between fortis and lenis, what Lessiak term fortis 1, fortis 2, half-fortis, and lenis (14-16).

Similarly, Pfalz sees the need for a finer distinction between the stops in East Middle Bavarian. He advises that a distinction of fortis and lenis is not longer possible for the Middle Bavarian dialects. The stops series in Middle Bavarian must be considered an

opposition of lenis and semi-fortis. But, in final position, the fortis/lenis distinction is maintained. Historical geminates that moved into final position by apocope are now fortis stops. The former fortis stops in final position became lenis stops. If a lenis stop appeared finally, it either became a homorganic spirant or disappeared. Pfalz also notes that fortis is only possible after a short vowel, lenis only possible after a long vowel (1936: 10, 15).

For East Franconian, Batz notes that /s/ and /š/ are always fortis as are /x/ and /ç/. But, the fortis-lenis distinction is not as pronounced in this dialect because of the almost complete absence of fortis stops. As Batz writes, "die Mundart kennt außer den folgenden zwei Fällen nur die lenes *b, d,* g: nur im absoluten Auslaut werden diese etwas stärker artikuliert, indem ein allerdings ganz leichter Hauchlaut nachklingt; in diesem Falle ist *p, t, k* geschrieben" (12).

Despite some variation in how German dialectologists are crafting a discourse of consonant distinction, it seems clear that they are all working with the terminology familiar to the Yiddish linguist as well. Fortis and lenis are operative distinctions in the German dialects as is voice. In this way, the consonant systems of the German dialects seem to align with Yiddish.

Another point of harmony between the German dialects and those of Yiddish include the use of aspirated /p, t, k/. In the dialect of Lusern, Bacher notes the absence of aspiration for both /p/ and /t/. When describing the /k/, however, Bacher refrains from designating it as unaspirated, but instead describes the sound as having an energy "ungefähr dieselbe wie bei *p* und *t*" (162). It seems that with this statement Bacher is either avoiding the repetitious use of the term 'unaspirated' or he is acknowledging the general High German trend to affricate aspirated /p, t, k/. Regardless, it seems like the

former case is most likely, with the later case not differentiating the dialect of Lusern significantly from Yiddish.

Lessiak does record the presence of an aspirated /k/ in the dialect of Pernegg, however. Yet, this realization of /k/ is limited to initial position only in words like *khots* 'cat', *khuə* 'cow', *khla:n* 'small', *khle:a* 'clay', *khlu:w* 'cleft', *khrieg* 'war', and *khro:gn* 'neck'. Outside of this, /k/ is realized as a geminate, as the affricate /kx/, or as /h/ medially after vowels (Lessiak 144-145).

Quite dissimilar from Upper Bavarian, Middle Bavarian merged the fortis and lenis stop series so that there is no distinction between /p, t, k/ and /b, d, g/ initially. Pfalz maintains that initial stops lost both fortis and lenis qualities, and instead argues for their classification as either lenis or semi-fortis. Yet, Pfalz does present an aspirated /k/ in his consonant system. This is likely the case for Upper Bavarian too, but Pfalz traces the origins of the Middle Bavarian /kh/ to the affricate /kx/ (1936: 10).

As mentioned above, East Franconian only has the lenis, unaspirated series /b, d, g/ initially. In final position, these sounds gain some degree of aspiration and are thus written <p, t, k> (Batz 12).

In terms of *r* realization, the German dialects seem to be in a similar place to those of Yiddish. As Kranzmayer notes, it is difficult to discern if the uvular or alveolar *r* is more original to the German dialects. The uvular *r* exists in all positions in Innsbruck and in parts of Tirol. When Kranzmayer was writing, the uvular *r* was also gaining territory in Steria, Carinthia, and in the larger cities of Austria. It seems that the uvular *r* took up the center of the Bavarian speech territory, leaving the apical *r* in areas in contact with Romance and Slavic languages that share the alveolar *r* feature (Kranzmayer 1956:

121). Batz notes that the East Franconian *r* is heavily rolled and articulated apically (11). And Gradl notes that the *r* in Northeast Thuringian is also alveolar, much like the state of things in East Franconian and parts of Austria (108).

The state of palatalized consonants in the German dialects seems to sharply contrast that of Yiddish. In most of the areas surveyed here, there is a general lack of palatalized consonants. The issue of palatalization does, however, feature in most discussions of German. The point of departure is usually the case of the *ich* versus the *ach* sound. In the first case, the <ch> is palatalized and is pronounced [ç], in the second case, the <ch> represents [x]. In Kranzmayer's treatment of the Bavarian dialects, he notes that the /ç ~ x/ differentiation based on the preceding vowel has largely been thought not to exist in Upper German, but that this position does not take East Franconian into account where palatal and velar consonants are clearly distinguished. Kranzmayer goes on to write that this palatalization is perceivable almost everywhere in the Bavarian speech territory even if current orthography and the extent to which the dialects express this distinction might mislead an observer. Yet, Kranzmayer insists that palatalization is an observable trait in the Upper German dialects. He also seems to think that palatalization is a relic feature, and points to isolated and conservative dialect areas as the strongholds of this feature (Kranzmayer 1956: 71). Kranzmayer also observes that the relic areas of Tirol have the consonants /l', n', k', x'/, and that these consonants previously enjoyed a more general distribution in Southern and Western Austria (1960: 176-177). As for the relic areas of Tirol, Kranzmayer claims that an observer could mistake a [kx] affricate for a [tt] geminate sequence, a geminated [t] for a geminated [k], and an [x] geminate for a [š] geminate due to palatalization: *lükkxa ~ littša, pittn ~ pikkn*,

and *zixxla ~ ziššla* (1956: 71). The story is similar in the speech islands and eastward from Tirol into Burgenland. The date of palatalization is placed in the range of the Old High German and Middle High German periods, between 750-1300 CE (Kranzmayer 1956: 72).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The lack of phonemic vowel length in Standard, Northeastern, and Southeastern Yiddish is unparalleled in German dialects. This can be seen from the speech islands in Italy all the way north to Thuringia. Lusern, for instance, retains a vowel length distinction (Bacher 161). The relic areas of Tirol seem to have distinctive vowel length as well (Kranzmayer 1960: 171). Lessiak proposes a more graded length and shortness distinction for the dialects of Carinthia, but some length distinction exists here regardless of how appropriate the descriptive categories are (39-40). Both Middle Bavarian Dialects that Pfalz analyzes have distinctive vowel length (1911: 246-247; 1936: 16-17). Like Lessiak, Batz sees the need for a five-way distinction of length when talking about the vowels in the Bamberg dialect (7). Kürsten and Bremer see in Northeast Thuringian a similar need for a five-way distinction of vowel quantity (11-12). Gradl also claims that length is distinctive for the dialect of Nordgau in Western Bohemia with only one intervening category necessary (99).

As for the diphthongs in Yiddish and the German dialects, Yiddish presents the following four features of diphthongs: rounded glides correspond to distinctive vowel length, the second element of the diphthong may either be a vowel or a consonant, second elements of diphthongs harden, and glides serve to break up hiatus.

For the German dialects, rounded glides always correlate with distinctive vowel length because there is no German dialect that lacks distinctive vowel length. For the

German dialects this correlation may be a non-starter. Lusern has [au, aü, ua, üa] and phonemic vowel length (Bacher 161). Pernegg has [uə, au, ui] and phonemic vowel length (Lessiak 11). Nordgau also has [iu, au~ou, aü~ öu, uo, üe] along with distinctive vowel length (Gradl 34-97, 99). Even Bamberg has /au/ and phonemic vowel length (Batz 9-10).

The discussion of what constitutes the second part of a diphthong is equally contested in the German dialects, although there does seem to be some consensus among the dialectologists discussed here. Lessiak describes the second part of a diphthong as a vowel (12). Gradl supports this assessment (143). Batz proposes that both component parts of East Franconian vowels are short vowels with some exceptions (10). And finally, Kürsten and Bremer find the same phenomenon in Thuringia (11).

Like Yiddish, glide hardening does take place in the German dialects. In Carinthia /j/ > [g] (Lessiak 158). Yiddish and the relic areas of Tirol even share glide hardening in *plo ~ plower* (Kranzmayer 1960: 183). Gradl notes a general shift of /j/ to /g/ in the dialect of Nordgau (143). In Bamberg /j/ > /c/ after /i/ as in *faicala* ‘violet (botanical’ (Batz 34). Kürsten and Bremer record Northeast Thuringian as displaying /j/ hardening to /g/ initially, and to /x/ after /r/, /l/, /n/, and /v/ (41).

The German dialects have a variety of ways to break up hiatus. Glide insertion is one of them, but not the whole story. Pernegg has glide insertion in *fo-ir* ‘fire’, *læ-ir* ‘lyre’, *ša-ur* ‘shower’, *frœi* ‘free’, *pau* ‘building’, and *noi* ‘new’ (Lessiak 43).East Franconian, displaying another hiatus breaking option, uses /n/ for this purpose in *duni* cf Standard German *tue ich* ‘I do’ (Batz 40).

Nasalization and dental epenthesis in Yiddish have the following features: nasalization is used to reduce a nasal + fricative sequences, dental epenthesis is also used to break up nasal + fricative sequences, and dental epenthesis is also used to break up /n/ + /l/ sequences and /l/ + sibilant sequences. For instance, Yiddish *bejn* + diminutive suffix > *bejndl*, *nign* + diminutive suffix > *nigndl*, as well as *haldz*, *gandz,* and *mentš* (Jacobs 127-128). In unstressed syllables nasalization is dropped to create free variation of nasalization on final vowels.

The German dialects have nasalization, perhaps different motivation for doing so. Lusern nasalizes all vowels preceding /n/ (Bacher 179). Only a limited development of nasalization exists in Pernegg. But, in this dialect, nasalization works regressively and progressively (Lessiak 24-25). In Middle Bavarian, nasalization seems stronger than in Upper Bavarian. In the Marchfeld nasalization remains even after final *n* deletion (Pfalz 1911: 245-246). Gradl observes similar nasalization features to both Upper Bavarian and Middle Bavarian in Western Bohemia. Some final nasalization is retained where *n* is deleted, and some is not (Gradl 111-114). East Franconian displays an understated nasalization of vowels to the point where nasalization makes do discernable distinction (Batz 47).

German dialects use dental epenthesis much in the same way that Yiddish does. Lusern does not use a dental, but a labial epenthesis to break up nasal + diminutive suffix sequences (Bacher 170). Pernegg uses /d/ to break up /n/ + /l/ sequences, /n/ + /r/ sequences, and /l/ + /r/ sequences. Where an /m/ + /l/ sequence occurs, a /b/ is inserted. Where /n/ + sibilants sequences occur, a /t/ is inserted (Lessiak 27-29). Middle Bavarian seems to allow nasal + sibilant series. But, it does not permit /n/ + diminutive suffix

series (Pfalz 1911: 252). Western Bohemian only inserts /t/ between /n/ and /š/ in loan words (Gradl 130). East Franconian seems to be an outlier in that it deletes dentals in nasalized environments (Batz 47). Northeast Thuringian seems to be fully mixed, having both presence and absence of a dental between /n/ and /š/ (Kürsten 45).

In unstressed environments, the German dialects seem to evidence the same kind of variety of nasalization as Yiddish. In Pernegg, where a nasal is lost, so too is nasalization (Lessiak 24-25). In the Marchfeld where *n* occurs finally, it is assimilated into a nasal vowel (Pfalz 1911: 245-246). Western Bohemia shares the same pattern of free nasalization variation with Yiddish, with both retained and lost nasalization after final *n* deletion (Gradl 111-114).

Stress and vowel color in Yiddish is broken down into two parts by relative position to the main stress: pre-tonic and post-tonic. In pre-tonic position, Yiddish allows all short monophthongs, and all diphthongs. In post-tonic position Yiddish only allows schwa, with the exception of some internationalisms.

The German dialects only allow a limited range of vowels in pre-tonic position. Lusern does retain /o/ in prefixes, but the tendency is to reduce to schwa in pre-tonic position (Bacher 169-170). Tirol relic areas do preserve vowel color in the prefix *gi-* < MHG *ge-* (Kranzmayer 1960: 171). In post-tonic position, however, the German dialects show a tendency towards apocope, leaving room for no vowel color in post-tonic position. Lusern only retains a schwa after [b, d, g], and replaces schwas with syllabic consonants (Bacher 171-172). Eastern Franconian does preserve a lengthened /e/ finally as well as a short /a/, but this is not representative of the trend (Batz 6, 27).

As for the consonant features covered here, Yiddish has a greater degree of voice oppositions than German, including /s~z~š~ ž/ and /x~h/ (Jacobs 108). Yiddish also has the distinctions of fortis versus lenis, or unvoiced fortis/lenis versus voiced lenis. Yiddish also has unaspirated /p, t, k/. Both alveolar and uvular trill are found in Yiddish dialects. Yiddish also has palatalized consonant phonemes

In comparison, the four sibilants in the Bavarian speech territory do not pattern like those in Yiddish (Kranzmayer 1956: 88-89). /x/ and /h/ do not pattern like Yiddish either. As for fortis, lenis and voice distinctions, Pernegg has fortis /p, t, k/ and lenis /b, d, g/ (Lessiak 14-16, 18). East Middle Bavarian has a fortis/lenis distinction in final position only (Pfalz 1936: 10, 15). East Franconian does have a fortis/lenis distinction (Batz 12).

Aspiration of the voiceless stops looks slightly different in the German dialects. Lusern has unaspirated /p, t, k/ (Bacher 162). But, Pernegg has an aspirated /k/ in initial position (Lessiak 144-145). Middle Bavarian also has this aspirated /k/ (Pfalz 1936: 10). East Franconian may have aspirated fortis /p, t, k/ finally (Batz 12).

/r/ is both uvular and alveolar in the Bavarian speech territory (Kranzmayer 1956: 121). East Franconian has alveolar r (Batz 11). Northeast Thuringian also has alveolar r (Gradl 108).

In the German dialects there is a general lack of palatalized consonants. The *ich* versus *ach* sound is the common point of departure for palatalized features in German. This distinction does, however, exist in Upper German dialects (Kranzmayer 1956: 71). Relic areas of Tirol have /l', n', k', x'/, which may have enjoyed more general distribution in the Middle Ages (Kranzmayer 1960: 176-177).

Conclusion

The bulk of Yiddish phonological data surveyed here has a close affinity to that of the German dialects. In fact, there are only a few points of divergence that can be summarized quickly. Yiddish seems to differ most from the German dialects in four of the features explored above. The lack of distinctive vowel length is one such feature, but one that is not so drastic. After all, the lack of distinctive vowel length is not a pan-Yiddish phenomenon, and the German dialects can be seen to have vowel length distinction in common with Central and Western Yiddish. The amount of vowel color, on the other hand, seems to differentiate Yiddish from the German dialects substantially. The oppositions possible in Yiddish also distinguish it from the German dialects. And finally, the palatalized phonemes in Yiddish also set it apart from the German dialects on the whole.

But, the traits that Yiddish shares with the German dialects include nasalization before /n/, the assimilation of /n/ to a nasalized vowel, the use of dental epenthesis to break up sonorant clusters, the distinction of fortis and lenis for consonants, an unaspirated stop series, use of uvular and alveolar /r/, and, in the case of Tirol relic areas, the shared use of palatalized consonants.

As to the dialect with which Yiddish seems to have the most affinity from a phonological standpoint, it seems easy to pinpoint the Upper Bavarian and relic areas and perhaps even the Middle Bavarian dialects as sharing the most in common with Yiddish. This does not, however, mean that Yiddish originated with these dialects, but that they at least share a common ancestor. The affinity is most strongly pronounced in the patterns of nasalization, in the retention of some vowel color in pre-tonic position, the presence of palatalized consonants, and the fortis/lenis consonant distinction.

As for grouping Yiddish with these dialects, it seems possible on the linguistic grounds provided here. But, this study has not included large swathes of linguistic material that could confirm or complicate such an evaluation. Not even all phonological features have been explored in exhaustive depth here. Furthermore, morphology has been excluded from this study completely, as has syntax, a field in which there may be more divergence than convergence between the German dialects and Yiddish. For a comprehensive analysis of the place of Yiddish within the German dialects, it seems that first of all this study would need to expand to encompass more linguistic features. Also, it would need to expand to encompass the finer dialect distinctions within the German dialect continuum.

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