



Introduction



The Reader, the Book, and the Library

This book explores Yiddish reading practices among Jews in the Pale of Settlement and Congress Poland in the years 1860–1914. As such, it combines elements of cultural history, the history of reading, and the history of the book. In particular, it focuses on *the reader*, *the book* (including newspapers), and *the library*, their roles in the society under discussion, and the intricate web of relations between them. I begin by introducing these concepts on the theoretical plain. This is followed by a discussion of the relevant historical and geographical settings and the exploration of these concepts within the context of Jewish society.

Originally, reading fulfilled a religious function. However, once books ceased to be surrounded by a halo of sanctity, reading acquired new contexts and meanings. The written word no longer expressed a definitive intention and decisive meaning; rather, interpretations could differ according to the period and the readership. Over the years, the interaction between the world of the text and the world of the reader began to alter. One of the most fundamental changes was the shift from the practice of listening to a text to independent reading or group readings in various locations. Likewise, the intensive reading of specific texts was replaced by more extensive reading. Indeed, in the modern world, the importance of reading a wide range of works, which influence both the formation of opinions and the historical reality, is commonly acknowledged.¹

Various scholars have sought to define the study of reading and the tools that enable it. Robert Darnton, one of the most prominent figures to examine this discipline from the historical-social perspective, discusses several key questions at the basis of the history of reading, dividing them into two types: external and fundamental. External questions concern the identity of the reader, the content of the reading material, location, and timing, while fundamental questions inquire into the motivations behind reading and how they function.² To answer the latter, important questions, Darnton suggests studying how reading creates different meanings in varying cultural environments. In particular, he explores

this from a general perspective, based on the unique value that a given society attributes to reading in general, the importance it accords to literacy, and the change in the physical form of books. On the individual plain, Darnton highlights autobiographical writing as a means via which we can reconstruct the meaning that the reader attributes to the text.³

A book can fulfill different functions for various readers, as well as perform a range of functions for the same reader at different times.⁴ Usually, when readers pick up a book, they seek to become intimately acquainted with the content it contains. To do so, readers must accept the writer's authority and then sieve the information according to their understanding. As part of this process, readers must exercise great care: it is possible that the content of the book (certainly if it is fictional) will overwhelm them emotionally, drawing them into it. When readers attempt to tackle unfamiliar content, they experience the text in a way that will afford new insights. According to Wolfgang Iser, "Experiences arise only when the familiar is transcended or undermined; they grow out of the alteration or falsification of that which is already ours."⁵ Thus, modern reading creates a kind of partnership between the reader, author, and text: the reader is not a passive consumer, and the author does not fully own the text. The reader can create meanings and adopt a stance (critical reading) regardless of whether this entails existing or new insights.⁶

Beyond the individual perspective, the communal-social context of reading is also highly significant. Various works discuss the character of reading in specific sociocultural environments and periods: those by Darnton and Roger Chartier concern Europe in general and the French context in particular; Geoffrey Brooks discusses Russia; Hanna Adoni and Hillel Nossék examine the current Israeli context; and Shmuel Níger describes the general Jewish context after World War I.⁷ In a changing world with increasingly sophisticated printing, a proliferation of printing houses, and constantly developing distribution systems, nonreligious reading—that is, acquaintance with literary content (or at least looking at a newspaper)—has become a basic condition for the individual's participation in the public social and political spheres. A multi-class and multicultural society creates a "literary system," a "literary republic," or a "literary field" that supplies a variety of reading material in a range of visual formats (size, length, typography, illustrations) for each community of readers in accordance with their tastes and needs—in the perception of the printers and publishers—their educational level, age, socioeconomic level, and gender.⁸ An individual of low socioeconomic status, someone who works long hours to make a living (providing that he is literate and has access to books), will in all likelihood read less than someone who has more leisure time, and his reading will usually be based on the literary offerings intended to fill his limited free time, which the cultural elite and critics consider harmful and even dangerous (see below). A reader (or even listener) such as this will turn to "high" reading only if he is able to under-

stand it or it is presented to him in an accessible format. The more educated a reader is, the greater the likelihood that his reading will be diverse.⁹ Thus, for example, learned persons from the higher classes are likely to read quality literature, works of philosophy, and scientific texts in a sophisticated manner, whilst also enjoying “low” popular literature that is not intended for them.

One of the most prominent initiatives to disseminate books to communities of non-elite readers in the western world was inaugurated at the end of the seventeenth century: the *Bibliothèque*, a collection of writings belonging to a certain genre or by a certain author in one comprehensive volume or a series of volumes. Or, as Chartier describes such endeavors, “a library without walls.”¹⁰ This idea spread throughout Europe, reaching Russia and Poland, and also influencing the Jewish environment, in which a large number of *bibliotekot*, as they were called in Hebrew, or *bibliotekn* in Yiddish, were published.

Alongside printing houses and publishers, the vendors and booksellers, the censor and all the elements involved in the book’s journey from the author’s desk to the hands of the reader, the library plays a central role. As an agent of culture, the library—mainly public libraries but sometimes also private ones—serves as a vital link connecting readers to the political, social, and intellectual surroundings in a certain place and time. In parallel to other mediators of knowledge—schools, research institutes, and newspapers—which all developed with great momentum in Eastern Europe during the nineteenth century, the public library was intended to function as a reservoir of knowledge from various sources, knowledge that the potential user could acquire independently based on desire and cognitive ability.¹¹ Alistair Black offers an original explanation of the role that the library played in nineteenth-century Britain, based on Michel Foucault’s idea in his work *Naissance de la Clinique*. Black compared the library with a hospital or clinic, examining their principles and working methods as well as the ideas that guided their operators. He thereby determined that the library as an institution was intended to both cure and prevent social ills.¹² As such, the library constitutes not only a physical resource of books dependent on time and place but also a reservoir of the knowledge and ideas embedded in the books, that awaits exposure, internalization, realization, and preservation by the readers. This is mediated via the librarians, who facilitate the encounter between book and reader.¹³

If a book sometimes affects worldviews and historical events, then reservoirs of books—open and available or underground and forbidden—also contributed to molding societies and outlooks. The history of the library and the history of the book are intimately linked. It is impossible to discuss a certain book market without considering the holdings on the bookshelves of libraries and reading rooms.¹⁴ Likewise, any discussion of a given library’s catalogue cannot ignore the market of books and newspapers outside the library’s walls.

The development of various types of libraries, their aims and internal organization, or the “consciousness of the library,” according to Avriel Bar-Levav’s definition,¹⁵ depended upon several interdependent variables within the relevant historical and social framework. Among these are nationalism, urbanization, industrialization, economic ability, ruling culture, religious identification, educational level, and the education system (for children and adults alike).¹⁶ Furthermore, it is important to remember that the contents of a library do not necessarily reflect reading patterns in the surroundings and that the reading public extends beyond members of the library. A prominent example of this is the complete opposition to the reading of novels among the British (and German) cultural elite at the end of the eighteenth century and throughout most of the nineteenth century. They considered this literary genre morally damaging and usually identified it with women in general and women of leisure in particular. This opposition to the reading of novels led to their exclusion from public libraries, fearing that they would have a detrimental influence on readers and public welfare.¹⁷

Other factors similarly indicate that drawing conclusions based on an examination of reading practices in libraries can lead to inaccurate assumptions: for example, the growing demand in Europe in general (and in America) for commercial, popular newspapers and the novels in instalments that were printed therein, or the continuous increase in the printing of cheap and popular books and their circulation in far larger numbers than quality books, which were usually selected meticulously by librarians and cultural activists.¹⁸ While in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century the cultural elite recognized the importance of making books available to the general public, two contradictory approaches developed regarding what books a library should offer and, moreover, which books should be made available to the public (or which books they should endeavor to prevent the public from obtaining). According to the hatch system, the role of the librarian is to mediate between readers and books that are suitable for them, acting as a guide and pedagogue; accordingly, the reader does not have direct access to every book in the library. By contrast, the counter system enables readers greater freedom of choice vis-à-vis books, even those that are not necessarily of an educational nature.¹⁹ Thus, the history of the book and the history of the library are closely interwoven, and it is impossible to tackle one without examining the other.

Reading and Readers in the Russian Empire

The general lines and theoretical principles outlined above regarding the reader, the book, and the library apply to reading habits in the Russian Empire between the mid-nineteenth century and World War I. Spread over massive territories from Eastern Europe to the far east of Asia, and with a population of around

129 million people that included various ethnic groups speaking a range of languages, the discussion here focuses on European Russia and Congress Poland.²⁰ In daily life and in the development of their ideas and worldviews, Jews were influenced either directly or indirectly by the changes in their surroundings, and sometimes often contributed to them. This also applies to secular reading practices among Jews, who from 1791 were forbidden to live beyond the limited territory in the western Empire known as the Pale of Settlement.

At the end of the nineteenth century, around 13 percent of the Empire's total population lived in cities. The urban population included the upper and middle classes, the wealthy and petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals, and other members of the intelligentsia. Likewise, the cities were also populated by workers and members of the lower socioeconomic levels, and their numbers increased with the growing internal migration from the agricultural periphery to the cities.²¹ Most of the Russian population was rural and made a living from working the land. In 1897, the literate proportion of the population in the cities of *European Russia* was on average 58 percent (64 percent among men and 42 percent among women), while in the villages it was 26 percent (35 percent among men and 13 percent among women).²²

The attitude to the book in Russia at the beginning of the nineteenth century derived first and foremost from the distinction between the learned and wealthy urban residents, on the one hand, and the laborers and rural population, on the other. The latter lacked education, financial means, free time, and even the physical conditions to facilitate reading, such as suitable space and lighting. Over the course of the century, and mainly following the reforms initiated by Alexander II, meaningful changes began to occur in the reading practices of non-learned "people" and in the way that the urban intelligentsia viewed the so-called uneducated masses. Literacy became vital in a range of occupations, mainly in the city but also in the army, in religious institutions, and even in villages. The number of rural schools and their students grew continuously. Likewise, printed material from various sources multiplied, and newspapers, offering a range of news and interpretations of events from near and far, developed. All these increased the importance of reading among the rural population, which treated the written word with reverence, having formerly been satisfied with listening to public readings.²³

As early as the 1830s, and especially from the 1860s onwards, the Russian urban intelligentsia was known for its innovative ideas regarding social stratification, the character of the ruling regime, and Russian culture. In social meetings known as "circles" (*kruzhki*), they discussed, among other things, the need to "go to the people" and influence their mental development, for example by preventing an encounter with what the intelligentsia considered defective literature.²⁴ Sociocultural streams such as nihilism, which challenged the social and artistic consensus and placed realistic aesthetics at the center of the social and

cultural discourse, on the one hand, and socialist populism (*narodnichestvo*), on the other, motivated educated people, young and old alike, to lead a socio-cultural process that sought to include in the public and cultural discourse those previously excluded from it.

Among those who emphasized the importance of “going to the people” were the theoreticians and thinkers Alexander Herzen, Mikhail Bakunin, Pyotr Lavrov, the literary critics Vissarion Belinsky, Nikolay Chernyshevsky, Nikolay Dobrolyubov, and Dmitry Pisarev, the writer Gleb Uspensky, the sociologist and literary critic Nikolay Mikhaylovsky, and others.²⁵ An exceptional figure identified with the Narodniks (populists), who was later especially famous in the Jewish milieu, was Sh. An-ski (Shloyme Zaynvl Rapoport). Seeking to draw closer to the (Russian) people, in the 1880s he lived among rural populations and miners, studying their practices vis-à-vis literature and reading. He published his research conclusions in a book titled *Narod i kniga* (The People and the Book, 1894; a second edition was published in 1914). An-ski claimed that intellectuals have neither the right nor ability to prevent the rural populations from accessing the authentic literary material with which they are familiar. However, he argued, it was advisable to protect them from the potentially damaging urban and commercial literature disseminated for the purposes of profit. An-ski was influenced by Tolstoy, who declared that there is room to influence the rural population and not only to learn from it. Likewise, he was particularly affected by Uspensky and Mikhaylovsky, who were among the members of the intelligentsia who sought to draw close to the rural population. Inspired by them, An-ski determined that it was indeed desirable to offer the rural public quality literary materials, without forcing these materials upon them.²⁶ Another intellectual who investigated reading practices and the psychology of reading in those same years was Nikolay Rubakin. As a moderate Marxist, he did not espouse guiding people to read literature that encouraged the development of a social consciousness. He believed in the simple people’s desire to acquire knowledge and the importance of the book as a means of socialization. Even without supervision from above, in his opinion, the quality book would triumph in the future. This victory would be achieved via the acquisition of critical reading trends, by means of which every reader would be able to judge the value of specific reading material. Rubakin believed in the potential of the lower classes and even expected to see writers and poets emerge from them.²⁷

Why was the urban intelligentsia so concerned about rural reading habits? Even when literacy was rare in Russian rural communities, this population had its own folk literature: illustrated printed sheets, published anonymously, accompanied by short texts telling stories from folklore and daily life (including, among other things, the interpretation of dreams and good advice), stories of saints, stories of heroism, and short tales with a moral. These were known as *lubki* (singular *lubok*).²⁸ As printing became more sophisticated, the publication of *lubki* moved to commercial printers: in the 1890s in Moscow alone, twenty-

two printers specialized in printing them.²⁹ These printers altered the form of the *lubki*, which became illustrated chapbooks numbering between thirty-two and ninety-six pages. By this stage, most of these works contained no moral or religious messages as they had in the past. Their writers continued to publish anonymously, and their content addressed the widest possible common denominator. Millions of copies of *lubki* in their new format were printed and sold. They were distributed mainly by peddlers and wandering booksellers for a small price, and they yielded good profits for the printers. Each such work was read or listened to by more than one reader/listener and afterward served as paper for rolling cigarettes or other daily functions.³⁰

The rural reading audience gradually changed its reading preferences and consumed fewer religious materials. In the 1880s and 1890s, the demand for folk tales, stories of knights, wars, history, and crime, as well as novels, reached a new peak. The urban populist intelligentsia watched these changing reading practices with concern and feared the negative ramifications of this trend. From the 1870s, cheap, small format editions of classic contemporary Russian (and European) literary works were published, but it was impossible to market them in far-flung areas. In 1884, the *Posrednik* (mediator) publishing house for the printing of folk books was founded. This was a partnership between the Moscow publisher Ivan Sitin, who was famed for his expertise in printing and distributing *lubki*, Lev Tolstoy and his secretary, the author Vladimir Chertkov, and the writers and adapters of the literary materials. The publishing house succeeded in marketing and distributing *belles lettres* among the rural reading public (and those who read aloud to others), some of them adaptations, which also contained didactic messages, as well as popular scientific literature. In the first four years of its existence, more than twelve million copies of these booklets were printed, and in the years 1887–1908 the publishing house printed over 1,000 titles at the price of up to five kopecks per booklet.³¹ One of the leading publishers in Russia in the field of printing and distributing popular scientific texts and other didactic literature was Florenti Pavlenkov. From the 1890s, he published three illustrated Bibliothèques that included hundreds of items related to scientific topics and the biographies of persons famed for their contribution to the Russian people and humanity in general.³² The *Znaniye* (Knowledge) publishing house was active in St. Petersburg in the years 1898–1913—from 1902 it was managed by Maxim Gorky—publishing dozens of works from the best of modern Russian literature.³³ Furthermore, from the end of the century until the revolution of 1917, public bodies such as the St. Petersburg Committee for the Advancement of Literacy or the Union for the War against Insobriety printed and distributed *belles lettres* and popular scientific works for the masses. They also established libraries and reading rooms.

According to An-ski's research concerning the 1880s, rural farmers read little *belles lettres*, and even those who did so preferred “useful” literature with a prac-

tical moral message. These readers took an interest in realistic literature with which they could identify, seeing themselves and their surroundings reflected in its content. The public of urban workers (among them miners and day laborers) preferred realistic literature and rejected the religious and moralistic preaching that still interested rural farmers.³⁴

Considering the innovations in the book market and fearing that these would undermine their authority, the church and the state provided new reading materials for the rural population, adding lists of books that they considered appropriate, and even offering them at a subsidized price: religious and patriotic literature that included history, general knowledge, and very little *belles lettres*.³⁵ These publications sought to counter the radical, anti-religious, and mainly covert literature that spread with increasing speed from the 1860s, despite the censorship and the tireless searches for its producers and distributors.³⁶ After the revolution of 1905, professional unions likewise began publishing, seeking to attract the simple reader.³⁷

Despite the lack of free time and suitable physical conditions for reading (or listening to works read aloud), books often provided the public of workers and urban laborers, men and women alike, with a temporary refuge from their existential suffering. Similar to the working-class readers in Western Europe, in Russia too this public largely ignored institutionalized, recommended reading, preferring adventures and realistic novels that reflected the surrounding reality and resonated with them emotionally. Likewise, political literature, usually subversive, appeared on the growing list of works read by the lower urban (and rural) classes, although in Russia before the 1905 Revolution it accounted for only a marginal portion of reading materials.

The new intelligentsia or the people's intelligentsia, mainly members of the lower and lower-middle socioeconomic strata who lacked a higher education, played a significant role in stimulating reading among wide circles of the public. This social group sought to undermine the cultural hegemony of the old intelligentsia.³⁸ Beginning in the 1870s, the new intelligentsia was identified with a series of journals, some of them illustrated, which multiplied rapidly until the end of the century. These journals contained informative and literary content, including material concerning current issues. The oldest and perhaps most popular, which addressed a range of reading levels, was *Niva* (Field; St. Petersburg, 1870–1917). In 1900, 200,000 copies of this illustrated journal were sold weekly. A similarly popular weekly was *Ogonyok* (Flame, 1899–1917). In 1912, its distribution stood at 300,000 copies and in 1914 had reached around 700,000 copies.³⁹ Another characteristic socio-literary endeavor was *Vestnik znaniya* (Herald of Knowledge; St. Petersburg, 1903–18). This popular publication, which espoused the slogan “Teach [yourself] and teach others,”⁴⁰ served to spread knowledge in the fields of science and social science, and as a platform for realist writers. At the same time, it was among the most prominent proponents of the anti-modernist line in the Russian cultural discourse.

More such literary publications appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century, circulating in tens of thousands of copies. Some of them even sought to attract a learned readership from the old intelligentsia. In opposition to these journals, which were referred to as “thin” journals due to their relatively limited run (even though each edition numbered about 100 pages), the veteran and prestigious journals, the “thick” ones, found themselves in decline. These publications, the most prominent among them *Russkiy vestnik* (The Russian Herald; Moscow, 1856–87, and St. Petersburg, 1887–1906) and *Russkaya mysl'* (The Russian Idea, Moscow, 1880–1918), included rich literary and publicist content and imparted didactic and ideological messages in the spirit of populism. From the 1890s, they also provided a platform for modernist writers. They usually appealed to a stable readership who identified with the messages expressed therein. These publications continued to appear until the Bolshevik revolution.⁴¹

From the 1870s onwards—within the limitations of the law—independent journalism developed in Russia: it was less institutionalized, less under the control of the intelligentsia, and less didactic than previously existing journalism. The desire of the publishers and editors to make a profit was evident. The editors sent reporters out into the field and provided readers with up-to-date information as a public service, without interpretation and without educational or moral pretensions.⁴² The criteria for selecting reporters and writers did not include education, training, or experience. Creating an unmediated connection between the writer—and the editor behind him—and the unlearned reader was considered of greater importance. These newspapers and their enthusiastic reporters were in fact agents of socialization, and they aroused independent thinking, public opinion, and public discourse. By means of the letters to the editor and the publication of real-life stories in the format of feuilletons concerning daily problems (workers' rights, class discrimination, battles against the bureaucracy, education, and literature), using a relatively limited vocabulary, the newspapers succeeded in transcending the borders of the big cities and bringing news of the current reality to provincial towns.⁴³

The Revolution of 1905 enabled the cheap and modern development of these newspapers. Decades after the appearance of penny papers in the United States, the relative freedom that emerged in Russia provided an opportunity for mass journalism at a low price, as little as one kopeck per paper (1908). These newspapers mainly reflected the reality of life in the city and, in simple language and using known stereotypes (dangerous wanderers, drunk swindlers, greedy Jews, defenseless women, etc.), they offered readers summaries of the news, sensational stories, and detailed information about the world of crime and the courts. The editors were attentive to readers via the letters to the editor, bestowed on them advice, and provided them with the content they favored. The newspapers also offered information (albeit not always trustworthy) in the fields of science, medicine, and technology. The readers, for their part, felt themselves involved in the unfolding events, informed of the latest scientific innovations, and part-

ners in the public discourse.⁴⁴ An obvious identifying mark of journalism, both the popular journalism described above and its sensational counterpart that developed later, was the novel in instalments, which was printed daily (sometimes papers even included more than one such novel).⁴⁵

Alongside the novels in the newspapers, popular literature was sold in separate booklets priced at 2–5 kopecks (after the first was distributed for free). In addition, there were a great number of thick and multivolume titles. Most prominent (both in newspapers and in booklet form) were tales of adventures, journeys, and wars, stories of love and bandits, and what was known as the “plague” of detective stories.⁴⁶ The cheap journalism for the masses and the literature that accompanied it—whether part of it or in parallel to it—to a great extent replaced the *lubki*. Hundreds of thousands of copies of the new newspapers were sold in the cities. Likewise, they were read with great desire in far-flung areas, either independently or by groups. Sometimes hidden political and social messages were encoded in the various stories, feuilletons, or novels, directed at sophisticated readers who were able to identify them.⁴⁷

Female readers, writers, and heroines who demanded independence and equality also assumed a prominent place in the literary change described above. A central and pioneering voice in this context was the writer Anastasiya Verbitskaya, whose popularity among female readers (and apparently also male ones) in Russia after the 1905 Revolution sometimes surpassed that of Tolstoy. Her writings presented independent women without obligations who sought self-realization but at the same time lived wretched lives. Her writings were published in journals and books. She also engaged in publishing and printed translations of works concerning the status of women.⁴⁸

The discussion above reflects only a small part of the complex cultural system in the Russian Empire, which is of great importance in understanding the Jewish context discussed at length in the body of this book.

Many ethnic minorities connected to a certain territorial space, language, and culture lived in Tsarist Russia. Especially prominent in European Russia were the ethnic Germans, Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Lithuanians. The Ukrainians (like the Galician Jews) were divided between the Russian regime and the Habsburg Empire, and as such they were influenced by both Russian and Polish cultures. Tsar Alexander II adopted a consistent anti-Ukrainian policy, according to which the Ukrainian language was considered nothing more than a Russian dialect: the printing of religious materials in Ukrainian or its use in the education system were prohibited. The Ukrainian intelligentsia, which sought to cultivate national values, accordingly shifted the arena of its activities to outside the borders of the Russian Empire. At the beginning of the twentieth century, only one third of Ukrainian school-age children (who learned in Russian schools) could read, in addition to approximately 17 percent of adults.⁴⁹ The Ukrainian cultural initiatives in the last decades of the nineteenth century concentrated mainly on

scientific research (published in Russian), theater, and music. Despite the existence of writers, including young ones, the limitations imposed by the authorities prevented the development of a literature in this national language. The writers were forced to publish their writings over the Austrian border, and the number of readers was not great. At the turn of the twentieth century, a renewed national-political and cultural awakening began, and this intensified after the 1905 Revolution, when, among other things, the first newspaper in Ukrainian appeared.⁵⁰

Cultural activities in the Lithuanian and Belarusian languages were also forbidden or severely limited (for example, Lithuanian texts had to be printed in Cyrillic letters). Despite the restrictions and the linguistic assimilation among these minorities, in the second half of the nineteenth century some voices encouraged national feelings, including the cultivation of the national memory, culture, and language. The first newspaper in Lithuanian appeared in 1883 and in Belarusian only after the 1905 Revolution.⁵¹

Reading and Readers in Congress Poland

In the west of the Russian Empire, in the territory of Congress Poland, the cultural-linguistic picture was even more complex. Following two failed rebellions (1830 and 1863), the autonomy that had been granted to Poland was annulled and the policy of forced Russification intensified. Despite this, the Poles continued to use their language as much as possible.

Popular urban literature and journalism of different levels, alongside serious and high-quality literature, flourished in Poland in the second half of the nineteenth century. Similar to the Russian Narodniks, the Positivists in Poland sought to draw close to the rural population, hoping to guide it to reading materials in the national language, albeit without much success. Among the urban working classes, the demand for reading materials increased; however, rather than the familiar religious content, the people desired what was known as *literatura brukowa* (street literature), which, despite its poor image, ostensibly had a serious aspect.⁵² This literature (and journalism) was largely intended to yield a profit and responded to the demands of the lower classes in terms of price and content. One of the most common genres, partially didactic in nature, was the annual calendar. In fact, these collections presented vital information for daily life as a means to expand readers' general knowledge. However, they also contained interpretations of dreams, legends, hagiographic tales, and heroic stories, both original and translated.⁵³

Alongside these calendars, from the first half of the nineteenth century, dozens of multivolume series, Bibliothèques, emerged in various fields and for different readerships. These constituted a means to spread knowledge and to bring *belles lettres* to the simple reader. In the first decade of the twentieth cen-

tury, alongside easily understandable adaptations of literary works by important Polish authors, the first sensational and cheap newspapers, with a local and tumultuous hue, also appeared. Simultaneously, the Polish book market was flooded with booklets and pamphlets of a few dozen pages that included various kinds of material: international legends, folk tales, stories of saints, beggars' songs, and texts offering interpretations of dreams, magic, and horoscopes, in particular sensational, fantastical, light, and cheap works, some of them anonymous and some by popular and well-loved authors. The "plague" of booklets containing stories in installments afflicted Poland at the same time as it affected Russia (1908–14). On average between 5,000 and 10,000 copies of each booklet were sold, and their main topics included crime, detective stories, westerns, adventures (mainly intended for men), and romantic novels (largely for women). Sometimes the booklets concerned well-known international heroes transplanted to a local setting; for example, Sherlock Holmes.⁵⁴ The Polish daily newspapers also provided a wide range of literary works in installments at different levels, according to the character of the newspaper and the readership it sought to attract.

Reading and Readers in the Changing Jewish Surroundings

From the cultural perspective, according to Dan Miron, during the reign of Alexander II, the war that the Haskalah waged against its opponents became increasingly radical.⁵⁵ Due to their language and style, the radical maskilim writing in Hebrew in the 1860s and 1870s attracted few readers. By contrast, moderate maskilic writing, which included philosophical works and the translation of historical literature and *belles lettres*, enjoyed a wider readership. In the 1880s and 1890s, Hebrew creativity blossomed in terms of distribution and demand. Hebrew readers then numbered around 100,000 individuals.⁵⁶ However, this did not last long. The first decade of the twentieth century, both before and after the 1905 Revolution, was characterized by "revival in a vacuum." The creators of the new Hebrew literature continued to write and print their works, but the call for them continuously declined and diminished in relation to the demand for works in Russian and the growing demand for texts in Yiddish.⁵⁷

A small number of state-run (and private) schools for Jewish children had existed since the beginning of the nineteenth century, teaching in Russian (in Galicia—German; in Poland—Polish and, after 1863, Russian).⁵⁸ At the beginning of the 1860s, Jewish men, and around a decade later also women, were offered the opportunity to study in institutions of higher education, thus creating a significant public of educated Jewish intelligentsia that lived in big cities (outside the Pale of Settlement, in particular in St. Petersburg) and engaged in the free professions.⁵⁹ This public lived alongside a thin slice of wealthy Jews, who were closely associated with the ruling circles and faithful to them, on the one hand,

and the urban Russian intelligentsia, on the other. The educated Jewish intelligentsia generally moved away from traditional Jewish society, seeking to identify with its Russian counterpart. Some of its members adopted the worldviews of their Russian counterparts, including imitating the Narodniks, although not all Narodniks expressed favorable attitudes toward the Jews.⁶⁰ Another group of Jews, Russian-speaking, were semi-intelligentsia: autodidacts and graduates of the traditional Jewish education system, some of whom also sought to draw closer to the surrounding society and some of whom were influenced by Russian revolutionary ideas and turned to cultural and political activism within Jewish society.⁶¹

According to some, the pogrom that took place in Odessa in 1871, the wave of riots in Ukraine in 1881–82, and the hostile indifference of the Russian revolutionary movement to these events constituted a turning point for the educated intelligentsia. This combination of factors put an end to their desire to integrate into the Russian surroundings, heralding their return to the Jewish people.⁶² A deeper examination of the events and the reactions to them reveals that the educated intelligentsia and wealthy Jews did not hasten to part with their original views; rather, these events “brought about complete chaos and a reshaping of the goals and identities in many directions,”⁶³ only one of which was “to go to the Jewish people,” to help the people in their distress, to expose them to the values of freedom, equality, and critical thinking, and to rouse them to work for a better future. The intelligentsia continued to use Russian, although some saw Hebrew as a national language suitable for cultivation and study. The combination of Hebrew and Russian, both in the cultural and national contexts, was expressed in the founding of the Society for the Promotion of Enlightenment among the Jews of Russia (OPE, 1863), which will be discussed further in Chapter 5. With regard to Yiddish, similar to religious tradition, various hues of the intelligentsia resigned themselves to the fact that most of the Jewish public continued to live according to religious tradition and to use this vernacular. Prominently, this resignation was expressed in the outlook of socialist ideologues and activists. Later, the Jewish socialist movement came to be identified with the developing Yiddish culture and literature.

To understand the deliberations of a Jewish intellectual concerning language, let us examine the Jewish socialist thinker and pioneer Aharon Liberman (1845–80). He wrote in Russian but edited a Hebrew monthly in London and despite reservations, recognized the importance of using Yiddish.⁶⁴ A younger colleague, close to Liberman, Morris Winchevsky (1856–1932), adopted Hebrew as his first language for expressing his opinions about Socialism and atheism in the second half of the 1870s. In 1884, he began to publish a Yiddish weekly in London, *Der poylisher yidl* (The Little Polish Jew), later changing its name to *Di tsukunft* (The Future). This paper continued to appear until 1888, placing Yiddish on the front lines of the battle for equality and brotherhood despite the disagreement or hostility of many of his socialist partners.⁶⁵

The socialist-Yiddishist ideologue Chaim Zhitlowsky (1865–1943), who also belonged to the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia, tried to explain in his memoirs why the intelligentsia flocked to Russian culture, noting that until the 1880s there was no alternative cultural activity in Yiddish: “The Russian language and Russian literature made us Russians.”⁶⁶ From the moment that quality literary works appeared in Yiddish (with or without connection to the pogroms or the reactions to them), the way back was open, although it was by no means easy.

The Jewish public needed a wide range of written texts. Due to the significance of reading in the traditional Jewish way of life, it is important to understand the semantics of the Yiddish verb *leyenen*. In the past, this verb was used to describe the act of reading from the Torah (thus only among men) or, by contrast, to the reading of “light” texts, usually by women. Apart from reading from the Torah scroll, men did not read but rather studied (the verb *lernen*), scrutinized (the verb *me’ayen zayn*), or recited (*nokhzogn*) to fulfill the commandment of studying the Torah. The secularization of the verb *leyenen* and the inclusion of scientific, ideological, and literary materials represented a historic change in the cultural lives of Yiddish speakers in Eastern Europe.⁶⁷

Alongside the traditional folk literature, including folk takes, stories of wonder, and Hasidic hagiographies, modern secular writing in Yiddish began to appear from the 1860s. Initially, this literature was written by a few Hebrew writers, but their ranks subsequently swelled. These writers, who at first forced themselves to write in Yiddish, regularly contributed to Yiddish journalism, which despite modest beginnings played a significant role in widening the horizons of lay people and involving them in the public Jewish discourse. Writers, editors, and publishers who felt a sense of duty wrote in the language of the masses to impart messages and shed light on the readers’ existential distress. Alongside new original literature, literary works and publications regarding science and general knowledge were adapted from foreign languages, mainly Russian and German, and tailored to Yiddish readers. At the same time, the Yiddish book market also contained “fascinating and suspenseful” materials that were printed in Eastern Europe or imported from the United States (at the end of the century) to the despair of writers and public activists alike. The cheap and popular daily papers in Yiddish began to develop in the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century, and these too included the same materials, in installments.

The literary critic known by the penname Bal-Makhshoves (man of thoughts, Izidor Eliashev) was worried about the simple readers’ estrangement from quality literature and their search for entertaining or “fascinating” materials. This audience was considered unable to discern the disparity between the works of an educated writer such as Sholem Yankev Abramovitch (Mendele Moykher-Sforim) and those of “fascinating” novels, such as Shomer (Nokhem Meyer Shaykevitch)⁶⁸ and others like him. Thus, they needed to be educated to read the correct materials. According to Bal-Makhshoves, this could be achieved by “reviving the dead

words.” In the absence of a folk theater worthy of its name that could carry out this task, he suggested introducing public artistic readings of literary works. “Through the ears,” so he claimed, the readers’ hearts would be opened to quality and worthy literature.⁶⁹ This idea combined the cultural reality among the Russian rural or urban populations, who lacked the ability to read independently, with the religious Jewish practice of reading from the Torah (albeit in a language that was less well understood) and sermons accompanied by quotes from the sources, or women reading aloud biblical stories and midrashim in Yiddish for groups of female listeners.⁷⁰ An anonymous writer in the Yiddish daily *Der fraynd* (The Friend) suggested a more advanced idea. Based on successful experience in the Russian milieu, the writer proposed that readers and cultural activists should establish associations for public reading and exploit technological innovations such as “magic torches,” thus adding an advantageous visual dimension to public readings.⁷¹

The workers’ calendar for the year 1908 contains a bibliographical section that emphasizes the importance of reading for gaining knowledge and widening horizons: it opens up an entire world that one can enter only by reading books. The author, apparently Avrom Kotik, warned against reading materials that were likely to mislead the readers, noting the importance of the bibliographic list as a guide for the beginner reader.⁷² As a way to implement this approach, he surveyed and evaluated a few book publishers that he considered high quality and listed the important books published in Yiddish. To “enable the reader to reach the basic ideas of every book . . . and to remember better what he has read,” he suggested a series of questions touching upon the content of the works.⁷³ Kotik had already previously called for the Jewish intelligentsia to publish works of popular science and *belles lettres* and to make them accessible to a wide public via the largest possible number of public libraries open to whoever wished to visit them.⁷⁴ It is important to remember that despite the increase and variety in the Yiddish book market at the end of the nineteenth century, this was a very small market, limited in terms of extent and materials.

As an informal educational factor, the library filled gaps in the education of adults who were able to read but had not acquired a formal education. The continuous increase in the publication of Yiddish printed materials and the rise in the number of readers contributed to the growing fear that unsupervised reading or reading without ideological guidance would become an aim in itself, pursued for the sake of enjoyment and in accordance with the changing fashions. Even worse, such reading was likely to cause readers to peruse books in the languages of the surroundings. This fear mainly concerned male and female readers who lacked a formal education and lived in far-flung communities.⁷⁵ Similarly, others expressed concern about the lack of a guiding hand that would ensure suitable reading for a public interested in reading Yiddish yet unsure what to read. The intention was to encourage the establishment of literary circles or literary societies that would charge membership fees to finance the printing and distribution

of quality books; they would thus be responsible for guiding readers to suitable materials.⁷⁶

The Library as a Literary Agent in Russia and Poland

In Russia in the 1890s, significantly later than England and America, awareness grew regarding the importance and necessity of public libraries open to all.⁷⁷ In 1864, there were 280 public, private, and institutional libraries in the Russian Empire. Of these, 92 were public libraries in cities and 15 were public rural libraries—numbers that by no means met the growing demand for books.⁷⁸ In parallel to the activities of the intelligentsia on behalf of the people and endeavors to increase awareness of the importance of learning and reading among the rural population, the coming decades saw the opening of rural libraries. These were either public institutions or associated with schools. However, they too were insufficient. Local committees to advance literacy played a central role in establishing hundreds of public libraries in cities and villages, until these committees were neutralized by the Russian Ministry of Education in 1895. Afterwards, new libraries were founded by private persons, mainly thanks to the advancement of education and enlightenment by the *zemstvo*, regional (rural) councils chosen by the residents as institutions for self-administration. The activities of these bodies, together with increasing public awareness regarding the importance of study and reading, led to a massive increase in the number of rural libraries: there were 4,500 in 34 such councils in 1904, and in 1916 there were no less than 15,000 public libraries managed by the *zemstvos* throughout the Empire. Each such library had on average 400–500 books—most according to the lists of books permitted by the regime. *Belles lettres* accounted for between one third to one half of the titles (in cities around 80 percent), and between one tenth and one quarter were religious and moral books. The use of these libraries was usually free, in contrast to urban public libraries, which required readers to pay a fee.⁷⁹ As noted above, there were libraries adjacent to many rural schools that provided books for the students beyond those needed for studies, including books borrowed at weekends to be read aloud to family members. In 1911, around 70 percent of primary schools had lending libraries.⁸⁰

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were few public (and private) libraries at the disposal of the Polish population in the Russian Empire in general, and in Congress Poland in particular. It was almost impossible to establish such libraries in the period between the two rebellions against Russian rule (1830 and 1863) or after, and even the maintenance of existing libraries proved difficult. From the eighteenth century onwards, it was possible to borrow or peruse books in central bookshops in large cities, visitors to which were usually members of the middle or upper class.

From the 1860s, those who sought to establish public libraries or reading rooms were required to meet a series of restrictive legal demands issued by the

state censor (Interior Ministry), and in certain cases the Education Ministry. Such initiatives were usually spearheaded by private individuals as well as charitable, educational, and religious institutions and public committees that sought to advance literacy among the public. The number of licenses given was always lower than the number of requests submitted. Even when libraries or reading rooms opened, their contents, activities, and operators were supervised meticulously, and often in a threatening manner.⁸¹ The 1905 Revolution made it easier to establish and run Polish libraries: this included the opening of libraries for an educated audience or for students in educational institutions as well as libraries and reading rooms in provincial towns. Likewise, town and village committees played an active role in encouraging literacy among the lower population stratas, as did organizations to fight illiteracy among adults and the enlightening committees that operated in industrial factories.⁸² In June 1911, the first conference of libraries in Russia took place. It was attended by 350 representatives from throughout the Empire, among them representatives of ethnic minorities, including Jews. The conference reached various decisions and recommendations, some of which were suspected of revolutionary tendencies and, therefore, due to difficulties and restrictions could not be implemented.⁸³

Librarians were needed to operate the various libraries and to achieve their aims. However, there were very few librarians (professional ones, at any rate). In 1903, the division for librarian studies was founded in the framework of the Russian Bibliological Union in St. Petersburg, an academic institution for the study of Russian bibliography and literary history. In 1908, the division became the Union of Russian Librarians, which operated until 1917.⁸⁴ The librarians in the institutional urban libraries were members of the intelligentsia who obtained professional training and earned a living from their job. The rural ones, by contrast, were members of the people's intelligentsia—mostly lacking higher education and often teachers, they were motivated by a sense of cultural-social mission and were rarely paid for their work.⁸⁵ However, they too assumed responsibility for helping readers reach the “correct materials,” developing their cognitive abilities and civil and social awareness, widening the horizons of the lower classes and making them productive and thinking citizens. Over the years, the profession set down roots in Russia, and, according to the American model, the role of the librarian developed from one of educator and director to service provider.⁸⁶ Nikolay Rubakin perfectly captured the force motivating the public libraries and their operators when he said that: “The highest quality reading for the largest number of readers at the cheapest possible price.”⁸⁷

The Library as a Cultural Agent in the Jewish Surroundings

Since the application of printing techniques to Hebrew works (and immediately afterwards also to those in Yiddish), the *batei midrash* (study houses) that existed in almost every Jewish community in Eastern Europe (and also in Central

Europe) began to function as a kind of public library, offering books for study and reference volumes. In addition, there were private Jewish libraries, which were owned by individuals (although they were open to a limited circle of readers). Books were donated to the *beit midrash* or purchased using community funds. They were available to men and youths at all times, free of charge. Over the generations, these collections became a “cultural institution and a socializing factor of the first degree.”⁸⁸

Various factors, among them the intensification of the spirit of the enlightenment, the desire to make the Jewish population productive, and the exposure to (high) culture in the surroundings, contributed to the growing awareness that the Jewish public needed libraries. As formal educational frameworks proliferated, this consciousness spread further, and efforts to organize collections of select books for students increased. Maskilim established libraries adjacent to schools or as a substitute for them, in the synagogues that they founded, and in private homes. In the words of Mordechai Zalkin, these libraries were often “the gate through which a young man entered the world of Haskalah . . .”⁸⁹ Although Zalkin does not detail the linguistic makeup of these libraries, presumably books in Yiddish were not at the top of the list; indeed, it is possible that such libraries offered no works in this language.

In the framework of Hebrew activities for the edification of the masses, and sometimes in connection with the distribution of the Zionist idea, alternative frameworks of study for various age groups emerged at the turn of the century. These activities mainly took place on Sabbath afternoons in private homes or public places, in small groups, without payment or for a small fee. The teachers (male and female) were usually graduates of or students at various educational institutions, professional teachers, or Zionist activists who taught writing (in Russian and Hebrew) and other subjects. Similar frameworks also existed in Yiddish, and they were organized by the socialist youth. One of the tasks that these teachers took upon themselves, in both frameworks (Hebrew and Yiddish), was collecting books, subscribing to newspapers, and lending them to their students.⁹⁰

In the last two decades of the century, teachers, activists, and government-appointed rabbis endeavored to open public libraries for the use of those seeking knowledge; sometimes they even succeeded.⁹¹ Afraid to lose the creative momentum and the demand for Hebrew books, bilingual author and journalist Shmuel Leib Tsitron (Zitron) called for the establishment of a network of Hebrew libraries that would connect the reading public with books. He suggested making an exact statistical record of the readers that frequented the libraries and conducting surveys that would enable cultural activists and writers to learn about the practices of the Hebrew reader.⁹² Toward the end of the period dealt with in this book (1910), the OPE funded and published a comprehensive survey of Jewish schools, which revealed that many of them (including evening

schools) had small libraries, usually containing less than 400 books. In some schools there were also libraries (or a bookshelf) for the use of teachers. There is no detailed data regarding the linguistic composition of the books and the borrowings, although here too presumably Yiddish books were rare. The survey noted that in schools for boys, Hebrew and Russian teachers were usually responsible for lending books to the students, while in girls' schools, the library was usually managed by the Russian teachers.⁹³

The inclusion of Yiddish books in (authorized) public libraries and their availability to potential readers was in no way obvious. Apart from the readers' demand for such books (and journals), public and cultural activists often had to intervene to ensure an up-to-date and extensive selection, demanding that the rights of the "language of the masses" be represented in a specific library. The success of the readers and activists was not always assured.

The interdisciplinary perspective adopted in this book, combined with its particular focus, answers the following key questions: Who read, what did they read, where did they read, when did they read, how did they read, and in what language? The following discussion exposes the complexity and the unique nature of reading practices among Jews in the Russian Empire in general and among those who read Yiddish in particular.

Developing Changes

From "Zhargon" to Yiddish

For many years, Jewish intellectuals and political ideologues in Eastern Europe and elsewhere were engaged in a heated linguistic argument: Yiddish vs. Hebrew vs. the surrounding language. This dispute is discussed in many studies, and scholars have shed light on various aspects of it.⁹⁴ Below I will mention some examples of the protagonists involved and the central arguments advanced, contextualizing them at junctures relevant to this book.

The following quote, which depicts the reality in the late 1870s/early 1880s, portrays a sociocultural experience characteristic of a stratum of wealthy Jews who lived traditional lives but had already adopted external signs of "modernism":

I became acquainted with "*zhargon*" literature—"Yiddish" literature was not yet known in my childhood—in the kitchen. All the other rooms of our home were ruled by other literatures: every Sabbath afternoon my mother would read the *Taytsh khumesh* out loud, my sister read books in Polish and German, my brother-in-law was immersed in Russian books. Pisarev and Dostoyevsky, whom no one was allowed to criticize, were his idols.

My father loved the holy tongue and tried to plant this love in me. He had a subscription to *Hamagid* [The Preacher], and afterwards to *Hamelitz* [The Advocate], *Hashaḥar* [The Dawn], and *Haboker or* [The Morning]. He had a relatively fine Hebrew library. Alongside the Talmud and Maimonides' works, the bookcase contained copies of *Shirei tiferet* by [Naftali Hertz] Wessely in a beautiful binding, the collected writings of Mapu, Levinzon, Gordon, Shulman, Zweifl, and others. Apart from books there were dozens of years' worth of Hebrew newspapers there . . .

Of course, I read the Hebrew books unsystematically. No one took an interest in this silly question, not my parents and not my *melamdim* [teachers] . . . At the age of twelve, I read *Ḥatat ne'urim* [Sins of Youth] by [Moshe Leib] Lilienblum, the *Hatsofe leveyt yisrael* [Watchman unto the House of Israel] by Dr. I[saac] Erter, and other similar books.

Had an angel had come down from heaven and asked what I wanted to be, I would have answered without hesitation: A Hebrew writer. . . . Once I wanted to make this wish at midnight on Hoshana Rabba, at the moment when the heavens open. People told me that I am allowed to say one word, but I could not express my wish in one word, because the world "writer" could, God forbid, also refer to an author of "story booklets in *zhargon*," and what could be worse and more terrible than that?

They were only interested in story booklets in the kitchen. On Friday evenings and Sabbath days, after eating, Perl, our cook, would . . . put on her big glasses and read aloud stories such as *A Thousand and One Nights*, "The Enchanted Princess," "The Bandit Who Changed His Skin," and so on. Often, she would read something by A. M. [Ayzik Meyer] Dik, or by Mendele Moykher-Sforim.

[Perl] borrowed these story books from Shmerl the bookseller.

When I was ten or eleven, something happened that somewhat changed my attitude to story books in *zhargon*. My father traveled to Russia and, upon his return, brought with him a copy of *Dos poylishe yungl* [The Polish Lad] by [Yitskhok Yoel] Linetski . . . this was the first book [in Yiddish] that was read not in the kitchen but in the dining room . . . everyone listened with interest. Even my brother-in-law put down Pisarev . . .

[Reading] *The Polish Lad* caused a revolution in my brain. There are beautiful and interesting stories not only in Hebrew but also in "*zhargon*," I thought to myself, and why does no one take them into consideration? Later, I got hold of [more books] and I started to search in particular for stories in "*zhargon*."⁹⁵

This was written by Dr. Gershn Levin. Levin, born in Lublin (1868), was raised in a wealthy home and lived most of his life in Warsaw. He gained a reputation as a physician, cultural activist, and writer. These words express an inherent denigration of *zhargon*, which is identified with women who read poor quality texts. Yiddish was relegated to the kitchen, far from the respectable place accorded to Hebrew, Russian, Polish, and German. Yet despite its poor image, a surprise discovery revealed that there were also quality literary works in Yiddish, with their own content and messages. This sheds light on the gradual change in the status of Yiddish and its image among the Jewish public; its difficult journey from the kitchen to the living room, from serving maids or the traditional mother, without education, to learned men seeking knowledge.

In a pioneering act, in 1862, Aleksander Zederbaum, founder and editor of the Hebrew newspaper *Hamelitz*, established a Yiddish newspaper, *Kol mevaser* (The Voice of the Herald). This was intended as a tactical move that would help facilitate the fulfillment of a cultural-linguistic vision: in the future, the Jews of Eastern Europe would conduct their national spiritual life in Hebrew, while adopting Russian for their day-to-day needs. Zederbaum was raised and educated in a maskilic home in Zamość, Poland, and as an adult settled in Odessa, where he invested a great deal of energy and funds in realizing his maskilic vision. Although not intended to serve as a platform for the advancement of Yiddish, *Kol mevaser* nevertheless became a stage for the use of *zhargon*—according to the outlook of one of its writers, Yehoshua Mordechai Lifshitz, who was among the first to demand the presence of Yiddish in the public sphere—and for the publication of novel literary works by Hebrew writers who responded to the challenge and tried their hand at writing in the poor “language of the masses.”⁹⁶ One of the most famous of them, who was also enchanted by this language, was Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh (Mendele Moykher-Sforim). In his memoirs, he wrote that he decided to favor “love of the useful” over “the apparent respect” reserved for Hebrew writers; thus, he wrote his first work in Yiddish for *Kol mevaser*. From then onwards, in his words, “my soul desired Yiddish and I became betrothed to it forever.”⁹⁷

Around a generation later, Sholem Aleichem’s initiative to publish a literary collection, *Di yudische folks-bibliothek* (The Jewish People’s Library, 1888, 1889), led to a resounding argument concerning the place and value of *zhargon* in Jewish public life. Although many participated in this dispute, Sholem Aleichem himself was careful not to take a clear stance in favor or against either one of the Jewish languages.⁹⁸

Indeed, Yitskhok Leybush Peretz (Y. L. Peretz), the third of the classic writers of modern Yiddish literature, wrote in a letter to Sholem Aleichem that *zhargon* is not “a second vessel”⁹⁹ and not a temporary means; I desire that it will be a language and therefore we must expand its treasures and add every moment new expressions.”¹⁰⁰ However, he explicitly stated (1891) that “as Jews we must know

Hebrew, but as educated people, as living people, we must know the language of our surroundings.” He defined Yiddish as a nursemaid (*nianke*), meaning a means to prepare the wider, non-educated public to move toward that linguistic goal. Once this goal is achieved, he noted, “we can throw out the nursemaid or in gratitude leave her a place next to the table.”¹⁰¹ Writing from a similar perspective, Nakhmen Sirkin stated almost a decade later: “The *zhargon* literature is only a means of enlightenment and culture, it is also the best means to destroy itself.”¹⁰² Moshe Leib Lilienblum demanded didactic and useful writing. He declared that, over the years, as the Jews integrate into their surroundings there would no longer be a need for Yiddish literature; it would simply disappear.¹⁰³

Other prominent and influential personalities in the Eastern European Jewish cultural discourse did not accord *zhargon* even this little respect. Leon Rabinovich, the last editor of *Hamelitz*, declared that “*zhargon* literature must commit suicide, because its readers will benefit from its death. And so that it should die a good death, its soul must be taken with a kiss . . . *zhargon* must diminish gradually.”¹⁰⁴ Author and publicist Yisrael Ḥayim Tavyov, who defined himself as a “great hater of the jargon,”¹⁰⁵ a language that he saw as the enemy of enlightenment, spoke out crudely against the concept of Yiddish as a legitimate language, adding “I have never dirtied [!] my pen with *zhargon*.”¹⁰⁶

More moderate statements were voiced, for example, by Yehoshua Khone Ravnitsky, the editor of the newspaper *Der yud* (The Jew) in its early days. He claimed that Yiddish had a right to exist as a literary language, and he even expected the assimilated Jewish intelligentsia to find their way to this language of the masses.¹⁰⁷ The publisher and editor Meyer Yankev Freyd defined Yiddish as a “mixed language” and believed that Hebrew would later overcome it, but he understood that this would not happen immediately: in the meantime, it was necessary to support talented writers and fund the publication of their books.¹⁰⁸ In a survey penned in Russian, the scholar of Jewish literature Israel Zinberg (Tsinberg) decried the attitude of the enlightened Jewish intelligentsia toward Yiddish, their opposition to it, and called upon its young members, as well as the Zionist activists, to help build a suitable and necessary literature in terms of artistic quality, publication, and distribution.¹⁰⁹ Zinberg drew attention to the publication of Russian folk books for the “masses,” declaring the need for similar initiatives in Yiddish (which would also include translations of Hebrew literature).¹¹⁰ The Jewish Russian literary critic Arkady Gornfeld completely opposed (in Russian) the degradation of *zhargon*. He called upon writers to use it without prejudice, without discomfort, to create in it for the purposes of enriching the language and its literature.¹¹¹ Fabius Shach, a Zionist activist and journalist who resided in Berlin (but was born in a Lithuanian shtetl), noted the language’s achievements, the need to cultivate its literature, and mainly the importance of establishing unified rules for the written language, as exist in every other language.¹¹²

At the turn of the century, the supporters of Yiddish still lacked the power to extricate the language and its users from their low status vis-à-vis the Hebrew “noble woman” and its writers (not to mention Russian). The appearance of the daily newspaper *Der fraynd* (The Friend) in 1903, and in its wake additional newspapers and journals, encouraged cultural endeavors in Yiddish, and its supporters stopped calling it *zhargon*. The Revolution of 1905 led to a change in the censorship, which had previously posed a real threat to every publication printed in Yiddish. In the fall of that same year, the censor for Jewish publications merged with the general censor. The market of newspapers and Jewish books enjoyed relative freedom, the like of which it had never known before, although not all Jewish printed materials benefited from the easing of the regulations. In fact, Yiddish publications were examined with great meticulousness. In particular, attention was paid to publications by the socialist Bund movement, and many of them were confiscated (and afterward distributed in secret).¹¹³ As the numbers of Yiddish books and journals grew, opponents of the language became increasingly concerned, seeing this as a sign of arrogance that would immortalize the low status of the Jew and even as a threat to the promising future of Hebrew.¹¹⁴ They believed that a Hebrew writer or intellectual who “sinned” by writing in Yiddish would never be able to atone for his sins.¹¹⁵

Authors who chose to write in Yiddish slowly abandoned the defensive tone that had characterized the writing of their predecessors. L. Shapiro sharply attacked Hebrew literature, which, he argued, the folk heroes, the ordinary Jews, could not access. He expected that in the future the Hebrew “noble woman” would lose her status, while the “serving maid” would be built on its ruins and even educate the future Jewish intelligentsia.¹¹⁶ Other activists who identified with the Bund sought to impose the language of the people and to implement it in all areas of Jewish life, first and foremost at all levels of education.¹¹⁷

The greatly admired and popular poet and storyteller Avrom Reyzen, a member of the generation of “young” writers, articulated a clear public response to the opponents of Yiddish. At the end of 1904, he published a manifesto announcing the appearance of a new journal in Yiddish, *Dos yudishe vort* (The Yiddish Word). It noted prominently that the language that had been called and was still known as “*zhargon*” is “**the Jewish national language**” (*zi iz di yidische natsionale shrpakh*, my emphasis) and that the literature written in this language represents an end in itself, not merely an intermediary stage on the way to learning the language of the surroundings.¹¹⁸ Reyzen sought to publish a journal that the intelligentsia would also find of interest, and he planned to devote special attention to women. Similar sentiments were expressed by the bilingual writer Dov Ber Slutsky in a letter to the editor of *Der fraynd*, in which he called for Yiddish to stop acting like a servant to other languages.¹¹⁹ Likewise, Zionist activist Dr. Yosef Lurie cited the need to recognize Yiddish as a national language. An exception in his ideological environment, he saw the main linguistic battle as not

between Yiddish and Hebrew but between Yiddish and the surrounding vernacular, which posed a real threat of assimilation.¹²⁰

Shmuel Niger, the youngest of his colleagues, a member of the Zionist Socialist Party (SS), and a literary critic at the start of his career, prominently supported the Yiddishist perception. His cultural-social criticism focused on the Jewish intelligentsia, which was alienated from Yiddish and opposed its use. He called upon this intelligentsia to recognize the language of the people as a national-cultural treasure worthy of leading the Jewish public in the battle for minority rights and advancing it to future achievements.¹²¹

A milestone in the molding of modern Yiddish culture was the monthly journal *Literarische monatshriften* (Literary Monthly Journal; Vilna, 1908): Niger was a member of the editorial team, together with Shmarye Gorelik, a Zionist journalist, and A. Vayter (Ayzik Meyer Devenishsky), and the initiative was supported financially by the Vilna-based printer and publisher Boris Kletskin. In the years of reaction after 1905, the editors pursued the idea of a cultural renaissance and transforming Yiddish into a national treasure. Addressing readers in the opening of the first volume, the editors noted the extended and damaging influence that the “assimilated intelligentsia” exerted on Jewish cultural activity and praised the improvement that was underway among the “half-assimilated intelligentsia” and the “orthodox/conservative-national intelligentsia.”¹²²

The monthly journal *Leben un visenshaft* (Life and Scholarship, 1909–10 and 1911–12), edited by Shmuel Hurwitz (better known by his penname A. Litvin), realized the scientific and cultural functions that Yiddish could and should fulfill. Addressing the readers at the start of the first issue (May 1909), the editors noted the importance of popularizing science and the need to make it accessible to the “masses” in the people’s vernacular.¹²³ Yet, in fact, the Jewish intelligentsia, which was supposed to fulfill this function, was completely alienated from the masses and outwardly disparaged its language. The aim of the monthly journal was to contribute “to the Yiddish enlightenment of the Jewish intelligentsia.” The nineteen issues of the journal were not sufficient to achieve this aim.

In the summer of 1908, Yiddishist activists from Eastern Europe gathered for the event known as the Czernowitz Conference. This historic opportunity to publicly demonstrate the strength of the Yiddish language and its culture brought the long-lasting argument to a peak when it declared Yiddish a Jewish national language.¹²⁴ Despite the activities and achievements, it is necessary to remember that most of the Jewish public and its spiritual leaders clung to a traditional way of life (either Hasidic or Mitnagdic). Although Yiddish was the vernacular, this public tried with all its might to separate itself from the modern revelations of the secular cultural system emerging in Yiddish (and beforehand in Hebrew). Maskilic thinking, *belles lettres*, and popular scientific works were suspected of heresy and apostasy and were referred to using the dubious, disparaging nickname *treyf-posl*, to be persecuted and eliminated like a pest. After

the Galician orthodox leadership adopted the medium of journalism as an easy and comfortable means of communicating with its public, the Czernowitz Conference in fact aroused new insights regarding the place and status of Yiddish among the religious public in Russia-Poland, and regarding the need for an adequate alternative to the flourishing secular journalism in this language.¹²⁵

Two years after the conference, Bal-Makhshoves noted with satisfaction that Yiddish was no longer considered a stage on the way to adopting the surrounding vernacular or Hebrew but rather was a means of disseminating knowledge, on the one hand, and, on the other, a reflection of the soul of the Jewish masses. Bal-Makhshoves emphasized, with a great degree of exaggeration, the achievements of Yiddish in educating (part of) the Jewish intelligentsia, highlighting as its clear enemies Zionist circles that opposed the exile.¹²⁶ Dovid Frishman ridiculed the level of contemporaneous Yiddish literature. He did not disagree regarding the importance of the older Yiddish writers, but he thought that the younger ones—in his words tasteless idlers, who sanctified the language without justification—were what he called Menelauses: they became high priests and brought the people closer to destruction.¹²⁷ Yiddish language and literature were humiliated from an unexpected quarter: by the well-known and respected bilingual author Shimen Shmuel Frug, who contributed significantly to Yiddish poetry (albeit alongside his writing in Russian). In his old age, Frug called *zhargon* a dirty and embarrassing language. According to Frug, if the Jews were indeed a people, they needed a national language. However, if this language was Yiddish, the Jews were not a people.¹²⁸

Between the years 1899 and 1914, the way that some of the educated social classes viewed the “language of the masses” began to undergo a fundamental change. This was not only a passive recognition of the language’s cultural value. Rather, an organized ideology also emerged, according to which Yiddish was a national language (the only one or on par with Hebrew). This outlook was not necessarily dependent on political ideology but for the most part was identified with the socialist movement, which naturally addressed the lower echelons of the working public—that is, those without a formal education. Although some leaders of the Jewish workers’ movement belonged to the Russian-speaking Jewish intelligentsia, they understood that only by using Yiddish could they reach the hearts of their target audience and bring about the desired results. Yiddish abandoned the position of defensiveness that had characterized it since the middle of the nineteenth century, and its representatives employed a determined and resolute (sometimes also aggressive) tone. The old demand to replace Yiddish with the language of the surroundings was replaced with a demand for activities to disseminate information via publications in Yiddish, mainly seeking to provide the language and its cultural values with a firm basis by means of an organized, modern, and progressive education system and by publishing works of grammar and anthologies of readings. Supporters of Hebrew, who discovered

that their battle against *zhargon* was not achieving the desired aims, began to regard Yiddish as a real threat.

Rising Numbers and Changing Content

The change in the status of Yiddish within Jewish society affected publishing initiatives. According to a bibliographical survey for the year 1889, which was printed in *Yudishe folks-bibliothek*, 115 titles were published in Yiddish in the Russian Empire in that year. Of these, fourteen were religious books, four dealt with history (one of them was an edition of the traditional *Sefer yosifon*), five were instructional texts—including guides for the individual study of Russian and Yiddish—three were calendars; two were *brivenshteller* (handbooks of sample letters) and one was a collection of proverbs. Among the nonreligious titles, 80 percent were *belles lettres* (prose, poetry, drama) by respected and admired authors as well as those that critics considered unworthy of appearing in print, although the readers thought otherwise. On average, 2,000 copies of such titles were printed. However, there were significant disparities between the various literary levels. For example, two booklets of poetry by a Lithuanian *badkhn* (traditional entertainer, *badkhonim* usually performed at weddings and on other special occasions), Hillel Klebanov, were printed in runs of 10,000 copies each. Thirty-five works (around 40 percent of the *belles lettres*) were by Shomer—such works were known by the derogatory name *shund* (trash) and were considered not only illicit in terms of quality but also as detrimental to the readers' taste.¹²⁹ Many of Shomer's works were printed in runs of 6,000 copies, and some even merited a second edition. The only quality writers able to compete with Shomer were Yankev Dinezon—6,000 copies of his novel were printed—and Mendele Moykher-Sforim—5,000 copies of *Di kliatshe* [The Nag] were printed. However, these were exceptions. One thousand copies of the works of Mordkhe Spector and poems by Y. L. Gordon were printed. The novel *Stempenu* by Sholem Aleichem was considered highly successful in terms of circulation: 4,100 copies were printed.¹³⁰ Furthermore, it should be noted that most of the literary works were booklets or chapbooks numbering dozens of pages, and few were actual books.

Of the titles in the list, forty-two were printed in Vilna and thirty-eight in Warsaw, without a clear distinction between the two cities vis-à-vis content. Single titles were printed in Odessa, Zhitomir, Lublin, Piotrków, St. Petersburg, and Kishinev. In addition to this list, in 1889 six literary collections and the weekly *Yudishes folks-blat* (Jewish People's Paper), founded by Aleksander Zederbaum, appeared.¹³¹

The above statistics are even more meaningful when compared with data collected in 1912 and published in the following year, close to the end of the period discussed in this book. The source of these statistics is the official annual

publication by “the central office for printing matters,” which was in fact the department in the Interior Ministry responsible for censorship. Superior to the local censors, this department received copies of all publications printed in the Russian Empire.¹³²

Despite the inaccuracies in the recording of works, and considering that there may have been other publications that did not appear on the list, it seems that 407 Yiddish titles were printed in the Russian Empire in that year. To obtain a detailed picture, the titles were divided according to the following categories.

Belles lettres

These amount to 236 titles (58 percent). Ten were booklets of traditional, pious content. Around one third of the titles (seventy-two) were booklets of on average sixteen pages, which were part of the series *Familien-bibliotek* (Family Library), which was published by the daily newspaper *Haynt* (Today) in the years 1909–14. Most of these booklets (sixty) included short stories by Sholem Aleichem or chapters from his longer works. Four entire books by Sholem Aleichem were printed in that year; three books and one booklet by Mendele Moykher-Sforim; and four by Y. L. Peretz: two as books and two as booklets.

Forty-two of the 236 works of *belles lettres* were longer than one hundred pages (17.8 percent), most of them by known writers such as Sholem Asch, Avrom Reyzen, Zalman Shneour, Y. D. Berkowitz, Yehudah Steinberg, Dovid Frishman, a book of poems by Der Nister, and the first collection of stories by Yekhezkl Dobrushin. Only around one tenth of the literary publications in 1912 could be defined as *shund*. One-time publications, some of them humorous, published to mark events or festivals, and literary collections accounted for a similar amount. Fourteen dramatic works—popular entertainment—were printed, one of them translated and two others translations of Italian operas.

We can discern two separate categories of poetry: one included many publications of single pages from theatrical songs and folk songs, with titles such as *Teater-lider* (Theater Songs) or *Kupleten* (Couplets); and the second collections of poems. Four works from the second category appear on the list. There also appears a collection of folk songs collected and edited by the educator and scholar of Jewish folk music Zusman Kiselgof (Kiselhof), published by the Society for Jewish Folk Music in partnership with the OPE in St. Petersburg.¹³³

Prominently lacking are translations from foreign languages: the list includes only nine such works written by eight writers. Two of them (Edmondo De Amicis and Hans Christian Andersen) wrote for children, and their books were published by publishing houses that targeted young readers.

For each literary work published in 1912, an average of 1,000 copies were printed. An average of 1,380 copies of translated titles were published. In contrast to the list from 1889, there are no large disparities in print runs, because

the number of titles defined as *shund* was now relatively low. Thus, for example, Shomer, who had since passed away, and whose works no longer enchanted the readers, had only two works published.

Publicist Writings, Criticism, and Science

Ninety-six titles (23.6 percent): this category contains a mixture of books or series of books, booklets, chapbooks, and pamphlets from two to sixteen pages in length. The authors, original and translated, included Y. L. Peretz, Sholem Aleichem, Ahad Ha-am, Max Nordau, Hillel Zeitlin, and more. Such works also included ideological-political publications, pamphlets concerning elections for the community of Warsaw and to the Duma, and two missionary publications. In the ideological-political sphere, the socialist publications (Bund and Po'alei Zion) took first place: ten publications with an average of 3,280 copies per title—a meaningful number in comparison to the average distribution of all other Yiddish titles (not including newspapers). Zionist publications in Yiddish accounted for relatively few works, and their distribution was also low. Apart from a pamphlet titled *Der shekel* (The Shekel), 10,000 copies of which were published in St. Petersburg, six Zionist works were published with an average of 1,166 copies each (around half the distribution of the socialist ones).

Four publications by the Jewish Colonization Association, JCA, concern society and economics. One of these was printed in a run of 20,000 copies. The works regarding society and economics discuss loan funds, cooperative organization, law, a journal intended for tailors, advice and information for emigrants, and a report on agricultural settlements.

In the category of general knowledge, history (Jewish and general) took first place. Most works were popular adaptations of German books. In contrast to the 1890s, in which a range of works about natural science were published, in 1912, thirty-five popular science booklets in a pious spirit by the Lithuanian writer Yehoshua Meyzakh were printed. This subcategory also included works concerning health and hygiene.

A number of titles touched on literary criticism, the history of Yiddish literature, and Jewish folklore. Initiatives to gather folklore in Yiddish had begun in the 1880s and multiplied over the years. This list includes a collection edited by collectors and researchers Noyekh Prylucki and Shmuel Lehman.¹³⁴ Furthermore, the list notes a collection of hundreds of sayings and proverbs by figures from all over the world throughout history;¹³⁵ the second volume of the literary collection for literature and criticism, *Fun tsayt tsu tsayt* (From Time to Time; Kiev); a second edition of the pioneering book by Meir Pines, *Di geshikhte fun der yudisher literatur* (The History of Jewish Literature, two volumes, Warsaw), and a collection of criticism regarding world literature.¹³⁶

It is difficult to gain a general impression of the extent and quality of the publications in this category. Similar to the list of *belles lettres*, it too included a few

important and meaningful publications alongside numerous works that lacked any literary or scientific value. Their significance lies in their production and inclusion among the titles printed in Yiddish in that year.

Instructional Texts

Sixteen books (3.9 percent): this number reflects the poor achievements of Yiddish in the field of education at this point. Yiddish schools were still in the planning and experimentation stages, thus there were few textbooks and study books in the language itself. In total, the statistical list includes six modern textbooks in Yiddish. Four of the study books are *brivenshteller*; those who sought to institute modern education in Yiddish did not consider them textbooks. The rest of the books were guidebooks for self-study of languages. Altogether, 11,500 copies of the four *brivenshteller* were printed, which was more than the six modern textbooks (a little more than 1,000 copies per book).

Various Books Not Considered “Literature”

Fifty-nine (14.5 percent): half of the books in this category were calendars, eighteen pamphlets and local publications, four guides for home industry,¹³⁷ a prayer book, *Tsene rene* (an extremely popular Yiddish translation-adaptation of the bible by Yankev ben Yitskhok Ashkenazi of Yanev [Janów] that includes commentary and midrashim; it has been printed more than 200 times since the early seventeenth century), a collection of *tekhines* (private supplications, largely said by women), a book of riddles, a book of love letters, and a catalogue of the books for sale in a Jewish bookshop in Berdichev.

These categories reinforce the importance of Warsaw as a focus of Yiddish cultural activity, at least in terms of quantity. In contrast to the slight advantage that Vilna had in terms of number of publications in 1889, in 1912, 64 percent of all books were printed in Warsaw and 16 percent in Vilna. Warsaw’s advantage is evident in each one of the above categories, although a survey of the titles reveals that most of the literary material was printed in Warsaw, and most of the political (largely socialist) material was printed in Vilna.¹³⁸

In the field of journalism, the data for 1912 reflects the prominent change that began with the appearance of the first daily Yiddish newspaper in Russia, *Der fraynd*, and intensified after the easing of the censorship in the fall of 1905. The relative freedom enabled the existence of no less than twenty-four Yiddish periodicals in 1912, which included fifteen daily papers (most stable with high distributions; a few short-lived) and nine journals that appeared at various frequencies. These publications addressed a range of target audiences and provided news, political, social, cultural, and other types of information.¹³⁹

World War I closed a period of around fifty years of slow yet fundamental change in the status of Yiddish in Eastern Europe. The disparaged *zhargon* be-

came a language like any other: authors wrote in it (texts of various qualities), publishers and editors printed an increasing range of newspapers and journals, and readers found what they sought in accordance with their age, status, taste, and inclinations.

Notes

1. Robert Darnton demonstrates this in his essay concerning the history of reading, focusing on the figures of Martin Luther reading Paul, Karl Marx reading Hegel, and Mao Tse-Tung reading Marx. See Robert Darnton, "History of Reading," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 140–67, especially 161–62. For a detailed discussion of the significant changes in reading practices during the eighteenth century and the influence of reading on human thinking in the modern period, see Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?" in *Books and Society in History: Papers of the Association of College and Research Libraries Rare Books and Manuscripts Preconference 24–28 June 1980, Boston, Massachusetts*, ed. Kenneth E. Carpenter (New York: Bowker, 1983), 3–26 (this important essay was reprinted in later years and in other frameworks); Cathy N. Davidson, "Toward a History of Books and Readers," in *Reading in America*, ed. Cathy N. Davidson (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 1–25. See also Roger Chartier, "Labourers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader," in *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 47–58 (this essay is an expanded version of the introductory chapter to his work, Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994]). On p. 3 Chartier notes the concepts "world of the text" and "world of the reader," according to the definition by Paul Ricœur. See also Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (London: Flamingo, 1995); Reinhard Wittmann, "Was There a Reading Revolution at the End of the Eighteenth Century?" in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 284–312; Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 28–29. For a theoretical survey of the history of reading and readers, see Carl F. Kaestle, "The History of Readers," in *Literacy in the United States, Readers and Reading since 1880*, ed. Carl Kaestle and Helen Damon-Moore (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 33–52. In the Jewish context, relevant articles have been written by Zeev Gries and Avriel Bar-Levav concerning the reception of the book *Shivhei haBesht*, see Zeev Gries, "Between Literature and History—Prolegomenon for Discussion and Analysis of Examples from 'In Praise of the Ba'al Shem Tov,'" *Tura* 3 (1994): 153–81 [Hebrew]; Avriel Bar-Levav, "Between the World of the Texts and the World of the Readers," in *A Touch of Grace—Studies in Ashkenazi Culture, Women's History, and the Language of the Jews: Presented to Chava Turniansky*, ed. Israel Bartal et al. (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 2013), 95–122 [Hebrew].
2. Darnton, "History of Reading," 142. In the Eastern European Jewish context discussed herein, changes in reading practices were connected to the legitimacy of the spoken vernacular (Yiddish) and identified with it. Therefore, we must ask in what language people read.
3. Darnton "History of Reading," 152–59. See also Robert Escarpit, *Sociology of Literature*, translated from the French by Ernest Pick. 2nd ed. with a new introduction by Malcolm Bradbury and Bryan Wilson (London: Cass, 1971); Rudolf Schenda, *Die Lesestoffe der Kleinen Leute: Studien zur Populären Literatur im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Beck,

- 1976), 33–34; Carl F. Kaestle, “The History of Literature and the History of Reading,” *Review of Research in Education* 12 (1985): 44–45; Davidson, “Toward a History of Books and Readers,” 18.
4. Jonathan Culler, “Prolegomena to a Theory of Reading,” in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, ed. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 50–53; Chartier, “Labourers and Voyagers,” 50–51. These insights were a starting point for the scholar and critic of Yiddish literature Shmuel Niger decades earlier when he wrote about literary criticism (Sh. Niger, “Gedanken fun a lezer,” *Der fraynd*, 24 and 25 February 1909, 3 [in both issues]).
 5. Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 130–34, 153–54 (quote on 131–32). Clearly there are texts such as works of suspense, for example, that necessarily draw in the reader; if they do not do so, the book fails to achieve its aim. Iser was not referring to these. Reinhardt Wittman defined the encounter with an unknown text as hermeneutical reading, which is not only an authorization of known truths but also a way to discover new truths. Wittmann, “Was There a Reading Revolution at the End of the Eighteenth Century?” 300.
 6. In the practical sphere, in the Eastern European Jewish milieu, writing in 1908, journalist and critic Re’uven Brainin noted the importance of selective, careful, and critical reading as a means to lead the reader to revelations and to the understanding of new contents (Re’uven Brainin, “Bikher un lezer,” *Unzer leben*, 21 August 1908, 3). M[ax] Lazaron made similar comments. See M. Lazaron, “Talant tsum lezen,” in *Zumer: Shvues zamlung*, ed. Moyshe Stavsky (Warsaw: Kultur, 1910/11), 3–32; in the political context, Dr. N (Sh. Niger?), “Vi azoy tsu lezen a bukh?” *Leben un visenshaft* 5–6 (1912): 139–43.
 7. Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861–1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Chartier, “Labourers and Voyagers”; Darnon “What Is the History of Books?”; Hanna Adoni and Hillel Nossek, *Readers’ Voices: The Act of Reading in the Multi-media Environment* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2007) [Hebrew]; Shmuel Niger, *Geklibene shriftn*, vol. 1 (New York: Yidisher Kultur Farlag, 1928). See also Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 17–18. In relation to what is said here, Adoni and Nossek rely on the model of the cultural field that Pierre Bourdieu proposed (Adoni and Nossek, *Readers’ Voices*, 13–15; Pierre Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production,” in *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alister McCleery [London and New York: Routledge, 2002], 77–99). For a study that compares two reading communities in different places from the sociocultural perspective of reading, see Jacques Leenhardt, “Towards a Sociology of Reading,” in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, ed. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 205–24.
 8. Itamar Even-Zohar, “Hayahasim bein ma’arakhot rishoniyot umishniyot berav-ma’arekhet shel hasifrut,” *Hasifrut* 17 (1974): 45–49; Adoni and Nossek, *Readers’ Voices*, 13–20; Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production.” Regarding the literary republic in the context of new Hebrew literature, see Dan Miron, *Bodedim bemo’adam: Lidokna shel harepublika hasifrutit ha’ivrit bitehilat hame’a ha’esrim* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1987), 9–19, 104–11, 333–81. On the idea in an earlier Hebrew context, see Avriel Bar-Levav, “Between Library Awareness and the Jewish Republic of Letters,” in *Libraries and Book Collections*, ed. Yosef Kaplan and Moshe Sluhovsky (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 2006), 201–24 [Hebrew]. “Communities of Readers” is the title of the opening chapter of Chartier’s book, see Chartier, *The Order of Books*, 1–23. See also Davidson, “Toward a History of Books and Readers,” 20–22.
 9. Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 27–29. See also S. H. Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, new edition, revised by John Trevitt (London: British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 1996), 137–69; Davidson, “Toward a History of Books and Readers,” 17; Chartier, “Labourers and Voyagers,” 48–49; Leenhardt, “Towards a Sociology of Reading.” Niger referred to the phenomenon of reading for the purpose of belonging to a public and political sphere

- as “hypocrisy” (Niger, *Lezer, dikhter, kritiker* [New York: Yidisher Kultur Farlag, 1928], 25).
10. Chartier, *The Order of Books*, 61. See also Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, 166–69. The most famous example is Bibliothèque Bleue, which was intended to provide adaptations of *belles lettres* for unlearned French readers between the mid-seventeenth century and the revolution (Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987], 240–64; Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 27–29). A similar German enterprise, Blaue Bücher, was created at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century (Katrin Völkner, “Bildung for Sale: Karl Robert Langewiesche’s Blaue Bücher and the Business of ‘Reading-Up,’” in *Publishing Culture and the “Reading Nation”: German Book History in the Long Nineteen Century*, ed. Lynne Tatlock [Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010], 251–58). A Russian example of such an enterprise will be noted below.
 11. Bar-Levav, “Between Library Awareness and the Jewish Republic of Letters,” 201–8; idem, “The Sacred Space of the Portable Homeland: An Archeology of Unseen Libraries in Jewish Culture from the Medieval Period to the Internet,” in *Ut videant et contingant: Essays on Pilgrimage and Sacred Space in Honour of Ora Limor*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Iris Shagrir (Raanana: Open University, 2011), 297–320 [Hebrew]; Dov Schidorsky, *Sifriya vesefer be’Erets Israel beshalhei hatekufa ha’otmanit* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990), 15–16. An important distinction between types of public libraries in Western Europe (“scientific” or “learned” on the one hand and “popular” on the other) appears in Alfred Hessel, *A History of Libraries*, translated, with supplementary material, by Reuben Peiss (New Brunswick: The Scarecrow Press, 1955), 109–10.
 12. Alistair Black, “The Library as Clinic: A Foucauldian Interpretation of British Public Library Attitudes to Social and Physical Disease, ca. 1850–1950,” in *Libraries and Culture: Historical Essays Honoring the Legacy of Donald G. Davis Jr.*, ed. Cheryl Knott Malone et al. (Washington: Library of Congress, 2006), 194–212. Black relates to Michel Foucault’s *Naissance de la Clinique*, 1963.
 13. Schenda, *Die Lesestoffe der Kleinen Leute*, 35; Donald G. Davis Jr. and Jon Arvid Aho, “Whither Library History? A Critical Essay on Black’s Model for the Future of Library History, with Some Additional Options,” *Library History* 17 (2001): 21–37; Bar-Levav, “The Sacred Space of the Portable Homeland,” 300.
 14. Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 18–21; Jonathan Rose, “Alternative Futures for Library History,” *Libraries and Culture* 38, no. 1 (2003): 50–60. Reading halls or rooms contain newspapers and journals.
 15. Bar-Levav, “Between Library Awareness and the Jewish Republic of Letters,” 201.
 16. Robert V. Williams, “The Public Library as the Dependent Variable: Historically Oriented Theories and Hypotheses of Public Library Development,” *Journal of Library History* 16, no. 2 (1981): 329–41.
 17. Mary Hammond, *Reading, Publishing and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880–1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 23–50; Rose, “Alternative Futures for Library History”; Martyn Lyons, “New Reading in the Nineteenth Century: Women, Children, Workers,” in *A History of Reading in The West*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 315–24. For a general description of the many worries in Britain regarding defective reading, see Patrick Brantlinger, *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998). On the destructive potential attributed to novels, which ostensibly overwhelm readers’ emotions and consciousness, blurring the divide between imagination and reality, see Karin Littau, *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies and Bibliomania* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 62–65. So too in the Eastern European Jewish context, the reading of fascinating and suspenseful novels was considered inappropriate, and therefore they were not considered desirable offerings for libraries. Shmuel Niger censured reading

- intended for the purpose of enjoyment, comparing this to wasting time at card games or watching movies. By contrast, he saw room for “low” reading of novels in installments, albeit only as an intermediate stage toward quality reading (Niger, *Lezer, dikhter, kritiker*, 19–21).
18. Manguel, *A History of Reading*, 141–44; Richard D. Atlick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 64–66; James J. Barends, “Depression and Innovation in the British and American Book Trade, 1819–1939,” in *Books and Society in History: Papers of the Association of College and Research Libraries Rare Books and Manuscripts Preconference 24–28 June 1980, Boston, Massachusetts*, ed. Kenneth E. Carpenter (New York: Bowker, 1983), 231–48; Hammond, *Reading, Publishing*, 31–50; Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 59–165. Hagit Cohen, *At the Bookseller’s Shop: The Jewish Book Trade in Eastern Europe at the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2006), 88 [Hebrew], adds in this context that lists of holdings and catalogues of publishers and bookshops do not necessarily reflect the public’s reading practices.
 19. Gideon Reuveni, *Reading Germany: Reading Culture and Consumer Culture in Germany before 1933* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 183–88. On popular quality literature in Germany, see Völkner, “*Bildung* for Sale.”
 20. In 1795, Poland lost its independence and was divided between the neighboring Empires (Russia, Austria [Habsburg], and Prussia). Following the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the ten regions of central Poland became an autonomous entity under the Tsar’s authority and was called Congress Poland. This entity existed until the Polish rebellion of 1863. The lands of Galicia, which were included in the historical kingdom of Poland, were cut off from it following its division: they were annexed to the Habsburg Empire. Consequently, Galicia is not included in the geographical area discussed in this book, unless the matter touches directly upon the topic.
 21. The collection of articles by Edith W. Clowes et al., eds., *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) is dedicated to the changes in the social structure of the (urban) Russian population and the emergence of a new middle class in the mid-nineteenth century.
 22. Boris N. Mironov, “The Development of Literacy in Russia and in the USSR from the Tenth to the Twentieth Centuries,” *History of Education Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1991): 234–35; Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 4. Brooks notes that on the eve of World War I the proportion of the rural population able to read had risen to 40 percent. The ability to read was sometimes rather limited and tentative.
 23. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 9–34.
 24. The term “intelligentsia” has been employed since the 1860s. Among this literary group were graduates of the gymnasia and universities from various socioeconomic strata. On the characteristics of the Russian intelligentsia at this time, see Martin Malia, “What is the Intelligentsia?” in *The Russian Intelligentsia*, ed. Richard Pipes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 1–18; Allan K. Wildman, “The Russian Intelligentsia of the 1890s,” *The American Slavic and East European Review* 16 (1957): 157–60; Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1974), 251–79. Scholars highlight the book by Ivan Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons*, as a literary reflection of the spirit of this intelligentsia and the growing disparity between it and its familial-class roots (the book was published in 1851, and in several translations to English beginning from 1862). The “circles” tended to meet in student apartments, student clubs, private homes, philanthropic societies, and cultural institutions. From the 1860s onwards, these “circles” were used for reading forbidden revolutionary literature and thus were persecuted by the police. Writers and artists established their own circles, in which they read their writings, discussed literary works, and consolidated new literary approaches. On a late example of such a cir-

- cle and its characteristics, which differed from those of its predecessors, see Mary Louise Loe, “Redefining the Intellectual’s Role: Maksim Gorsky and the *Sreda* Circle,” in *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Edith Clowes et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 288–307. Reading and discussion circles were also popular in Western Europe and the United States, see Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 22–29; DeNel Rehberg Sedo, ed., *Reading Communities from Salons to Cyberspace* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
25. Jeffrey Brooks, “Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era,” in *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800–1914*, ed. William Mills Todd III (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1978), 97–150. The book by Isaiah Berlin (Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers*, edited by Henry Hardy and Aileen Kelly with an introduction by Eileen Kelly [New York and London: Penguin Books, 1978]) is devoted entirely to these figures, their thought, and their activities. See also Rafi Tsirkin-Sadan, *Wandering Heroes, Committed Writers: Nihilists and Nihilism in Russian Literature, 1862–1866* (Bnei Brak: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2015) [Hebrew], which deals with nihilists and nihilism in Russian literature.
 26. Gabriela Safran, *Wandering Soul: The Dybbuk’s Creator, S. An-sky* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 44–45, 103–5. See also Brooks, “Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era,” 132–42; idem, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 295–99, 323–24.
 27. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 326–28. There is evidence that Rubakin was interested in reading practices among Jews and asked Jewish students in St. Petersburg to give him information regarding contemporary Yiddish literature. See A. Kotik, “Novosti zhar-gonnoy literatury,” *Voskhod* 74 (1901): 18. Khristiana Alchevskaya, a teacher from Kharkov, originally from the lower social classes, also objected to the idea of dictating reading materials to the masses. Alchevskaya dedicated her life to facilitating critical reading practices among her students and other adults with whom she came into contact. She also believed in readers’ potential and their ability to discern between quality and poor reading materials, on condition that they have access to quality materials. In the years 1884, 1887, and 1906 she published the findings of her fieldwork from Kharkov and the village of Alekseyevka (in the Yekaterinoslav governorate) in a three-volume book titled *Chto chitat’ narodu?* (What to Read to the People?). See Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 323–24.
 28. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 59–108; Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 9–36.
 29. Moyshe Shalit, “Sh. An-skis referatn,” *Fun noentn over 1* (1937): 314.
 30. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 99–106, 360–61.
 31. Charles A. Ruud, *Russian Entrepreneur: Publisher Ivan Sytin of Moscow, 1851–1934* (Quebec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 7–38; Brooks “Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era,” 126–28; Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 66–69, 295–99, 313–24, 333–43. The Posrednik publishing house continued in parallel to publish *lubki*.
 32. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 344–45. Other publishers also began to print such Bibliothèques. See *ibid.*, 52–53; Ruud, *Russian Entrepreneur*, 52–53.
 33. From 1904, the publishing house also published literary collections that bore its name, Znaniye. Among others, these included stories by the Russian Jewish writers Semyon Yushkevich and David Aizman and translations of Yiddish stories by Sholem Asch. Concerning the place of Znaniye among literary journals in Russia, see Joan Delaney Grossman, “Rise and Decline of the ‘Literary’ Journal, 1880–1917,” in *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, ed. Deborah A. Martinsen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 171–96. On its popularity among the Jewish intelligentsia, see Jeffrey Veidlinger, *Jewish Public Culture in the Late Russian Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 95–96.
 34. C. A. An-ski, *Narod i kniga* (Moscow: Universal’noe Knig., 1914), 65–76. In the 1890s, Rubakin discerned that rural readers’ tastes had begun to change. He expected that even

- without interference they would in the future prefer quality literature to popular works. He saw the readers among the working classes as closer to the intelligentsia. See Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 326–27.
35. *Ibid.*, 295–315, 346–52. Niger doubted the value of these lists of books but did not entirely reject them. He suggested that the reader “take into consideration the authoritative opinion when you open a book and consolidate your opinion on it when you close it. And may you have the courage to close it already after [reading] the first pages” (Niger, *Leser, dikhter, kritiker*, 47).
 36. In 1879 the group *Narodnaya volya* (the people’s will), a socialist revolutionary movement, was founded. Its activities reached a peak with the murder of Tsar Alexander II. Among the members of this group were quite a number of Jews. See Elias Tcherikower, *Yehudim be’itot mahapekha* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1958), 248–49, 369–70.
 37. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 299–17, 349–50.
 38. On the new intelligentsia and its journals, see Jeffrey Brooks, “Popular Philistinism and the Course of Russian Modernism,” in *Literature and History: Theoretical Problems and Russian Case Studies*, ed. Gary Saul Morson (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), 90–110.
 39. Brooks, “Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era,” 102; Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 111–17; Lyons, “New Reading in the Nineteenth Century”; Martyn Lyons, “The Reading Experience of Worker-Autobiographers in 19th-Century Europe,” <http://www.oslo2000.uio.no/program/papers/sl0/sl0-lyons.pdf>, 2000. The founder of *Niva* and its first editor was Adolf Marks, a Jewish emigrant from Stettin, who managed the department of foreign literature at a large bookstore in St. Petersburg. On Jews who read *Niva*, see the memoirs of Rokhl Kirsch Holtman (*Mayn lebns veg* [New York: Rokhl Holtman bukh komitet, 1948]), 32–33; Tsvi Prylucki (*The Memoirs of Tsvi Prylucki*, Yad Vashem Archive, M10/175), 394–95, and the autobiographical novel by Dovid Bergelson, *Baym Dnieper*, Book I: *Penek* (Moscow: Emes, 1932), 89.
 40. Brooks, “Popular Philistinism and the Course of Russian Modernism.”
 41. Brooks, “Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era,” 111–16; Brooks, “Popular Philistinism and the Course of Russian Modernism,” 90–91; Grossman, “Rise and Decline of the ‘Literary’ Journal,” 171–206; Stanley J. Rabinowitz, “‘Northern Herald’: From Traditional Thick Journal to Forerunner of the Avant-garde,” in *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, ed. Deborah A. Martinsen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 207–27.
 42. Louise McReynolds, “Imperial Russia’s Newspaper Reporters: Profile of a Society in Transition, 1865–1914,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 68 (1990): 277–93; *idem*, *The News under Russia’s Old Regime: The Development of a Mass-Circulation Press* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 113–22. See also Daniel R. Brower, “The Penny Press and its Readers,” in *Culture in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Stephen P. Frank and Mark D. Steinberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 147–67. The war between Russia and Turkey (1877–78) hastened the development of commercial-informative journalism. The concept of the “field” means the battlefield during the war and the streets of the city in times of peace.
 43. McReynolds, “Imperial Russia’s Newspaper Reporters”; Brower, “The Penny Press and its Readers.”
 44. McReynolds, “Imperial Russia’s Newspaper Reporters,” 284–88; McReynolds, *The News under Russia’s Old Regime*, 228–38; Daniel R. Brower, *The Russian City between Tradition and Modernity, 1850–1900* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), 170–81. On the penny newspapers in the United States and their characteristics, see Michael Shudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 12–60; Joseph Dominick, *The Dynamics of Mass Communication*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw, 1993), 84–91. Regarding the kopeck newspapers,

- it should be noted that Yiddish newspapers renewed the phenomenon in 1906. The most popular kopeck newspaper was *Gazeta kopeyka* (1908–17); in 1910, distribution reached 250,000 copies, and in the war years it grew even further, to 600,000 or even 700,000 copies per day. See Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 130–35.
45. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 130–35; McReynolds “Imperial Russia’s Newspaper Reporters,” 286–88; Brower, “The Penny Press and its Readers,” 152–61.
 46. Brooks, “Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era,” 145; Stites, *Russian Popular Culture*, 25–26. On a similar phenomenon in Germany, see Roland Fullerton, “Toward a Commercial Popular Culture in Germany: The Development of Pamphlet, 1871–1914,” *Journal of Social History* 12, no. 4 (1979): 489–511. On detective literature, see below, Chapter 3.
 47. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 109–213; Brower, “The Penny Press and its Readers.”
 48. On the movement for the emancipation of women in Russia, see Stites, *Russian Popular Culture*. On popular writing for women (by women), see Louise McReynolds, “Reading the Russian Romance: What Did the Keys to Happiness Unlock?” *Journal of Popular Culture* 31, no. 4 (1998): 95–108; Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 153–60. *Ibid.*, 156–61, Brooks expands on Verbitskaya.
 49. Paul Robert Magosci, *A History of Ukraine* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 373. In villages, 91 percent to 96 percent of the population were unable to read. See *ibid.*, 351–64. See also Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 119–22.
 50. Magosci, *A History of Ukraine*, 368–78.
 51. Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations*, 26–51.
 52. Czesław Hernas, “Potrzeby i metody badania literatury brukowej,” *O Współczesnej Kulturze Literackiej*, tom.1, ed. Stefan Żółkiewski and Maryla Hopfinger (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1973) 15–45; Jadwiga Krajewska, *Czytelnictwo wśród robotników w Królestwie Polskim, 1870–1914* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1979), 62–64; Anna Martuszczyńska, “Literatura obiegów popularnych,” in *Słownik Literatury Polskiej XX Wieku*, ed. Alina Brodzka et al. (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1992), 577–87.
 53. Hernas, “Potrzeby i metody badania literatury brukowej,” 23–24.
 54. Hernas, “Potrzeby i metody badania literatury brukowej,” 23–36. In Germany, the “plague” of booklets in installments continued from the 1870s until World War I, and there too it reached a peak in the decade before the outbreak of the war. See Fullerton, “Toward a Commercial Popular Culture in Germany.”
 55. Miron, *Bodedim bemo’adam*, 60.
 56. *Ibid.*, 61–65; David Patterson, *The Hebrew Novel in Czarist Russia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Publications, 1964), mainly chapters three and five.
 57. Miron, *Bodedim bemo’adam*, 106. On the crisis in general, see *ibid.*, 74–110. See also Lilach Nethanel, “The Non-reading Reader: European Hebrew Literature at the Turn of the 20th Century,” *Zuot* 14 (2017): 112–24.
 58. Mordechai Zalkin, *From Heder to School: Modernization Processes in 19th Century East European Jewish Education* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2008) [Hebrew] (regarding the aims of the school and the curricula in the 1860s and 1870s, see especially 142–60); Sabina Levin, *Chapters in the History of Jewish Education in Poland* (Tel Aviv: The Center for the Study of the History of Polish Jewry, 1997) [Hebrew]. In accordance with the character of the school, its location, and operators, there could also be Hebrew studies. Such a state-run school was known in Yiddish as a *shkole* (Russian *shkola* and Polish *szkoła*). The nickname was accompanied by a tone of denigration and mockery, the root of which was the great protest voiced in 1841 by the Jews of Vilna against Dr. Max Lilienthal, who was

- appointed by the Russian education minister to carry out a comprehensive reform of traditional Jewish education. For more on the source of this concept in Yiddish, see Kh. Sh. Kazdan, *Fun kheyder un "shkoles" biz Tsisho* (Mexico: Meksike Shloyme Mendelson Fond, 1956), 40–52. The title of this book is based on his historical memory of the topic.
59. Academic studies for women took place in special courses alongside the studies at the faculty of medicine; the women mainly specialized in midwifery (Tcherikower, *Yehudim be'itot mahapekha*, 185, 206–8). See also below, Chapter 1, alongside notes 244–47.
 60. *Ibid.*, 180–84, 208–13, 368–72; Yehuda Slutsky, *Ha'itonut hayehudit-rusit bame'a hatesh'a-eresrei* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1970); Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 31–37, 49–64, 81–90, 97–107; Zvia Nardi, "Tmurot betnu'at hahaskala beRusiya beshnot hashishim vehashiv'im shel hame'a ha-19," in *Hadat vехаָayim: Tnu'at hahaskala hayehudit bemizrah Eiropa*, ed. Immanuel Etkes (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 1992), 300–27; Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 214–25; Nathaniel Deutsch, *The Jewish Dark Continent* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). Harsh criticism of the intelligentsia who were alienated from people appeared in the book by Avraham Mapu, *Ayit tsavu'a* (The Hypocrite; first published 1857). Criticism of assimilated Jews who made a living from tax farming on alcoholic drinks and aimed to become part of the Russian bourgeois appears in Mendele Moykher-Sforim, *Dos vintshfingerl in Ale verk fun Mendele Moykher Sforim*, vol. 13 (Warsaw: Mendele, 1928), 360–68 (first published in 1903).
 61. Yehuda Slutsky, *Ha'itonut hayehudit-rusit bame'a ha'esrim* (Jerusalem: Center for Diaspora Studies, 1978), 13–14 and the references there. Tcherikower referred to this group as provincial maskilim (see Tcherikower, *Yehudim be'itot mahapekha*, 189). See also Nardi, "Tmurot betnu'at hahaskala," 300–27. For a detailed examination of the social and geographical characteristics of the Eastern European maskilim, see Mordechai Zalkin, *A New Dawn: The Jewish Enlightenment in the Russian Empire* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000), 22–42, 43–86 [Hebrew]. Members of the semi-intelligentsia influenced by the Russian revolutionary ideas were among the founders of the Jewish workers' movement.
 62. Tcherikower, *Yehudim be'itot mahapekha*, 375–80; Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 49, 57, 113–14. The literary figure of a young man who sought to pass the matriculation exams, to study medicine at university, and to join the Russian intelligentsia, yet failed to even pass the first challenge because he could not internalize the required information about Russian folklore, is Isroel, the hero of the allegorical work by Mendele Moykher-Sforim, *Di kliatshe* (first published 1873). For an English version see *The Nag* translated from the Yiddish by Moshe Spiegel (New York: Beechhurst Press, 1955). Israel Bartal identified him as a model for the turning point among maskilim who were autodidacts and "returned to the people": not to the Russian "people . . . but instead to the Jewish people, and not because of dismissing it or failing to recognize its positive qualities in their own right but out of a clear desire to be part of it." Israel Bartal, "Bein haskala radikalit lesotsializm yehudi," in Immanuel Etkes, *Hadat vехаָayim: Tnu'at hahaskala hayehudit bemizrah Eiropa* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 1992), 328–34.
 63. Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, 192. See also 254–56 and mainly note 191 and 186–98.
 64. Tcherikower, *Yehudim be'itot mahapekha*, 299–300; Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 28–48. With regard to his treatment of Yiddish, see *ibid.*, 38–39.
 65. Morris Winchevsky, *Erinerungen* (Moscow: Shul un bukh, 1926), 16–51, 196–231.
 66. Dr. Chaim Zhitlowsky, *Zikhroyes fun mayn lebn*, 1–2 (New York: Dr. Chaim Zhitlowsky Yubiley Komitet, 1935), vol. 1, 220.
 67. Niger, *Lezer, dikhter, kritiker*, 17. The verb to write, *shraybn*, did not have such clearly defined meanings.
 68. Shomer (1846?–1905) was in fact a brand name. For some it indicated shallow and poor quality reading material that was to be avoided (and others should be prevented from

- reading it). For others, he was the most admired and sought-after writer. On him see below and also the first chapter, alongside notes 44 and 45 and according to the index.
69. Dr. Zviling (Bal-Makhshoves), "Bikhr un lezer," *Der yud* 13 (1900), 1–2.
 70. On religious reading and on the status of the *zogerke* or *firzogerin*, see Iris Parush, *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2004), 134–38. In the introduction to the body of his article about women writing in *Kol mevaser*, Shmuel Werses provides literary examples of women reading aloud and listening to texts being read. See Shmuel Werses, "Kol ha'isha bashevu'on beyidish 'Kol mevaser,'" *Hulyot* 4 (1997): 53–82.
 71. Y. Sh-d, "Folks forlezungen mit likht-bilder," *Der fraynd*, 12 August 1904, 3 (and continued the following day).
 72. *Arbeiter kalender: A zamelbukh far arbeiter-interesen aroysgegebn durkh Yekhzkel Kotik* (Warsaw: I. Edelshteyn, 1907). The author of the bibliography list was A. K., apparently Avrom Kotik, to whom a separate discussion is devoted in the first chapter.
 73. *Ibid.*, 2 (separate pagination). The books regarding which Kotik phrased the questions were by Karl Kautsky, Friedrich Engels, and others.
 74. [A. Kotik], *Prospekt, baygeleygt a katalog fun oysgevalhte yudishe bikher* (Warsaw: Bildung, 1902). See also Sh. Belenki, "Vegn folks-un-kinder bibliotekn," *Der yud*, 49 and 51 (1902), 14 and 3–5. Belenki, who was a Zionist activist, noted the importance of a library with a firm basis, managed by members of the community rather than alienated "officials." In particular, he emphasized the educational value of children's libraries. On the motivations to establish libraries, see below, Chapter 5, and see also David Shavit, "The Emergence of Jewish Public Libraries in Tsarist Russia," *Journal of Library History* 20, no. 3 (1985): 239–52; Veidlinger, *Jewish Public Culture*, 29–43.
 75. Y. Sh-d, "Vegn folks-bildung," *Der fraynd*, 4 December 1904, 3; Yankev Peykin, "Der kleynshtetlsher lezer," *Vilner tog*, 28 and 29 May 1913, 2 (in both issues).
 76. M. Z. "Lezer un shrayber," *Der fraynd*, 23 and 24 December 1908, 2 and 3 respectively.
 77. The accepted term "public library" found various expressions in Russia and was referred to by a range of similar names; indeed, the difference between them is not always clear. My intention here is to present a general background only, and therefore I will avoid entering into the minute distinctions between these types of libraries. For detailed information and a relevant bibliography, see Mary Stuart, "'The Ennobling Illusion': The Public Library Movement in Late Imperial Russia," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 76, no. 3 (1998): 401–40.
 78. These numbers and the numbers below relate to libraries that received a legal license. Obviously, unauthorized libraries also operated throughout the Empire, and we possess no information about their numbers.
 79. Most of these libraries were in schools but were open to all. See Stuart, "The Ennobling Illusion," 409–413, 429. See also Brooks, "Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era," 124–25.
 80. *Ibid.*, 124.
 81. Jadwiga Kołodziejska, *Publiczne biblioteki samorządowe w okresie międzywojennym* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie bibliotekarzy polskich, 1967), 16–28; Krajewska, *Czytelnictwo wśród robotników w Królestwie Polskim*, 13–18; Barbara Bieńkowska and Halina Chamerska, *Books in Poland: Past and Present* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1990), 63–71.
 82. Large parts of the book by Krajewska, *Czytelnictwo wśród robotników w Królestwie Polskim*, are devoted to these bodies and their influence on the Polish working-class readers. See mainly Chapter 5.
 83. Harold M. Leich, "The Society for Librarianship and Russian Librarianship in the Early Twentieth Century," *The Journal of Library History* 22 (1987): 42–57. And see below, Chapter 5.
 84. *Ibid.*, 42–43.

85. Stuart, "The Ennobling Illusion," 415–25. The new people's intelligentsia in the city originated among the graduates of schools and white-collar workers (hired workers and clerks). See Brooks, "Popular Philistinism and the Course of Russian Modernism," 90–91.
86. Concerning the American influence on the function of libraries and librarians in Russia on the eve of World War I (and afterward), see Edward Kasinec, "L. B. Khavkina (1871–1949), American Library Ideas in Russia and the Development of Soviet Librarianship," *Libri* 37 (1987): 59–71.
87. Stuart, "The Ennobling Illusion," 432.
88. Zeev Gries, *The Book in the Jewish World, 1700–1900* (Oxford: Littman library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 66–68, 129–130. See also, idem, *Sefer, sofer vesipur bereshit haḥasidut: Min haBesht ve'ad Menachem Mendl meKotsk* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1992), 59–62; Shidorsky, *Sifriya vesefer be'Erets Israel*, 25–28.
89. Zalkin, *A New Dawn*, 247–55. The quote can be found on p. 254. To Zalkin's list we can add David Engelstein, a teacher in the school in Vinnytsia who, in the 1870s, operated from his home a library for youth (not specifically those who attended school) in order to widen their horizons (Mordkhe Spektor, *Mayn lebn*, vol. 1 kinderyorn, vol. 2 yugntyorn [Warsaw: Ahisefer, 1927], 238–78).
90. Below is a sample of such initiatives that were reported in *Der yud*: General news about "Russia," 1 (1899), 15; in Tsebrik (Russian Tsebrikovo), in the Kherson region, young people organized a circle for bible study and for reading and lending newspapers and books free of charge, *ibid.*, 11 (1900), 3; eight volunteers in Shirayev (Russian Shirayevovo), in the Kherson region, taught poor children Hebrew, Russian, arithmetic, and history in the evenings; on Saturday nights and on Thursdays lessons were given in the *Kitsur shulhan arukh* and *Ein Ya'akov* to adults; the teachers also lent out newspapers, *ibid.*, 5 (1900), 10; in Pereyaslav, in the Poltava region, students at the gymnasium taught poor children, sewed clothes for them, and lent out books, *ibid.*, 13 (1900): 12; in the town of Zawiercie, in the Piotrków region, Zionist youth devoted time on Sabbaths to studying the bible with Jewish workers and purchased for them subscriptions to newspapers in various languages, *ibid.*, 38 (1900): 9; in the Lithuanian town of Plungyan (Lithuanian Plungė; Russian Plungyany), a group of young women opened an evening school for workers (male and female) in which they voluntarily taught reading and writing in Yiddish, a little arithmetic, and a little Russian and German. The women gathered books and opened a small lending library in the home of one of their grandmothers on the outskirts of the town—a location that was safe from police searches, Kirsch Holtman (*Mayn lebns veg*, 29–31); in the settlement of Novozlatopol', in the Yekaterinoslav governorate, a group of young people, with the help of teachers from the elementary school, gathered to teach Russian and Yiddish and to read books and newspapers, *Der fraynd*, 15 April 1904, 3; according to news from Kovel', Volhynia, the union of carpenters tried to organize evening courses at which workers would learn reading and writing in Russian and Yiddish, but already on the first evening the police arrested the teachers and the students, *ibid.*, 10 June 1907, 4.
91. Zalkin, *A New Dawn*, 246–55.
92. Shmuel Leib Tsitron, "Ha'am vehasifrut," *Hashiloah* 6 (1899): 188–92. See also Y. Ben-Yisrael, "Misparim yokhkhu," *Hador*, 31 (1901), 1–2.
93. "53 evreiskiya shkoly v tsifrakh," *Vestnik OPE* 10 (1911): 3–35.
94. For general information on this, see Shmuel Werses, "Ve'idat Tshernovits bere'i ha'itotut ha'ivrit," in his book *Melashon el lashon: Yetsivot vegilguleihen besifrutenu* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), 453–87; idem, "Yad yemin doḥa veyad smol mekarevet: 'Al yaḥasam shel sofrei hahaskala leleshon yidish," *Huliyot* 5 (1999): 9–4; G. Kressel, "A historishe polemik vegn der yidisher literatur," *Di goldene keyt* 20 (1954): 338–55; Avraham Novershtern, "Sholem Aleichem un zayn shtelung tsu der shprakhn-frage," *Di goldene keyt* 74 (1971): 164–88; Zalmen Zilbertsvayg, *Ahad ha-am un zayn batsiung tsu yidish* (Los Angeles: Eli-

- sheva, 1956); Israel Bartal, “Midu-leshoniut mesortit lehad-leshoniut le’umit,” in his book *Cossak and Bedouin: Land and People in Jewish Nationalism* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2007), 30–40 [Hebrew].
95. Gershn Levin, *Peretz: A bisl zikhroynes* (Warsaw: Yehudiya, 1919), 3–6.
 96. On Zederbaum’s attitude to Yiddish and on the reception of this newspaper in the Jewish cultural milieu in Russia, see Chone Shmeruk, *Sifrut yidish—prakim letoldoteiha* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1978), 261–93.
 97. These memoirs were first printed in *Sefer zikaron lesofrei Israel* (Warsaw, n.p., 1889), 117–26. The quotes here are translations based on *Kol Kitvei Mendele Mokher Sfarim* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1965), 4–5. Abramovitch’s love of the useful extended also to penning popular scientific works in Yiddish (see below, Chapter 1), the translation of Sabbath songs (Zhitomir, 1875), and his plan to translate the Book of Psalms.
 98. Sholem Aleichem, “Yidishe gazetn un zshurnaln (a fantaziye),” *Yudishe folks-tsaytung*, 1 (1903), 2–6. The feuilleton was printed again in the volume titled *Felyetonen* (Tel Aviv: Beit Shalom Aleichem, Y. L. Peretz Farlag, 1976), 54–59. For details on the parties involved in the argument and their positions, see Kressel, “A historishe polemik vegn der yidisher literatur”; Novershtern, “Sholem Aleichem un zayn shtelung.”
 99. Using a halakhic term for pouring boiling water from one vessel into another on the Sabbath to avoid the act of cooking.
 100. Letter from the end of the 1880s, *Kol kitvei Y. L. Peretz*, vol. 10, second book, letters (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1952), 226.
 101. The quotes here are from Y. L. Peretz, *Ale verk* (New York: Tsiko, 1947), band 8, Gedanken un idee’en. II, 12. Based on documents published by Jacob Shatsky, “Legendes un faktarum yudishe bibliotek,” *YIVO bleter* 28 (1946): 66–77, and an analysis of data and memoirs conducted by Shmuel Niger (Niger, Y. L. Peretz [Buenos Aires: Argentinener opteyl fun altveltlekhn yidishn kultur-kongres, 1952], 210–16), it is evident that this was indeed Peretz’s approach with regard to the status of Yiddish not only in 1891 but also in the introduction to the collection *Literatur un lebn* (1894) (see Niger, Y. L. Peretz, 213–14), albeit phrased more delicately there.
 102. Dr. Nakhmen Sirkin, “Der zhargon,” *Der yud*, 42 (1900), 15. The series of articles in which these sentiments were expressed appeared in issues 30, 36, 37, 38, 40–41, 42, 47, 4–6, 14–15, 15, 22–23, 14–16, and 16, respectively.
 103. M. L. Lilienblum, “Vos leyenen proste yidn?” *Der yud*, 1 and 2 (1899), front pages; “Iz zhargon unzer national-shprakh?” *Der fraynd*, II August 1907, front page.
 104. Ish Yehudi (A Jewish Man, Leon Rabinovich), “Sifrut hahamon,” *Hamelitz*, 31 December 1897, 1–2. Although in the years 1900–2 he himself printed forty-eight Yiddish booklets on different subjects, Rabinovich later wrote that “all the lovers of their people must fight against *zhargon* in speech and in writing” (idem, “Lema’an sfatenu,” *ibid.*, 23 January 1903, front page). See also the words of the historian and publicist Azriel Natan Frenk under the penname Pe.Ayin.Nun.Chet, “Mikhtavim miVarsha,” *Hamelitz*, 21 December 1897, 2–4.
 105. Y. H. Tavyov, “Ezrat sofrim: Hazhargon vehaskalat hahamon,” *Hamelitz*, 27 December 1897, 1–2. Later, at the end of a series of articles titled “!!!A remedy for wealth!!!” (“!!!Segula le’ashirut!!!” *ibid.*, 12 March 1900, 2), Tavyov denigrated a Yiddish newspaper (apparently *Der yud*) and its writers and repeated his claim that “*zhargon* is not a language of people but of savages.” The literary critic Bal-Makhshoves responded to this, saying that Tavyov should read contemporary Yiddish literature and study the pioneering research of Leo Wiener, *The History of Yiddish Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899), or approach Elazar Shulman, who was then engaged in Kiev in a study of Yiddish literature over the generations and even published the first chapter of his work in the second volume of *Di yudishe folks-bibliothek* (Kiev, 1889, 115–34). Chapters of the book were published in *Hazman* (1903–4), and the entire

- book, *Sfat yehudit-ashkenazit vesifruta*, appeared in Riga in 1913, edited by none other than Tavyov himself (I. E. [Izidor Eliashév], “Tsaytung’s shtimen,” *Der yud*, 14 [1900], 10).
106. Y. H. Tavyov, “Lekorot shirei ‘am,” *Hamelitz*, 26 June 1901, 2.
 107. [Y. Kh. Ravnitsky], “Hebreish un yidish,” *Der hoyz-fraynd* 5, 1896, 38–47.
 108. M. Y. F. (Meyer Yankev Freyd), “Sifrei ‘ever vezargon,” *Hamelitz*, 30 December 1897, 3; *ibid.*, 27 December 1897, 3–4. Similar sentiments were made in Galicia by Mordechai Ehrenpreis, who called upon “our enlightened ones” to shake themselves free of their anachronistic attitude to *zhargon* and “to gradually create a collection of books from all branches of knowledge and literature, which will have a very vigorous influence on expanding the knowledge of our masses.” Yet he warned not to “raise up *zhargon* to a level of literature with all its details,” as for example Sholem Aleichem had done. See M. Ehrenpreis, “Letikun hasifra hazhargonit,” *Hamagid*, supplement to issues 10–11 (1894), 85–86 and issues 14, 25, 27 (1894), 109–10, 202–3, 218, respectively.
 109. S. L. Tsinberg (Zinberg), “Zhargonnyaya literatura i eya chitateli,” *Knizhki Voskhoda* 3 (1903): 45–71; 4 (1903): 35–55. The statistical data to which he referred appears in A. Kotik, “Zhargonnyy chitatel’ i yego kharakteristika,” *Evreyskiy Yezhegodnik 1902–1903* (St. Petersburg, 1902), 216–34; A. Kotik, “Zhargonnyaya literatura i yeyo zadachi,” *Voskhod* 15 (1902): 34, the continuation of the article appears in issue 17, 33–38. A summary of Zinberg’s words was brought before the historical-ethnographic committee of the OPE in St. Petersburg on 13 January 1903, see “Zhargonnyaya literatura i eya chitateli,” *Voskhod* 4 (1903): 19–21. Similar and earlier comments criticizing Zionist circles that unjustly feared clinging to *zhargon* appear in an article signed with the letter Z, which may be by Tsinberg. See Z.[inberg?], “Obzor yevreyskoy pechati,” *Voskhod* 36 (1902): 10–15. An anonymous writer spoke out against Tsinberg, seeking to “endeavor with all our might to eliminate *zhargon* from the mouths of our people” (Ba’al mikra, “Besifrutenu ha’itit,” *Hazman*, 42 (1903), 3–4). The writer drew on an article by Yosef Klausner, “Al hazhargon,” *Hashiloah*, 11 (1903), 376–83, warning of the “danger” that the developing Yiddish, which he called “*zhargon*,” represented to Hebrew.
 110. Y. Zinberg, “Al dvar she’alat hazhargon,” *Hazman*, 48 (1903), 2–4.
 111. A. Gornfeld, “Zametka o zhargone,” *Voskhod* 41 (1902): 28–29. Gornfeld related to the letters from Y. L. Gordon to Sholem Aleichem, which were published in the previous issue of *Voskhod* (23–27). See in detail Novershtern, “Sholem Aleichem un zayn shtelung,” 171–75. For a second and later expression by Gornfeld on the topic, see A. Gornfeld, “Zhargonnyaya literatura na russkom knizhnom rynke,” *Yevreyskiy mir* 1 (1909): 68–74.
 112. Fabius Shach, “Di farbeserung fun zshargon,” *Der yud*, 49 (1902): 1–5. In response to Shach, the Hebrew educator Zvi Sharfstejn defined Yiddish as “the language of ignorance,” which must disappear. See Zvi Sharfstejn, “Husar hamasve!” *Hamelitz*, 11 January 1903, front page.
 113. Dmitryy Elyashevich, “A Note on the Jewish Press and Censorship during the First Russian Revolution,” in *The Revolution of 1905 and Russia’s Jews*, ed. Stefani Hoffman and Ezra Mendelsohn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 49–54.
 114. The following are a few prominent figures who articulated a position on the topic during the first decade of the twentieth century: Dr. Yehuda Leyb Katsnelson (Buki ben Yogli), physician and Hebrew writer, negated the possibility of creating cultural content in Yiddish, “Hazhargon vехаָeder,” *Hazman*, 1, 3, 4, (1903): 4–5, 2–4, 2–4 respectively; report on the fiftieth birthday celebrations of the writer-doctor, *Der fraynd*, 3 January 1905, 5; Zalmen Epstejn, one of the earliest members of Hovevei Zion, warned that advancing Yiddish will bring about “national suicide.” See Z. Epstejn, “Undzer zelibst-bashtimung un hebreish,” *Der fraynd* 15, 18, 20 February 1906, 2, 2, 1–2, respectively, and the response of Yosef Lurie (also a Zionist activist), “Tsu der zhargon-frage,” *ibid.*, 26, 27 February 1906, title pages. At the founding meeting of the society “Hovevei sfat ever” (Friends of the Hebrew Language) in St. Petersburg in January 1908, Epstejn aroused a commotion when

- he sharply criticized the drama *Di familiye tsvi* written by Dovid Pinski after the Kishinev pogrom (ibid., 21 January 1908, 2). Yosef Klausner, known for his hostility to Yiddish, “confessed” the sin of the Hebrew maskilim who neglected the “masses” while the latter became “more and more savage” (Dr. Yosef Klausner, “Hovoteinu lehamon-ha’am,” *Hashiloah*, 17 [1907–8], 405–10). On Klausner and Yiddish, see Werses, “Ve’idat Tshernovits.” Ravnitsky contradicted Klausner’s words (A. Yarkhi [Y. Ch. Ravnitsky], “Vegn khoyves tsum yidishn hamoyn,” *Der fraynd*, 28 January 1908, 1–2). Shmuel Rozenfeld, a member of the editorial team of *Der fraynd*, added to this, listing writers and activists who disparaged Yiddish but were not deterred from writing in it to earn a living (B. Shimshi [Sh. Rozenfeld], “Etlekhe verter dem h[er] Yarkhi,” *Der fraynd*, 29 January 1908, 1–2).
115. Hāyim Naḥman Bialik claimed that “a decent writer who knows how to write in Hebrew and writes in *zhargon*, he robs us and himself” because jargon will have no right to exist in the future. Therefore, to “r[reb] Mendele, who wrote in *zhargon*—I wonder if he will ever find atonement . . .” from a letter to Y. Ch. Ravnitsky, second day of the new moon of Ellul, 1899, *Igrot Chaim Nahman Bialik*, vol. 1 [1890–1905], Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1938, 127). Similarly, Ben-Avigdor (Avraham Leib Shalkovich), who was known for his printing initiatives in Hebrew but did not refrain from contributing to Yiddish journalism and literature, was denounced as someone who surrendered to “the Moloch of Yiddish” (A. Luboshitzky, “A”d hakotvim zargonit,” *Hatsfira*, 6 and 7 July 1902, front page). Ben-Avigdor’s response, stating the need to write in Yiddish, was printed under the title “Two answers” (Shtei tshuvot), ibid., 18 and 19 August 1902, 3, but Luboshitzky did not give up, “Od a”d hazhargon,” ibid., 28, 29, 30 August 1902, title pages. Arn-Leyb Bisko wrote that poets who write in *zhargon* (meaning mainly Avrom Reyzen), “apart from the fact that they sin greatly against the revival of our Hebrew language and its literature, they cast pearls into the mire” (A. L. Bisko, “Pnimim barefesh,” *Hamagid*, 13 [1902]: 155–56).
116. L. Shapiro, “Tsu der frage vegn hebreish un yidish,” *Yor-bukh “Progres,”* 1904, 57–67; idem, “Nokh a mol iber der shprakh frage,” *Dos yudishes vort*, 11 (1905), 5. On Shapiro and his contribution to twentieth-century Yiddish literature, see Avraham Novershtern, *Here Dwells the Jewish People: A Century of American Yiddish Literature* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2015), 271–314 [Hebrew].
117. A. Kotik, “Der klasn-kharakter fun der yidisher shprakh,” *Folks-tsaytung*, 12 March 1906, 2–3. In the same spirit, another publicist emphasized the quality of the new (and ideological) literature and that the interested reader from among the masses is entitled to an education system in his language. Emanuel (?), “Fun der zayt,” ibid., 8 and 9 November 1906, 1–2 in both issues. See also, B. Beylin, “Fun der yidisher velt,” ibid., 19 October 1906, 2. For more on the Bund and on Yiddish, see below, Chapter 1.
118. This manifest appeared as appendixes to issues 1–2, January 3, 1905 (YIVO Library, New York). From January 1905, the journal was published weekly in Krakow. For more on the role of the journal in advancing the status of the Yiddish language and its literature, see Avrom Reyzen, *Epizodn fun mayn lebn* (Vilna: Vilner Farlag B. Kletskin, 1929), vol. II, 304–7; vol. III (1935), 13–26; Yechiel Szeintuch, “Ve’idat Tshernovits vetarbut yidish,” *Huliyot* 6 (2000): 255–85.
119. D. Ber (Dov Ber Slutsky), “Yiddish!” *Der fraynd*, February 19, 1905, 3. This article appeared together with an introduction by Gennadi Estraiikh about the author in *Forverts*, 30 May 2008, 12–13.
120. Y. Lurie, “Zelbst-bashtimung: zhargon als folks-shprakh,” *Der fraynd*, 4, 5, and 9 January 1906, 2–3 in all issues. On Lurie and his unique stance vis-à-vis Yiddish, see Kazdan, *Fun kheyder un “shkoles” biz Tsisho*, 241–49.
121. Sh. Niger, “Di yidisher shprakh un di yidisher inteligents,” *Der nayer veg* 5 (1906): 167–78; idem, “Kultur-tregeray un kultur,” *Der shtral* (Vilna) 2 (1908): 12–19. These sentiments were penned in December 1907. In 1911, Niger phrased a positive address to the young Jewish intelligentsia, asking them to change their perception and contribute to building

- Yiddish culture. See idem, “Kultur un bildung: Vegn der yidisher inteligents,” *Dos naye leben* (New York), 3 (1911), 27–33.
122. The address to readers, “Tsu di lezer,” appeared on 7–9 of the first issue (February 1908). For a full study of the monthly journal and its contribution to Yiddish culture, see Kenneth Moss, “Jewish Culture Between Renaissance and Decadence: *Di Literarische Monatschriften* and its Critical Reception,” *Jewish Social Studies* 8, no. 1 (2001): 153–98. For personal impressions about *Literarische monatshriften* and its editors, see Daniel Charney, *Barg aroyf* (Warsaw: Literarische Bleter, 1935), 141–43. On the molding of the Yiddishist ideology following the 1905 Revolution, on Niger, and on the journals that he was involved in publishing, see the first three chapters of Barry Trachtenberg, *The Revolutionary Roots of Modern Yiddish, 1903–1917* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008), mainly chapter 3. On the literary activity before 1905, see Kenneth B. Moss, “1905 as a Jewish Cultural Revolution? Revolutionary and Evolutionary Dynamics in the East European Jewish Cultural Sphere, 1900–1914,” in *The Revolution of 1905 and Russian Jews*, ed. Stefani Hoffman and Ezra Mendelsohn (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2008), 185–98.
 123. In this context, Jeffrey Veidlinger highlights the similarity between the title of this monthly and its aim and *Vestnik znaniya*, which preceded it (see Veidlinger, *Jewish Public Culture*, 132).
 124. The conference, its initiators, and its cultural context have been discussed comprehensively by scholars; see, for example, Jess Olson, *Nathan Birnbaum and Jewish Modernity: Architect of Zionism, Yiddishism and Orthodoxy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 176–208; Szeintuch, “Ve‘idat Tshernovits.” Regarding the conference from a Hebrew perspective see Werses, “Ve‘idat Tshernovits.” On the stance of Y. L. Peretz at the conference and on his position toward Yiddish in the Jewish cultural multisystem, see Marie Schumacher-Brunhes, “Peretz’s Commitment to Yiddish in Czernowitz: A National Caprice?” in *Czernowitz at 100: The First Yiddish Language Conference in Historical Perspective*, ed. Kalman Weizer and Joshua A. Fogel (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 45–53.
 125. On this see below, Chapter 2, *The Daily Press*.
 126. Bal-Makhshoves, “Der zhargon,” *Geklibene shriften* 1 (Vilna, 1910): 9–14.
 127. Dovid Frishman, “Undzere literatn,” *Haynt*, 23 June, 7 and 14 July 1910, 2 (all the articles). Frishman refers here to Menelaus, who became acculturated to Greek culture and purchased the position of High Priest from Antiochus the Fourth. He subsequently imposed harsh decrees on the residents of Judah.
 128. Frug, in his article “po mytarstvam,” in *Raszvet* 13 (1913): 42, defined Yiddish as a dirty language. See also his comments in Yiddish, Sh. Frug, “Vegn zhargon,” *Der fraynd*, 9 June 1913, 2. For a criticism of his words, see the section *Likht un shotn*: “Sh. Frugs meynung vegn zhargon in proze,” *Di yudishe velt*, 6 (1913), 141–42.
 129. On *shund* literature in Yiddish, see Chone Shmeruk, “Letoldot sifrut ‘hashund’ beyidish,” *Tarbiz* 52 (1983): 325–50; idem, “Te‘uda nedira letoldoteiha shel hasifrut halo-kanonit beyidish,” *Hasifrut* 32 (1983): 13–33.
 130. A. K., “A register fun ale zshargonishe bikher vos zaynen opgedrukt inem yor 1888–9,” *Di yudishe folks-bibliothek*, II (Kiev, 1888): 135–39.
 131. A. Kirzhnits, *Di yidische prese in der gevezener rusisher imperiye (1823–1916)* (Moscow, Kharkov, Minsk: Tsentraler Felker-Farlag fun FSSR, 1930), 61–62.
 132. *Knizhnaya letopis’ glavnogo upravleniya po delam pechaty*; Moyshe Shalit, “Statistik fun yidishn bikher-mark in yor 1912,” *Der pinkes 1912* (Vilna: Vilner Farlag B. Kletskin, 1913), 302–6.
 133. *Teksten tsum lider zamelbukh: Far der idisher shul un familie* (St. Petersburg: Gezelshaft far idisher folks-muzik in Peterburg, 1912).
 134. Noyekh Prylucki, *Noyekh Pryluckis zamelbikher far yidishen folklore filologiye un kulturgeshikhte* (Warsaw: Nayer Farlag, 1912). For more on Prylucki as a Yiddish folklorist and the

- “folklore circle” who met in his house in those years, see Kalman Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 95–105.
135. Dovid Igelberg, *Klasifitsirtes aforizmen-zamelbukh; oysgevehlte gedanken fun di behrimtste shriftshteler fun ale Felker un tsayten* (Warsaw: A. Gitlin, 1912).
136. Shmarye Gorelik, *Literatur-bilder* (two editions, Warsaw: Progres, 1912).
137. See below, Chapter 1, alongside notes 326–31.
138. Shalit, “Statistik fun yidishn bikher-mark.”
139. Kirzhnits, *Di yidishe prese*, 44–48. Kirzhnits also listed fifty one-time publications (103–7) only some of which appear in Shalit, “Statistik fun yidishn bikher-mark.”