On the History of Editing Pre-Modern Yiddish Manuscript Texts

Abstract: The history of editing pre-modern Yiddish texts goes back to the Early Modern Period. Both Jewish and non-Jewish scholars and printers transferred manuscripts into print – a process difficult to research for lack of original manuscripts that served as Vorlage. Knowledge of cursive script – the basis of all Yiddish manuscript studies – will be discussed in this article, as will the basic historical principles of editing and their long-lasting effects on scholarship and the conceptualisation and understanding of pre-modern Yiddish.

1 The beginning of editions during the Early Modern Period and the knowledge of cursive script

Strictly speaking, the endeavour of editing Yiddish manuscript texts started already with the first prints of Yiddish texts. It was not only the first step in a transition process away from manuscript culture towards the printed medium but also the first step towards modern editions. The various strategies, norms, decisions and rules employed in this process could provide invaluable information on the history of texts, literary standards and graphemics, the development of concepts and notions, geographical shifts and the history of printing as such. However, Yiddish textual scholarship faces the dilemma of having virtually none of the manuscripts on which printed editions were based, while some collections contain manuscripts of texts which remained unprinted. We possess relatively few external documents offering additional information about books, texts, their authors and the circumstances of their writing and printing. Yiddish book printing was a subsidiary of

Regarding the choice of terminology: pre-modern, Old, Early or Western Yiddish are used synonymously here. The term ‘transcription’ is employed to denote the pronunciation-based conversion from one writing system into another. ‘Transliteration’ means a strict letter by letter conversion from one script into another.

1 See, for instance, Neuberg 1994 or his forthcoming article 2017.
the Hebrew publishing industry [...]. Virtually no long-term plans were made for the production of Yiddish texts and books.²

But not only Jewish printers and scholars took an interest in Yiddish manuscripts, as Jean Baumgarten noted:

The Yiddish language had already experienced its first linguistic study during the Renaissance, when some European scholars began to consider the possibility of using vernacular languages as vehicles of study and scholarship. [...] At about the same time that these first treatises on European vernaculars were appearing, the first bibliographies, systematic grammatical studies, lexica and brief collections of texts in Old Yiddish were published.³

With the rise of Christian Hebraism from the late 15th century onwards, an interest in the contemporary Jewish vernacular and its literature had been awoken, driven by a vast spectrum of motivations – ranging from philological and literary curiosity to outright anti-Judaism or missionary intentions.⁴

Aya Elyada, however, justifiably differentiates between the interest in Hebrew or Yiddish:

Although closely linked to Christian Hebraism, ‘Christian Yiddishism’ constituted a cultural phenomenon in its own right. Unlike Hebrew, Yiddish was considered neither holy nor ancient by Jews and non-Jews alike. [...] However, neither the low status of Yiddish inside the Jewish communities nor its negative image in non-Jewish eyes deterred Christian scholars, most of them theologians, Hebraists, and Orientalists, from involving themselves with the language and its literature. [...] Accordingly, proficiency in Yiddish was promoted among Christians [...] for three main reasons: to missionize among the Jews, to read Jewish literature in this language, and to use Yiddish as an aid in the study of Hebrew and the biblical text.⁵

Thus, in the wake of Christian Hebraism, the ‘scientific’ study of Yiddish outside the Jewish community and the editing of Yiddish writings began. Some Christian scholars owned vast libraries containing Yiddish manuscripts, but this is hardly reflected in their editorial undertakings. Mainly, excerpts were provided from books, not handwritten sources.

² Berger 2013, 1.
³ Baumgarten 2005, 25.
⁴ See Baumgarten 2005; Coudert/Shoulson 2004; Elyada 2009 and 2012; Frakes 2007; Habersaat 1962 and 1965; Katz 1986; Matut 2010; Weinreich 1923. See also Steimann's contribution to this volume.
⁵ Elyada 2012, 20–21.
Although the study of Yiddish was also an internal Jewish phenomenon during the Early Modern Period, the publishing of teaching manuals was generally conducted by Christians or converts.

It is safe to assume that many or most Christian Hebraists and Yiddishists knew the cursive script and were capable of reading it, not least because of their at times impressive manuscript collections and correspondences, but also because of their use of sources available only in handwritten form. Wilhelm Christian Just Chrysander even lists this expressis verbis among the reasons why ‘learning the Jewish-German vernacular and style of writing has its uses’:

III. Daß man die Hebräischen Manuscripta, welche mit Jüdisch-Teutschen Buchstaben geschrieben, und in verschiedenen Bibliotheken anzutreffen sind, lesen könne.

And Chrysander continues:

V. Daß man die gewöhnlichen Handschriften der Juden ausdeuten könne; als geschäftliche Briefe, Quitungs[!] und Wechsel=Verbriefungen, Mieht=Kauf=Verkaufungs=Briefe, Con-
tracte, Jüdische Bescheide, Zeugnisse, Urias=Briefe, Diebes=Listen, Verschreibungen, und
andere Instrumenta. Wie auch, daß man mit ausländischen Juden einen Brief=Wechsel
pflegen könne.

However, in their Yiddish teaching manuals the focus lay almost entirely on the printed form of the letters – a situation that Johann Christoph Wagenseil addressed directly:

Wobey nit zu verhelen / daß wann man gleich das gedruckte Jüdisch-Teutsche lesen kan
/ doch das so mit der Hand geschrieben wird / noch eine Schwerigkeit mache / gleich wie
unsere Kinder / wann sie in gedruckten Büchern lesen können / doch darum solches nit
alsobald in denen geschriebenen Briefen zu leisten vermögen. [...]

7 See, for instance, the libraries of Johann Christoph Wagenseil (now housed in the University Libraries Erlangen-Nuremberg and Leipzig) or Oluf Tychsen (now at University Library, Rostock).
8 Chrysander 1750, 21.
It cannot be denied that when one is able to read the printed Jewish-German, that which is written by hand still causes difficulties, just as it is in the case of our children, who, even if they can read in printed books, cannot do the same with written letters [...]. But since it is impossible to teach the written through the printed, it is necessary to act as one would do in schools, where children are taught how to read what is handwritten in special instruction. One has to look out for the possibility of getting things from the Jews written in their German [...].

Johann Boeschenstein, however, presents an exception. In his *Elementale introductoriū in hebreas litteras teutonice & hebraice legendas*, he introduced the cursive script (Fig. 1).
In 1680, August Pfeiffer also deemed it essential to introduce the learner to what he termed ‘Character corrúptior in Manuáscriptis’ [Corrupt characters in manuscripts]. His rationale was that one might wish to correspond with Jews and should thus be able to read and write the cursive script (Fig. 2).

During the 18th century, the cursive form was included in handbooks that Dovid Katz labelled ‘teach yourself Yiddish’ manuals, mainly, but not exclusively addressed to a ‘business-oriented’ audience.11 This included Gerson Abrahams Anweisung zur Jüdischen Schreibart (1782) (Fig. 3),12 Carl Wilhelm Friedrich’s Unterricht in der Judensprache und Schrift (1784),13 which offers the alphabet, phrases, sample letters and invoices in cursive script, and the

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Fig. 2: August Pfeiffer (1721), ‘De lectione ebræo-germanica’, in Critica Sacra de Sacri Codicis Partitione […], Dresden and Leipzig: Gothfred Lesch, unnumbered single page between pp. 322 and 323. (The alphabet charts are numbered with Roman letters I–IV. However, in the accompanying legend, they were numbered I, II, IV and V, which seems to be a mistake since III is missing and V does not exist.) © Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Digital; http://www.mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10412319-7 (last accessed 12/09/2017).

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12 Braunschweig: Fürstl. Waysehaus=Buchdruckerey, 1782.
13 Prentzlow: Chr. G. Ragocz, 1784; addendum I–XV.
Kurze und gründliche Anleitung zu einer leichten Erlernung der Jüdischdeutschen Sprache by convert Gottfried Selig (1787), including a ‘Tabula zur Erlernung des geschriebenen Jüdischdeutschen’ [Table to learn the written Jewish-German].

But also in these cases, no significant editions of manuscript texts can be noted. When Gerson Abraham, a Schutzjude (protected Jew) from Holzminden published his Anweisung in 1782, he expressly stated that it was impossible to find the ‘Jewish (cursive) letters’ anywhere and that he had to have them specially made, although cursive letters were already widely in use at the time.

Of the Yiddish manuscripts consulted by Christian Hebraists for editions, those providing help with difficult terms and phrases – such as glosses and dictionaries – proved to be most significant. They were in turn used for the com-

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14 Leipzig: Christian Friedrich Rumpf, 1787; single sheet, included after the ‘Vorbericht’.
15 Abraham 1782, ‘Vorbericht’.
pilation of new dictionaries or for translations and interpretations, as Johann Christoph Wagenseil stated himself:

> [The] expertness in the German-Hebrew dialect would prove very beneficial, and would give them a good instruction, [how] to correctly interpret many obscure expressions and difficult words that are found in the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament.

Thus, Yiddish in this context served the purpose of being a bridge to Hebrew and advancing understanding of the Hebrew Bible, as Aya Elyada put it:

> If Yiddish translations of Hebrew words were considered valuable for providing Christians with a relatively easy and convenient access to the Jewish understanding of the biblical text, they were also considered valuable because of the linguistic affinity between Yiddish and Hebrew.

However, glosses are not where edition ended. Paul Helicz, born Shemu’el, was a convert, working as a printer in Cracow. In 1543, he published his *Elemental / oder lesebüchlen* (Hundesfeld) and included a sample borrower’s note (‘Schuldbrief’) – presented in a very advanced interlinear edition: above the Yiddish lines and words, Helicz printed their German translations (which in itself is a fascinating linguistic document) (Fig. 4).

This sample letter might have had a concrete manuscript Vorlage, but could also have been a free creation based on contemporary common formulas. Nevertheless, it presents an ambitious editorial method.

Among the Christian Yiddishists, it was Johann Christoph Wagenseil in particular who made use of handwritten sources, as Jerold Frakes has already observed:

> Wagenseil’s brief treatment ‘Bericht wie das Jüdisch-Teutsche zu lesen’ [Report on How to Read Jewish-German] [...] provides an extensive Hebrew alphabet anthology of early Yiddish

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16 Elyada 2012, 69–70.
17 Johann Christoph Wagenseil (1699) in the introduction to his *Belehrung der Jüdisch-Teutschen Red- und Schreib-Art*; quoted from Elyada 2012, 70 (translation by Aya Elyada).
18 The Helicz brothers published extensively in Yiddish and Hebrew, for Jews and Christians. Paul (Shmuel) is the only one of the three brothers who later returned to Judaism and left Poland, see Fram/Teter 2010.
19 This method was applied in various other teaching manuals as well, e.g. Johannes Meeführer (1607), *Grammaticae Hebraeæ compendiosa institution*, Ansbach: Paul Bohemus, 266–267; or Johann Buxtorf (1609), *Thesaurus grammaticus linguae sanctæ hebraeæ*, Basel: Conrad Waldkirch, 455–457.
literature, from both the manuscript tradition and the early printing industry, comprising a collection of various types of texts [...].

Wagenseil applied various editorial techniques. In his ‘Prob-Übungen in dem Teutsch-Hebreischen Dialecto’ [Sample exercises in the German-Hebrew dialect] as the last chapter within his teaching manual, he offers texts in Yiddish characters only (and based on a print, not a manuscript) (Fig. 5). However, in the previous chapters, and for the most part, he presents them in Yiddish together with a rendition in Latin letters. His strategies in doing so are multi-layered and multi-facetted. While, on the one hand, he Germanizes the texts (e.g. capitalizing, adding double consonants, the lengthening h, umlaut, etc.), he leaves various other characteristics intact, e.g. no final t for the word ‘is’, morphological specifics such as ‘Feyrung’, ‘Lehrung’ or ‘Gwinnung’. He transcribed Hebrew words into Latin letters and added footnotes with translations, especially for the Megillas Vints\(^{21}\) (e.g. ‘Schomer Iisroël’, ‘Haschem Iisborech’, ‘Megillas’, ‘Schir’, ‘Niggun’, etc.), which can be considered an advanced system in the context of its time.

\(^{20}\) Frakes 2007, 60.

\(^{21}\) Wagenseil used a print as Vorlage for his edition, not a manuscript.
In general, as was said before, actual editions of manuscript texts were rare during the Early Modern Period, i.e. if their Drucklegung (printing) is not taken into account.

2 Sample editorial methods – 19th to mid-20th centuries

In the following paragraphs, several historical methods will be presented. Until the second half of the 20th century, no comprehensive study on the graphemics and phonemics of Old Yiddish existed. Thus, scholars of pre-modern Yiddish texts either took Middle High German as their point of reference or modern Yiddish – with varying results. In the following description I therefore refrain from pointing out the general shortcomings transcriptions consequently had (see also the discussion in 3), since this would not be helpful for the evaluation of historical editions in the context of their time.  

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For an overview of relevant studies and as the most comprehensive research to this day, see Timm 1987, esp. 1–7.
2.1 Transcription as conformation to German orthography and Hebrew component kept in Hebrew letters: Max Grünbaum (1882)

This is one of the oldest editorial formats of presenting Yiddish manuscripts, dating back to the Christian Hebraists – as do various basic forms of editing. After 1800, it was used extensively by bibliographers such as Moritz Steinschneider, and one of the first to apply this method to editions of manuscripts was Max [Maier] Grünbaum in his *Jüdischdeutsche Chrestomathie* (1882). He can be considered one of the first, if not the first, to engage with the editing of pre-modern Yiddish literature in its own right, as he himself expressly states:

In neuerer Zeit sind in Deutschland mehrere Schriften erschienen, in welchen die Juden von der geschichtlichen [...] und diversen anderen Seiten betrachtet wurden. Darunter war denn auch die sprachliche Seite, das sogenannte Judendeutsch, das ebenfalls mit in den Kreis der Betrachtungen gezogen ward – allerdings aber in höchst oberflächlicher Weise. Schon deshalb dürfte eine etwas eingehendere Darlegung der jüdischdeutschen Sprache und Literatur nicht überflüssig erscheinen.24

Recently, several publications appeared in Germany in which Jews were studied from the historical [...] and several other perspectives. Among those was also the linguistic side, the so-called Jews’ German, which was also taken into consideration – but in an extremely superficial manner. Hence, a somewhat more thorough presentation of the Jewish-German language and literature would not seem superfluous.

Grünbaum belonged to a new generation of Jewish scholars educated at German-speaking universities25, who discovered the wealth and worth of pre-modern Yiddish literature. However, Grünbaum and many of his contemporaries considered the latter significant only with regard to cultures that were considered ‘superior’, which in general meant Hebrew and/or German. He deemed Old Yiddish literature to be ‘originell und doch kein Original’ [original but not an original]26 and judged it to consist mainly of translations from Hebrew and foreign works.

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23 For Steinschneider’s works on Yiddish (including Yiddish manuscripts), see Matut 2012.
25 Grünbaum studied philology and philosophy at Giessen and Bonn universities, see Singer/Dunbar 1906.
26 Grünbaum 1882, vii.
In this compilation, Grünbaum edited glosses (25ff. and 463ff.) as well as excerpts from the Rosh ha-Shana and Yom Kippur liturgy of the Maḥzor Wilmersdörffer (14th or 15th c.)²⁷ (289ff.) (Fig. 6). He presented Latin-script versions of the Yiddish manuscripts that were in part very ambitious and aimed at being a careful rendering – all within the philological parameters of his time. He did refrain, for instance, from capitalizing substantives within sentences and left words in their transcribed form as close to the (perceived) original as possible, sometimes adding the modern German form in brackets, e.g.: ‘tifen’ not *Tiefen*; ‘kunig’ not *König*; ‘aumer’ not *immer*; ‘vernimt’ not *vernimmt*, etc. (p. 290). However, he did not refrain from Germanizing by adding *h* after *t* as was still standard in the German orthography of the time for words like ‘thun’ [to do] or ‘Thür’ [door].

²⁷ Max Wilmersdörffer was a German-Jewish financier and numismatist. In 1888 he was knighted and held the office of royal Saxonian consul general in Munich. Grünbaum, who also lived in Munich, dedicated his *Chrestomathie* to him, see Deutsch 1906.
etc.; adding lengthening $h$; doubling consonants; writing umlauts; unifying the voiced and unvoiced s-sounds into one letter $s$, and unfortunately omitting entire words and prefixes, etc.

As a general strategy, Grünbaum printed words from the Hebrew-Aramaic component of Yiddish in their original letters (with translation in brackets). This way, he avoided the question of how it might have been pronounced historically, established an artificial divide between the language components and further strengthened the argument of Western Yiddish being a ‘pure, historical’ form of German with a ‘Hebrew component’. This was, of course, entirely in keeping with the language ideologies of 19th-century German-speaking Jewry and the scholars of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Those who studied or knew about the older Yiddish language and literature mourned the development it supposedly took after the 16th century. Until then, so the *opinio communis*, it was still ‘pure German’. Although Grünbaum noticed the ‘eigtenthümliche Orthographie’ [peculiar orthography], he considered the non-Hebrew and non-Romance component simply to be ‘alterthümliche deutsche Wörter’ [archaic German words] thus failing to appreciate the progression of Early Yiddish with a unique vocabulary, grammar etc. and the importance of graphemics and phonemics to prove this point.

### 2.2 Transcription as conformation to German orthography and transcribed Hebrew component – Felix Rosenberg (1888)

Among non-Jewish scholars, those researching Old and Middle High German literature in particular took an interest in Early Yiddish, as for instance Prof. Theodor Zarncke (1825–1892), who taught a seminar at Leipzig University entitled ‘Deutsche Literaturgeschichte bis zum Zeitalter der Reformation’ [History of German Literature up to the Reformation] during the summer semester in 1884. In the course of this seminar, he expressly stressed the ‘Wichtigkeit des Jüd.-deut. in sprachgeschichtlicher, kultur- und literaturhistorischer Hinsicht’ [The importance of Jewish-German with regard to the history of language, culture and literature]. He thus encouraged one of his Jewish students by the name of Felix...
Rosenberg to begin a dissertation whose aim was the edition of songs and plays contained in a Yiddish manuscript from the early 17th century (Figs 7a and b).\(^{33}\) Rosenberg, however, was not interested in studying and editing the manuscript texts in their own right. His *ultima ratio* was to prove their value for German culture, especially as a ‘secondary source’ for German folksongs.\(^{34}\)

His dissertation appeared in print as a university thesis and shortly afterwards in Ludwig Geiger’s *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland*.\(^{35}\) Consequently, he titled his dissertation *Über eine Sammlung deutscher Volks- und Gesellschaftslieder in hebräischen Lettern* [On a collection of German folksongs and Gesellschaftslieder in Hebrew letters], thus negating all the genuinely Yiddish songs, plays, riddles, etc. the manuscript contains. Rosenberg’s edition was prone to all the aesthetics and moral predispositions of his time, which led to the exclusion of many verses and entire songs.\(^{36}\)

He explained his editorial principles, including the following statement:

Für ach, is, anander, arain habe ich in den deutschen Liedern auch, ist, einander, herein etc. gesetzt, weil ich meine, daß man überall da, wo nachweislich eine deutsche Vorlage einfach in hebräische Lettern übertragen ist, nur den litterarhistorischen Gewinn ins Auge zu fassen habe und berechtigt sei, die wenigen Spuren des jüd.-deut. Dialekts zu beseitigen.\(^{37}\)

Instead of *ach, is, anander, arain*, I used also, *ist, einander, herein*, etc. for the German songs, because I think that wherever a German Vorlage was verifiably simply transferred into Hebrew letters, only the literary historical benefit has to be considered and justifies elimination of the few traces of the Jewish-German dialect.

Rosenberg chose to present his text in Latin script only, which also included the Hebrew component.

Rosenberg’s work was widely noted and generally acknowledged. However, in 1892 a very thorough review appeared with a critical appraisal that is meticulously accurate and still, in many respects, a valid analysis:

Von einer weitverbreiteten litteratur geben die beiden vorliegenden hefte willkommene kunde; sie bereichern unsere kenntnis und beweisen, wie sehr jene aufzeichnungen des jüdisch-deutschen dialects in hebräischen lettern die beachtung aller germanisten verdie-

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\(^{33}\) Rosenberg 1888b, 233; for an edition of all the texts and a commentary on the manuscript as well as a critical appraisal of Rosenberg’s work, see Matut 2011. Rosenberg was supported in his endeavours by Moritz Steinschneider and Adolf Neubauer.

\(^{34}\) Rosenberg 1888b, 239.

\(^{35}\) Rosenberg 1888a, 1888b and 1889.

\(^{36}\) Rosenberg 1888b, 258.

\(^{37}\) Rosenberg 1888b, 239.
Fig. 7a: Ms. opp. add. 4° 136, Bodleian Library, Oxford, p. 16–17. © Bodleian Libraries.

Fig. 7b: Felix Rosenberg (1888a), Über eine Sammlung deutscher Volks- und Gesellschaftslieder in hebräischen Lettern, Braunschweig: Appelhans, 29 [edition of Ms. Opp. Add. 4° 136, Bodleian Library Oxford]. © Goethe University Frankfurt, Compact Memory, University Library; http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/cm/periodical/titleinfo/2259275 (last accessed 12/09/2017).
nen [...]. wiederholt bezeichnet R. lesarten seiner hs. als wertlos. [...] ist dies die einzige betrachtungsweise? hat für uns nicht ebenso hohen wert die beobachtung, wie sich im laufe der zeit gerade dadurch die volkslieder umgestalten, dass sie nicht von hs. zu hs. sondern von mund zu mund wandern? [...] es hätte sich auch empfohlen, die texte vollständig abdrucken zu lassen; [...] freilich hätte dabei ein genaueres eingehn auf die sprachlichen eigentümlichkeiten des jüdisch-deutschen platz greifen müssen [...] da die hs. die vocale nicht bezeichnet [...] fehlt jenes mittel [...] um mit grosser sorgfalt die dialectischen laute festzuhalten.38

The two booklets at hand give welcome information; they enrich our knowledge and prove just how much those notations of the Jewish-German dialect in Hebrew letters deserve the consideration of all Germanists. [...] Repeatedly, R. calls the variants of his ms. worthless. [...] Is this the only approach? Is not the observation of equally high worth how folk songs change over the course of time precisely by not moving from ms. to ms, but from mouth to mouth? [...] It would have been advisable to publish the texts in their entirety; [...] but then, of course, to deal more precisely with the linguistic peculiarities of the Jewish-German would have required more space [...] Since the ms. does not denote vowels [...] the means is lacking [...] by which the dialectical sounds can be represented with great accuracy.

The case of Rosenberg’s partial and fragmented edition is to that extent unfortunate since it had a tremendous impact on song research and literary studies for decades, if not centuries. Maks Erik used, among many other manuscripts, this song collection to prove his theory about the spreading of a Yiddish poetic repertoire by the Jewish *shpilman* and other wandering people.39 Since he himself was writing in Yiddish and had no access to the manuscript, he needed to use Rosenberg’s Latin-script version and re-transliterated the verses into Hebrew letters – with according results.40 Other scholars like Bassin, Shipper and Tsinberg were forced to do the same – likewise lacking access to the original.41 Rosenberg’s edition was used as late as 2001 for an extensive monographic study on German songbooks.42

38 Werner 1892.
40 Erik 1928, 140–170.
41 Basin 1917; Shipper 1923, esp. 72–79 and Tsinberg 1935, esp. 103–110.
2.3 Yiddish and transcription with a translated Hebrew component – Alfred Landau and Bernhard Wachstein (1911)

Landau and Wachstein’s methods truly brought Old Yiddish editorial practice into the 20th century. The Austrian Biographical Lexicon praised Landau’s achievements:


He regarded his research on historical grammar and his work on the dictionary of the Yiddish language including etymology, phraseology, semantics and dialects as his life’s work. His research forms the basis of modern Yiddish philology through its meticulousness and excellent methodology.

Bernhard Wachstein’s biography was very similar to Landau’s. He too was born in Galicia and lived in Vienna, where he worked as a librarian of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde.

Landau and Wachstein presented their manuscripts (private letters) in Yiddish, adding a selection of photographic images and a Latin-script transcription with the Hebrew component in translation (set in italics). Their introduction, an extensive critical apparatus in footnotes as well as glossaries in transcription complete the edition. The Yiddish text was printed from the back of the book and the page count started there again, while the glossaries were inserted between the transcription and original-script section (Figs 8a and 8b).

Landau and Wachstein described their editorial principles, proving a very acute awareness of its possibilities and limitations and even addressing issues that are still (or once again) under debate, e.g. transferring the cursive script into a typeface,44 adding a transcription in Latin letters,45 etc.

43 Wein 1969.
44 See Plachta 2006, 21.
Die in der jüdischdeutschen Schreibung nicht ausgedrückten Vokale wurden ergänzt, wobei es, wie im sprachlichen Teile der Einleitung begründet wurde, in vielen Fällen zweifelhaft bleiben muß, ob auch wirklich die dem Schreiber vorschwebenden Laute eingesetzt worden sind.  

The text printed in Hebrew letters renders the original faithful to the letter, with all errors and slips of the pen by the scribe, to substitute the original for the sake of the reader, insofar as the letterpress allows. [...]  

The transcription with Latin letters shall offer readers who are not familiar with the Hebrew script an easy-to-read and comprehensible text, and diverges from the original only in so far as this aim requires. [...]  

Those vowels which are not given in the Jewish-German spelling have been added, although, as was explained in the linguistic section of the introduction, it must remain doubtful in many cases if exactly those sounds have been added which the scribe had in mind.  

The editors decided on very progressive standards for their transcription. To a greater degree than other contemporary scholars, they avoided the otherwise typical ‘Germanization’ of Yiddish texts in the form of capitalizing substantives (except for proper names and the word ‘Got’), refrained from doubling consonants, distinguishing between voiced and unvoiced s-sounds, šade and shin, and did not add lengthening ‘h’, etc. They did, however, add vowels, diphthongs, etc. without indicating they were additions, in keeping with what they considered the production of a comprehensible text. The analysis of transcription standards could be continued at this point. However, the examples given above may suffice to demonstrate the progress Landau’s and Wachstein’s edition constituted in light of their scholarly predecessors.  

Furthermore, they aimed at presenting the Yiddish text as faithfully as possible by refraining from adding any punctuation, changing orthography, and the like. This is not yet a modern edition, but, in the context of its time, it remains a highly sophisticated one.

2.4 Yiddish only (with glossaries and introduction) – Moritz Stern (1922)  

Moritz Stern studied in Berlin and wrote a dissertation in Semitic Studies. He also pursued a rabbinic career and was ordained in 1890, after which he served for
Fig. 8a: Alfred Landau / Bernhard Wachstein (1911), *Jüdische Privatbriefe aus dem Jahr 1619*, Vienna and Leipzig: Wilhelm Braumüller, 10. © Goethe University Frankfurt, Freimann Sammlung, University Library; http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann/content/tit-leinfo/663907 (last accessed 12/09/2017).
Vil Frieden un' gefund: zu aler zeit un' stand: afo vil etz begert un' kent reden mit enkern mund: zu meiner herzen liefen schwester der zuchtigen und frommen, in ihrer Herrlichkeit die Kögistschter in ihrem Gemache, der Rabbinerin Frau Bona s. l. un' zu deinem harzigen liefen man, den teuren und verständigen gottesfürchtigen Manne Kërr Wolf b. F. E. un' zu enkern liber kinderlich, jedem einzelnen mit Namen. Vor allem feit wisen mein gefund, das gleichen fol ich ach heren von enk zu aler stand. herze libe schwester un' herziger libe schwager af mein liber bruder, feit wisen af ich hab mich fer gefreut, af ich hab gehört, dass du s. l. J. gefund bist un' G. g. s. Name hot enk losen gelesen enker Gerechtigkeit und Frömmigkeit un' dich errettet un' geholfen, as dir G. b. nischt geschat hat, G. g. s. Name fol enk alen weiter behiten vor leid, un' losen s. G. w. derleben grosse vred: ich hab gar nischt gewiht, bit Matel kumen if un' ich enker liefen yater, dem Vornehmen b. F. E., sein Brief geleitet hab. fo kent etz begreifen, wie ich mich hab gefreut s. l. J. un' mein bit zu G. g. s. Name, der fol enk un' g. I. weiter errettet von dem un' alem bëfen. G. g. s. Name fol mein Zeuge fein, das mir enker forg mer if, afoal meine grosse forgen, die ich hab, un' etz kent begreifen, dass ich jetzt vil forg hab. got der almechtig fol itlichen fein auen legen wenden zu

Vgl. z. B. Reumann in Gräbers Magazin I, 5, Nr. 5, בעזרת והעטולin Ha-Bechkol VI, 233. 4 euren. 5 wie. 6 dass. 7 als. 8 gelesen.
9 selhime Lage?
several years as a rabbi in Kiel (northern Germany) and became head librarian of
the Jewish Community in Berlin in 1905.47

He chose ‘original only’ as an editorial practice for the text of an entire
manuscript – albeit involuntarily, as he himself stated in the introduction:

Für die vorliegende Veröffentlichung im Rahmen der deutschen Sprachdenkmäler wäre es
empfehlenswert gewesen, dem Text in hebräischen Buchstaben einen solchen in deutscher
Umschrift folgen zu lassen. Doch war dies aus pekuniären Gründen nicht möglich. Bei der
Wahl zwischen dem einen und dem anderen entschied ich mich für die Wiedergabe des
Originals. Ich konnte mich nicht entschließen, nur den transkribierten Text vorzulegen, da
dieses Surrogat bei den sogenannten jüdisch-deutschen Texten keinen zuverlässigen Ersatz
für die Vorlage in hebräischen Schriftcharakteren bietet.48

For the publication at hand, in the series German Language Monuments, it would have been
advisable to let a German transcription follow the text in Hebrew letters. This was, however,
for financial reasons not possible. Having to choose between one and the other, I opted for
the rendition of the original. I decided not to present only the transcribed text, since this
surrogate offers no reliable substitute in the case of the so-called Jewish-German texts for
the Vorlage in Hebrew characters.

His edition was printed in typeface, while the introduction as well as glossa-
ries where a facsimile of his handwritten version (Figs 9a and 9b). Stern’s work
marked yet another step in the evolution of Yiddish editions: 1) his critical appa-
ratus offers various annotations as to form, colour, and size, etc. of the script
in the manuscript, 2) he indicates any corrections he made, 3) as well as later
additions, 4) changes and corrections within the manuscript and 5) added num-
bering for the verses. From a methodological point of view, Stern’s edition was
already very modern, were it not for the following aspects: 1) he added full stops
where the manuscript presented two dots – but did so inconsistently, 2) he added
a line count which does not follow the actual lines within the manuscript, but the
lines of the edition itself which are organized according to the rhyming patterns,
3) as it is, the text is not always a faithful rendering of the manuscript. Promi-
nent examples are כ in the manuscript, which often becomes ג in the edition; ז
becoming ע etc. Although Stern placed his edition programmatically within the
new series German Language Monuments in Hebrew Letters (of which this was
the first and only volume), my suggestion would be that Early Yiddish was not
merely a German derivate for him. He considered transcriptions to be ‘unreliable’

47 For more information, see Metzler 2012, 57–58.
48 Stern 1922, XIII-XIV. Manuscript: Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; David Kauf-
mann Collection, Ms. Kaufmann A 397.
and ‘surrogate’ – a notion that was not new in the context of 19th and 20th-century Yiddish editorial practice, but still rare.

One of (if not) the first to express this clearly was David Kaufmann in his edition of Glikl of Hameln’s memoirs (1896):

Is justification necessary for the fact that I do not present this publication in German transcription, but think it necessary to leave it in the same form in which it left its author’s

Fig. 9a: Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Ms. Kaufmann A 397, fol. 1r. © Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest.
hand? Inasmuch as I would have wished for its German translation for the sake of general scientific use [...], it seemed to me that exactly this law of strict scientificity prohibited such an endeavour as long as the original had not been provided. A mere transcription that, moreover, takes away the ripeness from the fruits and the colour from the wings of the butterfly, would not suffice. The language seems so interwoven with words and phrases, borrowings and allusions from Hebrew and Rabbinical writings, [it] shifts so suddenly and unsought from German speech into the idiom of the Bible that a translation would be necessary.49

When it came to Early Yiddish, Kaufmann clearly favoured the presentation of the original and, as a second step, a translation, over the highly Germanized transcriptions of his day.

49 Kaufmann 1896, IX-X.
Fig. 10a: Lajb Fuks (1957), The Oldest Known Literary Documents of Yiddish Literature (c.1382), vol. 1: Introduction, Facsimiles and Transcriptions, Leiden: Brill, 40-41. © Brill Academic Publishers.

2.5 Facsimile, transcription, transliteration and translation – Lajb Fuks (1957)

Lajb Fuks, for many decades librarian at the Rosenthaliana and lecturer at the University of Amsterdam, was neither the first nor the last to edit the Yiddish texts of the Cairo Geniza (Cambridge University Library TS 10.K.22; Figs 10a and 10b).\textsuperscript{50} Until the discovery of the inscribed pieces of slate in Cologne, they were the oldest known Yiddish literary documents.\textsuperscript{51} Their importance for the history of Yiddish literature cannot be emphasized enough, and their re-discovery also ignited a renewed interest in pre-modern Yiddish texts in general.

Fuks changed the hitherto common editorial practices by offering the texts in four different forms and formats: as facsimile together with his Hebrew-script transcription\textsuperscript{52} plus, in a second volume, a complex transliteration as well as translation.

It was a novelty to offer an entire Yiddish manuscript in reproduction plus this abundant variety of other formats.\textsuperscript{53} However justifiably Fuks was criticized by his contemporaries and colleagues in years to come for his reading – his efforts to present the text in all these varied forms and the novelties introduced are worth being noted as significant in the history of editions.

\textsuperscript{50} For a discussion of the various editions, see Frakes 1989, 120–164.
\textsuperscript{52} ‘Transcription’ here means ‘the effort to report – insofar as typography allows – precisely what the textual inscription of a manuscript consists of’ (Vander Meulen/Tanselle 1999, 201).
\textsuperscript{53} Fuks was not the first to present the manuscript in photographic reproduction. Others, such as Landau/Wachstein 1911 or Felix Falk, had done the same, but only with parts of manuscripts, never the entire work, see Falk 1940. Furthermore, Falk did not offer his own translation, but used a German version for comparison and noted that he had rendered the originally cursive-script text in square letters and with improvements that he did not further specify (Falk 1940, 82). Felix Falk, who perished in the Holocaust, had also prepared another edition (of a print) which was reworked and published by Lajb Fuks in 1961, Das Schemuelbuch des Mosche Esrim Wearba: Ein biblisches Epos aus dem 15. Jahrhundert.
3 Germanistn, Yiddishistn and the others –
Editing pre-modern Yiddish manuscript texts after 1800

3.1 The 19th century

The study of pre-modern Yiddish literature flourished especially among Jewish scholars from the middle of the 19th century onwards. By then, of course, Western Yiddish was no longer spoken, but its Eastern variant was about to enter into an era of unprecedented variety in cultural expression, gaining social and political momentum. Many of those Jewish researchers from the East to the West had, to a significant degree, been educated in German-speaking academic settings. Thus, the better part of pre-modern Yiddish manuscript edition was, during the 19th and early 20th century, aimed at a German-reading audience. The intended readership, however, did not encompass only the German-speaking countries. By then, German was still considered one of the most important languages of science and the academic world.

Fuelled by the new self-conceptualization of research promoted by the Wissenschaft des Judentums, inspired by contemporary positivistic and folkloristic work and by a new academic recognition of (comparative) linguistics and literature unrelated to the classics, they engaged with the older variants of Yiddish. This, but also the fact that Old Yiddish was at best considered a German-Jewish dialect or at worst a ‘corrupted’ form of Middle High German, created the frame for editions. Chone Shmeruk justifiably argued that

[S]cholars who had inherited the mantle of the German Wissenschaft des Judentums tended to overemphasize the relationship between German and Yiddish literature in order to provide evidence of Jewish participation in German culture, or even of a German-Jewish symbiosis.

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54 Thus, the Yiddish tongue coined them the Germanistn, which in this case meant ‘scholars of German who have an interest in Yiddish’, see Katz 1986, 31–32.
55 Schmeruk/Prager 2006, 367.
During the 19th century, Max Grünbaum, Gustav Karpeles, Alfred Landau, Felix Rosenberg, Abraham Tendlau and Adolf Brüll were among them as were the bibliographers Julius Fürst and Moritz Steinschneider. The latter was heavily criticized by contemporary colleagues for the way in which he conceptualized Yiddish, but despite his ambiguous attitude towards ‘Jewish-German’ (as was the scholarly term for Yiddish at the time), Steinschneider nevertheless did it a tremendous service through his bibliographical work. He also introduced the material in various articles and engaged in an intensive, sometimes heated debate about the language and its literature. He himself sharply criticized the small booklet by Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen which had appeared almost a decade before, entitled Die romantische und Volks-Litteratur der Juden in Jüdisch-Deutscher Sprache, remarking that ‘one might have expected a fairer recognition of the Jewish-German literature from a well-known Germanist’.

3.2 The early 20th Century

The generation of 19th-century Yiddish scholars left an impressive legacy. But while many of them still had a complex, in parts even apologetic attitude with regard to their subject, the Yiddishist movements – an array of responses to social and linguistic circumstances in Eastern Europe – arose at the beginning of the 20th century and brought a very new approach in their wake. The various political, social and cultural expressions served, even if at times involuntarily or unkno-

56 Grünbaum 1882.
58 Landau 1897, 126–132 and Landau 1911.
59 Rosenberg 1888.
60 Tendlau 1860.
61 Brüll 1877.
62 Fürst 1849.
63 On Steinschneider, see Matut 2012.
64 See Wiener 1899, 13.
66 ‘[…] von welchem man als bekanntem Germanisten eine gerechtere Würdigung der j.-d. Literatur hätte erwarten dürfen’ (Steinschneider 1864, 35), see Hagen 1855, 35–36, as well as Matut 2012, 389.
wingly, to build and define the ‘Yiddish nation’. As with every nation-building-process, language, literature and folklore are at the core of the endeavour. The service other researchers had rendered their respective (nation-state) languages and literatures, mainly in the course of the 19th century, was now taken up by Yiddish-speaking scholars like Shmuel Niger, Max Erik, Bernard D. Weinryb, Yisroel Tsinberg or a young Russian Jew by the name of Max Weinreich, who in 1923 wrote a dissertation in German Studies at Marburg University. Two years later, in August 1925, he took part in a meeting in Berlin with a very important outcome – the decision to pursue the idea of a Yiddish scientific institute. As part of the future program, key tasks were defined and among them ‘Geschriebene und gesprochene Schriftsprache in vergangenen Jahrhunderten’ [Written and spoken literary language of past centuries]. However, in the years to come not only older variants of the language, but also its literature took centre stage in Yiddish research.

The rise of Yiddishism and the academic professional advancement of Yiddish-speaking researchers furthered the growth of Yiddish secondary literature, especially in the early 20th century. Thus, editions of texts from pre-modern manuscript were published that only presented the original texts and had a critical apparatus as well as commentaries, etc. in modern Yiddish. These editions, however, were not a priori more reliable since they too were prone to ‘silent corrections’ and changes. Lack of access to relevant sources in some cases led to bizarre re-transcriptions into Hebrew letters from Latin-script versions of manuscripts (see discussion under 2.2). This happened for some, but not all manuscript texts in publications such as Basin’s *Antologye* (1917) and early-20th-century Yiddish literary histories, such as those of Ignacy Shipper (1923), Maks Erik (1928) and Yisroel Tsinberg (1935). When Max Weinreich wrote his *Bilder fun der yidisher lite-

68 See Gottesman 2003 (with extensive bibliography); Weisler 2011 or Bar-Itzhak 2010.
69 As for instance Karl Lachmann, Georg Friedrich Benecke, Heinrich von der Hagen or Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm did for German.
70 In particular, in (1913), *Der pinkes: Yorbukh far der geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur un shprakh, far folklore, kritik un bibliografye* 1 [The Record Book: Yearbook for the History of Yiddish Literature and Language, for Folklore, Criticism and Bibliography 1].
71 Erik 1926 and 1928.
72 Weinryb/Löwinger 1936; Weinryb/Löwinger 1937.
73 Tsinberg 1935; English edition Tsinberg 1975.
74 *Geschichte und gegenwärtiger Stand der jiddischen Sprachforschung* [History and Current Situation of Yiddish Language Research].
75 Weinreich 1926, 69.
76 See, for instance, Stern 1922; Hillesum 1928 and various articles that were published within the course of a single year (1938) in the *YIVO bleter* 13 (by Birnbaum, Ginsberg and Freimann).
ratur-geshikhte (1928) he strove, as did Erik and other contemporary colleagues, to include sample images of manuscripts and consulted them directly wherever possible, but was simply unable to gain access to all.78

Parallel to these efforts, editing of pre-modern Yiddish manuscripts also continued in the German-, French- and English-speaking academic and non-academic world during the early 20th century. It was conducted either within the frame of Germanic Studies or by scholars working outside academia, for instance as librarians, rabbis or in other professions.79 Bertha Pappenheim and Alfred Feilchenfeld published translations of excerpts from Glikl’s memoirs, thus producing the first books intended for a wider German-reading, Jewish and non-Jewish, lay and professional audience dedicated exclusively to the text of an Old Yiddish manuscript.80 All in all, it was a very promising point of departure for Old Yiddish Studies.

3.3 The period after World War II

World War II, the Shoah and Soviet ideology (as for instance in the case of Maks Erik81), destroyed these promising beginnings. In the decades after the war, research on pre-modern Yiddish and manuscript editions fell under ‘The Changing Geography of Yiddish Studies’82 and continued within old and new language frames: Yiddish, Hebrew, German, English and French. Modern Yiddish sadly played a more and more tangential role in editing. In Israel, the former Old-Yiddish-for-Yiddish-readers’ editions were continued by scholars who had themselves switched from Yiddish to Hebrew as the language of their (new) country and scholarship, as for instance Chone Shmeruk (Figs 11a and 11b) or Chava Turniansky. Thus, they offered editions with Old Yiddish versions and contextualized

77 Weinreich 1928, image between pages 48 and 49.
78 He had access to manuscripts especially from Germany (Hamburg, Berlin, Munich) and France (Paris) and judged that all of them coming from the context of religious education were interesting only with regard to the history of language, since he did not regard them as ‘literature in the proper sense’ but merely translations; Weinreich 1928, 50.
79 See Stern 1922, Wachstein or Alfred Landau 1911 as well as Leo Landau 1912, 1916, 1919 and 1920.
80 Pappenheim 1910; Feilchenfeld 1913 and the late 19th-century translation by Kaufmann 1896.
81 ‘Due to political conditions in the Soviet Union, Erik had to almost completely renounce his scholarly interest in old Yiddish literature’ (Novershtern 2010, page).
82 See Kuznitz 2002.
Fig. 11a: Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, Ms. B.H. 18, fol. 142r. © Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig.

Fig. 11b: Chone Shmeruk (ed.) (1979): Yiddish Biblical Plays 1697–1750, Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities [Hebrew and Yiddish], 159 [edition of Leipzig, Ms. B.H. 18]. © The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.
them in modern Yiddish and increasingly with commentaries and critical apparatuses in Hebrew.83

Editions of Yiddish manuscripts aimed at a German-reading audience continued with the works of Lajb Fuks, who lived in the Netherlands, Salomo Birnbaum, who had migrated to England, William Burley Lockwood – an English Germanist,84 Hans-Peter Althaus, Wulf-Otto Dreeßen, Walter Röll and later the Finnish scholar Heikki J. Hakkarainen, Erika Timm and others. An important figure who bridged pre- and post-war scholarship in Europe was Salomo A. Birnbaum85 who, as the first lecturer for Yiddish at a western university (Hamburg), had his hopes for establishing Yiddish as a separate discipline within the framework of his envisaged Institutum Germano-

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84 Lockwood 1963.
85 His work on Old Yiddish began in the 1930s and continued into the post-war era, see, for instance, Birnbaum 1932 and 1932. For a complete and detailed bibliography, see Timm/Birnbaum/Birnbaum 2011, vol. 1, xxxix–xlviii.
After the war and his escape to England, he supported the young Walter Röll, who in turn offered the first Yiddish seminar in post-war Germany and became one of the major figures in pre-modern Yiddish research.87

French scholar Jean Baumgarten produced the most comprehensive introduction to Old Yiddish literature in Europe after the war. He used excerpts from various manuscripts, and introduced Yiddish manuscripts from the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris to a wider audience.88

English, as the modern-day lingua franca of science, entered into the kaleidoscope of Old-Yiddish manuscript editions with works by Leo Landau, Salomo Birnbaum, Percy Matenko and Judaicum dashed in 1933.86

87 For more information on Walter Röll and the re-establishment of Yiddish Studies in Germany, see Timm, 2016, 23.
Social, political and academic circumstances often did not encourage a career in Yiddish, not to mention pre-modern Yiddish Studies. Thus, to this very day, Western Yiddish still lacks all the positivistic work that is the basis of scientific research and has been performed long since for other languages: a dictionary, a grammar, and editions of almost all its important literary works.

4 Editing Yiddish texts as Early Modern texts

Editionswissenschaft (edition philology / textual scholarship) for pre-modern Yiddish manuscripts encompasses the 14th to 18th centuries. Thus, it faces all the questions related to the edition of either mediaeval, or, for the main part, Early Modern material. While textual scholarship developed its perspectives based on post-1750 or medieval writings, demands related to Early Modern texts had, for a long time, not been noted. Thus, between the two major poles of editorial traditions, a new one arose that developed into a unique link. Bodo Plachta’s observation for German Early Modern texts holds true for Yiddish ones as well:

Sicherlich stehen alle editionstheoretischen und -praktischen Bemühungen für die Edition von Texten der Frühen Neuzeit zunächst erst einmal vor dem Problem, die gewaltigen Lücken in der Textversorgung mit wissenschaftlich fundierten, gleichzeitig aber vom Aufwand her vertretbaren Editionen zu schließen. Die Verluste und Zersplitterungen, die durch die Weltkriege des 20. Jahrhunderts in den Beständen der europäischen Bibliotheken gerade für diese Epoche entstanden sind, machten die Recherche nach Originalen und deren bibliographische Erfassung zu einer vorrangigen Aufgabe. […] Insofern rechtfertigen sich die einschlägigen Editionsprogramme nicht so sehr aus ästhetisch-philologischen Belangen, sondern in erster Linie aus Gründen der Textdokumentation.90

Surely all efforts with regard to edition theory and practice for texts of the Early Modern Period face the problem of having to close the tremendous gaps in text-supply with scientifically sound, but in terms of effort, still reasonable editions. The losses and fragmentations which occurred in European libraries because of the world wars in the 20th century make, especially for this period, the search for originals and their bibliographical compilation a

89 See Landau 1912 and 1919; Matenko/Sloan 1968; Eidelberg 1991; Frakes 2008 and Fox/Lewis 2011. Translations of pre-modern Yiddish manuscripts should be mentioned here as well, although they are not part of the canon of editing but form their own category as translation studies, see Neugroschel 2002; Fox/Lewis 2011, and Frakes 2014.

Fig. 13a: Ms. Hebr. Oct. 183, fol. 33b. © Frankfurt City and University Library.
priority. [...] Insofar, edition programs are justified not so much because of aesthetic-philological concerns but first and foremost for reasons of text documentation.

Although the historical-critical method of editing manuscripts was invented in the 19th century, it has of course undergone a significant process of change and
criticism that altered its appearances and standards.91 The debates surrounding critical editions will probably never cease and help the field to evolve even further. Contemporary discussions include questions of legibility and general complexity of editions, orthography and punctuation, notation and noting the Lautstandsbewahrung (the state of development of the sound system), the dissolution of fonts and handwriting92 etc. Editors of pre-modern Yiddish texts have to face these questions even more intensively, since they are working with a Jewish language written in Hebrew characters that is a Nahspreche (neighbouring language) of German. Thus, one of the main issues beside all other general editorial questions will always be: transcription/transliteration, or not? An entire line of further considerations entails from this point.

Editors’ choices have depended on various parameters, such as: which period does a manuscript belong to, what is the editor’s own scholarly background, how

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91 See Plachta 2006, 11–12.
92 See Plachta 2006, 21.

Fig. 14: Fox, Harry / Lewis, Justin Jaron (ed. and trans.) (2011), Many Pious Women, Berlin: de Gruyter, 192–193 [edition of Cambridge University Library, Ms. Cambridge add. 547]. © De Gruyter.
«Nr. 11: Das so genannte Taub Jeklein»

Šeliḥess¹
Ain hüpschen ḥatonu², gär wol gédicht:

ich wil eich sagen wās dō is gēschehēn bschns⁴ schn"h⁵,
in der kehile hakedōsche⁶!
vrogt niks un` lōt eich niks sein kosche⁷,
kosche lōt eich niks sein, den {} is eitl Purim gēmain,⁸
dās mān mächt ain sīp fun taub Jeklein
un` mit seinēm weib Kendlein
un` mit seinēn zwaï sindlēch⁹ fein.

[2] Fein hōt mān eś tun vor-lesēn,
wi` si` hábēn gefirūt ain wesēn¹⁰.
un` dās is kurlīch gēschehēn,
ē ich mich häb um-gēsehēn.
um-gēsehēn hin un` her,
ich häb gētracht gär ser,
bis ich eś häb gebracht in ler,
es is mir geworden gār schwēr.

¹ Pl. von hebr./jidd. סלייה 'Buß- oder Bittgebet', vgl. den Einzelkommentar zum Text.
⁴ hebr./jidd. ‘im Jahr’
⁵ העש = 5358 nach jüdischer und 1598 nach christlicher Zeitrechnung.
⁶ hebr./jidd. ‘in der heiligen Gemeinde’
⁷ hebr./jidd. ‘schwierig, schwer’
⁹ ‘Söhnchen’

Das Fragment im Besitz Steinschneiders (Serapeum Jg. 25, Heft 7:102, Nr. 450) präsentiert eine andere Variante dieses Liedes. Dort heißt es statt ler 'Reim':

'Ich hab getracht gar sehr,
  bis ich es hab gebracht in Reim
  is mir geworn sehr schwer'.


11 Die Strophen 1–4 dieses Liedes fallen im Ms. besonders auf, da die Schrift eine andere ist (siehe Kommentar). Als Trennzeichen dient hier nicht der Doppelpunkt, sondern ein Doppelstrich ".
12 Steinschneider (1864, 25. Jg., Heft 7:102, Nr. 450)
13 Shmeruk (1979:121; 2002:39; Steinschneider (1864, 25. Jg., Heft 7:102, Nr. 450)
14 Das Fragment im Besitz Steinschneiders (Serapeum Jg. 25, Heft 7:102, Nr. 450)
extensive is a manuscript, which readership for the edition is intended, which resources with regard to finances, time and technical requirements are available? Other relevant factors include: does the owner of the manuscript support publication, are transliteration or transcriptions accepted methods or not, what are the current trends and discussions for editions of manuscripts of the same period, etc.?

Still, editions of texts transmitted in manuscript in the early 21st century adhere, in principle, to one of the methods mentioned before: the ‘Yiddish only variant’, contextualised in Hebrew, English or German in the manuscript editions by Jerold Frakes, Nathanael Riemer93 (Figs 13a and 13b) or Claudia Rosenzweig,94 the ‘Yiddish plus translation’ in the publications by Evi Butzer (Michels),95 Chava Turniansky96 or Harry Fox and Justin Jaron Lewis (Fig. 14) as well as the ‘Yiddish with transcription’ as published by Diana Matut (Fig. 15a and 15b) or Erika Timm.97

Interestingly, however, the Latin-script-only variety is no longer in use. This illustrates just how important the original written form is judged to be and that, in general, back-checking with the source text has to be made possible.

All in all, the editing of pre-modern Yiddish manuscript texts has not stagnated, it continues, but is by no means where it should or could be. As said before, not even the fundamental tools for Old Yiddish studies, such as a grammar and dictionary exist. The basic need of any literary, cultural and philological studies is reliable editions – but the most important texts in manuscript form which have had a long-lasting effect on Ashkenazic society have not yet appeared in scholarly editions. Furthermore, texts of important manuscripts that have been published in the dawn period of Old Yiddish studies should, in theory, now be subject to modern editorial practices. Thus, the situation is not a gratifying one.

93 Riemer/Senkbeil 2011 with commentary and contextualisation in Riemer 2010.
94 Rosenzweig 2016.
95 Butzer 2003.
96 Turniansky 2006.
97 Timm 2013.
5 What the future of editing pre-modern Yiddish manuscript texts could entail

So far, Old-Yiddish editorial practice has remained relatively conservative. While modern editions of the late 20th and early 21st century are by and large outstandingly meticulous and extremely reliable, they have not yet entered the digital age. However, for the material at hand, engaging with the field of digital humanities could mean a wealth of new possibilities:

1. The material situation is very particular for the Early Modern period. One or two manuscripts of major Yiddish works often face a significant number of contemporary or later print editions that can sometimes even reach into the 21st century. Digital editing would allow presentation of all manuscripts plus substantial reworked or altered book editions in a synoptic manner. The reader could choose which versions she/he would like to compare by opening the respective tabs.

2. More extensive editorial projects could present first results without having to finish the entire editing process in advance.

3. If applicable, an editorial project could more easily open up for cooperation with scholars outside the first or basic text preparation for additional translations, commentaries, critical annotations, etc.

4. The edition could, beside the Yiddish text itself, encompass as many different forms and formats as wanted. A particular type that might not be necessary or is not requested could simply remain unopened.

Meanwhile, the implementation of and scholarship on digital editing are progressing rapidly, as is the technical development for OCR in the context of Hebrew and Yiddish prints and manuscripts. Still, Old Yiddish manuscripts to date are only included in the most basic sense: as part of larger Judaica collections online, made available as images or PDFs without an edition in the proper sense of the word. Some projects, such as the University of Cambridge’s digital library with the manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah, have at least installed tabs beside each individual folio of the Yiddish manuscript, which are still empty bearing the heading ‘Transcription’ (‘normalised’ or ‘diplomatic’) and ‘Translation’ – the manuscript

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98 See Vliet 2002 and Berger 2002 and the very extensive Sahle 2013.
99 See, for example, the technically convincing digital copy of the Yiddish Geniza manuscript Cambridge University Library, Taylor-Schechter collection 10 K 22; https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-TS-00010-K-00022/1 ff. (last accessed 20/03/2017).
that once triggered an unprecedented interest in pre-modern Yiddish texts might also be the first to enter into the digital age of Yiddish manuscript editing.

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