

»... und die ganze pfälzisch-jüdische Sündfluth kam dann heraus.«¹

Monstrosity and Multilingualism in
Oskar Panizza's *Der operirte Jud'*

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Abstract:

In Oskar Panizzas vergessener Geschichte *Der operirte Jud'* (1893) unterwirft sich eine monströs dargestellte jüdische Figur einem grotesken Veränderungsprogramm ihrer Erscheinung, um »ein Goj zu werden«. Die Geschichte wirkt zunächst wie ein antisemitischer Kommentar zu Assimilationsbestrebungen, aber nach einem genaueren Blick auf die eingesetzte Vielfalt an Sprachen und Dialekten ergibt sich eine etwas andere Lesart. Was erst als die monströse Sprachmischung des Protagonisten erscheint, die ebenso wie sein grotesker Körper korrigiert werden muss, stellt sich als eine subversive Kraft heraus, die das Ideal der Anpassung in dieser Geschichte unterwandert: Der sprachliche Standard eines reinen Hochdeutshs ist nicht aufzufinden und erscheint deshalb als künstlich konstruiert. Stattdessen wird Hochdeutsh, das metonymisch für die angestrebte deutsche Identität einsteht, als ein ebenso hybrides und dadurch monströses Kompendium von Sprachteilen entlarvt wie der ursprüngliche Ausdruck des Protagonisten.

In a 1926 review of Franz Kafka's *Der Proceß*, Kurt Tucholsky writes: »Seit Oskar Panizza ist so etwas an eindringlicher Kraft der Phantasie nicht wieder gesehen worden. Das Deutsch ist schwer, rein, bis auf wenige Stellen wundervoll durchgearbeitet. Wer spricht?« (Panter 1926: 383) Today, the direction of the inquiry would most certainly be reversed. Who is Oskar Panizza? This question would have surprised many of his more famous contemporaries. Walter Benjamin valued him as »ein häretischer Heiligenbildmaler« (Benjamin 1991: 648), Kurt Tucholsky was convinced that Panizza was »der frechste und kühnste, der geistvollste und revolutionärste Prophet seines Landes« (Wrobel 1975: 304), and even the aged Theodor Fontane said: »Entweder müßte ihm ein Scheiterhaufen oder ein Denkmal errichtet werden.« (1960: 299) Oskar Panizza's (1853–1921) creative and explosive oeuvre most certainly deserves this attention, yet the scan-

1 | Panizza 1981: 278.

dalous nature of his life and work also seems to explain his marginalization and current scholarly neglect. Throughout his life, the trained neurologist Panizza faced persecution and censorship for his provocative works about sexuality and disease, as well as his criticism of the Wilhelmine Empire and the Catholic Church. He knowingly took profound risks by writing against a policed societal consensus that ultimately put his entire existence at stake, as his life was marked by imprisonment, exile, and institutionalization.

Oskar Panizza's narrative *Der operirte Jud'* is a satirical parable of the failure of assimilation. It was written in 1893, a time when equal citizenship for the German Jewry had only been granted for 22 years in Panizza's Munich. Its protagonist, 19th century stock-figure² Itzig Faitel Stern, enters the narrator's life as a fellow student in Heidelberg. Struck by Faitel's physical and linguistic differences, the narrator describes Faitel's professed desire »ßu werden aach a fains Menschenkind wie a Goj-menera, und außßugeben alle Fisenemie von Jüdischkeit« (Panizza 1981: 272).³ A team of doctors assists Faitel with a grotesque Pygmalion-esque experiment to make this desired ›physiognomic passing‹ possible: his bones are broken and straightened, his hair is dyed, and he practices a new set of gestures. Most significantly, he has to learn to speak ›proper‹ German because his diction gives away his descent. In the doctor's view, the ultimate success of the experiment can only be proven by procreation, and when the transformation seems complete, Faitel successfully woos a »blonde Germanin« (ibid.: 279). But on his wedding day he has one drink too many, and involuntarily his old language, behavior, and even appearance return in front of everyone in the form of a monstrous disintegration, so that the wedding party flees in fear.

The story is controversial in many respects and has often been discarded as simply and straightforwardly anti-Semitic.⁴ The few critics who have engaged with *Der operirte Jud'* have often done so with little regard for its utterly gro-

2 | The name Itzig V/Feitel Stern is first used as an anti-Semitic pseudonym in the 18th century (cf. Althaus 2002: 145). Stern alludes to the Star of David and was a popular choice among Ashkenazi Jews who adopted German names in the course of Emancipation. The name Itzig combines a colloquial/dialectal German version of the Hebrew name Israel, which turned into a metonym for a Jewish person and associated stereotypical characteristic (see ibid.: 257f.). The name is given to literary figures like Veitel Itzig in Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben* (1855).

3 | Panizza's unique phonetic spelling is more obvious in some parts of his tale than in others, but since it was a conscious choice on his part, I decided not to mark it as aberrant with a [sic!].

4 | In a posthumous appropriation, the narrative was used in the Nazi publication *Der Stürmer*. Decades later, the text has hardly been considered in its own right, but has rather served as an example for a variety of discourses. Cf. for example Jack Zipes 1991, whose translation of the tale is notably colored by the assumption of anti-Semitism. Sander Gilman 1993a and 1993b, Jay Geller 2011, and Eric Santner 1996 also focus on Faitel's grotesque bodily appearance, but recognize as well that »What is at stake here, then is not simply Panizza's ridicule of German vulgarity and stupidity, which is no doubt also present in the text, but rather his suggestion that, in a sense, ›the German‹ does not exist.« (Santner 1996: 127)

tesque nature that subverts both German and Jewish stereotypes alike. My close reading suggests that the satire's main target is not Jewish individuals in particular, but rather the artificially constructed and exclusory nature of national identity concepts, as exemplified by German society. Specifically, Panizza's mastery of multiple languages and dialects introduces a subtext to the story that undermines the stereotypes at play. Faitel is cruelly depicted as monstrous, and the degree of his foreignness can be measured in the physical abnormalities he is imbued with, which become evident in the detailed descriptions »dieses grauenhaften Stücks Menschenfleisch« (Panizza 1981: 269). But we encounter an even greater obsession with Faitel's hybrid language, which is described as equally monstrous: »die Sprache [...] ist der Ausdruck einer schmierigen, niedrigen, feigen Gesinnungsweise.« (Ibid.: 272) The cowardice conveyed in his language seems to outweigh the »Heroismus« (ibid.) with which Faitel endures all the painful physical procedures. His French, Palatine, and Yiddish speech elements, as well as his neologisms and mannerisms are thus subject of his transformation almost more so than his physical traits. The narrator of the tale provides a detailed and derogatory analysis of the protagonist's hybrid mix of foreign languages and dialects, which I will contrast with my own analysis of the linguistic strategies in the text. My reading suggests that the text actually emphasizes the fragmented and hybrid condition of *Hochdeutsch*, the language standard that Faitel is supposed to acquire. I trace how the story questions the existence of such a standard and the unified national identity it has become synonymous with, ultimately exposing that standard as monstrous. The understanding of linguistic monstrosity thus enables us to see the depiction of Faitel's physical monstrosity in a different light. In order to explicate these claims, I will first point out some markers of monstrosity employed in the text and subsequently attempt to disentangle the different linguistic strands of the narrative. This close reading of Panizza's satire will reveal that it does not spare anyone from ridicule, and successfully complicates issues like identity, assimilation, cultural appropriation, passing, and multilingualism.

THE MONSTROUS JEW

Etymologically, monsters are warning signs,⁵ and it seems that the *topos* of the monstrous is one of the most effective ways to label liminal, foreign, and alienated figures in literature. The monster is a hybrid, mutable figure, often combining impossible physical traits, and its foreign ability to cross the borders of definition enables it to weaken classification systems at the heart of cultural discourses. This makes the monster a dangerous other that cannot be safely categorized, and to maintain social structures it must be extinguished because

5 | From Latin *monstrum* = omen, sign; *monstrere* = to warn.

its presence shows the constructedness of all categories.⁶ I propose that particularly successful depictions of monstrosity always embody several category transgressions at the same time.⁷ Religious alterity is one of the most effective ways of condemning the monstrous, which is why the relationship of the monster to the God of the non-monstrous must be clearly organized within classification systems. Since racial and sexual alterity appear equally essential, I suggest that most monstrous depictions simultaneously cross the borders of race/species, gender/sexuality, and religion.⁸ The following reading of the story will show that Faitel's monstrous status is emphasized precisely at these three prominent points.

From the beginning of the tale, the nameless narrator calls into question whether Faitel is human at all. This species transgression is inscribed in his physical appearance. Not only is his body apparently malformed and his face grotesquely ugly, but his eyes – the traditional locus of the soul – are described in animal and vegetal terms: »Ein Gazellen-Auge von kirschen-ähnlich gedämpfter Leuchtkraft schwamm in den breiten Flächen einer sammtglatten, leicht gelb tingirten Stirn- und Wangen-Haut. Daß es troff, da konnte Faiteles nichts dafür.« (Panizza 1981: 265f.) The crass materiality of this description alludes to different species (plants and animals) just as much as to stereotypes of racial difference (cf. his »yellow skin«, and »Itzigs Nase hatte jene hohepriesterliche Form [...]. Die Lippen waren fleischig und überfältig«; *ibid.*: 266). The alternative Faitel is striving for is an equally exaggerated being »im heroisch-teutonischen Genre, wie in der blond-naiven, süßlächelnden Jünglings-Gangart« (*ibid.*: 273f.). Himself a representative of the seemingly enlightened and modern

6 | »Das Monströse liquidiert die klassische dichotomische Struktur zugunsten der grotesken Struktur des Sowohl-Als-Auch, das ein Weder-Noch ist. Der Riese ist weder groß noch klein, er ist riesig. Das Monströse ist weder schön noch häßlich, weder gut noch böse, es ist monströs. Etwas verschwindet nicht in seinem Gegenteil (da es vielmehr in seiner Negation bewahrt wird), sondern in seiner wild wuchernden Übertreibung.« (Fuß 2001: 312) I would like to call Fuß's argument the *non solum, sed etiam*, the not only, but also, that gets to the core of the problematic nature of hybridity. As Jeffrey Cohen writes in *Monster Theory*, »By revealing that difference is arbitrary and potentially free-floating, mutable rather than essential, the monster threatens to destroy not just individual members of a society, but the very cultural apparatus through which individuality is constituted and allowed.« (Cohen 1996: 12) The anthropologists Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Starr argue in their essay entitled »To classify is *human*« (cf. Bowker 1999; emphasized by author) that classification systems are at work everywhere, and well-working systems disappear from view by definition, which makes them a dangerous mechanism of power play. As a result, Bowker and Starr call for resistance, which is best done from the perspective of those who do not find their place in the classificatory systems generally employed. The inhabitants of those in-between spaces show that the concept of an all-encompassing order is an illusion, and this act makes us call them monstrous.

7 | »Any kind of alterity can be inscribed across (constructed through) the monstrous body, but for the most part monstrous difference tends to be cultural, political, racial, economic, sexual.« (Cohen 1996: 7)

8 | For a more detailed explication of my claim, cf. Zeller 2012.

Germanness caricatured in the story, the narrator attempts to hide his horrified fascination under the cloak of science and some humanistic desire to help, but this only amplifies his underlying prejudices, and his descriptions clearly place Faitel akin to both a different species and race once more:

Es war gewiß viel, wie soll ich sagen, medizinische, oder besser anthropologische Neugierde dabei; ich empfand ihm gegenüber wie etwa bei einem *Neger* [...]. Mit Verwunderung beobachtete ich, wie dieses *Monstrum* sich die grauenhafteste Mühe gab, sich in unsere Verhältnisse, in unsere Art zu gehen, zu denken, in unsere Mimik, in die Aeußerungen unserer Gemüthsbewegungen, in unsere Sprechweise einzuleben. (Ibid.: 269; emphasized by author)

Together, they visit doctors, who ask »ob es sicher sei, daß Itzig von menschlichen Eltern geboren« (ibid.: 271), and subsequently invent a brutal therapy to stretch his body and straighten his bones. His ›physical Jewishness‹ is not only treated like a disease or a genetic defect, but moreover classified as sub-human, even animalistic, and »zuletzt wurde es monströs« (ibid.: 267). In order to stop his torso from constantly moving back and forth, which seems to be a reference to Jewish prayer, he gets »ähnlich wie bei Hunden, ein Stachel-Halsband [...] auf den bloßen Körper« (ibid.: 272). He practices a new way of walking and gesturing, and he receives treatments to change the color of his skin and hair. Once his appearance is successfully changed, he names himself Siegfried Freudenstern, thus moving from a dialect-infused Hebrew name (*Itzig*) to one that consists entirely of positively connoted German components, which signify assimilation, yet remain true to his roots (*Stern*). »Faitel war jetzt ein ganz neuer Mensch geworden« (ibid.: 274), so much so that his old friends no longer recognize him.

This transformation from monster to man drives his experimenters to a new question: »Hatte Faitel eine Seele?« (Ibid.: 275) To attain this marker of authenticity, the full extent »jener keuschen, undefinirbaren, germanischen Seele« (ibid.), his blood is exchanged for German blood donated by »mehrere kräftige Schwarzwälderinnen, die zur Messe gekommen waren« (ibid.: 276). It is briefly mentioned that he also undergoes a formal conversion, but in this act, Faitel attempts not only to cross religious borders, but also the borders of gender, insofar as he receives ›female‹ and ›christlich's Bluht« (ibid.). Afterwards, he successfully poses as »ein Gemüthsmensch durch und durch« (ibid.: 277), even if he occasionally needs to express himself in his old ways, much like a ritualistic act of catharsis. During these episodes of old language and gesture usage, he relives the first learning experiences that left a mark on him, namely hearing about the Talmudic creation myth in *shul*. He imitates his rabbi's questions »mit einem frechen witzigen Accent: [...] Wie lang copuliert der hailige Gott die Männer und die Waiber?« (Ibid.) Unaware of this religious and eroticized outlet of old habits that betrays heightened language awareness and imitation skills already in his childhood, the doctors decide that »Eines fehlte noch: Es galt diese kostbar-gewonnene Menschenrace fortzupflanzen. [...] Eine blonde Germanin mußte

die mit fabelhafter Mühe gewonnenen Resultate erhalten helfen« (ibid.: 279), and thus ultimately help replicate Faitel's fantasy of copulation. They find the »arme, aber schöne, flachshährige Beamtenstochter *Othilia Schnack*« (ibid.) who is chosen as the rather unwilling Germanic princess of this grotesque fairy tale for her simple, bourgeois averageness. Even though she has a »starken Mädcheninstinkt« (ibid.: 280), which makes her wary, both the money and extraordinary popularity that go along with Faitel's courtship win her parents over. The narrator addresses his readers directly at this point, cautioning them about the pretense Faitel personifies: »Nur das Weib darf lügen und sich in falsche Umhüllungen kleiden« (ibid.: 283), he explains, once more pointing at a form of gender transgression on Faitel's part, as well as at contemporary anti-Semitic depictions of Jewish men as effeminate (cf. Gilman 1993b).

The monstrous category crossing, then, appears precisely at the three points I suggested: first, Faitel is not considered a fellow human being, but part of a different, inferior race, or even another species, and he is explicitly called monstrous and non-human from the start. Secondly, Faitel's will to deceive and please at all costs is one of the reasons why others label his character weak and effeminate. The blood transfusion grotesquely coagulates this claim of gender crossing, and furthermore carries associations of male menstruation (cf. Gilman 1998), along with blood-related anti-Semitic horror stories of ritual murder and human sacrifice. By contrast, Faitel's improper sexual talk betrays a desire that he is not supposed to articulate, and he thus violates the moral code of contemporary sexuality in multiple ways by voicing »his lust for a pure German woman.« Finally, the alterity of religion is determined by his Judaism, which positions him vis-à-vis Christian theology and salvation history through an understanding that considers »die primäre Seelen-Anlage bei Leuten wie Fайтеles nicht als geistigen Besitz, sondern als mechanische Funktion« (Panizza 1981: 275). As a new hybrid *Mensch*, Faitel's defining qualities do not place him in clear categories, however; as shown by a passage at the story's end, he remains stuck between his old and new forms: »Die vielfach operirten, gestreckten, gebogenen Gliedmaßen konnten jetzt die alten Bewegungen ebenso wenig ausführen, wie die neugelernten.« (Ibid.: 291f.) It appears that Faitel has only truly become monstrous *because* of the transformation processes.

On his wedding day, one glass too many pushes Faitel over the edge. He seems to revert to his old self in front of everyone. At first, it is only his speech, but soon his posture also changes, and in the end, even his hair turns from blond to black and curly again. He repeatedly says: »Bin ich ä Mensch aß gut und werthvoll als Ihr Alle!« (ibid.: 290), but the wedding party sees only »ein blutrünstig angelaufenes, violettes Menschenantlitz mit speichelndem Mund, lappig hängenden Lippen und quellenden Augen« (ibid.). In addition, his secret sexual desires are uncovered and placed in the realm of the animalistic: »und schnalzend und gurgelnd und sich hin- und herwiegend, und mit dem Gesäß ekelhaft lüsterne, thierisch-hündische Bewegungen machend, sprang er im Saal herum: [...] Kellnererä, wo is mei copulirte, christliche Braut?« (Ibid.: 291) Without hesitation, Faitel is depicted in the same monstrous fashion as before,

if not worse. In the wedding party's eyes, the final catastrophe is a just punishment for trying to be something else, something ›better‹, and »Alles blickte mit starrem Entsetzen auf [...] de[n] Juden« (ibid.: 292).

Faitel is called monstrous explicitly and repeatedly throughout the story, and the description of his transformation, while superficially attempting to strip him of his monstrous attributes, is in fact the *narrator's* means of establishing this literary monstrosity more firmly. However, it is this belief in an inherent inequality that the author, Panizza, leads *ad absurdum* on many levels. The core tactic of this manoeuvre is the grotesque exaggeration that infuses every statement about the personnel of the story with irony. Where this concerns Faitel, Panizza engages with contemporary anti-Semitic stereotypes, but we find similar mechanisms applied to the descriptions of the narrator and society as well. According to the story, Germans are overly sensitive and naïve, shallow and stupid, uptight and greedy, along with many other negative qualities. Jack Zipes, one of the very critical readers of the story, admits in the postscript to his translation that:

Every step Faitel Stern takes to control and eliminate his Jewishness is laughable, not so much because his obvious stereotypical Jewish traits are ridiculous, but because the German qualities, which he wants to adapt, are preposterous. To become a blond, blue-eyed German stalwart means learning how to walk stiffly, utter pretentious phrases, dispense with critical thinking, and to pander to money, power, and the upper classes. In a way it is a credit to Faitel Stern's Jewish ›essence‹ – his rebellious nature – that he cannot become German, that the experiment fails, and that human flesh proves stronger than a eugenic operation. (Zipes 1991: 106)

Moreover, the fantastic, almost alchemical, pseudo-scientific methods and ›secret formulas‹ that are used to achieve Faitel's transformation, as well as the narrator's odd self-professed qualifications as an anthropologist and humanist are clearly manoeuvres of criticism of the physician Panizza.

THE MISUNDERSTOOD JEW

Der operirte Jud' enforces an understanding of assimilation as imitation on multiple levels, most notably on the level of language. Despite the cruel detail of Faitel's descriptions, the narrator repeatedly states that he himself is at a loss for words. From the beginning of the tale, he thus reflects on the difficulty of imitation in the context of language:

Aber wer hilft mir die Sprache von Itzig Faitel Stern beschreiben? Welcher Philologe oder Dialektkenner würde sich unterstehen diese Mischung von Pfälzerisch, semitischem Geknängse, französischen Nasal-Lauten und einigen hochdeutsch mit offener Mundstellung vorgebrachten, glücklich abgelauschten Wortbildungen zu analysiren?! (Panizza 1981: 268)

Faitel's hybrid language appears as monstrous as his body, thus taking the anti-Semitic caricature of the »mauschelnde Jude« to a grotesque extreme (cf. Althaus 2002). However, despite the narrator's professed difficulty in distilling a »pure« (i.e. »comprehensible«) language from Faitel's speech, he seems quite willing to experiment with unusual phonetics himself. In the narrator's experiment, it is not so much *Hochdeutsch* that is imitated as a variety of »lower« vocals that belong to the most basic of onomatopoeic reproductions. There are musical »Schnedderengdeng-Geräusche« (Panizza 1981: 267) and »Sing-Sang« (ibid.: 273), bodily sounds like »schneuzen«, »näselen«, »knängsen«, »gröhlen«, or »gurgeln«, and animal sounds like »miauen«, »grunzen«, »schnarren«, »schnurren«, and »meckern« that convey »immer noch mehr [...], als wenn er [Faitel] bloß einige Worte hingeworfen hätte.« (Ibid.: 267) The first act of imitation in this story is thus the narrator's seemingly oblivious attempt to reproduce and describe Faitel's phonetics, which defies his own standard of *Hochdeutsch* and makes him just as much a language learner as Faitel; moreover, one who partakes in a hybridization he himself calls monstrous. From the start, language as an object of imitation thus appears mutable, and foreign elements, like different languages or animal sounds, are considered part of it.⁹

Yet contrary to the narrator's statements, Panizza does not single out Faitel as an example of compromised or aberrant language, as is evident from the sheer number of other languages, dialect, and phonetic spelling in the text. What is more, Panizza himself adopted a unique phonetic spelling for all of his writing in the very year *Der operirte Jud'* was written, and increasingly so until the end of his life. His spelling resonates with his own Lower-Franconian dialect, and Panizza's family heritage is French just like Faitel's. So while the influence of French and Palatine elements indicates inferiority to the bourgeois German narrator of the story, the rampant yet cleverly constructed use of these very elements counteracts his stance in every single paragraph. Moreover, *Hochdeutsch's* definition as unified, standardized German is challenged by the suggestion that different dialects can fulfill the requirements of the abstract idea of *Hochdeutsch* proper:

Wohl konnte Fайтеles auch Hochdeutsch reden; aber dann war es eben nicht Fайтеles, sondern eine Zierpuppe. Wenn Faitel für sich war, und sich nicht zu geniren brauchte, dann sprach er Pfälzisch und – noch etwas. [...] Da es hoffnungslos war, ihn mit seinem Pfälzisch-Jüdischen auf ein nächst-verwandtes reines Hochdeutsch zu bringen, so versuchte man, durch einen absoluten Gegensatz zu seinem bisherigen Sing-Sang, ihn

9 | The same applies to non-verbal expressivity: »Wenn er [Faitel] aber eifrig wurde, und gute Opportunitäts-Gründe in's Feld zu führen hatte, dann bäumte er auf, hob den Kopf empor, zog die fleischige, wie ein Stück Leder sich bewegende Oberlippe zurück, so daß die obere Zahnreihe entblößt wurde, spreizte mit zurückgebeugtem Oberkörper beide Hände fächerförmig nach oben, knaukte mit dem Kopf gegen die Brust zu einigemal auf und ab, und ließ rythmisch abgestoßene Schnedderengdeng-Geräusche hören. Bis zu diesem Moment hatte mein Freund noch gar Nichts gesagt.« (Panizza 1981: 267) The narrative, however, has said plenty.

auf rechte Bahn zu bringen; und besorgte einen hannoveranischen Hofmeister, dessen hell-näselnde, klirrende Sprechweise Itzig wie ein Schulknabe, Satz für Satz, nachzusprechen hatte, so daß er Hochdeutsch wie eine völlig fremde Sprache lernte. [...] Diese ganze Reihe von Maßnahmen war das Resultat einer sachgemäßen Besprechung mit dem berühmten *Tübinger* Linguisten damaliger Zeit [...]. Und nun wurde genau untersucht, welcher deutsche Dialect mit dem Pfälzisch-Jüdischen Faitel's die geringste Laut-Verwandtschaft besitze. Man kam erst auf das Pommer'sche. Aber Faitel war dieß zu hart. Endlich einigte man sich über dem Hannoveran'schen. (Ibid.: 266 a. 273)

Taught by a *Hofmeister*, the concept of *Hochdeutsch* is here understood as representative of a normative and restrictive society, yet it also seems surprisingly random because any German dialect qualifies as ›proper‹ German if it is only different enough from Faitel's own. Despite Hannover's reputation for a particularly ›pure‹ language standard, the definition of *Hochdeutsch* rather seems to be found by negation, or degree of foreignness from Faitel's original manner of speech. As *undefinierbar* as the Germanic soul, *Hochdeutsch* is everything Faitel is not. Presented as a language that is acquired by way of repetition and imitation, *Hochdeutsch* is meant to eradicate Faitel's French and Palatine speech elements as well as his ›Jüdisch‹ or Yiddish: Transcribed into the Latin alphabet and therefore representing another layer of phonetic imitation, Faitel's use of Yiddish is often difficult to distinguish from dialectal variants of German in the text. But while the spelling of those two languages appears mostly conflated in the narrative, there are certain key words and some use of word order that can be identified as markedly Yiddish and that are depicted as foreign and obscure elements of Faitel's speech.

One of these words perfectly exemplifies not just Faitel's hybrid language; its associations also describe the very problems of assimilation presented here. Faitel uses the expression »Misemischine« (ibid.: 270) or »Misemaschine« (ibid.: 291), once to describe himself as a mess, and once as a curse when his wedding day goes awry. This is a term that is nowhere else to be found in this particular spelling variation. It is reminiscent of the Hebraism *misso meschunno*, which literally describes a sudden unnatural death and is usually used as a curse word (Althaus 2002: 152). Panizza's specific spelling does, however, conjure up all kinds of associations. One hears the German *mischen*, *mies* and *Maschine* right away, and it is certainly noteworthy here that Faitel is also identified as a Hoffman-esque »Zierpuppe« (Panizza 1981: 266) with a soul that is merely a »mechanische Funktion, ›rotation work‹¹⁰ (ibid.: 175) and »Schnurr-Sprechwerkzeugen« (ibid.: 280) at different points in the narrative. It also contains the French word *mise*, which denotes a whole range of meanings, the most notable in this context certainly being ›appearance‹, ›a stage setting‹, ›insertion‹, and ›being out of place‹, and which could quite literally also describe the process of being inserted into a machinery of braces and corsages during Faitel's transfor-

10 | English introduces international scholarly expertise at this point.

mation.¹¹ The term leads the reader to multiple etymologies and connotations. Thus, as language subverts standardization, it simultaneously mimics standard forms and makes connections in unexpected places that yield new meanings. Many of these meanings only become possible by fragmenting composite nouns, i.e. hybrid terms, which are so typical for *Hochdeutsch*. Ultimately, it proves impossible to pin down one conclusive meaning for *Misemaschine*, and it remains a composite that exudes general meaningfulness, but cannot be used to communicate something specific or precise. For the story's narrator and his bourgeois peers such a fragmentation of semantic standards poses a threat to the perceived coherence of their linguistic identity. Panizza ridicules these fears by showing that there has never been *Hochdeutsch* in the first place, but just a variety of interconnected German dialects, a hybrid monstrous mix from the start. *Hochdeutsch* itself is a *Misemaschine*.

The provocative nature of this claim becomes most obvious where the narrative combines questions of individual and national identity with language and religion:

Faitel hatte von jener keuschen, undefinirbaren, germanischen Seele gehört, die den Besitzer wie einen Duft umkleide, aus der das Gemüth seine reichen Schätze beziehe, und die das Schiboleth der germanischen Nationen bilde, jedem Besitzer beim Andern sofort erkennbar. Faitel wollte diese Seele haben. Und wenn er kein echtes Kölnisches Wasser haben konnte, wollte er das Nachgemachte. Er wollte wenigstens diese Seele in ihren Aeüßerungen, in ihren Zutagetretungen sich aneignen. Man rieth ihm nach England zu gehen, wo der reinste Extrait dieser germanischen Seele zu finden sei. Sprachschwierigkeiten ließen diesen Plan bald wieder fallen. (Ibid.: 275)

This reference to *Sprachschwierigkeiten* as the obstacle to achieving something *Nachgemachtes* seems to be a satire of our satire. It emphasizes that the kind of national identity Faitel wants to adopt can only ever be an imitation, more precisely, the imitation of an idea. The advice to find the purest Germanic souls in England alludes to the Hanoverian version of *Hochdeutsch* mentioned before, and thus connects the idea of pure language with politics, i.e. the related royal houses governing England and Germany at the time. It simultaneously shows once more that what Faitel wants to assimilate to is in fact a hollow, constructed idea that can be randomly attributed to different linguistic traditions; or, if English is in fact understood as a (more) Germanic language here, this claim of shared linguistic origins inherently undermines the concept of exclusive language purity in the first place. The word that makes this most obvious is *Schiboleth*. Because it is etymologically a Hebraism, the phrase ›das Schiboleth der *germanischen* Nationen‹ is an ironic commentary about the bourgeois fears of Jewish assimilation. *Hochdeutsch* cannot do without foreign words to communicate specific expressions. The meaning of *Schiboleth*, on the other hand, is

11 | Cf. *mise en machine*; *mise-en-scène*; *ne pas être de mise*. As discussed above, French is established as one of the text's many languages.

the narrative in a nutshell: it is the part of speech that gives away one's social or regional origin. It is also a way to put someone to a test: Either it reveals him as an authentic member of a community or it gives him away as a fraud.

Faitel's own *Schiboleth* is analyzed by the narrator in great linguistic detail, which is worth quoting at length, in particular because the terms in question are neologisms that display the author's linguistic mastery and love of experimentation:

Faitel Stern sagte z.B. wenn ich ihn über den ungeheuren Luxus in seiner Garderobe, seinen Toilettegegenständen, interpellirte, – »... was soll ech mer nicht kahfen ä neihses Gewand, ä scheene Hut – 'menerá, faine Lackstiefelich, – 'menerá, aß ech bin hernach ä fainer Mann! *Deradáng! Deradáng!* ...« [...] Der Leser wird hier mit Verwunderung zwei Wörter entdeckt haben, oder vielmehr ein Annexum, ein Anhängsel, und eine Interjection, die er in jedem Wörterbuch vergeblich suchen würde. »- *menerá*«, eine Art Schnurrwort, kurz-kurz-lang, mit dem Ton auf der letzten Silbe (Anapäst), wurde Substantiven angehängt, und verlieh ihnen eine Art eigenthümlicher, pathetischer Bedeutung; schloß das Substantiv mit einem Consonanten, so wurde oft »- *emenerá*« angehängt, und zwar mit solch rasselnder Geschwindigkeit, daß der Ton auf dem Substantiv blieb, und das Annex als vierkurzsilbiger Schnurr laut (also: Doppelpyrrhichius) sich anschloß. (Ibid.: 268)

The narrator analyses these elements with a complex phonetic, semantic, grammatical, and prosodic understanding that is characteristic of the emphasis Panizza places on the role of language in the story. At this point in the narrative, it also serves to demonstrate the uncanny degree of success that Faitel's experiment achieves by way of contrast. For in a final step, Faitel receives assistance from yet another imperial employee whose profession represents the very essence of imitative art: a »Hofschauspieler« (ibid.: 277). Now we not only suddenly *hear* a very different Faitel, but it is also at this very point that his old friends also fail to recognize him. The stark contrast in language and gesture turns the text from a satire of one stereotype – of one monstrosity – into that of another:

Faitel brachte jetzt mit großem Geschick in seiner Diction Sätze vor, wie: »Ach, ich sag' Ihnen, wenn ich darüber nachdenke, wenn ich mir's überlege, es wird mir oft dunkel vor den Augen und mein Herz preßt sich zusammen ...;« – dabei einige brüske Bewegungen, beide Hände auf die linke Seite der Brust gepreßt, – (ibid.).

It seems that Faitel is now »der dumbe, tappige Germanen-Jüngling« (ibid.: 274) he wanted to become, but the narrator shares a secret with us that introduces yet another kind of language, which seems to represent the true Faitel for the first time, in particular because the quotation marks that usually frame his speech are suddenly absent:

– Fайтеles! Scheener Jüd', fainer Jüd', eleganter Jüd', – so sprach oft Faitel zu sich selbst, aber nur in der Gedankensprache, wenn er vor dem Spiegel stand, – biste jetzt

geworden ä Christenmensch, frei von aller Jüdischkeit? Kannste jetzt hin gehn, wo de willst, und dich hinsetzen zu de faine Leit, ohne daß Einer kann sagen: des is aach aner vun unnere Leit? – (Ibid.: 274f.)¹²

This *Gedankensprache* betrays the quality of Fattel's transformation, yet it also voices the reasons for his mimicry: It addresses a sense of belonging that was historically unachievable for the European Jewry. But the monstrous ending of the tale informs us about the reasons why this endeavor must ultimately fail:

Hast Du vielleicht, lieber Leser, schon Thiere mit einander sprechen sehen? [...] Nicht wahr, wie sie gurren, schnattern, kläffen, winzeln, wedeln und Körperkrümmungen machen! Glaubst Du, daß sie sich verstehen? Gewiß! Gewiß! Jeder weiß im Nu, was das Andere will. Aber zwei Menschen? Wenn sie schnüffelnd die Köpfe gegeneinanderstrecken, und sich ankieken; und dann ihre Gesichts-Taschenspielerereien beginnen; blinzeln, äugeln, schwere und leichte Falten aufziehen, die Backen blähen, knuspern, leer kauen, »Papperlapapp«, und »Der Tausend! Der Tausend!« winzeln? Was thun sie? Verstehen sie sich wohl? Unmöglich! Sie wollen ja nicht. Sie können und dürfen ja nicht. Die *Lüge* hindert sie ja daran. [...] Als *Prometheus* von Gott endlich die Erlaubniß erhalten hatte, Menschen machen zu dürfen, geschah es unter der ausdrücklichen, erniedrigenden Bedingung, daß selbe *eine* Eigenschaft besitzen müßten, die sie tief unter das Thier stellten. *Prometheus*, der nur eilte, sein Kunstwerk fertig zu sehen, sagte Ja. Es war die *Lüge*. (Ibid.: 283f.)

The narrative presents the lie as the ultimate human language; and as a symbol for the failure of human communication, it is synonymous with the failure of assimilation in the story. As a mere imitation of truth, it becomes utterly meaningless, just as *Hochdeutsch* becomes a meaningless standard *qua* its factual non-existence. The allusion to an inimitable divine language that represents the act of creation only underscores the depth of the fall caused by human hubris in the tale, and it alludes to the resulting isolation. The reference to the language of animals is reminiscent of the descriptions of Fattel's original mode of communication, and associations to a paradisiacal state create the idea of a ›natural‹, original language that results in the only meaningful communication possible for all beings. Yet, as the example of *Hochdeutsch* shows, this remains an unattainable idea, because language, even as a compendium of standard bits, is ultimately mutable and hybrid, and thus monstrous itself.

The way Panizza exposes the monstrosity of *Hochdeutsch* as an exclusory standard in the face of censorship is easily misunderstood as a mere depiction of a grotesque Jewish ›monster‹ figure, but it in fact subverts and problematizes the notion of the monstrous. The story reveals that national identities are built on an illusion of purity, universalism, and coherence – an illusion that is a lie. The tale does not conceal the fact that the one who is exposing this

12 | Note the heavy dialectal inflection of the imitated bourgeois, supposedly *Hochdeutsch* speaker in the last line (›das ist auch einer von unseren Leuten‹), which is the perfect example for the illusion that *Hochdeutsch* were truly the condition for belonging to this society.

lie will suffer drastic consequences, but it nonetheless advocates for an even more radical reconsideration of identity concepts. Despite its contemporary relevance, the German reaction to Jewish citizenship rights seems ultimately as an interchangeable example, as the story raises the stakes of its social critique and even gestures at the inclusion of other species (animals other than man). By showing how identity is constructed and deconstructed on the basis of language and other categories, the tale provides the opportunity for a reconsideration of identity altogether.

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