SECTION TWO

BETWEEN JEWS AND POLES
Some fifteen years ago, while writing a dissertation on the Polish-Jewish dramatist Mark Arnshteyn (Andrzej Marek), I came across some tantalizing references to the work of a playwright named Feliks Schober. According to Witold Filler, the historian of the nineteenth-century Warsaw popular stage, Schober (Szober, 1846–79) was the author of several celebrated plays featuring a character named Józio Grojseszyk.¹ The first of these, *Podróóż po Warszawie* (A Journey Through Warsaw), was first staged in September 1876, at the Tivoli theatre² (the same year that Avrom Goldfaden launched the first professional Yiddish theatre in Jassy, Rumania). Józio, whose Yiddish-Polish surname means big chic, is apparently the ultimate urban connoisseur, a high-spirited wheeler-dealer who knows all the ins and outs of contemporary Warsaw night life. Józio was paired with his opposite, a country squire named Barnaba Fafuła, a native of the village of Woli Ogon (Ox tail). The premiere of *Podróż po Warszawie* drew much attention and attracted an audience of 2,000, doubling the theatre’s previous attendance record. While theatre critics railed against Schober’s supposedly message-less entertainment,³ Warsaw horse-cab drivers would ask the actor who played Barnaba, “Where to, Sir Fafuła?” (“Gdzie mam jechać, jaśnie panie Fafuła?”), while Jews would point out “Józio” on the street and exclaim, “Kikste, Józio!” [“Look, Józio!” in Warsaw Yiddish].⁴ Schober capitalized on his success with a sequel entitled *Barnaba Fafuła i Józio Grojseszyk na wystawie paryskiej* (Fafuła and Grojseszyk at the Paris

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² *Podróż po Warszawie: Operetka komiczna w 7-miu obrazach* (Warsaw, 1878).
³ Filler 128.
⁴ *Kolee*, September 23, 1876, cited from Filler 123.