JÖRG SCHULTE

Saul Tchernichowsky and Vladislav Khodasevich

A Chapter in Philological Cooperation

When Saul Tchernichowsky arrived in Berlin in December 1922, he was forty seven years old and at the hight of his creative strength.¹ Within two years he published the Book of Idvlls (Sefer ha-idilyot), the Book of Sonnets (Mahberet sonetot) and the volume New Songs (Shirim hadashim). The first to announce Tchernichowsky's arrival in Berlin was his fellow poet Iakov Kagan who wrote a long article for the Russian journal Razsvet on January 14, 1923. Kagan revealed to his readers what Tchernichowsky had told him about his yet unpublished works. He also reported that Tchernichowsky had studied medieval Hebrew medical manuscripts in the State Library of St Petersburg (then Petrograd) and had been forced to leave a considerable part of his work behind when he fled to Odessa.² We still do not have any trace of these materials. We know that in the company of H.N. Bialik, Tchernichowsky attended the farewell concert of the Russian songwriter Alexander Vertinsky at the Scala theatre (in Berlin) on November 7, 1923, and was deeply impressed by the poet who sang his own verses.³ We also know that in the same year, he lived next door to the actress Miriam Bernstein-Cohen who, like himself, held a degree in medicine and translated from Russian into Hebrew.⁴ In her memoirs, Miriam Bernstein-Cohen notes that she introduced Tchernichowsky to Aharon (Armand), Kaminka who had been the first to translate a part of the Iliad into Hebrew in 1882.5 Besides the memoirs of Bentsion Kats,6 we have those of Josef Patai and his son Rafael7 who met the poet in Swinemünde in 1924 where he stayed in the villa of Alexander Riwkin. Josef Patai recalled

46

47

1 2 3

¹ Tchernichowsky crossed the border in Passau on December 15 (Genazim Archive Tel Aviv, I–165); on December 29, he published a German article to celebrate Bialik's fiftieth birthday: Das Herz Israels, in: *Jüdische Rundschau*, 29.12,1922, p. 670.

² Iakov Kagan, Saul Chernikhovskii: K priezdu poėta v Berlin, in: *Razsvet*, 14.1.1923, pp. 11– 12.

³ Tchernichowsky described his visit (together with Bialik) in a letter to H.D. Nusboym (John Nussbaum) on December 25, 1923; Nurit Govrin, Shnei mikhtavim shel Tshernihovski, in: *Ma'ariv* 16.9.1984, p. 44 and 5.10.1984, p. 32; the concert on November 7 was Vertinskii's last concert in Berlin in 1923; cf. Karl Schlögel, *Chronik russischen Lebens in Deutschland* 1918–1941, Berlin 1999, p. 203 (no. 3126).

⁴ Miryam Bernstein-Kohen, Ketipah bayam: Zikhronot, Ramat Gan 1971, pp. 158, 196–198.

⁵ Aharon Kaminka, Mavo' leshirat ha-yevanim, in: Kneset Yisra'el 2 (1887), pp. 128–160.

⁶ The memoirs were published in the journal *Ha-zeman* in 1944 and have been collected in the Makhon Kats at the University of Tel Aviv (II–736).

⁷ Raphael Patai, Apprentice in Budapest: Memories of a World That is no More, Lanham 2000, pp. 174–175 and passim.

(in an unpublished review to Nachum Slouschz's *Sefer ha-yam*), how the poet read his translation of the *Odyssey* at the shore of the Baltic sea and suddenly exclaimed: "Is this not an original Hebrew song?" ("Hari zo ke'ein shirah 'ivrit makorit mamash!").⁸ For Tchernichowsky's later years in Berlin, we have the memoirs by Moshe Ben Menachem⁹ who describes the poet's life in the village of Fichtengrund, some twenty miles north of Berlin, where he lived from 1927 until his immigration to Israel in 1931.¹⁰ In this village, Tchernichowsky was compared to Hassidic rabbis because he cured his patients without salary, even giving them medicine for free; if Ben-Menachem did not exaggerate, they said: "he is not only an excellent doctor but also a just man, one of the thirty six just of his time."¹¹ The most precious source for Tchernichowsky's later years in Berlin, however, are the letters to Jenny.¹² The poet visited the United States in 1928 where he met a beautiful young widow, Jennie Perrie Hurvitz. Around eighty letters to Jenny, written in splendid and tender Russian, stretch over a period of four years and are now preserved in the Makhon Kats in Tel Aviv.

I would like to return to Tchernichowsky's first weeks in Berlin. On January 11, 1923, the Russian poet Vladislav Khodasevich noted in his diary which is known under the title *Kamerfur'erskii zhurnal*: "visit to Tchernichowsky."¹³ The friendship between the two poets (arguably the best poets in their languages at the time) is well known,¹⁴ as is Tchernichowsky's appreciation of Khodasevich's

1

2

3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

⁸ Gnazim Archive Tel Aviv, Nachum Slouschz, fond 3203–1.

⁹ Moshe Ben-Menahem, Baya'ar Fihtengrund, in: Katif: Yalkut le-divre sifrut, hagut ve-'omanut 6–7 (1969), pp. 151–174; idem, Masot, reshimot u-divre-bikoret, Tel Aviv 1969, pp. 43–104; Mosheh Shla'nger [idem], 'Im Tshernihovski: Zikhronot mi-germaniyah, in: Ha-'olam, 14.10.1937, pp. 92–93, 21.10.1937, pp. 114–116.

¹⁰ Bo'az Shakhevits, Ye'arot metohamim: 'episodot be-biyografyah literaryah shel Shim'on Halkin, Tel Aviv 1982, p. 87.

¹¹ "Lo' rak rofe' mumheh hu' 'ele' gam tsadik gadol, 'ehad milamed-vav tsadikim shebador!" – Moshe Ben-Menahem, "Baya'ar Fihtengrund", p. 155; the report on the poet's generosity is confirmed by Ze'ev Vorbeh, 'Im Tshernihovski beBerlin, in: *Ha-do'ar* (New York), vol. XXIV, no. 2, Nov. 12, 1943, p. 32.

¹² Cf. 'Aminadav Dikman, Sha'ul Ţsherniḥovski kotev 'al G'eni Pri Hurvits, in: Ha-'et hahadashah 4 (2003), pp. 13–19.

¹³ V.F. Khodasevich, Kamer-fur'erskii zhurnal, ed. O.R. Demidova, Moskva 2002, p. 38.

¹⁴ Cf. Zoya Kopelman's introduction Istoriia ėtoi knigi, in: V.F. Khodasevich, *Iz evreiskikh poėtov*, Ierusalim 1998, pp. 13–98, esp. pp. 48–56 and 86–96; Aminadav Dykman, Tchernikhovsky et Khodassevitch: Pour l'histoire d'une amitié, in: *Russies: Mélanges offerts à Georges Nivat pour son soixantième anniversaire*, ed. Aminadav Dykman, Jean-Philippe Jaccard, Lausanne 1995, pp. 189–195; Idem, Milim aḥadot 'al Hodasevits' veŢsherniḥovski, in: *Sha'ul Ţsherniḥovski: Meḥkarim u-te'udot*, ed. Boaz Arpaly, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 511–523; D.M. Bethea, *Khodasevich: His Life and Art*, Princeton 1983, pp. 136–138; Inna Andreeva (ed.), Perepiska V.F. Khodasevicha i M.O. Gershenzona, in: *De visu* 5 (1993), pp. 12–51; Iurii Kol'ker, Saul Chernikhovskii i Vladislav Khodasevich, in: *Leningradskii evreiskii al'manakh*, vyp. 1 (1982), pp. 41–45; Luis Bernkhardt, V.F. Khodasevich i sovremennaia evreiskaia poėziia, in: *Russian Literature* 3, 1 (1974) pp. 21–31; Louis Bernhardt, *Chapters in the History of the Hebrew Literary Renaissance in Russia (1892–1924): Hebrew Renaissance Poetry in Russian Translation*, PhD Princeton 1970.

translations.¹⁵ Khodasevich had begun to translate Tchernichowsky's poems when he was asked by Leib Yaffe to contribute to the "Jewish Anthology" published by the Pushkin scholars, Mikhail Gershenzon and Khodasevich;¹⁶ the brief memories they wrote of one another have been re-published both in Russian and in Hebrew.¹⁷ One precious side of their contact – the philological side – is yet to be discovered. An episode from the time before they worked together illustrates exactly why their cooperation in Berlin became so interesting: In 1918, Leib Yaffe had provided Khodasevich with interlinear translations of those poems which he had selected for the Evreiskaia antologiia. One of them was Tchernichowsky's idyll "Brit Milah"; one of the guests at the Brit is called a "tahmas polani" because "every Pole was called a 'tahmas' or a thief."¹⁸ The word "tahmas"¹⁹ was translated as "ostrich" (Gesenius) and as "night owl" (the Septuagint has γλαύξ, the Vulgate "noctua"); Ben Jedudah suggested "nightjar" (caprimulgus),²⁰ Joseph Klausner and Yehudah Gur²¹ use "Falke, sokol" (falcon), following Mendele Mokher Seforim's Hebrew translation²² of Harald Othmar Lenz's Naturgeschichte.²³ Khodasevich translates "korshunom polskim u nas prozvali ego" ("they called him a Polish black-kite"). When Tchernichowsky received the published translation he wrote a postcard (dated St. Petersburg, March 4, 1918) to Leib Yaffe to inform him that in his village -i.e. in Michailovka between the Dnepr and the Sea of Azov - Poles were not called "korshuny" (black-kites) but "yastrebi" (hawks). On the same postcard, which is now in the Central Zionist Archives,²⁴ he adds that, had he been asked, he would have recommended translating part of the idyll into Ukrainian, in order to "preserve the local colour".

- ¹⁵ Cf. Z. A. Shakhovskaia, *Otrazheniia*, Paris 1975, p. 185; in an interview for the Polish journal *Opinja* in 1936 Tchernichowsky complained that the translations of his works into English, German and Polish "left much to be wished for"; Cwi Wohlmuth, W 60-lecie urodzin Szaula Czernichowskiego: Wywiad z poeta, in: *Opinja*, 12.1.1936, pp. 6–7 (p. 6).
- ¹⁶ Leib Yaffe (ed.), *Evreiskaia antologiia: Sbornik molodoi evreiskoi poėzii*, Moskva 1918, Berlin 1921, 1922; cf. Brian Horowitz, Russian-Zionist Cultural Cooperation, 1916–18: Leib Jaffe and the Russian Intelligentsia, in: *Jewish Social Studies*, n.s. 13, 1 (2006), pp. 87–109; Yaffe's first (still unpublished) letters to Tchernichowsky of 1915 and 1916 are preserved in the Central Zionist Archives (fond of Leib Yaffe).
- ¹⁷ Khodasevich's article "O Chernikhovskom" (originally a lecture given in Berlin at the Union of Russian Jews) was first published in *Evreiskaia tribuna* in 1924 (№ 13) and can be found in Kopel'man, (see note 14), pp. 51–53; Tchernichowsky's "Ha-meshorer ha-tra'gi" was published in *Ha-'arets*, 30.6.1939, pp. 9–10, republished by Boaz Arpaly, (see note 14), pp. 503–506 and translated into Russian by Zoya Kopel'man, (see note 14), pp. 89–92.
- ¹⁸ "Ka'asher yikru lekol polani tahmas 'o ganav"; Tchernichowsky, *Shirim*, Tel Aviv 1955, p. 160.
- ¹⁹ Lev. 11.16; Deut. 14.15; Hiob 39.17; Lam. 4.3.

1

2

3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

- ²⁰ Eli'ezer Ben-Yehudah, Milon ha-lashon ha-'Ivrit ha-yeshanah veha-hadashah, Jerusalem, Berlin 1908–1959.
- ²¹ Yosif Kloyzner, Yehudah Gur, Milon shel kis, me-'Ivrit le-Rusit ve-'Ashkenazit ume-Rusit le-'Ivrit ve-'Ashkenazit: helek rishon: 'Ivrit-rusi-'ashkenazi, Warsaw 1912 (the second part was never published).
- ²² Harald Othmar Lenz, *Sefer toldot ha-teva*', hoveret shniyah: ha'of, Zhitomir 1866, p. 62.
- ²³ Harald Othmar Lenz, *Gemeinnützige Naturgeschichte*, Gotha 1835–1839.
 - ²⁴ Central Cionist Archives, Jerusalem, fond Leib Yaffe.

The same fond contains the manuscripts of the only extant fragments of interlinear translation made by Tchernichowsky himself.²⁵ The translation of the sonnet "'Aliti bro'sh ha-har" ("I Ascended to the Summit of the Mountain")²⁶ was entrusted by Yaffe to Osip Rumer (1883–1954).²⁷ On Yaffe's request the poet translated the first quartet of the sonnet:

Я взошелъ на вершину горы – там цепью глыбы скалъ (Горѣли) изумрудом и вѣчными снѣгами, Раскинувшись предъ престоломъ творца мира вѣнкомъ, Положеннымъ небесными серафимами въ восхищеніи и изумленіи.

Yaffe had also asked the poet to translate a passage at the end of the poem "Le'ashtoret shir ule-va'al" which Khodesevich translated under the title "Pesn' Astarte i Belu" ("The Song To Astarte and Bel"). This is the only fragment for which we have both Tchernichowsky's Russian interlinear and Khodasevich's poetic translation.

А стихія водъ – направо и налъво	Глянь на запад и восток –
На востокъ и на западъ – несетъ бремя	Всюду вод кипучий ток
Въчной беременности и родовъ,	Полн зачатий и родов:
Начиная со свергающегося потока	В шумном рокоте ручьев,
И до моря въ его скалистой оправъ,	В море, сжатом между скал,
В капляхъ водостока у стъны,	Там, где медленный канал,
У истоков ручья и у берегов канала,	Где капель поет, звеня, –
Во мраке бездны и в сіянии дня.	В бездне тьмы и в свете дня.

Without Tchernichowsky's assistance, Khodasevich translated the masterpiece "Kekhom ha-yom" ("In the Heat of the Day") which contains a passage on various species of pigeons.

> אַלּוּ הָן יוֹנַי־מְצְרַיָם, וּלְאַלּוּ יַאָמָר זָיִרִים, וְיָשְׁנָן בַּצַלוֹת־מָרָאָה מַבְּלְטוֹת הָחָזֶה כִּפְקִידִים; נִכְהָן יוֹנַת־הָפִיִּים מְשָׁפֶּרֶת אֶת וְנָבָה הַגָּאָה, בַּצַלוֹת־הָרַצַמָה מִתָּהַדְּרוֹת בְּמַהַלְפָת מַקֶפָת לְעָרְפָן, כְּנוּכְּיָה שֶׁל יוֹנֵי־הַלְמַלִים עִם תּוּרִים־צַנָּקִים נִפְגָשׁים, בְּפָנּה זו הוֹגִים אֲהָבִים זוּג רוֹמִים וְזוּגוֹת כּוּשִׁיִים שְׁחוֹרֵי־הָרֹאשׁ, בַּיְנָתִים בָּאוֹת בִּעָף יוֹנֵי־פְּנִינִים, גוֹזַל לְמַשְׁפּחוֹת הַכְּמָרִים, אַיטַלְקִים, שָׁוַיַים וָסוּרִים.

28

(1) 'elu hen yonei mitsrayim, ul'elu ye'amer nezirim,

(2) vyeshnan <u>ba'alot-mur'ah</u> mavlitot hehazeh kifkidim;

(3) nikhhan yonat-tukiyim mshaperet 'et znavah ha-ne'eh,

(4) ba'alot-hara'mah mithadrot bmahlefet makefet le'arpan,

(5) knufyah shel yonei-taltelim 'im turim-'anakim nifgashim,

(6) bpinah zo hogim 'ahavim zug romim vezugot kushiyim

²⁸ V.F. Khodasevich, *Sobranie stikhov*, Paris 1982, tom 2, p. 208; the Hebrew text can be found in Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), p. 250.

12

1

3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

²⁵ Letter from Tchernichowsky to Yaffe, October 17, 1917.

²⁶ Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), p. 209.

²⁷ Leib Yaffe (ed.), *Evreiskaia antologiia*, Berlin 1922, p. 89.

47

- (7) shhorei-haro'sh; beintayim ba'ot biy'áf yoni-pninim,
- (8) guzal lemishphot ha-kmarim, 'italkim, shvetsim vesurim.29
- (1) Знал их малыш наизусть; вот это египетский голубь,
- (2) Это отшельник*, а там генерал*** с раздувшимся зобом
- (3) Выпятил грудь; вот <u>павлин</u> горделиво хвост распускает;
- (4) Там синеватой косицей чванятся горлицы**; турман**
- (5) Встретился здесь с великаном; там парочки негров* и римлян
- (6) Крутят в сторонке любовь, и к ним подлетает жемчужный;
- (7) Там вон монахи**-птенцы, итальянцы, швейцарцы, сирийцы ...³⁰

Leib Yaffe and Vladislav Khodasevich were cleary left perplexed by some of the dove species.³¹ Khodasevich misses for example the Russian "zobastyi golub" (the Russian "zob" means "goitre") behind "ba'alot-mur'ah" in line 2 (the English name of the species is Pouter pigeon) and the Russian "grivun" (from "griva", mane) behind "ba'alot-hara'amah" (the English name of the species is Nicobar pigeon). Therefore he had to come up with the additional species of the "generaly" (which is not mentioned in the original) in order to explain the arrogance of the Russian clerks (the Russian word behind the "pakidim" is certainly "chinovniki").³² The "generaly" were a famous species that had been bred by a Russian General in Odessa and won golden medals at all the pigeon fairs of the time, and it shows just how seriously Khodasevich took his work. It is remarkable that he correctly identified the "yonat-tukiyim" in line three. He recognizes "tukiyim" (which, in the Bible, appears only in 2. Chr. 9:21 and which means "parrots"³³ today) as "pavliny" which is literally "peacocks" (the interpretation of "tukivim" as peacocks goes back to the Vulgate); and the "pavlin'i golubi" are, indeed, a well known pigeon species. We can thus learn something very useful from Khodasevich's translations if we do not take every word for granted.

The close cooperation between the two poets began in Berlin in 1923. We know, from the memoirs of Bentsion Kats, that Tchernichowsky translated every single

- ³⁰ Khodasevich (see note 28), p. 182; the asterix (*) marks a pigeon name which does not exist in Russian, ** mark an erroneous translation, and *** mark dove species that have been added by Khodasevich.
- ³¹ Khodasevich described their cooperation in 1923: "The translations are made not from the original but from interlinear translations by Leib Yaffe, to whom I am further indebted for many hints and explanations. It goes without saying that I was concerned about the accuracy of the translations. Translating from the interlinear version I kept using the transcription of the Hebrew text into Latin characters. Therefore the acoustic particularities of the originals, their metre, the structure of the stanzas, the character of the rhymes, the number of stanzas etc. have been preserved"; Vladislav Khodasevich, *Iz evreiskikh poėtov*, Berlin 1923, pp. 5–6.
- ³² Aminadav Dykman called this solution a "coup de génie" and forgives the translator that he failed to identify the zoological species; Dykman, Tchernikhovsky et Khodassevitch (see note 24), p. 191.
- ³³ "Papageitauben" (Bruce's Green Pigeons in English) do exist, but their tails are not as eyecatching as those of the Peacock-Pigeon which are described in the second part of the line.

²⁹ Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), p. 222; the transcriptions of Hebrew poems reflect the metrical pronounciation of the hexametre (i.e. sheva and hataf are transliterated only where they are pronounced as syllables).

line of "Hatunatah shel 'Elkah" (The Wedding of Elka) for Khodasevich.³⁴ Louis Bernhardt had learned from Nina Berberova that Khodasevich also helped him during his work on the translation.³⁵ Whereas the translations of "Brit Milah", "Kekhom ha-yom" and "Levivot" which Khodasevich had translated with the help of Leib Yaffe, were included in his volume Iz evreiskikh poėtov published in Berlin in 1923, "The Wedding of Elka" was published separately in Maxim Gorky's journal Beseda in Berlin in 1924. Maxim Gorky had asked the poet to translate it himself but Tchernichowsky had declined despite his financial hardship and the offer of a considerable royalty.³⁶ Six years after the first publication, "The Wedding of Elka" was chosen for a lavish edition to celebrate Khodasevich's twenty fifth anniversary as a poet. The publishing house Omanut commissioned illustrations from Emmanuel (Mane) Katz³⁷ (whom Tchernichowsky had visited in his atelier in Paris in 1927, following a visit in Chagal's studio);³⁸ but this greatly hurt the pride of Abraham Stybel who had commissioned illustrations from Leonid Pasternak. Unfortunately, neither Omanut nor Stybel brought the book to print, the artists did not receive any payment and the illustrations are not known to the estates of either artist.

Khodasevich's translation is a precious source for anybody who reads Tchernichowsky's work closely and who wants to know exactly what the guests on Elka's wedding table were served beside the obvious "gefilte fish":

> ַעָּרְכוּ הַשֵּׁלְחָן כַּדָּת: מְלִיחִים גְּזוּרִים וּרְתוּתִים בְּשֶׁמֶריזַיִת וָחֹמֶץ, נַעָּטְרֵי זַיתִים בַּקַעָרוֹת, מְלִיחֵ־אַסְטְרַחַן וְקָרְטְשָׁ וּדְגַת יַם־בָרְדְיַנְסָק הַמְחַלְלָה חִילַק וְסֵלְתָנִית זְהַבְהַבִּים וְאַלְתִית מְתוּקַת-הַבָּשָׂר, וַיַיִן, יַיִו־שָׁרָף וְיֵיוְ־גֶּכֶן, מֵי־דְבַשׁ וּבַקְבּוּקֵי הַשֶּׁכָר [...] אֶכֶּס מֹא נִנְקַד מְקוֹמֶם שֶׁל אוֹתָם הַדָּגִים הַקְּטַנִּים, פַּרְקָה מְתוּקָה וְאַרְרוֹמָה וְאוֹקוּנוֹס עוֹטֵה-הַבָּטֶף,

- (1) V'arkhu ha-shulhan kadát: melihim gezurim ukhtutim
- (2) bshemen-zayit vahomets, na'átrei zeitim bik'arot,
- (3) mlihei-Astráhan veKértsh udgat yám-Berdyansk hámehulálah,
- (4) h<u>ilak vsultanit</u> zhavhavim ve'<u>iltit</u> metukat habaşer,
- (5) vyayin, yein-sáraf vyein-géfen, mei-dbásh ubakbúkei hashekhar [...]
- (18) 'efes lo' pasku mekomam shel 'otam hadagim haktanim,
- (19) pirkah matokah v'avromah v'okunos 'oteh ha-kesef,
- (20) tikhlon hsár hakashkéshet vekorshyah rahavat hagyiyah³⁹

- ³⁶ Iz evreiskikh poėtov, ed. Zoya Kopel'man (see note 14), p. 56.
- ³⁷ Zoya Kopel'man, 94–95 (note 14); cf. Khodasevich's note to M. V. Vishniak from August 21, 1929: Vladislav Khodasevich, Pis'ma M. V. Vishniaku, in: *Znamia*, pp. 178–200 (p. 197); cf. Mark Vishniak, V. F. Khodasevich, in: *Dal'nie berega: Potrety pisatelei emigratsii*, ed. Vadim Kreid, Moskva 1994, pp. 149–157 (p. 155).
- ³⁸ Ya'akov Tam [Sha'ul Ţshernihovski], "Mipinkaso shel Ya'akov Tam", in: *Ha-'olam*, 15.4.1927, pp. 282–284 (p. 283).
- ³⁹ Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), pp. 368–369.

1

2

3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

³⁴ Bention Kats, Zikhronot: Hamishim shanah behistoriyah yehudei Rusiyah, Tel Aviv 1963, p. 294.

³⁵ Luis Bernkhardt, V.F. Khodasevich i sovremennaia evreiskaia poėziia (see note 14), p. 24.

- (1) Были закуски все те, что обычай велит, и во-первых
- (2) Сельди в оливковом масле и в уксусе; с краю тарелок
- (3) Ровным бордюром лежали оливки; с селедкой из Керчи
- (4) <u>Сельдь</u> астраханская рядом лежала; помимо селедок
- Были <u>сардинки, ке</u>ф<u>аль,</u> золотой <u>пузанок;</u> а в графинах –
- (5) Водка, и мед, и вино, и пиво в зеленых бутылках. [...]
- (18) Не было тут недостатка и в рыбе помельче: был <u>окунь</u>, (19) Широкогрудый <u>карась</u>, и <u>судак</u>, и <u>лещ</u> серебристый.⁴⁰

The guests were given herring ("meliah", line 1); but what are "hilak" and "sultanit" in line 4? Both species are mentioned together in the Babylonian Talmud:⁴¹ "what is hilak? It is the [or 'a species of'] 'sultanit". There have been several attempts to identify the species, but recent translations of the Talmud simply use the Aramaic terms. Even-Shoshan,⁴² the only lexicographer who considered Tchernichowsky's work and made suggestions for some of his obscure expressions, offers sultanit for "clupea sprattus", the sprat. The problem is that the sprat is very common in the Baltic sea but not known in the Sea of Azov or the Black Sea. If a translator ever needed the poet's assistance it was in this passage. We therefore turn to Khodasevich's translations: he has "puzanok", the Caspian shad, and "kefal", the mullet; the Sea of Azov is famous for both species. "'Iltit" can already be found in Steinberg's dictionary of 1899, meaning salmon. In the following passage, Khodasevich is less precise. He transfers, for metrical reasons it seems, the attribute "dressed in silver" from the perch to the bream ("avromah") and omits the tench ("tikhlon") altogether. He may have been irritated by the fact that the tench does have scales (despite these being very small and deeply embedded into the skin making the tench slippery and giving the impression that it does not have scales at all). Tchernichowsky gave the Hebrew "okunos" the meaning of the Russian "okun" (perch; the word is commonly derived from Russian "oko", eye) but he certainly knew that "akunos" was the Aramaic name of an unknown small fish, a corruption of the Greek κολίας.

The plants in Elka's garden are not quite as difficult. The botanical details are interesting for any reader who wants to understand every word in Tchernichowsky's idyll. Tchernichowsky wrote several articles on plants himself⁴³ and widely used plant names of his own invention throughout his œuvre.

וְהָעֵלוּ בֵין עֵץ וּבֵין עֵץ פְּטְרוֹשֵׁילִין, שׁוּמֶר רַיחָני וּבָצָל, פַּסְלָיָה מְתַּפּשָׁה בְמוֹטוֹת, כְּרוּבִית מַתְעַפְּכָּה בְמֵאָה טֵלִיתוֹת וְקָטְנִית שׁוֹבַבָה, גֶּזֶר מֶתוֹק וּצְנוֹן, וַחֲזֶרֶת מֵכְריזָה עֵל דְּמֶעוֹת, זְהוֹרִית מְסְתֵּכֹּה בַחַמֶּה וּדְלַעֵת נִמְתַּחֵת בְּהַרְחָבָה,

- ⁴⁰ V.F. Khodasevich (see note 28), tom 2, pp. 237–238.
- ⁴¹ T.B. Avoda zara 39a.

⁴³ Saul Tchernichowsky, "Tsemahim uperahim", in: *Ha-shiloh* 23 (1919/20), pp. 372–376; idem, "Shemot ha-tsemahim", in: *Sefatenu, kovets* mukdash le-she'elot harhavatah u-tehiyatah shel ha-lashon ha-'ivrit, vol. 1, Jerusalem 1922, pp. 114–119; idem, "Tsemahim uperahim", in: *Ha-safah* 1 (1912), pp. 214–216.

⁴² Milon 'Even-Shoshan: be-shishah kerakhim be-hishtatfut hever 'anshe mada', Jerusalem 2003.

תּלָמִים תְּלַמִים קְטַנִּים וּזְרוּצִים מֵטְלִיוֹת מֵטְלִיוֹת. וַצְצֵי הָגִּינָה בְּרַבְם אַגַּסִים עַנַפִים וְתַפּוּחִים, דַּדְדְבָנָיֶה מִאְדִּימָה וְעַפָּבָית מְרַבָּה עֵקַצִים, שְׁזִרָה תִיכוֹנָה בַקַצָּה לָה חֲצִי גֹרֶן עַגַלָּה שְׁדֵרָה תִיכוֹנָה בַקַצָּה לָה חֲצִי גֹרֶן עַגַלָּה וַצְּיִם עֲנַפִים כַּשִׁיתָ – אַקַקִּיוֹת צָהַבּוֹת־הַפְּרָחִים. וְאַלְקָה הַפַּלָּה נוֹהָגֶת אֶת־הַנִי אָל־פִינַת גַּנָּתָה, אָשֶׁר אָהַבָּה, אָל תַּחַת צַפְצָפָה מַאָהִילָה עֲנָפִים, וְעָלְקָה הַרוּלִים וּצְמָחִים מְגַדְלַי־הָעָלִים וְעָלְשָׁת כַּרַוּלִים וּצְמָחַים מְגַדְלַי־הָעָלָים

(1) [...] ve-hé'lu bein 'ets u-bein 'ets petrusilin, (2) shumar reihani u-batsal, pasilyah mitapseh bemotot, (3) kruvit mit'atfah beme'ah talitot vekitnit shovevah (4) gezer matok u-tsnon, vahazeret makhrizah 'al dma'ot, (5) hmanit mistaklah bahamah u-dla'at nimtahat bharhavah, (6) tlamim, tlamim ketanim u zru'im matliyot matliyot (7) va'tsei haginah berubam, 'agasim 'anefim vtapuhim, (8) duvdevaniyah ma'dimah v'akavit merubat-'akatsim, (9) shazif 'ehad ushnayim tutim malbine-ha'inbah. (10) Sderah tikhonah bakatseh lah hatsi goren 'agulah, (11) 'etsim 'anefim kasiah - 'akakyot tsehubot-haprahim. (12) V'Elkah hakalah noheget 'et Heni 'el pinat ginatah, (13) 'asher 'ahevah, 'el tahat tsaftsafah, ma'hilah 'anafim, (14) pinah he'eltah harulim u-tsmahim megudlei-he'alim (15) v<u>'alshei-var</u> 'otim tsits siglah, ken shaket umetsal mehamah.⁴⁴ (1) Между деревьями грядки тянулись. На грядках - петрушка, (2) <u>Лук</u> и укроп ароматный, фасоль на высоких тычинах, (3) В сотне одежек своих - капуста, горох шаловливый, (4) Редька, морковка-каротель и хрен, вызывающий слезы. (5) Там же – подсолнечник, гордо глядящий на солнце, и тыквы. (7) Что до деревьев, то чаще - ветвистые яблони, груши, (8) Но попадаются также багровые вишни; крыжовник Тычет колючки свои, за одежду хватая прохожих; (9) Есть одинокая слива и белые две шелковицы. (10) Если ж по средней дорожке пройти до конца, то упрешься (11) В тесный большой полукруг постриженных желтых акаций. (12) Элька - невеста вела подругу милую Геню (13) Прямо в любимый свой угол, под старой развесистой ивой. (14) Густо в нем разрослись лопухов широкие листья, (15) В синих цветочках цикорий, крапива ... Укромно и тихо.45

Khodasevich omitted line 6 ("in many tiny furrows, seeded in numerous patches") which is half a quotation from the Mishna⁴⁶ and half a quotation from the Gemara⁴⁷ of the tract Kilayim of the Talmud Yerushalmi. The tree "tsaftsafah" (in line 13) is used today for the poplar tree; this meaning can be found in almost

2 3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

⁴⁴ Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), pp. 342–343.

⁴⁵ Khodasevich (see note 28), tom 2, p. 219.

⁴⁶ Mishna Kilayim 2.3 et alt.

⁴⁷ Talmud Yerushalmi, Kilayim 9.3.

all modern dictionaries. Even Klausner/Gur's pocket dictionary gives "topol', Pappel"; this dictionary is otherwise priceless for translating Tchernichowsky because it reflects the word lists that circulated among the Hebraists and were

published in journals as Safah and Lashonenu; Joseph Klausner was not only Tchernichowsky's closest friend, he also edited many of his poems which can still be seen in the manuscripts. In this case, however, Khodasevich translates "iva", willow, and this translation was probably indicated to him by the poet himself. Tchernichowsky uses the biblical "tsaftsafah" consistently for the willow, beginning with a list of biblical plant names which he had published in the St Petersburg journal Safah in 1910, together with a brief article.⁴⁸ The list is based on the list of biblical plant names in the Jewish Encyclopedia that was published in New York between 1901 and 1906.49 Tchernichowsky merely added German and Russian equivalents (in this case "iva" and "Weide"), and presented the list as his own work. In Elka's garden the "tsaftsafah" provides shelter (or even creates a tent) with its branches; this attribute fits much better to the willow than to the poplar. For "alshe-var" the same list gives "tsikorii". For the biblical "harulim"50 which appears in line 14 of the fragment we find the Latin "Lat $\langle h \rangle$ yrus" along with the Russian "polyn" and the German "Wermut", i. e. Common Wormwood. Wormwood has nothing to do with Lathyrus (in English: vetchling). By the time he wrote "The Wedding of Elka" Tchernichowsky must have noticed his mistake; we can assume that he himself indicated Khodasevich the Russian "lopukhi", burdock; Khodasevich contracts "harulim" and the "plants with big leaves" into one species and translates "the broad leaves of the burdock," which gives a precise description of the burdock. It is possible that the Russian text is correct and the Hebrew text corrupted because "plants with large leaves" is untypically vague for Tchernichowsky as he frequently references attributes. Unfortunately we do not have a manuscript of the "Wedding of Elka". However, I have found another example in which the editor misread a "he" as "vav" and created a plant that Tchernichowsky never intended to describe: in "My Father Was a Horse-Doctor" all editions read "esev bakhot u-ksamim".51 Whereas "esev bakhot" is a translation of the Russian "plakun-trava" (Purple Loosestrife), there is no Russian or Ukrainian equivalent for the alleged Hebrew plant "ksamim". The solution can be found in an early version of the manuscript which reads "esev bakhot ha-kosem"⁵² which simply means "the magical purple loosestrife". In the manuscript, "hakosem" is not set in inverted commas as it appears in the printed editions, i.e. it is not marked as a plant name; and "plakun-trava" is, indeed, one of the most famous Russian magical plants.

I return to Elka's garden: In line 2, Khodasevich translates "shumar" as "dill" ("ukrop") instead of "fennel"; the mistake can easily be explained: he must have

1

2

3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

Saul Tchernichowsky, "Shemot ha-tsemahim ha-nimtsa'im bekhitve ha-kodesh", in: Ha-safah 1 (1912), pp. 217-222.

⁴⁹ I(mmanuel) Lö(w), "Plants", The Jewish Encyclopedia, ed. Cyrus Adler, New York 1901-1906, vol. 10, pp. 72-85 (pp. 72-73). The Jewish Encyclopedia served as a major source for the Evreiskaia Entsiklopediia that was published in St. Petersburg between 1908 and 1913.

⁵⁰ Job 30.7.

⁵¹ Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), p. 719.

Genazim Archives Tel Aviv, I-30455 ("'Ifi'atros le'et metso' hayah 'avi").

been given the Russian "ukrop aptechnyi", a common Russian name for fennel; the adjective "aptechnyi" which makes all the difference, did not fit into the metre. Line 11 gives a good example how Tchernichowsky translated plant names from the Russian. Just as he uses "akakyah halevanah", i. e. the "belaia akatsiia" (which Odessa was famous for) for the Black Locust (Robinia pseudoacacia), he coined "akakyah tsehuvah" as a literal translation of the Russian "zheltaia akatsiia", which again is not an acacia, but caragana, or Siberian peashrub. In his autobiography, Tchernichowsky describes the semicircle of caraganas in his neighbour's garden and how, as a child, he made whistles from the green husks of the tree.⁵³ Khodasevich automatically found the correct translation in Russian. I am not entirely sure about the "kitnit shovevah" in line 3. Khodasevich translated the "mischievous peas", but according to Gur/Klausner the adjective "shovev" also designates a wild growing species.

The fifth song contains a brief passage (modelled on the bird simile in the *Iliad*)⁵⁴ which discribes the agitation of the girls attending the wedding. The names of the birds that ruffle their feathers pose greater difficulties than the dove species in "In the Heat of the Day".

אַחַת אַחַת הָּבֹאנָה: הַשַּׁרְוֹר, הַחוֹרְפִי וְהַיְרְגָז, אוֹ אַדְמוֹנְיָה וְחַלְחִי, מִתְנוֹסְסִים בִּשׁלֵל נוֹצוֹתֵיהֶם.

'ahat 'ahat tavo'nah: <u>ha-sharshur, hahorfi</u> v<u>hayagaz</u>, 'o 'admonyah vehalhi, mitnosesim bishlal notsotihem⁵⁵

То подлетает <u>синица</u>, то <u>чиж</u>, то <u>шегленок</u>, то <u>зяблик</u>, То <u>красношейка</u> – и все-то пестреют своим опереньем⁵⁶

For metrical reasons, Khodasevich changed the order of the birds; it seems, however, that he had exact translations from the poet and tried to be precise. The bird name "admonyah" was not accepted into modern Hebrew but can be easily recognized as Tchernichowsky's translation of "krasnosheika" (rubythroat); the name "horfi", which Khodasevich translated as "chizh" (siskin), can be found in Mendele's translation of Harald Othmar Lenz's *Naturgeschichte*; Mendele used "horfi" for the genus Fringilla and "horfi ha-kaṭan" for "Zeisig", siskin (which is in Russian "chizhik" or "chizh");⁵⁷ similarly the name "ha-yargaz" had been used by Mendele for the genus Parus⁵⁸ and it is very likely that Tchernichowsky had found it in Mendele's work and later provided Khodasevich with the translation "sinitsa" (tit). The form "halhi" can be found in all editions since the first publication of the idyll in *Ha-tekufah*.⁵⁹ Only in the latest edition it has been

1

2

3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

⁵³ Saul Tchernichowsky, "Me'eyin 'avtobiyografyah", in: Sha'ul Tshernihovski: Mehkarim ute'udot, ed. Boaz Arpaly, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 17–141 (pp. 24–25).

⁵⁴ Homer, Ilias II, 459–463.

⁵⁵ Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), p. 358.

⁵⁶ Khodasevich (see note 28), p. 230.

⁵⁷ Harald Othmar Lenz, Sefer toldot ha-teva', (see note 22), p. 67, 158; cf. Eliezer Ben-Ieguda, Polnyi russko-evreisko-nemetskii slovar', Warsaw 1912.

⁵⁸ Harald Othmar Lenz, *Sefer toldot ha-teva*⁴ (see note 22), p. 150; cf. Ben-Ieguda (see note 57).

⁵⁹ Ha-tekufah 14–15 (1922), pp. 435–480 (p. 460); the same can be found in Benjamin Harshav's annotated text in *Shirat ha-tehiyah ha-'Ivrit: 'Antologyah historit-bikortit*, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem 2000, vol. I, p. 276.

replaced by "hohit"⁶⁰; unfortunately we do not know who made the revision and on what basis (no manuscript of the work survives); and though I have not been able to find "halhi" in any dictionary, "hohit" can be found in Gur/Klausner as "shcheglenok" (goldfinch)⁶¹ which corresponds with Khodasevich's translation; equally difficult is the bird name "sharshor" which can only be found with the vocalization "shirshur" in Kenaani's dictionary as an unspecified bird name;⁶² Khodasevich translated it as "ziablik" (common chaffinch); in this case the translation made with the poet's assistance helps to establish the meaning of two words.

Unfortunately, Khodasevich's translation is not always a reliable commentary. Khodasevich made some small and pardonable mistakes, when he translated, for example, the village "Lopatihah ha-gdolah" as "Lopatikha Bol'shaia"⁶³ instead of "Velikaia Lopatikha" which can be found, as all other village names, on a map of late ninenteenth century Tauria. In one case he clearly had difficulties understanding the interlinear translation and contracted four lines into one.⁶⁴

שְׁנֵים שׁוֹשְׁבִינִים לְצִדֶּיו, פּוֹסַעֵ הָחָתָן מְדוּדּוֹת, אֶחָד מִימִינוֹ – שֶׁלוֹ. וְאָחָד מִשְׁמֹאוֹ – שֶל פַלֶּה (וזוּג השׁוֹשְׁבִינִים גַּם־שׁנֵיהֶם הָאִישׁ וְהָאשָׁה זוּג רִאשׁוֹן, רִאשׁוֹן לְאִשְׁתּוֹ, וְרָאשׁוֹנָה לוֹ, וְיֵשׁ לֶהֶם בָּנִים).

19

shnayim shoshvinim letsidav, poseʻa heḥatan medudot, 'eḥad mimino – "shelo", ve'eḥad miṣmo'lo – "shel kalah" (vzug hashoshvinim gam-shneyhem ha'ish veha'ishah zug r'ishon, r'ishon le'ishto, ve'ishto r'ishonah lo, veyesh lahem banim).⁶⁵

[With measured step the bridegroom went with the two "escorts" on his sides, / the one on his right was "from his side", the one on his left "from the side of the bride" / (also the "escorts" were married – both themselves and their wives in their first marriages,⁶⁶ / they were the first husband to their wives, and their wives were their first wife, and they had sons.]

Тихо жених между двух посаженных отцов подвигался.⁶⁷ ["The husband moved quietly between the two fathers by proxy"]

Tchernichowsky uses "shoshvinim" and "shoshvinot" throughout the idyll;⁶⁸ they almost always appear in pairs, which indicates that the bride and the bridegroom had one "shoshvin" and one "shoshvinah" each, and these were married couples. He never mentions witnesses ("edim") so that from a halakhic perspective Elka's

1

2

3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

⁶⁰ Sha'ul Tshernihovski, Po'emot ve'idilyot, Tel Aviv 1990, p. 153.

⁶¹ Ben-Jehuda gives for shcheglenok "hohit"; Ben-Ieguda (see note 57).

⁶² Ya'akov Kena'ani, 'Otsar ha-lashon ha-'ivri, Jerusalem 1960 – ; the entry quotes a passage from an essay by David Frishman, which can be found in his Mikhtavim 'al devar ha-sifrut VII, in: Ha-tekufah 9 (1920/21), p. 458–474 (p. 468).

⁶³ Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), p. 217.

⁶⁴ In another passage Khodasevich added six lines ("El, nasyshchalsia [...] obidy il' gneva ..."); Khodasevich (see note 28), p. 239.

⁶⁵ Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), p. 366.

⁶⁶ T.B. Sota 2b, Sanhedrin 22a (with the meaning "a couple in the first marriage").

⁶⁷ Khodasevich (see note 28), p. 236.

⁶⁸ Cf. Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), pp. 360, 361, 362, 367 and 368.

wedding can hardly be acknowledged.⁶⁹ Khodasevich makes things worse and translates "shoshvin" consistently as "otets posazhënyi"⁷⁰ which designates a role in the Russian orthodox wedding and has never been used in the context of a Jewish wedding. Khodasevich made no attempt to identify the dances, he omits the "volakhl" and the "kozachok" at the end of the fourth song,⁷¹ and translated the "maḥolot maḥanim" ("a dance of two camps") with "obnimaia drug druga kruzhilis'."⁷²

For other, which Khodasevich did not translate into Russian, the poet's own manuscripts can help us understand the botanical terminology. One example is the sequence of plant names in the idyll "The Broken Spoon" (Ha-kaf ha-shvurah)

> פֶרָג לוֹהֵט כָּאֵשׁ וְצִפֹּרָו צָהֹב וְרָב־כָּשֶׁם רְיַחַד עִם זְקְנוֹ שֶׁל מֶלֶה הָדוּר בָּאַרְאָמֵן־נְצָנָיו, קְנֵי בֶּרְכָּרִיצִים מִתפַּמֵּל עוֹלִים וְנָאֲחָזִים בַּגָדֵר, תּוֹלִים כּוֹסוֹתָם סַרְכָּנִים, כּוֹס לְבָנָה וְכוֹס שֶׁל יָקָנְטוֹן וְסָרְכֵי פּוּל יְכָה עָלָה וּבְגָדֵי צוֹצֵנַים מַבְהִיקִים, תַּלְלִית זְקוּכָה טְעוּנָה כּוֹסוֹת צִבְעוֹנִין לְמִינָה,

(1) pereg lohet ka'esh vtsiporen tsahov vrav beşem

(2) byahad 'im "zkano shel melekh" hadur be'argman-nitsanav,

(3) knei "ben-paritsim mitpatel" 'olim vne'hazim bagader,

(4) tolim kosotam sarbanim, kos lvanah vekos shel yakinton

(5) vsivkhei pol yefeh 'aleh u"bigdei tso'anim" mavhikim,

(6) helmit zekufah te'unah kosot tsiv'onin leminah,

(7) mațlit-mațlit lehud, ktifanit gedushat-hatseva⁷³

(1) poppy burning like fire and richly scented yellow carnation,

(2) together with Crown imperial, splendid with its purple buds,

(3) and the stalks of European birthwort that rise and clasp to the fence

(4) and hang white and lilac calyces on its obstinate stems;

(5) beans with beautiful leaves and the fair calendula;

(6) the upright mallow with its colourful calyces, according to its species-

(7) every plot is different; and Tagetes with exuberant colours.⁷⁴

"Pereg" (poppy) in line 1 is from the Mishna,⁷⁵ "tsiporen" is translated from the Russian "gvozdiki" (literally "little nails"), "zaken shel melekh" (in line 2) is the translation of the Russian folklore name "tsarskaia borodka" ("the tsar's beard"); in the article "Tsemaḥim u peraḥim" that was published in *Ha-shiloaḥ* Tchernichowsky gives both "Aristolochia clematitis L."⁷⁶ and the pharmacologi-

1

3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

⁶⁹ The problem is not discussed in Yitshak Ganuz, Hatunah ba'ayarah: hayay uminhagim shenigzazu: Hishtakfutam be'idilyah Hatunatah shel 'Elkah shel Sha'ul Ţshernihovski, in: Mahut: Ketav-'et le-yetsirah yehudit 17 (1996), pp. 75–93.

⁷⁰ Khodasevich (see note 28),p. 231 et passim.

⁷¹ Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), p. 356; Khodasevich (see note 28), p. 229.

⁷² Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), p. 368; Khodasevich (see note 28), p. 237.

⁷³ Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), p. 228.

⁷⁴ All English translation are made by the author.

⁷⁵ Mishna Sheviit 2.7 and Chalah 1.4.

⁷⁶ Sha'ul Ţshernihovski, "Tsemahim u perahim",in: *Ha-shiloah* 23 (1910/11), pp. 372–376 (p. 374).

cal names "Aristolochia vulgaris" or "A. tenuis" and explains that he used "zakan shel melekh" in order "to preserve the local colour"; "ben paritsim mitpatel" in line 3 is literally a "bending Puritz", an interesting translation of "kruchenyj panych," a Russian folklore name for Ipomoea purpurea; for "bigdei tsoZanim" in line 5 there is a footnote in Shirim hadashim (1924) that such was the Ukrainian name of the plant.⁷⁷ Though I have not been able to find any equivalent Ukrainian plant name, the flower can be identified: the flowers which Tchernichowsky combined in this passage can be found in the description of his mother's garden in the manuscript version of the poet's autobiography edited by Boaz Arpaly.⁷⁸ The Genazim archives hold a Russian manuscript draft for this version of the autobiography which includes a list of the very same flowers: the only flower without an equivalent in the above passage is "nogotki", calendula⁷⁹-and "skirts of the gypsies" is a very likely name for the blossoms of the calendula; "helmit" (mallow) in line 9 is mishnaic,⁸⁰ Tchernichowsky provides its meaning in an annotation; "ktifanit" in line 10 is derived from the Russian "barkhatki" or "barkhatsy" (from "barkhat", velvet). As we can see from this short passage Tchernichowsky invented most of the plant names himself. I have only found one instance where he followed the Russian-Hebrew dictionary of A. M. Kagan⁸¹ which went through four editions between 1907 and 1919 (and can still be found in Tchernichowsky's library in the Genazim Archives): here he had looked up "kryzhovnik" (gooseberry) and found the Hebrew "akavit", which appears in the Midrash as an unknown species of edible thistles. Khodasevich found the same translation in the

interlinear text for "The Wedding of Elka."⁸² Tchernichowsky's terminology reflects the particularities of Russian botanical lexis: he has two words for strawberry ("tut ha-sadeh" for "zemlianika", wild strawberry, and "tut ha-ginah" for "klubnika", garden strawberry) and two words for blackberry ("tut-sneh"⁸³ for "ezhevika kustistaia", rubus fruticosus, and "tut ha-siah" for "ezhevika sizaia", rubus caesius).⁸⁴ The latter name misled Benjamin

1

2

3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

⁷⁷ Sha'ul Tshernihovski, *Shirim hadashim*, Berlin 1924, p. 270.

⁷⁸ Sha'ul Ţsherniḥovski, Me'eyin 'avtobiyografyah (see note 53), pp. 17-141 (p. 18).

⁷⁹ Genazim Archives I–40814, p. 1.

⁸⁰ Mishna Kilayim 1.8.

⁸¹ A.M. Kagan, Polnyi russko-evreiskii slovar', Kiev 1919.

⁸² Khodasevich (see note 28), p. 219.

⁸³ From "sneh", the burning bush in Ex. 3.2 and in Deut. 33.16.

⁸⁴ The words "tut sneh" and "tut ha-siah" appear in the autobiography in an enumeration together with raspberry (ha-pețel), wild strawberry (tut ha-sadeh, "zemlianika"), garden strawberry ("tut ha-ginah", "klubnika") and European Cornel ("ha-moran"). In the manuscript of the autobiography, only "tut-siah" is given an annotation—the Ukrainian "ozhina" and the Russian "ezhevika" which both mean blackberry (Boaz Arpaly, the editor of the manuscript, transcribed, without any visible reason, "brusnika", cowberry); Me'eyin 'avtobiyografyah (see note 53), p. 38–39 (commentary on p. 128); In the word list in *Ha-safah* (see note 48) Tchernichowsky gives for "[tut] sneh" the Russian "ezhevika", the German "Schwarze Brombeere" and the Latin "Rubus sanctus (Schreb(er))". He had found the Latin name in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (see note 49), vol. 10, p. 72); the name had been coined by Johann Christian von Schreber (1739–1810), the German translator of Linné, in 1766. Schreber had derived the name from the biblical "sneh"—and this satisfied the editors of the Jewish encyclopedia who were grateful for a Latin name even if they had no idea of its botanical

Harshav to assume that Tchernichowsky had created his own word for raspberry⁸⁵ for which, in fact, he uses consistently "petel" (which is, again, confirmed by Khodasevich's translation of "The Wedding of Elka").⁸⁶

Being an ardent Hebraist did not prevent the poet from consciously creating a "subtext" in other languages: He describes the profession of his father as "ifiyatros."⁸⁷ The Aramaic loan word from the Greek is Tchernichowsky's translation of "konoval", a historical profession whose main duty was to castrate horses and bulls but also to cure all domesticated animals and sometimes humans; in the village, he shared the medical duties with a "mayshir 'atsamot" and a "hovesh degunda"";88 the first is a "kostopráv" (bonesetter), the second a "batalyonnyi feldsher" (feldsher of the batallion). Some of the medicinal plants used by his father were "kapot ribono shel 'olam", "bozhi ruchki" (primula veris), "'on kaful tesha" ("deviatisil"), tansy, "badyan" (the Russian word for star anise) and "kalgan" (the Russian word for lesser galangal).⁸⁹ None of these terms were accepted in Hebrew, nor was "dme shiv'ah 'ahim", a literal translation of "semibratnaia krov" (hypericum). Only the international "tal shemesh" (the Russian "rosa solnechnaia"), sundew was accepted. The subtext of another language creates some proper rebuses, and this is not limited to plant names: "sus ba'al tapuhim,"90 the young poet's favorite toy, is a literal translation of "loshad' v iablokakh", a dapple-grey horse. This is confirmed by a handwritten Russian draft for the poet's autobiography which is preserved in Genazim.⁹¹ One of the most difficult rebuses is a form of a beehive which has the Hebrew name "kaveret tavnit sharvul shel Limburg"⁹² – a "Lüneburger Stülper"; Tchernichowsky translated "Stülper" which is related to the old German word "Stulpe" (the turn-up cuff on the sleeve) as sleeve ("sharvul") and then confused Limburg and Lüneburg. Another example is the bird called "tsipor ha-solet"93 which has been taken for an unknown bird of the Ukrainian steppes. It shows once more that the poet was – for better or worse - thinking in Russian when he created new terminolgy. The "semolina bird" is a breed of two Russian expressions: "mannaia kasha" and "mannaia ptitsa". The adjective "mannyi" is a homonym: in the case of "mannaia ptitsa" it is derived from "manit" – "to attract" or "to decoy", whereas "mannaia krupa" is the fine flour from which the hot porridge called "mannaia kasha" is made (which etymologically goes back to the biblical food "manah"). It should be noted that the "subtext" is not always Russian, it can also be Greek, for example when the

⁹³ Ibid., p. 850.

1

2

3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

meaning; botanists were unable to identify the one and only plant that Schreber had brought to Munich); cf. the entry "Rubus sanctus Schreb. 1766", *Allgemeine Botanische Zeitschrift für Systematik, Floristik, Pflanzengeographie etc*, Jahrgang 1898, pp. 180–181.

⁸⁵ Benjamin Harshav, Language in Time of Revolution, Berkeley, London 1993, p. 106.

⁸⁶ Khodasevich (see note 28), p. 235.

⁸⁷ Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), p. 716.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 717.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 718–719.

⁹⁰ Tchernichowsky, Me'eyin 'avtobiyografyah (see note 53), p. 42.

⁹¹ Genazim I–40814, p. 6 (under "moi igrushki").

⁹² Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), p. 797.

poet uses the aramaic word "galinah"⁹⁴ for the doldrums on the sea; "galinah" is a loan word from the Greek γαλήνη which Homer uses no fewer than five times in the *Odyssey* – and in exactly the same metrical position.⁹⁵

Looking at the Homeric subtext we can perceive another important aspect of Khodasevich's translation. Khodasevich was aware of the Greek echoes; he observed that Tchernichowsky created the "Homeric spirit of his idylls" with repititions, comparisons (imitations of the Homeric similes), and detailed descriptions; and he explained the result: "The sense of the idylls is not only descriptive but philosophical. Reminding the reader persistently of Homer, Tchernichowsky emphasizes that only the appearances change, and the essence of human life remains, and that the difference between Nausicaa and Elka is not at all that big."96 He had certainly noticed the imitation of the Homeric ship catalogue in the description of the wedding guests in the first song of "The Wedding of Elka". He then went on to recreate some of the linguistic particularities which only the eye of the poet could perceive. One of these is parallelism: Tchernichowsky uses the caesura of the Homeric hexameter in order to recreate what has been the only generally accepted feature of tanakhic poetry since the pioneer work of Bishop Robert Lowth (1710–1787).97 Khodasevich recreated this effect and, in his best lines, raised the Russian hexameter to a level that it had not reached before.⁹⁸ He then recreated some characteristc stylistic devices. Particularly interesting is the use of the hendiadys because it belongs both to classical antiquity (most notably to Vergil)99 and to the Hebrew Bible.100 Tchernichowsky used it, particulary in his idylls, to an extent that is unparalled in modern literature, and with poetic ingenuity that was only surpassed by Shakespeare.¹⁰¹ I will discuss Tchernichowsky's hendiadys in a forthcoming study but offer here a very clear example which contains two hendiadys from "Brit milah": "Vkhalvei harhovot mizdarzim veratsim lifneihem vahreihem / mmal'im halal ha-'avir binvihot 'alizot vkol sason" (literally: "the street dogs hurry and run before and behind [the carriage] and fill the space of the air with joyful barks and with a happy voice").¹⁰² The

1

2

3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 703.

⁹⁵ Homer, Od. V, 391, 452; VII, 319, X, 94; XII, 168.

⁹⁶ Khodasevich, "O Chernikhovskom" (see note 14), p. 52.

⁹⁷ Robert Lowth, De sacra poesi Hebræorum prælectiones academicæ Oxonii habitæ, Oxonii 1753; cf. Joachim Dyck, Athen und Jerusalem. Die Tradition der argumentativen Verknüpfung von Bibel und Poesie, München 1977.

 ⁹⁸ To give just one example out of many: "Net granits tishine, i net predela prostoru" ("The are no borders to the silence, there is no limit to the space"); Khodasevich (see note 28), p. 227.
⁹⁹ Kenneth Quinn, *Virgil's Aeneid: A Critical Description*, Ann Arbor 1969, pp. 423–428.

 ¹⁰⁰ Rosmari Lillas-Schuil, A Survey of Syntagms in the Hebrew Bible Slassified as Hendiadys, in: *Current Issues in the Analysis of Semitic Grammar and Lexicon 2* (2006), pp. 79–100; H. A. Brongers, Merismus, Synekdoche und Hendiadys in der bibel-hebräischen Sprache, in: *Old Testament Studies* 14 (1965), pp. 100–114; Yitzhak Avishur, Pairs of Synonymous Words in the Construct State (and in the Appositional Hendiadys) in Biblical Hebrew, in: *Semitics* 2 (1971–1972), pp. 17–81; Wilfred G.E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*, Sheffield 1986, pp. 324–331.

¹⁰¹ George T. Wright, Hendiadys and Hamlet, in: *PMLA* 96, 2 (1981), pp. 168–193.

¹⁰² Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), p. 153.

dogs were, of course, running quickly and the happy voice of their barking filled the air. To recreate the hendiadys to the same extent in translation would have invariably produced a comical effect. Khodavich's use of the device therefore is only a distant echo of that of original hendiadys. There is, however, evidence that he was well aware of the device (despite his reliance on interlinear translations): he uses hendiadys in passages where they are not present in the original: where the original reads simply, "gadlah ha-bkhiyah" ("the weeping increased"),103 Khodasevich translates "sil'nyi i gromkii byl plach" ("the weeping was strong and loud")¹⁰⁴ meaning that it was very loud; similarly, "po mnogim i vazhnym prichinam" ("for many and for important reasons")105 means "for many important reasons". The hendiadys add to the epic tone, in which there is no instance that provides a hierarchy or logical relation between various attributes. In other cases he simply reiterates the use of Biblical Hebrew: "I govoril ei badkhan, i kazhduiu zapoved' strogo / ei nakazal sobliudat'" ("and the badchan spoke to her, and told her to follow every commandment strictly").106 Khodasevich also uses other stylistic devices characteristic of Biblical Hebrew such as the tautological infitive¹⁰⁷ ("spastis'-to spassia", literally "saving he saved himself"),¹⁰⁸ or the figura etymologica as in "krikom kricha"¹⁰⁹ ("yelling with a yell"). There is conclusive evidence that Khodasevich very consciously tried to recreate the Homeric subtexts: rendering the stable formula "'Elkah ha-tsnu'ah" ("the humble Elka") as "razumnitsa El'ka" he gives Elka the attribute of Homer's Penelope: Vasilii Zhukosvkii had translated περίφρων Πηνελόπεια (which occurs more than fifty times in the Odyssey)110 as "razumnaia Penelopa" or as "mnogo razumnaia startsa Ikariia doch" ("the very sensible daughter of the old Icarios").¹¹¹ The translation of the attribute "tsenu'ah" ("humble") as "razumnitsa" ("sensible") instead of the literal "skromnaia" or "skromnitsa" can only be explained by the reference to Penelope. If Tchernichowsky did not suggest the translation himself, he was certainly pleased: in his Hebrew version of the *Odyssey*, on which he worked during the same years, Penelope consistently received the same attribute as Elka: "Penelopeyah ha-tsnu'ah."112

Tchernichowsky used the subtext of another language intentionally, not only to create a "local colour", as he had written himself twice, but to lay open the ways

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 223.

¹⁰⁸ Khodasevich (see note 28), p. 178.

- ¹¹⁰ Cf. Hom. Od. IV, 787, XXIV, 404 et alt.
- ¹¹¹ V.A. Zhukovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v cheterekh tomakh*, Moskva 1959–1960, tom IV, p. 255 et passim.
- ¹¹² Homerus, '*Ili'adah. 'Odiseyah*, tirgem mi-Yevanit Sha'ul Tshernihovski, Tel Aviv 1954, p. 237 (Od. I, 328) et passim; I would like to thank Agata Grzybowska (Warsaw) for this hint.

1

2

3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 361.

¹⁰⁴ Khodasevich (see note 28), p. 232.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 232.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Jordan D. Finkin, A Rhetorical Conversation: Jewish Discourse in Modern Yiddish Literature, University Park 2010, pp. 17–30; Gideon Goldenberg, Tautological Infinitive, in: Israel Oriental Studies 1 (1971), pp. 36–83.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 225.

in which Hebrew interacts with other languages. That he unterstood translation as an integral part of his poetics can be seen from his late poem "Zemirot" ("Festive Songs") of 1943 which changes the Talmudic expression "shnayim mikra' ve'eḥad targum" ("twice Scripture and once translation")¹¹³ into "eḥad mikra' veshnayim targum" ("once Scripture and twice translation"),¹¹⁴ turning a halakhic dictum into a metaphor which describes his poetry. "Targum", here, does not refer to the Aramaic translation of the Tanakh but to Russian, Ukrainian and Bulgarian songs which his mother had sung when she was young.

There is yet another source which shows that Tchernichowsky was very aware of his role in Hebrew poetry: Tchernichowsky had written an article on H.N. Bialik in Russian for the journal Evreiskaia zhizn' (Jewish Life) in 1916¹¹⁵ which has remained almost unnoticed. In this article, he proposes a distinction between the "poet narodnyi" (from "narod", the people) and the "poet natsional'nyi" (from "natsiia", nation).¹¹⁶ Both terms would be translated as "national poet" in English. The distinction goes back to Vissarion Belinskii¹¹⁷ who had described Pierre-Jean de Béranger as "poet narodnyi" and Goethe and Schiller as "poety natsional'nye."118 The topic had been revived by Mikhail Gershenzon, one of the editors of the Evreiskaia antologiia, in his book Mudrost' Pushkina (The Wisdom of Pushkin).¹¹⁹ According to Tchernichowsky, Bialik is the only "poet narodnyj"; he does not give a Jewish example for a Hebrew "poet natsional'nyi", but anybody familiar with the Hebrew poetry of the time will have recognized that he himself was the first and obvious candidate: The "poet natsional'nyi" can show a "higher degree of individuality", of personal creativity and of general humanistic ideals; whatever he receives from his people, including its language, is merely the essential environment without which creative work is impossible. His people give him complete freedom, his thoughts and feelings can go against those of his people, and can even be hostile towards it. Tchernichowsky's examples for the "poet natsional'nyi" are Byron, Ibsen, Anatole France, John Keats and Oscar Wilde.

Saul Tchernichowsky used the freedom of the "poet natsional'nyi" to introduce layers of other languages. These layers create difficulties and even rebuses for the reader but they challenge a translation that reveals the common elements – not in images or ideas, but in the very essence of the languages. The translation of

¹¹⁴ Saul Tchernichowsky, *Shirim* (see note 18), p. 768.

1

2

3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

¹¹³ T.B. Berakhot 8a (referring to the practice of reading the weekly portion of the Torah).

¹¹⁵ Saul Chernikhovskii, Neskol'ko slov o Kh.N. Bialike, in: *Evreiskaia zhizn*', vol. 14–15 (3.4.1916), p. 30–31.

¹¹⁶ This distinction has not been considered in the recent articles on the question of the "Hebrew national poet"; Avner Holtzman, The Rise and Decline of the National Poet, in: *Polish and Hebrew Literature and National Identity*, ed. Alina Molisak, Shoshana Ronen, Warsaw 2010, pp. 38–53; cf. Aminadav Dykman, Poetic Commemoration: A Comparative Study of the Cases of Pushkin and Bialik, ibid., pp. 27–37.

¹¹⁷ Andrei Belyi revived the distinction in a speech in memory of Alexander Blok in Moscow on September 26, 1921; cf. Andrei Belyi, Rech' na vechere pamiati Bloka v Politekhnicheskom muzee, in: *Aleksandr Blok: Novye materialy i issledovaniia*, ed. G. P. Berdnikov et alt., Moskva 1980–1993 (= *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* 92), tom 4, pp. 760–773.

¹¹⁸ V.G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, Moskva 1953–1959, pp. 332–333.

¹¹⁹ Mikhail Gershenzon, *Mudrost' Pushkina*. Moskva 1919, passim.

Tchernichowsky's Hebrew idylls into Russian meant, to some degree, to uncover and re-create what was already there. The translation becomes a commentary, just as the Targum had been used as a commentary that helped to understand difficult passages in the Hebrew Tanakh. The most interesting aspect, however, is that supreme translation unveils that two texts belong to a common cultural field, and that translation in this sense belongs to the very essence of poetry.

Appendix: A Note on the German Translations of Tchernichowsky's poetry

The small number of German translations of Tchernichowsky's poems has fallen into oblivion. The best was a fragment of thirty six lines from "Baruch of Mayence" translated by Martin Buber. It was published in the Jüdischer Almanach of 1902.¹²⁰ Martin Buber rendered the iambic tetrameters of the original in iambic pentameters; and his occasional use of rhyme recreates the tonality of the original. Apart from a few scattered translations of short poems¹²¹ there were three further attempts to translate Tchernichowsky's poetry: the first was made by the historian and political scientist, Hans Kohn. The back cover of his book Nationalismus published by Löwit in Vienna and Berlin in 1922 announced a forthcoming volume with the title "Saul Tschernichowskij: Lieder und Gesänge: Nachdichtungen aus dem Hebräischen, gemeinsam mit Hugo Knöpfmacher", but this announcement was never fulfilled. The translations can be found in the archive of Hugo Knöpfmacher in the Leo Baeck Institute in New York.¹²² They contain some of Tchernichowsky's nature and love poems as well as translations of "Deianira" and of the first part of "Brit Milah". Though the hexameters are formally correct they more closely resemble a first draft than a translation of a piece of art. The first chapter of "Brit Milah" was published in the journal Das Zelt in February 1924 under the name of Hans Kohn.¹²³ The preface to this publication announces more information on the poet in a forthcoming book with the title "Wesen und Wege des Juden" - which was yet another unfulfilled promise. There is no trace of the book in Kohn's archive. A metrical translation of the final part of "In Front of the Statue of Apollo" can be found in Hans Kohn's monograph on Martin Buber. It is hard to decide if the translation is his, or if he quotes from an unpublished manuscript by Martin Buber.¹²⁴ The second attempt was made by the otherwise unknown Max Elk from Stettin. His translation of the third chapter of "Brit Milah" was published under the title "Das Mahl" in 1934.¹²⁵

1

2

3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

¹²⁰ Martin Buber, Entsinnst Du Dich? Aus der Dichtung ,Baruch von Mainz' von Saul Tschernichowski (Heidelberg), in: *Jüdischer Almanach*, Berlin 5663 (1902), p. 44.

¹²¹ Saul Tschernichowsky, "Der Abend", "Ani Maamin", übersetzt von Otto Spitz, in: *Jü-discher Almanach*, Berlin 1935, p. 122; more translations by Otto Spitz are preserved in the Genazim Archives, fond I–74696; the archive further hold the typescript of a translation of "The Heat of the Day" by Markus Kohlmann (I–47693) and a typescript with translations of two sonnets by A. Suhl (I–70704).

¹²² Leo Baeck Archives, AR 7172–3/4 (Hugo Knoepfmacher Collection 331, 1).

¹²³ Saul Tchernichowsky, "Brith Milah", in: *Das Zelt*, 1. Jg., 2. Heft (Feb. 1924), pp. 55–59.

¹²⁴ Hans Kohn, Martin Buber. Sein Werk und seine Zeit, Hellerau 1930, p. 51.

¹²⁵ Saul Tschernichowsky, "Das Mahl", in: *Jüdische Rundschau* 27/28 (5.4.1934), p. 6.

His hexameters are much better than those of Knöpfmacher and Kohn but still belong to those which Tchernichowsky himself described as, "leaving much to be wished for."¹²⁶ The translation was slightly improved by the anthropologist Max Grunwald and re-published in 1936.¹²⁷ The third attempt was made, it seems, by the Zionist poet Marek Scherlag who also wrote a German sonnet on Tchernich-owsyky in 1940 (upon the occasion of the Bialik prize which Tchernichowsky was granted that year);¹²⁸ to be more precise: the typescripts of some translations are filed under his name in the Genazim archives.¹²⁹ They include German versions of "Levivot", "In the Heat of the Day", "Man is Nothing But…", and "In Front of the Statue of Apollo". The translations of the two idylls were published much later under the name of Gershon Stein.¹³⁰ It is unclear whether Gershon Stein simply adopted Scherlag's translation allowed the use of anacrusis in the German hexameter without gaining much suppleness in syntax and expression.

1

2

3

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

46

¹²⁶ Cwi Wohlmuth, W 60-lecie urodzin Szaula Czernichowskiego: Wywiad z poetą, in: *Opinja*, 12.1.1936, p. 6–7 (p. 6).

¹²⁷ Saul Tschernichowsky, "Das Mahl", in: Jüdisches Fest, jüdischer Brauch, eds. Else Rabin, Friedrich Thieberger, Berlin 1936, pp. 450–453.

¹²⁸ Marek Scherlag, "An Saul Tschernichowsky": "Dir lieh das Los die Liebe zu den Dingen! / wie Stern und Blatt und Aar und Schmetterling, / die Deiner Augen Netz im Fluge find, / und auch die Kraft, die bunt zum Bild zu schlingen. // Dein Geist und Dein Gefühl – wie tief sie dringen / ins Herz der Kreatur, hoch und gering! / Du sprengst der Bruderleiden dunkeln Ring, / um Hoffnungsgold ans Tageslicht zu bringen. // Dir ward das Glück, des Volkes Lied zu singen / in seinem alten, schön erneuten Klange / und früh zu lenken Deine starken Schwingen // ins Land der Sehnsucht, folgend heilgem Drange, / das ewig bleibt in wirklichem Gelingen / und auch verklärt von Deinem hohen Sange"; Genazim Archives I–70662.

¹²⁹ Genazim Archives, fond I–4751 sq.

¹³⁰ Gershon Stein, *Die unzerstörbare Brücke*, Osnabrück 1996.

