

Fine Lines:
Hebrew and Yiddish Translations of
Alexander Pushkin's Verse Novel
Eugene Onegin, 1899 1937
by
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On Defending the Dissertation

*Hello to all and thanks for coming.
Today is not as I imagined
and to be totally forthcoming
I must admit to being saddened.
I'd long anticipated Omry
Ronen would sit before me
across this table, to confer
with us, and though I might prefer
not doing any more revisions,
I'd heed corrections of mistakes,
protected by the care he takes—
or took—for scholarly precision.
To him, then, I compose this note:
"This dissertation I devote..."*

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Note on Translations and Transliterations

Writing in English about Russian, Hebrew, and Yiddish texts presents a host of problems that cannot be solved to my satisfaction. In comparing multiple Hebrew and Yiddish translations of the same Russian text, for example, I include the originals and I translate them into English. In general, I have quoted from Vladimir Nabokov's translations of Pushkin's Russian because of their accuracy, though I have inserted certain changes for the sake of comparing these different versions more clearly; such changes are bracketed and initialed. All other translations are mine, except where noted. I have included most quotations in English translation as well as in their original language, but the originals frequently borrow words or entire sentences from other languages. Where I thought that they might be significant, I have generally italicized these and supplied bracketed translations.

At times, transliterations of the other alphabets into English was necessary for all readers to have a sense of how the texts sounded out loud, or just to simplify the lines of text. I have had to use different styles of transliteration to emphasize the distinct concerns of etymology and phonetics. Russian and Hebrew both have multiple different systems for transliteration into Roman characters, and this dissertation deals with two dialects of Hebrew. For the old accent in Hebrew, I have drawn from Benjamin Harshav's system. For the new accent, I have used the guidelines for the journal *Prooftexts*. For Russian, I have generally used the Library of Congress system without diacritics. Though there are several dialects of Yiddish as well, I transliterated according to the YIVO system.

For many names of people and titles of literary works that have already appeared in English-language books, I have instead used conventional spellings to make them recognizable. In other instances, I have chosen the transliteration of the language that seemed most frequently associated with the word. I have, for example, chosen to spell "Vilne" as a transliteration of its Yiddish name, rather than the more common Hebrew "Vilna" or the current "Vilnius." In most instances, I have converted the Jewish calendar years to Gregorian ones.

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Abstract

This dissertation is a literary and historical case study of Russian-Jewish translation, one of the competing strategies in the East European Jewish “language wars” to create a modern literature in either Hebrew or Yiddish. I argue that Yiddish and Hebrew writers, who were anxious for their respective chosen literary languages to earn a place in world literature, fashioned their literary movements after Russian examples. In particular, they understood Russian national poet Alexander Pushkin as not just a genius, but as the transformer and modernizer of Russian literature who gave voice to the indigenous and mastered the foreign. Those who translated Pushkin into Jewish languages aimed to enrich Hebrew or Yiddish in accordance with the foreign, or Westernizing, side of this program, but when Hebrew poet H. N. Bialik chose to gather Jewish materials rather than translate Pushkin’s verse novel *Eugene Onegin*, he was following a Jewish version of Pushkin’s Slavophilic side. The imperative to render the masterpiece, macaronic novel in its sonnet-like “*Onegin* stanzas,” in accordance with the greater project of translating world literature into Jewish languages, cut across the language war’s Yiddish-Hebrew lines and the Jewish political and aesthetic spectrum. The lines of the language war are clear, however, in this diachronic study which shows that the institutional and linguistic features of the two languages at given times in history determined how and when the novel was translated. *Fine Lines* explores translations and their paratexts by Buki ben Yogli, Dovid Frishman, A. Y. Grodzenski, Leyb Naydus, Avraham Levinson, and Avraham Shlonsky, and is among the first scholarly attention several of them have received despite their prominence as poets and public intellectuals. Covering the period between the Jewish celebrations of the centennial of Pushkin’s birth and that of his death, it begins in 1899 in Saint Petersburg with liberal *maskilim*, moving to the Great War, Russian Civil War, and interwar years in Vilna, Grodno, Kustin, Ekaterinoslav (mostly Polish and Lithuanian Jewish communities) amid Diasporist and Zionist politics, and concludes in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in 1937, demonstrating that Jews in Palestine left the Jewish Diaspora but found the Russian Diaspora.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Я не могу понять. Но вот
Неполный, слабый перевод,
С живой картины список бледный,
Или разыгранный Фрейшиц
Перстами робких учениц: (Pushkin 3:xxxI)

It baffles me. But I'll repeat
here a weak version, incomplete,
pale transcript of a vivid master,
or *Freischütz* as it might be played
by nervous hands of a schoolmaid: (Tr. Johnston)

The various attempts to translate Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837) into Jewish languages reflect the linguistic and institutional realities of Hebrew and Yiddish during what some, such as Avraham Levinson (1891–1955), called the “language wars.” During the first several decades of the twentieth century, East European Jewish intellectuals tended to favor one or more languages within their traditional polysystem,¹ which consisted of: Yiddish as the vernacular, as well as the language of secular and women’s literatures; Hebrew as the liturgical and legal language of elite male realms; Russian as the imperial language in which certain kinds of official communications with non-Jews took place; and Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Belorussian, or another local language or dialect for relations with the Jews’ peasant neighbors. Before the twentieth century, many Jews had already adopted Russian as their language and spoke it at home, but those who felt strongly about a Jewish

¹ Itamar Even-Zohar has written extensively on this polysystem. See Even-Zohar “Russian and Hebrew: The Case of a Dependent Polysystem” and “The ‘Literary’ System” (1990), and the other articles he published in that issue of *Poetics Today*. See also Harshav (1993) and Seidman (1997).

national culture did not distinguish merely between Jewish or non-Jewish languages. Though capable of speaking and writing in multiple languages, they generally affiliated themselves with either Yiddish or Hebrew.²

The process of bringing Russian cultural material into Jewish culture was not the same in both Jewish languages. In addition to reckoning with Western and Russian culture, those Jewish intellectuals who were committed to writing in a Jewish language had to reckon with the competition between Hebrew and Yiddish. While Hebrew had an ancient history of respected verse, Yiddish enjoyed a greater ease of expression with modern topics, and neither had produced a comprehensive library of translations of world literature. Hebrew did not become a spoken vernacular until the twentieth century,³ developing during the very period studied here. The diachronic dimension of analysis in this dissertation shows the changing abilities of Hebrew over time as Hebrew writers tackled the translation of Russian literature. Yiddish shared with Hebrew the challenges of trying to express non-Jewish culture in a language used only within the Jewish community, but also faced a need for cultural legitimacy. Yiddish was still referred to as “*zhargon*,” implying that it was bad German.⁴

As the violence, displacement, and disease of the Great War devastated East European Jewish communities and their institutions beyond what they could have ever imagined, the translation of Russian literature into Jewish languages would seem a strange occupation for people who were fighting—sometimes unsuccessfully—to survive. Yet during this time, several Jewish intellectuals sought to publish a Jewish version of *Evgenii Onegin* (*Eugene Onegin*). Staunchly loyal to either Hebrew or Yiddish, they all seemed to know the novel in Russian. The prospect of translating Pushkin into Hebrew appealed both to public intellectuals, whether Yiddishist or Hebraist, and to Yiddish and Hebrew poets who fancied themselves to be like Pushkin. Translation posed an important challenge for both the translator and the receiving language, with a successful translation representing a significant achievement for either. After the 1917 Revolution, both the public intellectual

² Fishman (2006) discusses the political factors in these choices.

³ For more on this transition, see Harshav (1993), Even-Zohar (1990), Segal (2010).

⁴ See Chaver (2004), Joshua Fishman (1991), David Fishman (2005).

A. Y. Grodzenski (1891–1941) and the popular young poet Leyb Naydus (1890–1918) translated the novel into Yiddish. One of the architects of Zionist Hebrew culture, Avraham Levinson, wrote a Hebrew translation during this time and was unable to publish it, so he had to wait for the 1937 Pushkin centennial in Palestine, an occasion that saw not only his translation, but that of another popular poet, Avraham Shlonsky (1900–1973).

This novel, now a standard text for Russian schoolchildren, interested Jews for a number of reasons. Written in Pushkin's sonnet-like *Onegin* stanzas, it is widely considered to be a masterpiece and a groundbreaking work of Russian fiction. For Jews, it was a fine example of the ways in which Pushkin advanced modern Russian literature: borrowing from other languages, mixing the indigenous and the foreign, moving beyond Romanticism, writing a novel in a national language, and gaining respect for it. Jewish translators, having read Vissarion Belinsky (1811–1848) and other Russian critics, considered the novel's realism and its rejection of Romanticism as reasons why it was revolutionary and important. And of course, another stated reason was the fact that *Onegin* is arguably the greatest work of the greatest poet of the Empire in which Jews had long lived, the first home base of modern Hebrew and Yiddish literature. Yet there were other motivations related to the underlying interest in developing these literatures.

Onegin is a novel that actively theorizes the process by which a body of literature can be expanded. The narrator's introduction (3:XXVI–XXXI) to Tatiana's letter to Onegin⁵ explains that as a typical Russian aristocrat, Tatiana was French-speaking and French-reading, and could not possibly have written a love letter in Russian. Therefore, the narrator explains that he has translated her French letter into Russian, a language hitherto ill-suited to the task. But this "translation" then provides Russian literature with an extraordinary epistle-in-verse. Similarly, following Pushkin's program for Russian literature, Jewish translators of *Evgenii Onegin* could give their receiving language a fine example of both novel and verse.

The example of *Evgenii Onegin* also happens to be particularly difficult to translate, not least because a translator must address common problems of poetry translation while conveying the plot

⁵ This letter is an inserted genre which is not written in the usual *Onegin* stanza form. On inserted genres, see Bakhtin (1981).

and other content of the novel. Jews were aware of this and were inspired by the challenge. Perhaps their literature, like that of Pushkin, was also too original and individual to be widely translated or read in Europe. But more importantly, long before *Onegin* became a widely-cited example of the challenges of translation, it was probably already understood as such by its translators. For a Jewish poet—whether that was one’s primary affiliation or not—this was an opportunity to show one’s skill in a memorable way. And indeed, for some of the translators, this work became a significant part of their legacy.

Like others within the Russian Empire and Soviet Union, Jews sought and found their own reflection in the breadth and depth of Pushkin’s work. When Soviet critics described Pushkin as a suppressed revolutionary, so did socialist Jews. Even Zionists found support for their cause in his writings. Similarly, Pushkin set a high standard against which other writers could be compared. He modelled what national poets could and should do to modernize their emerging national literatures. For modernist Russian writers, he was both the classic to be superseded and the holder of coveted laurels, with whom self-confident poets identified. For Jewish writers seeking to create independent Hebrew or Yiddish culture, he was both a part of the Slavic culture to be resisted and an irresistible source of nostalgia when they emigrated from the Pale.

Of the many reasons why Pushkin was of interest to East European Jews, several resemble the reasons why he has been so important to Russians. After all, it was in the East European, Russian imperial context that Yiddish-speaking Jews came to know Russian literature. Pushkin himself is a synecdoche for Russian literature and is typically considered to be the Russian national poet. He is credited with the making of a modern Russian literature in the nineteenth century, thanks in part to his two-pronged approach. On the one hand, he introduced new Western and Orientalist forms and content to Russian literature through translation and adaptation. On the other hand, he created indigenous Russian works with national content. Working at a time when most of Russian society belonged to either the illiterate, Russian-speaking peasantry or the French-speaking aristocracy, Pushkin wrote in Russian about local and universal themes. His corpus was thus considered to be

both universal and uniquely Russian. As the Russian national poet, he was standard educational fare for *maskilim* (proponents of the Jewish Enlightenment) and Russifying Jews.

Pushkin provided not only proof of good taste, or a banner under which the Jews could affiliate as part of Russian imperial culture, but also a paradigm for how a new national literature could be made modern and Western. Aware of his example, many Hebrew and Yiddish writers sought to import non-Jewish literary genres and to translate literature as a part of their overall effort to create modern literatures in Hebrew and Yiddish. Pushkin himself became an important part of this translation process for all of these reasons. Because of his universalism and high cultural status in the Russian Empire, as well as usage of foreign material to create a modern national literature, translating Pushkin was seen as a means of replicating the modernization process he had initiated in Russian in either Yiddish or Hebrew. Goethe had done this in German, Pushkin had done it in Russian, and now the Jews would do it in one of their languages.

While contemporary Russian poets were writing “My Pushkin” books (of personal reflections or literary scholarship)⁶ and Pushkin-themed poetry,⁷ or demanding that the classic poet be thrown overboard from the ship of modernity, Jewish poets who coveted Pushkin’s status rewrote his work in their chosen languages. This challenge could help prove a poet’s talent and importance. These translations, which attended to the musical elements of the text and privileged the translated outcome over reproduction of the original text, were received as a part of the Russian poet’s legacy in either Yiddish or Hebrew. Such translations were also a means for Jewish poets to be remembered by other, Pushkin-loving Jews.

These poet-translators faced competition from public intellectuals, who were inspired to translate the same texts. Although they may have written some poetry, these members of the Jewish intelligentsia had a much broader legacy in the construction and maintenance of Yiddish or Hebrew literature. They were architects and builders of modern Jewish cultural and political movements. Although modern belletristic literature was a cherished goal for the Jewish intelligentsia, it did not exist in a vacuum. Rather, it was a part of the “republic of letters” (Miron 10–11) together with

⁶ These writers included Marina Tsvetaeva (1892–1941) and V. Ia. Briusov (1873–1924).

⁷ Including Anna Akhmatova. For a discussion of this poetry, see Sandler (2004).

newspapers, new histories, conferences, writers' unions, and even theater. For some of the activists who devoted their lives to building up and professionalizing Jewish literary, cultural, and political institutions, translating Pushkin into their chosen Jewish language was both a personal and professional goal; less successful as poets, they sought as translators an acclaim that had not resulted from their own original poetry. More importantly, they believed that it was desirable for Jews to have access to and appreciation of the Russian Empire's great poet, that a library of translated texts was needed for Hebrew or Yiddish literature and that the inclusion of Pushkin could bolster other arts besides poetry, such as the Yiddish or Hebrew theater. Even ardent activists for Jewish labor unions or Zionism tried their hands at translating *Onegin*.

The various Hebrew and Yiddish *Onegins* constitute versions of a text that was shared across political, aesthetic, geographic, and language communities and, therefore, provides us with the opportunity to make a direct comparison between Hebrew and Yiddish culture. When viewed as part of a Jewish language war fought on foreign textual territory, these translations show the institutional and linguistic limitations of Hebrew and Yiddish at different points in Jewish history. The publication history, formal characteristics, paratextual remarks, and other features of the translations reflect these changing limitations, along with greater trends in Jewish literary and cultural history as well as dramatic changes to the Hebrew language.

The translations represent one of a two-part vision for the development of Jewish culture in either language, an element of Pushkin and Russian literature that cut across the battle lines of the language war. The *Haskalah* first disseminated⁸ the idea that Jews should read Pushkin, ideally in Russian, but more translations appeared as more Jews learned Russian. This is not to say that Jews were exclusively interested in Pushkin or Russian literature; the many translations from world literature attest to a broader interest in Yiddish or Hebrew becoming a part of world literature. Nevertheless, Jewish *Onegins* that fed into the sea of Jewish translations reflect the uniqueness of Jewish Pushkinism.

Though Jews and Russians may seem riper for contrast than for comparison, they did have

⁸ By means that included the translation of Pushkin into Hebrew.

something in common: like Russians, East European Jews were marginally European. For those self-consciously modern Jews who were driven towards the idea of a national literature, Russian culture represented more than just the oppressive tsarist empire or local, familiar manifestation of European culture and gateway to Westernization. It was also an example of another culture that had insider-outsider status within Europe, and had been wrestling with the problem of modernization-as-Westernization since Peter I had forced Russian Orthodox men to shave their beards. According to Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881), Pushkin’s work resolved the dispute between Russia’s Slavophiles and *Zapadniki* (Westernizers) by offering an alternative. Pushkin’s oeuvre brought out the Russian essence, but he was also a great genius who had the empathy to “reincarnate himself in fully in the spirit of another people” (64) which should not be confused with imitation: “[o]utside influences merely awakened in him what was already present in the depths of his soul” so that if you read his *Don Juan*, “you would assume that it was written by a Spaniard” (65). Arguing for a Christian, Aryan culture in which Russians unite with Europeans, the Judeophobic Dostoevsky unwittingly lays out a two-pronged approach that would inspire generations of Hebrew writers:

at least we can point to Pushkin, to that universal and all-embracing quality of his genius. After all Pushkin’s soul could encompass foreign geniuses as if they were his own. In his poetic works he revealed the Russian spirit’s longing for universality, a trait that points to our future. If our view seems fantastic, at least there is in Pushkin a basis for this fantasy. Had he lived longer, perhaps he would have disclosed great, immortal images of the Russian soul more intelligible to our European brothers. He would have drawn them much closer to us. Perhaps he would have succeeded in explaining to them the whole truth about our aspirations. They would have understood us better than they do and thus would no longer be inclined to look down on us, to view us with suspicion. (66–7)

Like Russians, East European Jews hoped that becoming part of world literature would also reduce suspicion and build connections with other peoples. They, too, would use outside influences—such as translated literature—to foster their own literatures. The Yiddish and Hebrew translators of *Onegin* all knew about the role that non-Russian literature and translation played in Pushkin’s own work. Their translation work is an endorsement of this approach.

While this dissertation focuses on texts and writers that followed the Europeanization (or Rus-

sification) approach, it had its counterpart in the other aspect, the inclination towards indigenous culture as the source of national creativity. This, too, was an aspect of Pushkin's work and a factor in his success as a Russian national poet. Hayyim Nahman Bialik (1873–1934), the Jewish writer who was probably compared to Pushkin more than any other via his status as national poet, was offered the chance to translate *Onegin* for good pay but turned it down in one of the great anticlimaxes of Jewish literary history. This other side of the story, itself a significant part of Pushkin's translation history in Jewish languages, illustrates the conflicted relationship between Jews, their languages, and Pushkin.

1.1 THE TRANSLATION THAT WAS NEVER WRITTEN

Despite the warfare of 1917, a wealthy businessman, Avraham Yosef Stybel (1885–1946), provided a fortune for the creation of Stybel Publishing House. It would be headed by Dovid Frishman (1859–1922; also known as David Frishman) and try to realize Frishman's hope that world literature would be translated into Hebrew (Katz 97). Frishman himself was to be the translator of German literature such as Heine and Goethe, due to his own educational background, while Hebrew poet Shaul Tchernichovsky (1875–1943) would be the one to translate Homer and Shakespeare thanks to his knowledge of Greek and English (Katz 98). Tchernichovsky was also quite Russified: he spoke and dressed Russian, married a non-Jewish woman, and ran a medical practice in a Russian neighborhood where he passed as Russian and treated Russian patients (Katz 99); he might have been a good choice for translating Russian literature. In fact, the stakes were higher for translations of Russian literature because, unlike many of the other works of world literature that were being translated into Hebrew (often mediated by Russian translations), because Russian was part of the East European Jewish language polysystem. Many Jews knew it in the original and might judge the quality of the translation harshly, so Pushkin was a special project.

This period was both a time of increased translation activity and one of serious difficulties that threatened Jewish life as well as cultural activity. World War I and the Russian Revolution, together with the Civil War, found new Jewish publishing houses and writers in large part interested in trans-

lation as a large-scale cultural project. Though these years were disastrous for Jews, they did not stop cultural activity but did draw new lines that were independent of language, as Kenneth Moss writes,

By 1918, a number of intellectuals, critics, writers, and activists had reached the same conclusion and separately articulated the proposition that what Jewish culture now needed most was not the indigenous but precisely the foreign: the systematic, massive, and immediate literary translation of a posited unitary canon of Western literature into Hebrew or Yiddish. (Moss 109)

Frishman himself, now the head of a publishing house, had long advocated for the same and now set about doing this more systematically.

Frishman did not intend to precisely enact Dostoevsky's Christian, Aryan ideal, but the fact that Jews suffered at the hands of their neighbors and invaders did not lead them all to reject non-Jewish literature. Many Jewish intellectuals—whether they were on board with the translation project or not—responded to the slaughter of Jews in the nineteen-teens with various forms of nationalism.⁹ Christian Europe was revealed as violent in contrast to the underdog Jewish culture which Frishman found—based on relative levels of bloodlust—to be morally superior. This understanding of the difference between Christians and Jews is expressed by Frishman in an anguished essay on the war and on its anti-Jewish violence, saying:

What could Jacob, that innocent that always staying in the tent, understand all that goes on in the soul of Esau, of that man-of-the-field, when he would take his bow and arrows, and his eyes burned like torches and his breath was quick and fiery, and he ran to the open field towards all the heaven's four winds? At most such a stayer-at-home understands only some external details in connection with the whole business. He understands that a man goes after the wolf to kill it, in order to transfer the danger from people or from the flock of sheep [...] But a hunt for the sake of a hunt, craft for the sake of craft, bloodshed so that a man may have that wonderful and special sort of joy of knowing and feeling, with all his limbs and all his tendons, that his hands spilled this blood, in the manner that his eyes shall light up from great satisfaction with the smell of spilt blooddrops, and his heart will extend and expand and beat from the very feelings of joy at the sight of the fallen animal or at the sight of a fluttering human body, that he has only just struck with his bullet and felled—no, all of this the Jew will never comprehend. Not with his intellect, and all the less so with his heart.¹⁰ (700)

⁹ This does not only mean Zionism and emigration, but other diasporist movements as well.

¹⁰ מה יכול היה יעקב, אותו התם היושב תמיד באהל, להבין מכל הנעשה בנשמתו של עשו, של אותו איש-השדה, בשעה

Frishman goes into this discussion of the “hunter” after describing the falls of many empires, implying that the difference in political and hence cultural identity between Jews and Christians has serious consequences for their behavior. Anti-Jewish violence may appear to present a problem for the relationship between Jews and Russian literature, and for Bialik—whose widely read pogrom poem “*Be’ir haharegah*” (“In the City of Slaughter”) is clearly alluded to here with the image of the victims’ quivering flesh. But one likely explanation for many Jews’ persistent love of Pushkin and Russian/European literature is that despite the “national” concept inherent in that of the national poet, writers of great literature were considered wiser, more Jewish souls who were above both the pogrom violence of the masses and the wickedness of the kings. Pushkin himself, as proclaimed in “*Ia pamiatnik sebe vozdvig nerokotvorynyi*” (“I have built myself a monument”), makes the appealing distinction between the political and military might of kings and the Jacob-like power of the poet. Jews who embraced their cultural difference could still appreciate such writers.

It was *yeshivah*-educated Hayyim Nahman Bialik, who claimed to prefer Tchernichovsky to Pushkin (152) and had created famous translations of Sh. An-sky’s (1863–1920) “*Der dybbuk*” (“The Dybbuk”) and Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*,¹¹ that Frishman and Stybel identified as an ideal translator for Pushkin’s novel in verse. Bialik was not the first choice,¹² but asking him to translate the novel was a part of a bigger attempt to get him to send publishable writing to Frishman and Stybel’s publications. Frishman was living in Moscow in 1918, working with Stybel on the new “*Hatkufah*” and other projects of Stybel Publishing such as a library of translations from world liter-

שהיה זה נוטל את קשתו ואת תליו, ועינו בערו כלפידים ונשימתו היתה חטופה ולוהטת, והוא רץ אל השדה הפתוח לארבע רוחות השמים? –לכל-היותר יבין יושב-בית שכזה רק איזו פרטים חיצוניים בנוגע לכל אותו העסק. יבין כי אדם יוצא על הזאב להרגו, כדי להעביר סכנה מבני אדם ומעדר הצאן [...] אבל ציד לשם ציד, אמנות לשם אמנות, שפיכות-דם כדי שיהיה לו לאדם אותו התענוג הנפלא והמיוחד במינו, לדעת ולהרגיש בכל אבריו ובכל גידיו כי ידיו שפכו את הדם הזה, באופן שעניו תאורגה מרוב נחת לריחן של טפות הדם השפוכות, ולבו בו ישתרע ויתרחב ויתדפק מעצם רגשי הגיל למראה החיה הנופלת או למראה גוף האדם המפרפר, שרק זה עתה פגע בו הכדור שלו והפילו, – לא, את כל זאת לא ישיג היהודי לעולם. לא בשכלו, ועל אחת כמה וכמה לא בלבו.

¹¹ Bialik also translated *Wilhem Tell* and “Julius Caesar.”

¹² At the end of 1917, Frishman was already looking for a translator for *Evgenii Onegin*. Having just received a poem which he really liked from M. Z. Volfovski, Frishman sent the young poet a letter praising his poem and promise as a poet. Just after saying that he expects to see more good work from Volfovski, Frishman asks if he was interested in translation—“maybe you could translate Pushkin’s *Evgenii Onegin* in simple and elegant language for our publishing house” (17 December 1917). Volfovski did not do it, although this might have been because he was drafted into the Russian army and sent to war. After the war he went to Palestine and eventually published several books of Pushkin translations, starting with *Kapitanskaia dochka* (1936) on the eve of the centennial.

ature, while Bialik lived in Odessa, soliciting projects from the former for his own journal “*Kneses*.” Frishman, apparently disappointed in the writers of his time, sometimes begged and sometimes demanded that Bialik send him “bellevistic” writing. Bialik, by then widely understood to be a Hebrew national poet on the level of Pushkin,¹³ to translate *Onegin*. Bialik had, at the time, stopped writing poetry in Hebrew for adults and Frishman wrote to him repeatedly—with some measure of guilt-tripping and an air of great offense (18 November 1917)—asking for contributions of new poetry. Published letters show us that Frishman was sending to his colleague in Odessa translations of Tagore and the Brothers Grimm (9 June 1917), money for Bialik himself and to support other writers, as well as imported American shoes from Stybel’s business (11 July 1917). He hoped that in return, he would receive at least a short lyric poem now and again. Bialik made good on the request to translate Sh. An-sky’s “*Der dybbuk*” from Yiddish into Hebrew, but claimed to have a terrible case of writer’s block which only allowed him to write children’s literature unsuitable for Frishman’s journal. He then found himself hospitalized and undergoing surgery in the fall of 1917. This did not cure his writer’s block and the wartime postal service was also losing some of his letters. It was after several exchanges of letters, including one in which Frishman expresses genuine personal offense (11 July 1917, 11 September 1917) at the lack of literary submissions (followed by Bialik’s apologetic explanation of the writer’s block and promise to send Frishman the first worthwhile poem to come from his pen). By the winter of 1918, Frishman gave up on this effort and promised not to burden Bialik any further (23 February 1918). In his next letter that spring, he sent the request that Bialik translate *Evgenii Onegin*, implying that this might be a way to make some money despite not being able to write new poetry (28/15 April 1918).

At the same time as Frishman was beseeching Bialik on behalf of Stybel, Stybel was beseeching Bialik on behalf of Frishman. While Frishman had promised that Stybel was the one who was asking and who would pay any sum, Stybel explained (in Russian) how much Frishman wanted it:

Along with this, I would like to appeal to you concerning the following business: Gospodin Frishman believes that you are the only person capable of doing a good translation of

¹³ Even among people who could not read Hebrew, thanks to some original work he wrote in Yiddish as well as translations of his work into Russian and Yiddish.

Evgenii Onegin. Although my previous appeals to you with requests for your cooperation have not led to a result and I, therefore, at this time have little hope of success, I am all the same taking the opportunity to find out if you wouldn't agree to take this work upon yourself.¹⁴ (27 April 1918)

Then Stybel, too, remarked upon the lack of original writing and appeals to Bialik's love of the Hebrew language in asking him to submit original poetry to *Hatkufah*. We do not know if Frishman and Stybel were conspiring in this manner to appeal to Bialik on each other's behalf with flattery and money, or if Frishman was unaware that Stybel was showing his hand. While Frishman's letters suggest that the appeal was simply to get Bialik to write something, Stybel's version is an apparent example of his matchmaking between texts of world literature and ideal Hebrew translators.

Having received no answer at all, Frishman repeated the request and, in exasperation, promised again that Bialik could name his salary, but also asks that he translate something, anything else, if he does not want to do *Onegin* (11/24 May 1918). These letters demonstrate that *Onegin* translated by Bialik is a sorry second for original work. But on the other hand, we can see the hierarchy of priorities: original work is the top priority, followed by the translation of *Onegin*, and finally, if Bialik can manage none of the above, he could choose another text and at least translate that. Frishman appeals to Bialik on the basis of the writer's block and financial sense; after all, it seemed reasonable that a talented poet who was not producing original material should then practice his craft as a translator.

Bialik finally replied to Frishman in the fall of 1918 with an unqualified "no" followed by an apologetic offer to choose another text for translation (схсв). Although translating *Onegin* into Hebrew would have been a tremendously difficult and involved task, it would also have been a great opportunity to bolster his poetic career (when he felt unable to write original poetry) and to get

¹⁴

[...] Одновременно с сим я бы хотел обратиться к Вам по следующему делу: г-н Фришмаи полагает, что вы являетесь единственным лицом, могущим сделать хороший перевод "Евгения Онегина". Несмотря на то что все мои предыдущия обращения к Вам с просьбами о Вашем сотрудничестве не привели к результату и я, поетому и на этот раз имею мало надежды на успех, я всетаки пользуюсь случаем, чтобы узнать, не согласитесь ли Вы принять на себе эту работу.

Stybel begins the letter by updating Bialik on other translations into Hebrew of such works as *Anna Karenina* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. I am grateful to Kenneth Moss for the citation and to Shmuel Avneri at Bialik House for his assistance in acquiring this letter.

paid. In his refusal, Bialik may be hinting at his own imperfect knowledge of Russian, his taste in literature, or at his general inability to write poetry at the moment, but leaves his reason unsaid.¹⁵

It makes sense that Bialik, frequently compared to Pushkin, did not want to become the Russian poet's translator. The two camps which emerged during this time¹⁶ are more complex than a Hebrew-Yiddish divide: some wanted to get world literature translated into Yiddish or Hebrew, and some wanted to create something more uniquely Jewish without that interference. Bialik was an advocate not of Russification, but of *kinus*, the gathering of indigenous cultural material including Talmudic stories, to make the new modern Jewish culture. He had spent years on a very different kind of translation project, an internal Jewish one in which he rendered passages of the Talmud from Aramaic into Hebrew for inclusion in his *kinus* project, *Sefer ha'agadah* [Book of Legend]. Though enacting the national side of Pushkin, Bialik did not want to make the comparison more explicit.

1.2 THE "JEWISH PUSHKIN"

Bialik understood clearly why he was asked to translate this particular text and why he was called the "only person capable of doing a good translation of *Evgenii Onegin*." His influence on the Hebrew language and its literature, though not so perceptible in the Israeli period with its new stress system and its function as a vernacular, was tremendous during and after the *fin-de-siècle*.¹⁷ At this time, Hebrew literature was a European phenomenon, especially in the Russian Empire and later in its postrevolutionary diasporas.

The legacy of Hebrew verse traced back from the biblical period and included centuries of *piyyutim*, the Golden Age in Muslim Spain, the early modern Kabbalist work of M.H. Luzzatto (1707–1746), and even some modern secular predecessors such as Judah Leib Gordon (1831–1892). But the changes brought by Bialik starting in the 1890s were fundamental, resulting in a new poetry that

¹⁵ Bialik had an adaptive, non-literalist approach when it came to the translation of other people's work and his *Don Quixote* is self-identified as an abridgement. However, when it came to the translation of his own "*Be'ir haharegah*" by Y. L. Peretz into Yiddish, Bialik subsequently showed his dissatisfaction by redoing it himself. Frishman could have expected a Bialik translation of *Evgenii Onegin* to have been Judaized a great deal.

¹⁶ See, among others, Moss (2009), Pinsker (2011), Miron (2010).

¹⁷ See Miron (2000), Harshav (2000), and Bar-El (1986) among the countless other sources on Bialik's influence.

would even be translated into Russian for a broader audience,¹⁸ and certainly necessary for Frishman to write in the amphibrachs with which he had translated Pushkin in 1899. Bialik is credited with achievements similar those of Pushkin and seen as the Hebrew “national poet” of this period (Harshav *Shirat hatehiyah* 65, Bar-El 215–6). In the area of form, Bialik introduced a modern version of “Biblical” poetry and even introduced syllabo-tonic (accentual-syllabic) meters (Harshav *Shirat hatehiyah* 70), opening up the possibility of ternary (3-beat) meters such as the amphibrach. In his use of language, he dug into many layers of Hebrew so that intertextuality was a part of his poetic vocabulary even as he adopted a modern sensibility. Bialik’s broad oeuvre includes fiction, essays, poems, lyric poems, and translations. His poetry spoke to Jewish themes such as the pogrom violence and the rupture from tradition. Bialik seemed the perfect candidate to translate *Evgenii Onegin* into Hebrew because of his apparent similarity with Pushkin and his facility with Hebrew versification. If anyone could breathe Hebrew life into Pushkin, or breathe Pushkin’s vitality into Hebrew, it should be Bialik, the Hebrew counterpart.¹⁹

In addition to these factors, Bialik had even written a poem “*Davar*” [“Word”] which responds to the material from Pushkin’s “*Prorok*” [“Prophet”]²⁰ and reworks it into a Jewish, modern poetics. This poem, intertextually linked not only to the Hebrew scriptures but to Pushkin’s intertextuality with them, also marked a new phase in Bialik’s poetry, both in form and in content:

Starting with “A Word” (or “A Saying” [*Davar*]) in 1904, he abandoned rhyme and attempted to replace tonosyllabic meter with a biblical accentual one. He also drew close to the characteristic parallelism of biblical verse. In tone, rhetoric, meter, structure, syntax, and metaphor, his poems became direct imitations of biblical prophecy, (which should not mislead us to think that they were actually identical with it). (Miron 2000:6)

Bialik donned the mantle of the prophet, with an awareness of Pushkin’s poet-as-prophet legacy and perhaps a claim to supersession based on the use of the actual language of prophecy: neo-biblical Hebrew, complete with neo-biblical prosody. While Frishman valued Bialik’s lyric poetry, he dis-

¹⁸ The *Evreiskaia Antologiia* (Jewish Anthology) was published during this time, for example. See also Slobin (2002).

¹⁹ Harshav also mentions that Bialik was better-poised than Pushkin for poetry-as-prophecy (*Language in Time of Revolution* 65–6).

²⁰ Also translated by Frishman.

liked the national poems or the poems of wrath, such as “*Davar*” (Ungerfeld 221) and the prophetic mode. Yet among Frishman’s choices of which Pushkin poems to translate himself in 1899, a substantial percentage consists of meta-poetic and even “prophetic” texts which partly inspired the Hebrew literary trend towards poet-as-prophet, including “*Prorok*” [“Prophet”], “*Poet*,” “*Poetu*” [“To the Poet”], “*Poet i tolpa*” [“Poet and Crowd”], and “*Ia pamiatnik sebe vozdvig nerukotvornyi...*” [“I have built myself a monument...”] *Evgenii Onegin* was written in a voice completely distinct from that of the poet-as-prophet. In fact, the novel’s disappearing and reappearing first-person narrator, who cannot know all of the details he relates of other people’s lives and thoughts, presents himself as a nobleman-poet who is friends with the eponymous character and is erotically excited by women’s feet and legs (1:xxx–xxxiv). Indeed, the first-person narrator of *Onegin* is one that finds his closest Jewish analogue in the narrators of Yiddish literature such as those of S.Y. Abramovitch (1835–1917; also known by his pseudonym and first-person narrator, Mendele Moykher-Sforim) and Sholem Rabinovitsh (1859–1916; similarly better known as his pseudonym and first-person narrator, Sholem-Aleykhem). Perhaps this is one reason why Frishman wanted Bialik to work with a different side of Pushkin than the prophetic mode, which he translated himself in *Mishirey pushqin*.

A most fundamental difference between Bialik and Pushkin stems from the natures of the languages with which they were working: prior to their use in modern literature, Russian was vernacular and Hebrew was written. Thus while Pushkin elevated the vernacular for high culture and thereby made literary texts more accessible to the Russian masses than they had been previously²¹ Bialik’s work mostly preserved the textuality of Hebrew and its inaccessibility to a largely literate Jewish population for whom Hebrew was not the language of mass literacy. Perhaps in part for this reason, Yuri Slezkine identifies the “Jewish Pushkin” as Sholem-Aleikhem (148), who wrote in the Jewish vernacular of Yiddish, despite the fact that he was a fiction-writer rather than a poet. Hebrew was esoteric among European Jews and most of Bialik’s work was inaccessible to most of them. But Bialik was still recognized as an important poet beyond the elite Hebrew circles due

²¹ This is not to say that written words were as accessible to the largely illiterate population compared with spoken ones. However, Pushkin’s work did gain a certain orality through memorization, public readings, and musical arrangements.

to a smaller amount of writing he had done in Yiddish as well as the translation of some of his Hebrew poetry into Yiddish and Russian. For example, Bialik's poem "*Be'ir haharegah*" ["In the City of Slaughter"] about the pogrom in Kishinev had become so well-known in Jabotinsky's Russian translation that even non-Jewish Russians such as Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893–1930) had it memorized (Timenchik and Kopel'man; Slobin); this poem along with others established him as a Jewish poet eligible for a place in world literature and Pushkin-like thanks to giving a high-culture voice to the nation whose people could not universally read what he was writing about them.

Frishman's method of trying to get international recognition for modern Hebrew literature was to follow the patterns that powerful, respected European cultures had set when they tried to do it. Germany had Goethe, Russian had Pushkin, and Heine had earned some international recognition for the Jews in a way that Frishman appreciated but hoped new writers wouldn't try—that is, in a goyish language—but then there was Bialik. If Bialik could translate Evgenii Onegin, he could transcend some of what Frishman did not like about his recent work, writing in the voice of a rather than that of a prophet.

1.3 WHY ASK BIALIK?

Frishman was implicitly proposing something along the lines of what Avraham Shlonsky would someday seek to accomplish in Palestine: a monumental work which would be a source of pride for Hebrew literature (in Russia), the masterwork of Russia's poet-prophet rendered into a "master translation" by Hebrew's poet-prophet. Stybel, the patron of Hebrew translators, was willing to let Bialik name his price. They would have hoped it would be worth the effort: the great Hebrew poet rendering the great Russian novel-in-verse into the modernizing ancient language of the Jewish people. The implications for Hebrew poetry might have been significant, for example if Bialik had managed to write it in *Onegin* stanzas complete with the iambs and masculine rhymes that eluded Frishman. The "silent period" of Bialik would have been marked by his production of an historic translation, one that might have been even more (temporarily) significant than Avraham Shlonsky's version eventually became (and might have prevented him from trying). The legitimacy of a trans-

lation of this nearly-sacred Russian text by Bialik would be recognized by Jews and even Russians (because of the comparisons between Bialik and Pushkin). The ways in which Bialik was similar to Pushkin were promising for the translation of this difficult text. Bialik was trusted to be able to perform the creative work on Hebrew in order to bring in something as complex as *Evgenii Onegin*, transforming the Jewish language in the process.²²

Though Bialik gave no clear reason for turning down this job, it is almost certainly connected with his own anxiety of influence as the “Jewish Pushkin,” an identity that flew in the face of his indigenizing aesthetic and project of *kinus*, or ingathering of Jewish materials. Shachar Pinsker describes Bialik’s plan for Hebrew literature as “a transformation of religious texts into secular literature, and then a transformation of secular literature back into ‘the sacred realm’ of the national” (279). During the 1910s when some Jews were translating foreign materials, Bialik was otherwise occupied with the gathering of carefully selected Hebrew texts written throughout history and the re-presentation of them as secular literature. His own translations were of writers to whom the comparison would not have been so immediately uncomfortable; if the Jewish Pushkin had become Pushkin’s translator, Jacob would again be grabbing onto the heel of Esau in order to get ahead.

This dissertation focuses on the proponents of the opposing trend within Jewish culture, one that gathers choice non-Jewish materials and translates them into Jewish languages, in order to inspire original creativity in Jewish languages later on or to read like an original creative interpretation. The contrast of Bialik’s presence is felt throughout this period, representing another common approach.

Although *Onegin* was not published into Hebrew until the 1930s, it was on some people’s minds already at the turn of the century and the Revolution. Yet the Hebrew literary community could not, or at least did not, produce it then. In fact, Avraham Levinson *did* translate it during the 1910s

²² Further study of this question would include a discussion of Frishman’s views on Bialik, Pushkin and Russian and Jewish concepts of genius. Genius was an important concept in Russian culture. What is it about genius that still matters now, when science has shown that diligence contributes more to virtuosity than inherent talent does and after critiques of the literary canon? To understand how people such as Frishman thought they could rebuild Hebrew culture we need to understand how they thought about genius. People who were considered to be geniuses had a tremendous role to play in Russian and Jewish culture; in Russian culture this came in the time of Pushkin, whereas in Jewish culture it was a long tradition as the intellectual activity of Torah (Talmud) scholars was very much prized as the greatest achievement a man could make. So in the Jewish world, like the modern literature itself, the concept of genius had both its Jewish and Gentile elements (Yuri Slezkine argues that the non-Jewish concept was in essence a Judaization of the Gentiles).

but could not get in touch with Frishman to publish it. Hagit Halperin describes Levinson's failed quest to find a publisher in those very years when Frishman was searching for a translator; it was a close call, with Levinson contacting Stybel and getting Tchernichovsky's recommendation that even with its flaws, his translation was worth publishing as a first attempt.²³ But Stybel was worried it would not be financially feasible (472). The Yiddish literary establishment succeeded in publishing its translation under terrible conditions in Ekaterinoslav in 1919, but the Hebrew republic of letters could not do this in wartime.

Eventually, Avraham Levinson and Avraham Shlonsky would each publish a translation of *Evgenii Onegin* into Hebrew, but these did not appear until a few years after Bialik's 1934 death. Although Frishman had trusted Bialik to translate the novel and although A.Y. Grodzenski and Leyb Naydus were at work translating it into Yiddish during this period, it seems too difficult a task for Hebrew.

The absence of a Hebrew translation of *Onegin* amid significant levels of Jewish Pushkinism would eventually provide New Hebrew poet Avraham Shlonsky an enticing Oedipal challenge to the legacy of Bialik. Shlonsky knew that Bialik did not translate it, and this made him particularly proud of himself for trying his hand at it (Halperin 470). And so it was, with Bialik turning down the translation and the Hebrew publishing world weaker in Europe than the Yiddish one, that *Evgenii Onegin* would first appear in the Yiddish vernacular rather than in the elite textual language of Hebrew.

²³ Although Frishman was not able to find a translator for *Evgenii Onegin*, it does not mean that no one wanted to do it. In fact, Hebraist and Zionist Avraham Levinson completed his own translation of *Onegin* in 1919 and sent it to *Hatkufah*. Frishman, who was the editor of both and who might have welcomed and chosen to publish such a submission, was not in Moscow and translations were not being accepted without him. In 1923, when Frishman had already passed away, Levinson sent it to Stybel and had some support from Yaakov Fichman and even from Shaul Tchernikhovski. Hagit Halperin writes:

“after he read a few passages Tchernikhovski determined that the translation had ‘something of the poetic spirit, but anyway this is not Pushkin.’ With this he said that ‘when there is no better translation than this it should be published as a first attempt.’ The economic situation of the publisher was poor in that period and in the end A. Y. Stybel decided not to publish the translation, and Levinson's dream was further deferred.” (472)

It would be nearly two decades before Levinson managed to publish his translation, in time for the 1937 centennial of Pushkin's death.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

In order to explore the literary, cultural, and linguistic development of Yiddish and Hebrew, I discuss the translation on two levels. To place the translations within cultural history and understand the motivations of the translators, I examine them as historical artifacts. I draw on the paratexts accompanying each translation—introductions, biographies of Pushkin, footnotes, title pages, etc.—as well as memoirs and archived newspapers and letters in order to demonstrate the backgrounds and intentions of the translators as well as the reception of the translations. The diverse political and aesthetic orientations of these translators, all of whom were significant poets or public intellectuals during their time, speak to the powerful role played by Russian culture in Jewish cultural movements of the period from the 1890s to the 1930s. Therefore, I have included information which demonstrates the roles played in modern Jewish culture and politics by those translators of *Onegin* who have not received scholarly attention.

In my readings of the translations themselves, I analyze language on the level of individual *Onegin* stanzas to see how writers dealt with the peculiarities of Yiddish and Hebrew in order to compose translations. Focusing on one control text which remains fairly constant—the Russian original—allows for the assessment of its changes across different writers, languages, and decades. I use metrical statistics, a quantitative analysis of poetry, to bring out the linguistic differences between languages, between different stages in the development of one language, and also between those translators that I have designated as poets and public intellectuals. Based on metrical statistics of poets and public intellectuals, I address the lower and upper ranges of poetic skill that can be attributed to Yiddish and Hebrew: these ranges help reveal what are the limitations of the translator, and what are the limitations of the language. In addition, the varied interpretations of Pushkin's complex meter are inseparable from the decisions that translators have to make about content.

Like a sacred text, *Evgenii Onegin* has been memorized by many devoted readers.²⁴ Like the Bible, it is a famous example of problems in translation. The methods of translating this verse novel,

²⁴ Including Russian-born scholar Alexander Knysh, who has recited stanzas from memory in front of me. I have also heard Dan Miron recite part of Shlonksy's Hebrew translation from memory.

a hybrid genre, are even more varied and controversial than those for translating novels written in prose. The controversy stems both from the perceived conflict between form and content as well as the status of the novel within Russian culture. It was openly debated in the 1960s with Vladimir Nabokov's (1899–1977) odd translation,²⁵ which took Friedrich Schleiermacher's notion of leading the reader toward the author more literally than ever. Nabokov's four-volume work is introduced by roughly 100 pages of translation theory and textual description, followed by a literal translation that dispenses with the form of the *Onegin* stanza, a reproduction of the (Russian) edition of the text that Nabokov considered most authoritative, nearly two volumes of footnotes, and appendices on Pushkin's great-grandfather and on Russian prosody. Nabokov's condemnation of all other Western translations of the novel that he had read and vehement defense of his own method are themselves significant works of translation theory.

While Nabokov's translations do appear in this dissertation as literalist reference points, there is no equivalence between what it meant to translate *Onegin* into Jewish languages and what it meant to translate this novel into English. Schleiermacher writes that "translating is a matter of necessity for a nation of which only a small part can acquire sufficient knowledge of foreign languages, and of which a larger part has a disposition toward the enjoyment of foreign works," (52) necessitating their rendering into this nation's language. In the case of East European Jews, much of the audience for Hebrew and Yiddish *Onegins* consisted of a rather large part of the nation that could acquire sufficient knowledge of foreign languages, especially as the "foreign language" in question was the imperial language of Russia (and until the 1930's, Hebrew translations were not much more accessible than the Russian original). Yet they wanted translations anyway. Of translations for those who know foreign languages, Schleiermacher also writes:

The knowledge of foreign languages could be as widespread as possible, and the access to their loftiest works could be open to anyone who is competent, and translation would still remain a curious enterprise, which would gather around itself more and more eager listeners if someone were to promise to represent to us a work of Cicero and Plato in the same way as these men would have written it directly in German today. And if

²⁵ See the exchange between Edmund Wilson and Vladimir Nabokov in *The New York Review of Books* on 15 July and 26 August, 1965.

someone else were to go so far as to do this not only in his own native tongue, but even in another, foreign one, he would appear to us as the greatest master in the difficult and almost impossible art of merging the spirits of the languages into one another. One can see that this would, strictly speaking, not be translation, and the result would not be the truest possible enjoyment of the works themselves; it would become more and more an imitation, and only the person who already knows these writers from somewhere else could actually enjoy such an artifact or work of art. (52–3)

Schleiermacher refers to the interest German readers would have in reading a modern translation of a familiar ancient classic, perhaps as a thought experiment. For Jewish readers of Pushkin, there were similar motivations and the result could be more of an imitation. But particularly for Hebrew readers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reading translations from Russian, the temporal paradigm was quite different. A modern Russian classic would be rendered into the ancient Hebrew language, which would be imagined to be a modern language; while Schleiermacher describes the journey of an author from the past to the present, a Hebrew reader would observe an author's journey from present, to past, and back to the present.

This paradigm also suggests that Nabokov's condemnations of verse translations of *Onegin* might not apply to the Jewish examples. "A schoolboy's boner," writes Nabokov about rhymed and measured renditions of *Onegin* that read "smoothly," "mocks the ancient masterpiece less than does its commercial poetization, and it is when the translator sets out to render the 'spirit,' and not the mere sense of the text, that he begins to traduce his author" (ix). To try and preserve the sonic or other beauty of the text is necessarily at the expense of accuracy. But because the Jewish audience knew Russian, knew *Onegin*, and wanted to read the Hebrew and Yiddish imitations, then the closer analogy is not to a treacherous version in English or German, but to Tchaikovsky's operatic one.

Nabokov's translation falls more squarely, or perhaps exaggeratedly, within the category of what Lawrence Venuti later calls "foreignizing," while the "smooth" translations that he condemned could all be considered "domesticating." Venuti has argued that there is an ethical dimension to the distinction between foreignizing, "resistant" translations and domesticating, "fluent" ones. This is especially the case when the relations between the source and receiving languages are unequal and colonial. While a "foreignizing translation can be useful in enriching the minority language and

culture without submitting them to constant interrogation” (Venuti 20), a domesticating translation into a dominant language, such as English, can erase cultural differences and promote the hegemonic culture’s idea of human universals. For this reason, postcolonial translation has much to say about the translation of colonized people’s texts into the languages of their colonizers.

Although Naomi Seidman uses the postcolonial model in her discussion of German-Jewish biblical translations into German, it does not work neatly to describe the power relationship between Jews and Russian. Seidman’s monumental *Faithful Renderings* has applied and complicated postcolonial approaches to the problems inherent in translating Jewish texts into non-Jewish languages.²⁶ Seidman’s application of Homi K. Bhabha’s hybridity to German Jews as a group of people under a colonizing influence is grounded in the pressures they faced to properly Germanize (and suppress Yiddish). For Seidman, “Post-colonial scholarship has also provided the sharpest model for the trickster narrative that I am viewing as (partially) emblematic of Jewish translation.” (8) This makes sense for her context, but as she also points out, “Jewish approaches to translation are, I believe, best understood not as purely philosophical or religious stances but rather as an expression of how the translators saw themselves vis-à-vis various ‘others.’” (30) Because they navigate a different set of others, the Jewish translations discussed in this dissertation do not fall in line with a trickster narrative, even when they domesticate their source material.

But this is because much of the current translation theory dealing with modern languages has more to say about translations from the language of the colonized into language of the colonizer than it does about such translations as those from Russian into Jewish languages. The Jews of Eastern Europe, who up until the Revolution were generally non-citizens under an oppressive empire, were as much the colonizers as the colonized; they were seen as invasive outsiders and—especially through their traditional economic role as intermediary through which Polish nobility could tax the peasants, but also through their modern role as capitalists—as a force of economic oppression. The anathema was for a long time mutual. But this is not the kind of relationship that is studied

²⁶ See especially her chapter entitled “A Translator Culture,” 153–198.

in postcolonial translation theory—a branch of translation theory which has addressed the role of footnotes.

Though footnotes might help satisfy Lawrence Venuti's demand for foreignization, Carolyn Shread more recently pointed out that they can also give the problematic impression that a translation is to be trusted:

Translations and their paratextual elements have the power to either further this process, or to challenge it. My fundamental observation is that paratexts often play a colonizing role in relation to the texts they present. In other words, the expert who offers authoritative, explanatory information runs the risk of replicating the colonial relation at the point of entry of the text into the target language culture (Shread 115).

The stakes are different in the relations between Jews and neighbors. While postcolonial approaches remind us of the role that power imbalances play in translation, this Jewish case is different in part not only because Jews were not ambassadors of a visiting empire, but because they had (varying degrees of) access to non-Jewish culture; it seems unlikely that something about the Christian cultural environment could be hidden from Jews who wanted to know about it. Nevertheless, footnotes do provide a source to be mined for insights about literary history, and postcolonial translation theory establishes the importance of power relations in translation, even as it does not describe the power relationships that I discuss in this dissertation.

In contrast to Seidman's work on Jewish-Christian translational encounters, this dissertation focuses on the opposite direction—Christian-to-Jewish translation—and in a more multilingual context. While the Jews' neighbors in Europe often thought of them as a foreign power—perhaps one much stronger than any empire²⁷—East European Jews generally lived among Slavs whose lands had been conquered by the Russian Empire. Russian was the colonizing language, yet Jews were the foreigners—who, in an empire that had freed the serfs in the mid-nineteenth century and never distributed citizenship, were not seriously expected to be assimilated into the Polish or Lithuanian population. In addition, the significance of Christian-to-Jewish translation in this context, though

²⁷ For the full extent of Russian paranoia about the Jews as an international power, see *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

it surely has to do with making change within the Jewish community and its literature, is not equivalent to the significance of Jewish-to-Christian translation. Finally, while Hebrew is present in both Seidman's study and this dissertation, the role of Yiddish is quite different. In East European Jewish communities (that were currently or formerly part of the Russian Empire), Yiddish was neither a corrupt version of the colonizing language (Russian instead of German), nor easily eliminated by those who sought to replace it with either Christian languages or Hebrew. Yiddish was a full and successful competitor with Hebrew and Slavic languages. Translating Russian texts into Hebrew or Yiddish was not just an act of cultural homogenization, but one intended to strengthen Jewish languages and thereby maintain a level of distinctiveness.

The utility of these *Onegin* translations in a multilingual context is questionable. Most of their audience was Yiddish-speaking and much of it was Russian-speaking. For both the Yiddish translations and the Hebrew ones, there was an expectation that some of the audience had already read Pushkin in the original, and so the communicative function of the translation was diminished in favor of other roles. These translations expanded Jewish languages and cultures as Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) offers in “The Task of the Translator,” but more in line with Schleiermacher's idea because this was the main motivation for creating them. Translators use *Onegin* to act upon Jewish languages lexically, poetically, and thematically. Venuti's ethical obligations of the translator are reduced when the audience can easily refer to another version and, in the case of at least one of these Jewish translations, is explicitly advised to do so. On the one hand, the translations have a didactic purpose. Yet on the other hand, they render visible and even celebrate the work of the translator. As Seidman writes, “domesticating translations cannot be seen categorically as instruments of hegemonic nationalism” (119).

Perhaps a closer comparison, rather than the postcolonial one, is between the Russian dichotomy of Slavophilia and Westernization, and the Jewish indigenizers and foreignizers described by Kenneth Moss in *Jewish Renaissance and the Russian Revolution*. In the Jewish case, it was between proponents of drawing from indigenous, traditional Jewish culture (such as the Talmud or Hasidism) and those who wished to work with models, genres, and texts from European culture. Considering

that some level of hybridity, or of adjacency to another culture, is fundamental to Jewish identity, this story of Jewish culture told through the non-Jewish vehicle of translation from Russian can be useful in studying broader questions. Here is an example of minority people drawing upon the dominant culture and its norms, familiar to them or not, in order to bring themselves up in mood, economic status, social standing, or for other purposes. The objection to this is that the hoped-for liberation would come from inside, from indigenous culture untainted by the violence of the dominant. While the model of Slavophilia and Westernization does not share this power dynamic and cannot be applied perfectly to the Jews either, it was familiar to East European Jewish translators of Pushkin and may have motivated some of their own cultural theories. It did influence their decision to translate *Onegin*.

Thus, like the study of Russia as a translation zone more generally, the Jewish translations in this study cannot be described by simply applying familiar translation theories to them. They demand that we expand our thinking about the significance of translation work. The field of postcolonial translation studies is based on an imperial model that does not account for the Russian Empire or its Jews, who were neither foreign nor indigenous in the colonized regions of the former Polish-Lithuanian kingdom. When Russified Jewish intellectuals translated Russian literature into Hebrew and Yiddish, despite the accessibility of Russian texts within their language polysystem, their aim was to expand the literary capacity of Jewish languages. Because the audience has access to the original text, these translations are distinct from the “smooth” or “fluent” domesticating ones which scholars have criticized for erasing difference. An ethics of fidelity in translation or preservation of difference cannot apply to these situations, in which an “unfaithful” translation cannot conceal the original text.

The ideas of Slavophilia and Westernization, however, informed Russian-Jewish translation practices and can inform translation theory. Shachar Pinsker has pointed out that Bialik’s *kinus* was actually part of a modern cultural trend beyond the Jewish community.

These new preoccupations were far from being unique to modern Jewish culture. All around Europe, national groups (especially small ones) touted their “folklore” as part

of an ideological and political agenda of national renewal. There was an attempt to go to the ‘folk,’ for example, by the revolutionary narodnik intelligentsia in Russian and Poland. From a different perspective, early modernist writers and thinkers had been mining Christian (and in some cases Jewish) mythology and mystical traditions in search of distinctively modernist poetic and philosophical sources of mysticism, the occult, and “primitivism.” (276–7)

Thus even Bialik, the national poet who preferred indigenous material to Pushkin, was actually aligned with a transnational agenda of national renewal; even though he wanted a uniquely Jewish aesthetic, he was not independent of cultural contact. Before the modern period, Pushkin had set the example for this kind of inward turn with works such as “Ruslan and Lyudmila.” But he also represented the other side, bringing in plenty of European material. Jews modeled their revival after both methods, and this dissertation focuses on the latter. But this tension between the indigenous and the foreign can also inform the translation practice of translators who, by their efforts, have already shown themselves to belong to the foreignizing camp. One could not be purely engaged in one or the other, considering the peculiarities of East European Jewish identity, any more than one could be purely attached to Hebrew or Yiddish. Since the indigenous (Jewish) and the foreign (Russian and world literature) represent the tension in these Jewish cultural movements—or rather, one axis intersecting with the language wars—they serve as a useful cultural relationship with which to think about Jewish translations of a novel that navigates the tension between Russianness and Europeanness.

Each chapter begins with a discussion of the Jewish socio-political backdrop of the translators and their audiences, moving outward from Petersburg to Poland and then Palestine as it moves through time. This information provides the context which demonstrates the nuances and difficulties of the translations with their shifting perspectives on Jewish identity vis-à-vis Russian culture. The relationship between East European Jewish translators, modern Jewish culture, and Pushkin was relatively consistent under changing circumstances in the modern period. The Pale of Settlement was their ancestral home, where they developed regional customs, Yiddish dialects, economic conditions, political and cultural organizations, and other distinctive cultural characteristics. Jews in the Pale occupied a peculiar place on the ethnic map, living among Poles, Ukrainians, Lithua-

nians, Belarusians, Moldavians, and other peoples whose land had been conquered by the Russian Empire. While both Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors were conquered by Russia, the Jews were not considered to be indigenous to this region. It was not until the nineteenth century that a significant number of Jews proclaimed that they could belong there. Yet when this claim eventually emerged, it exposed conflicting loyalties. If the Jews did belong, there was more than one choice: they could belong with the Russian of Pushkin, or with their Slavic neighbors fighting for independence from the Russian Empire.

1.5 CHAPTERS IN CONTEXT

Although much that the Jewish intelligentsia did was meant to alleviate Jewish suffering in the region, the conditions of life in the Pale were necessary to produce the diversity of Jewish responses to it. The liberal, Russified Jews of St. Petersburg, with whose story Chapter 2 shall begin, were certainly aware of their own complicated relationship with the Jews of the Pale. To live in St. Petersburg in 1899, a Jew needed to obtain a special residence permit, which was generally reserved for certain special classes of people, their household servants, and to women registered as prostitutes. Some of the registered prostitutes may have been university students (Nathans 105–06). The poet Shimen Frug (1860–1916) is known to have registered as a servant for the sake of residence in the imperial capital (Dubnov 450). St. Petersburg’s Jewish community, which enjoyed its privilege partly due to open Russification, had the wealth to lead East European Jewish organizations such as the OPE, despite its geographic distance from the Pale. It was also a kind of embodiment of the *Haskalah*: a community that relied less on Yiddish and more on Russian, dressed “German,” valued secular education, and participated in society outside of the Jewish community. Publishing Pushkin in Hebrew showed the community’s fealty to Pushkin and to the Russian culture that he represented, while highlighting the non-Yiddish heritage of the Jews: the ancient, even classical language of the Hebrew Bible’s widely appreciated texts. Hebrew was a language with which even Pushkin had some association, a language that only the most highly educated Russians might encounter.

Grounded in this context of Jews in the Russian Empire, Chapter 2 addresses the relations to

Pushkin of liberal, Russified Jews, such as the writer Buki ben Yogli (1846–1917; Dr. Y. L. Katsenel'son) whose organization sponsored the 1899 Hebrew collection of Pushkin's works, *Mishirey pushqin*. This chapter also introduces the problems of translating *Evgenii Onegin* into Hebrew through a discussion of the isolated *Onegin* stanzas translated by Dovid Frishman in *Mishirey pushqin*. This chapter shows why Frishman did not translate the novel himself when the time came, but wanted for someone else to do so. Frishman's verses demonstrate the lexical and sonic limitations of Hebrew during his time, yet are creative translations that can best be appreciated by those who know the original text.

In order to understand the social and political implications of Jewish translations, their history must be revisited at each point of publication. The questions of cultural affiliation only multiplied as the Pale became a battleground, first in the Great War and then in the Russian Civil War. Jews could greet the Germans as liberators, or join the Russians fleeing from the advancing German from the advancing German forces. The Revolution's overthrow of the hated tsar could change how the Jews felt about Russia. Yet the conditions of life got worse by most measures during these wars. While some Jews were massacred or displaced, others had to make way and care for refugees, despite conditions of serious material privation. Disease spread, pogroms terrorized people, and businesses went bankrupt. Although the Jews were finally allowed to be Russian citizens and live outside of the Pale, and although they even elected delegates to the Polish Sejm, Jewish life did not cease to be an alarming problem. At the same time, Jewish communities still maintained relations, even across the new borders.

It was under these conditions that Levinson migrated between his Hebrew theater in Lodzh (Łódź), his deputy-mayoral position in Brisk (Brest), and an emigrationist Zionist gathering in Harkov (Kharkov) before moving to Palestine. He exemplifies the transnationalism of Jewish existence in the Pale, even as borders continued to change. The new Jewish political movements, now spread across new borders, seem only to have lost their reach when the USSR made them illegal. Then Jews fled to other, non-Soviet parts of the Pale. In various locations, however, Jews maintained their cultural attachment to Pushkin.

Chapter 3 focuses on Yiddish translations in Polish or Lithuanian regions of the former Pale of Settlement. St. Petersburg may have been the capital of Russia, but the Pale city of Vilne (Vilna, Vilnius) was the “Jerusalem of Lithuania.” It was long the leading center of rabbinic authority, the hub of *yeshivah* Judaism. Despite being the unofficial chief rabbi of Vilne, the famous R. Chaim Ozer Grodzenski (1863–1940) was not the unchallenged leader of Vilne Jewry as a whole. He fought to preserve Orthodox Judaism against forces championed by his own nephew, A. Y. Grodzenski, whose Vilne was a center of secular Yiddishism, labor unions, resistance against antisemitic government, and internal class struggles of the Jewish community. When it came to modern, urban, Yiddish culture, Vilne was generally seen as second to Warsaw. Yet Vilne was the city where the *Yidisher visnschaftlekher institut* (Yiddish Scientific Institute, or YIVO) was founded, where A. Y. Grodzenski’s Yiddish libretto for *Evgenii Onegin* became the basis of Eastern Europe’s first Yiddish opera performance, and where PEN (eventually) established the Yiddish PEN Centre. Writers from smaller cities travelled to Vilne to participate in its rich cultural life, including literary “evenings.” The nephew Grodzenski’s leftist and populist Yiddish newspaper, *Ovnt-kurier* (*Evening Courier*), was so popular that it was exported to journalists in other cities with some blank pages for the addition of local news. Translating Pushkin was a part of this secular Yiddishist agenda that rebelled against the old ways of being Jewish in Vilne and sought to make a new Yiddish culture. Despite the war, the Yiddish literary world was resilient enough to publish *Onegin* when the Hebrew world failed to do so.

The use of Yiddish greatly increased in Vilne after the Germans replaced the Russians in 1915; many Russified Jews reclaimed Yiddish as the political climate and the significance of Russian changed. Yiddish was historically related to the German of the occupying army, and even after much of the Jewish leadership had evacuated to Ekaterinoslav, there was sufficient interest in the Yiddish for the remaining and returning members of the intelligentsia—especially the secular socialists of the Bund—to promote and professionalize Yiddish language and culture. Cultural affiliations could

not be so easily transferred, however. This is one of the reasons why Russia's Pushkin was translated into Yiddish, even as the use of Russian by Jews was in decline.²⁸

Chapter 3 is the first study of Grodzenski to appear in English or in many decades and one of the only English works on Naydus. I have situated their biographies and original works within the context of East European Jewish cultural and political life. Critical reception of the translations, as well as close readings to compare them, reveal that Naydus' partial translation is better by most conventional measures, but Grodzenski's complete translation may have made a more significant contribution to Yiddish culture nevertheless. For both, it was an effort to develop Yiddish poetry, though it was Grodzenski who used his translation as a template for the first Yiddish opera.

Naydus spent time not only in Vilne, but in the areas where he grew up. He is remembered as a poet of Grodne (Hrodna, Grodno), a borderland city between Poland, Belarus, and Lithuania, which may have suffered a brain drain of writers who headed to bigger cities. It contained a range of Zionist and radical youth movements whose activism attracted the attention of the government. During the Great War, when Naydus returned to Grodne after enjoying the lively literary community of Vilne, he tried to bring some back with him and went on tour giving lectures, readings of poetry, and "Bohemian" literary evenings. This arrangement, which along with the war contributed to his early death, ended up being fortunate for his legacy, in the sense that a community of this size took pride in having a talented local poet. He was popular with Jewish youth all over the city, as testified by the various political banners carried at his widely attended funeral. His death was commemorated with special readings of his works. Naydus' popularity demonstrates the Jewish demand and appreciation for a new Yiddish literature that drew on Pushkin's models of literary development. Friends from Grodne made sure that his work was collected and published posthumously. After the Holocaust, remnants of the Grodne community remembered him as their city's poet, reminiscent of the way in which Russians remember Pushkin.

Naydus was not based in Grodne, however. Kustin (Kuścin), walking distance from Grodne, is relatively rural. Naydus' upbringing on a family manor distinguished him from most East European

²⁸ I am grateful to Andrew Koss for our conversations about this problem. For further discussion of Vilne during the war, see also his dissertation, "World War I and the Remaking of Jewish Vilna, 1914–1918."

Jews, who were urban and closer to each other than to nature. Intimate friends called Naydus and his siblings by their Russified or Westernized names. The spaciousness of his childhood and his very different kind of exposure to Judaism in that environment may have been crucial in the formation of a Yiddish poet whose work was criticized for not being Jewish enough. His father's agricultural ventures in the area also may have inspired him toward an agricultural, but not Palestinian, variety of Zionism. The unusual circumstances of his upbringing not only demonstrate the breadth of Jewish experiences in the Pale, but also produced this poet who, in opposition to the indigenizing Hebrew poetry of Bialik, drew extensively upon the foreign and upon surprising elements of Jewish culture as a part of a cultural program that was modeled in part on Pushkin's own method.

To avoid the German occupation, Vilne's Jewish elite fled more than 700 miles to the Ukrainian city of Ekaterinoslav (Dnipropetrovsk). It may not be thought of as one of the major centers of Jewish culture, yet it actually had a substantial Jewish population, as well as political and cultural activity. Perhaps the mass evacuation of Vilne's elite contributed to the goings-on in Ekaterinoslav, but Naydus had already visited there and drawn inspiration on the eve of the Great War. Naydus travelled back to Vilne, against the current that carried Grodzenski to his ill-fated stay in Ekaterinoslav. It appears that in Ekaterinoslav, Grodzenski befriended Leo Zeitlin (1884–1930) of the Society for Jewish Folk Music, where they may have conspired to create the opera that was performed in Vilne. Literary evenings were held in Ekaterinoslav, where there were also significant branches of Bundism and Zionism, which may have been strengthened by the memory of the pogroms that had necessitated the creation of Jewish self-defense brigades. It was from this dynamic context that Avraham Shlonsky travelled to Palestine, first for education and later for a permanent move. It was also in this place that a tiny wartime publisher put out Grodzenski's translation of Pushkin and some original work by the Yiddish poet and dramatist Perets Markish (1895–1952). The chapters of this dissertation are organized chronologically and by language, but Hebrew and Yiddish writers came from the same East European Jewish towns. Despite the variety of linguistic and political affiliations that they held, Pushkin's presence was felt throughout, along with that of Russian literature more generally.

Like Chapter 3, Chapter 4 also deals with one translation by a public intellectual and one by a famous poet, both of which were published in Palestine in 1937. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this was a Middle Eastern outpost of East European Jewry. The Zionist community in Palestine was in the process of working toward cultural self-sufficiency but had not achieved it. Although Hebrew was sufficiently in use by 1937 to have some new, native speakers, many immigrants to Palestine embraced the language as they adopted their new Hebrew identity. Even as Zionists sought to negate the Jewish Diaspora, they celebrated Pushkin's centennial as if they were a part of the Russian Diaspora. Although much of the translators' generation knew Pushkin in Russian, the decision to translate Pushkin into Hebrew arose, at least in part, from an expectation that future generations would be raised as Hebrew-speakers and would thus require a translation in order to have access to a writer whom their parents loved so much. I argue that among Zionists in Palestine, Pushkin was a more acceptable target for nostalgia than their own Yiddish backgrounds. This chapter shows how the centennial commemoration of Pushkin's death, of which these translations were a part, conflicts with the self-understanding of Zionist immigrants in Palestine as having come home and rejected their Diaspora. My discussion of Shlonsky identifies the Hebrew Zionist writers' self-conscious reenactment of Russian modernist literary relations, including relations to Pushkin, that they keenly observed from afar. I also address the ways in which Shlonsky's Judaization of the text, compared with Levinson's closer translation, are a part of this dynamic. Through analysis of both translations, I argue that their success (compared to earlier Hebrew attempts) reflects the linguistic changes that transformed Hebrew poetry in the twentieth century.

This dissertation examines the Hebrew and Yiddish translations of Alexander Pushkin's verse novel *Evgenii Onegin* as artistic efforts that aimed to develop modern Jewish secular culture as these two languages competed for Jewish readership. I argue that across a broad spectrum of political and artistic ideologies, Russian literature in general and Pushkin in particular became embedded in East European Jewish culture, but not as a fixed point. Rather, Pushkin served as a vehicle for cultural change and a reflection of Jewish intellectuals' own beliefs and desires.

CHAPTER 2

Russian Patriotism and Hebrew Literature: Dovid Frishman's Translations of *Onegin* Stanzas in 1899

Всё это низкая природа;
Изящного не много тут. (Pushkin 5:III)

all this is lowly nature;
there is not much refinement here. (Tr. Nabokov)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Society for the Promotion of Enlightenment among the Jews of Russia (OPE) published “*Mishirey pushqin*”, an anthology of Pushkin’s poems translated by Dovid Frishman, to celebrate the 1899 centennial of the Russian national poet’s birth. In the imperial context, the OPE was making a show of cultural patriotism by participating in this commemoration of Alexander Pushkin. Pushkin, and the Russian literature he symbolized, was the ideal focus for a show of Russian patriotism—an option much preferred over Russian Orthodox religion, military service, or glorification of the tsar. The Jewish community thereby publicly helped realize Pushkin’s prediction: that the many peoples of Russia would love and declaim him in their own languages as his call for freedom left a greater legacy than that of the imperial monarch.

Inwardly, as a part of the educational goals of the organization, this translation would promote the dual goals of literacy in imperial culture and the use of Hebrew. Both of these intentions were part of the old program of the *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment movement that had for some time been giving ground to successor movements, but Russian and Hebrew literacy were by no

means out of fashion in 1899. In fact, they were both on the rise. The translation was a nexus of *Haskalah*, Hebraism, and Russian-Jewish patriotism. In an essay at the beginning of the book, Y. L. Katsenel'son encourages the uninitiated to learn more about Pushkin and the Hebrew writer to follow Pushkin's example.

Frishman famously argued that translation was essential for the development of modern Hebrew literature and for the maintenance of a Hebrew literary community. His translations of selected excerpts from *Evgenii Onegin* may be helpful for the uninitiated, but are written for an audience that can refer back to Pushkin's text—with current and potential Hebrew writers in mind. Frishman's *Onegin* verses demonstrate the linguistic challenges that Hebrew writers faced as well as the creative ways in which they could take advantage of the poor alignment between the resources of this language and the demands of modern literature. Like his contemporaries creating an imagined Hebrew-speaking reality²⁹ in their original works, he conspires with the audience, one that generally knew (or at least could check) Pushkin in the Russian. Frishman's Hebrew reality rests upon a Russian text, enabling Frishman to demonstrate and expand the range of Hebrew expression. Freed from the duty of introducing Pushkin to the audience, his translations are more geared towards the display of his Hebrew aesthetic than towards a precise reproduction of the Russian poet.

2.2 JEWS, PUSHKIN, AND TRANSLATION

In their relation to non-Jewish literatures, modern East European Jews were ambivalent if not polarized—though here I am focusing on only part of the continuum. The question was not just whether to promote Hebrew, speak Yiddish, or adopt a non-Jewish language such as Russian or Polish, but how much interest to take in non-Jewish writers. Yuri Slezkine argues that many Jews saw falling in

²⁹ Perhaps teleologically, Dov Sadan famously described this “as-if reality” from a Zionist perspective:

היתה זו יכולת נפלאה של דור-סופרים, שידע להעניק ללשונו רוחב-הבעה ועומק ביטוי, כאילו כבר היתה נטועה ועומדת במציאות נורמאלית של חיי-לשון ולשון-חיים, והרי אילולא אותה מציאות-שכאילו ספק אם היתה נוצרת מציאות-ממש [...]

This was a wonderful ability of a generation of writers that knew to grant our language a breadth of expression and depth of articulation, as if it was already planted and standing in a normal reality it is doubtful that a substantive reality would have been created[.] (36)

love with the national poet as a way into European society—“[t]o enter the neutral spaces, one had to convert to a national faith” (67) in which the sacred texts are not religious, but belletristic—and recounts the Pushkin-topped bookshelves and the memorization of Pushkin texts among Jews in the Russian Empire such as Mandel’shtam (67–8) and Babel’ (135). Brian Horowitz explains how M. O. Gershenzon, a Jew who became a renowned Pushkin scholar in Russian, came from a family that transmitted its love of Pushkin to him:

One of the few lights in the darkness was Pushkin. According to Gershenzon’s daughter, Nataliya Mikhailovna Gershenzon-Chegodavaeva, Only two things had the power to assuage the severity of life in the Pale: Pushkin’s poetry and his grandfather, who had introduced him to the poet. “One of the happiest memories of his childhood was M. O. [Gershenzon’s] friendship with his blind grandfather, his mother’s father, whom he led to the synagogue. Grandfather was the first person to plant in M. O.’s soul a love for Pushkin. He told his grandson that as a child he had several times seen Pushkin rapidly running along Kishinev’s streets in plaid pants.” [quoting Nataliya Gershenzon-Chegodavaeva to Olga Deschartes in Vyacheslav Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 4 vols. (Brussels: L’Age d’homme, 1976–80), 3: 808–9.] (Horowitz 1996 11)

Pushkin had actually lived in exile alongside the Jews (who considered themselves to be exiles) in Kishinev and Odessa. This, along with his mostly Russian but partly African ancestry, curly hair, bibliophilia, association with the Decembrists, problems with the tsar, and other characteristics, allowed Jews to identify more closely with him.

The publication of *Mishirey pushqin* reflects a new approach to translation and a shift in the way that Jewish translators approached Pushkin. It was not the first time that Pushkin was translated into Hebrew, but against the backdrop of the history of Hebrew translation, this text reflects the changes taking place at the turn of the century.

The *Haskalah* had inspired Jewish translation work, though much of it was geared towards scientific study of the natural world or of Judaism: for example, Naḥum Sokolov’s translation of a geography book³⁰ or Solomon Rubin’s translations of Spinoza.³¹ A few translations of Pushkin appeared in anthologies, journals, or essays (for the sake of quotation);³² Judah Leib Gordon (1830–1892)

³⁰ Originally, Matthew Fontaine Maury’s *The Physical Geography of the Seas*.

³¹ *Moreh nevukhim he-ḥadash*.

³² For further discussion of *Haskalah* translations, see Kopel’man (1999).

translated some individual works by non-Jewish poets, including Schiller and Pushkin, but the first book of Pushkin in Hebrew seems to be the slim volume by Gabriel Judah Lichtenfeld (1811–1887), which includes a “copying”³³ of Pushkin’s drama “*Rusalka*” and of a related poem. In this very biblical Hebrew book, Lichtenfeld includes a brief introduction which explains that these texts by Pushkin contain important moral lessons (4). The book’s title page has a quote from Avoth and the second text has an epigraph from Isaiah, neither of which were a part of the original texts; titles have been changed, for example, from “*Rusalka*”³⁴ to “False Love.” Similarly, the young woman in the play is renamed “Shoshanah”³⁵ in the process of Judaizing the text.

Mishirey pushqin came out for the centennial and lies in between the translation style of the *Haskalah* and that which would come later as the language developed. Hebrew writer, critic, editor, and translator Dovid Frishman (1859–1922) would later become one of the greatest advocates for translation into Hebrew. After the Revolution, he would unsuccessfully search for a Hebrew poet to translate *Evgenii Onegin*; in 1899, he himself translated selected stanzas from the novel and disguised them under other titles as lyric poetry within *Mishirey pushqin*. This book, even with its small potential audience, is at the intersection of older *maskilim* of Russian patriotism and the younger Hebrew writers.

2.3 ENLIGHTENMENT, PATRIOTISM, AND TITLE PAGES

Published by the OPE, Frishman’s *Mishirey pushqin* [“From the Songs of Pushkin”], a book of 24 poem-translations, reflects not only what Frishman was trying to do with Hebrew aesthetics, but also what the OPE wanted to do with Jewish identity in the Russian Empire. It appeared after the political sentiment of the *Haskalah* had been falling out of fashion since its bitter disappointments of the 1880s; the older generation of Hebrew intellectuals was now accompanied by newer Hebrew writers in the 1890s. The First Zionist Congress had put political emigrationist Zionism on the menu

³³ As translation was often described in those days.

³⁴ From Slavic mythology, often a water-nymph who haunts the area where she ended her life as a jilted lover or unwed mother.

³⁵ Kopel’man notes that Aharon Libushitzky’s 1899 Hebrew translation of a Pushkin fairy tale shares the conventions of Lichtenfeld’s (1999).

in 1897, yet the front matter of *Mishirey pushqin* reminds us that Russia's Jews were still looking for a way to improve their lot as a minority within the Empire by participating in Russian culture. The material in the book, including front matter and Katzenel'son's monograph on Pushkin in Hebrew, uses the centennial of Russia's national poet as a means of demonstrating that the Jews are one of many nations bound by the Russian Empire. This may have been one of the main reasons why the OPE published the translations therein, since other materials indicate that the book is not for an audience who needs access to Pushkin through translation.

The purpose of the OPE, along with a system of schools, journals, etc., was to promote *Haskalah* and a certain kind of integration. The *maskilim* believed that a modern Hebrew language and literature were key for becoming a different and not shamefully backward kind of Jew. At the turn of the century, the organization represented not just old *maskilim* but was also an intersection of modern Jewish ideas that included, writes Brian Horowitz, "Jewish intellectuals of differing orientations about such issues as Zionist politics, national identity, and the role of Yiddish education" (*Empire Jews* 135). The OPE members did not agree about fundamental questions of modern Jewish existence, but one generalization could be made: "A majority of OPE members appeared to repudiate the identity of "Russian Jew" (*russkii evrei*) and no longer imagined themselves, or hoped to become, members of the Russian nation. Rather, they considered themselves to be "Jews in Russia" (*evrei v Rossii*), composing an independent national group within the Russian State, similar to other ethnic minorities such as Poles, Ukrainians, and Latvians" (137).

Although Political Zionism was one new expression of modern Jewish identity at this time, *Mishirey pushqin* shows that it is a mistake to think that Jewish political and cultural life were marching teleologically in that direction. Most Jews of the Empire, including Hebraists, were not even part of the Hibbat Zion movement. Integration, assimilation, national autonomy, and other solutions to modern East European Jewish problems were also being considered alongside questions of Jewish identity.

The publication of *Mishirey pushqin* as a Jewish contribution to the 1899 centennial of the Russian poet's birth that was being celebrated in the Russian Empire. Like other Hebrew books pub-

lished in the Empire during this time, this book—published in Saint Petersburg—contains front matter that identifies it in both Hebrew and Russian. But peculiarly, this one seems to carry a bilingual message to Jews, including Russian-speaking Jews, and to non-Jewish Russians.

On the right-hand side is a title page in Russian, and on the left a title page in Hebrew. But repeated on each side is the quotation from Pushkin followed by its translation into Hebrew, leaving neither page completely monolingual:

«Слух обо мне пройдет по всей Руси великой,
И назовет меня всяк сущий в ней язык.»

וְאוֹתִי בְרוֹסְיָהּ הַגְּדוֹלָה כָּל-אִישׁ בָּהּ יִדַע וְיָרָא,
וְכָל-לְשׁוֹן שְׂבָה תִשְׁמַע לִי הִיא תִשְׁבַּע.

[I shall be noised abroad through all great Russia,
Her innumerable tongues shall speak my name. (Tr. Thomas)]

These lines are from Pushkin's well-known poem "I have built myself a monument..." (*Ia pamiatnik sebe vozdvig nerukotvornyi...* 1836), which was apparently a source of encouragement for Jews hoping to become a respected segment of a multinational Russian Empire. The bilingual presentation of the poem itself attempts to realize the "prophecy" therein: Pushkin in a tongue of Russia's Jewish minority. Pushkin's full stanza imagines all the peoples of the Empire as future fans of the national poet:

I shall be noised abroad through all great Russia,
Her innumerable tongues shall speak my name,
And the proud grandson of the Slavs, and the Finns, and now the wild
Tungus, and the friend of the steppes, the Kalmyk. (Tr. Thomas 92)

Слух обо мне пройдет по всей Руси великой,
И назовет меня всяк сущий в ней язык,
И гордый внук славян, и финн, и ныне дикой
Тунгус, и друг степей калмык. (424)

This poem promotes the multi-ethnic, pan-Russian culture which the OPE Jews, though not included here by Pushkin, hoped they could be a part of if only given the chance, and this Hebrew

anthology celebrating the centennial of Russia's national poet is an attempt to do so. Although Pushkin was at odds with the tsars during his life, the poet had since become a Russian national symbol, especially since Dostoevsky's famous "Pushkin" speech (Dostoevsky 56–67). In the poem, Pushkin asserts his superiority to the tsar (who was no friend to the Jews) and (some would say prophetically) predicts his own lasting fame among the peoples of the Russian Empire. He suggests that the lyre is dearer to the Russian peoples than the crown, an idea which appealed to those Hebraists for whom literature seemed the best means of achieving some kind of emancipation or at least dignity. For a despised minority such as the Jews, the notion of Pushkin uniting a consciously multi-national Russian Empire is of particular appeal. They could see—or at least present—themselves as a subject nation among the Slavs, Finns, Kalmyks, and other ethnic minorities of the Empire. This message was supported by the inclusion of Pushkin's "Jewish" work in the anthology, such as the poem "Judith."

The message encoded here would have been understood not only by Jews, but by Russians (should they come across the book), thanks to its bilingual presentation. This is not just a message to fellow Jews, but also to Russia. "If you trust Pushkin," it seems to say, "then look—he promised that the peoples of Russia would all love him. We are doing our part to fulfill the prophecy. Now it is your turn to rethink Russian identity," which is presented as a language community with a shared literary heritage that will hopefully be respectful of its minorities.

2.4 INTRODUCING PUSHKIN IN HEBREW: BUKI BEN YONGLI

While the translation tries outwardly to demonstrate Jewish solidarity with the other Russian subjects celebrating a century since the birth of the poet as a means of helping Jews join the family of nations, internally it creates a virtual reality of Hebrew literacy and culture in order to help enrich the incipient Hebrew literature. Also in the title pages' almost-mirror images are the names of the Hebrew writer Dr. Yehudah Leyb-Binyomin Katsenelson (1846–1917). In *Mishirey pushqin*, he is identified not by the Hebrew pen name he had taken from the Bible, Buki ben Yogli, but rather as Dr. Y. L. Katsenel'son in Hebrew and Dr. Lev Katsenel'son on the Russian title page, reflecting the

complexity of his identity. His 28-page monograph at the beginning of *Mishirey pushqin*, “*Toldos pushkin*,” is a biography of the Russian poet written with a didactic purpose directed at a Jewish audience. He lays out a vision of Pushkin and of Hebrew literature that emphasizes “realism” in poetry, contrasting that with a form of Romanticism that was divorced from everyday reality. While elaborating upon the vision of the title pages, Katsenelson’s aim was not only to teach Jews about Pushkin, but also to identify the Russian poet’s lessons for Hebrew literary development.

A medical doctor and part of the OPE’s “older generation of St. Petersburg leaders” (Horowitz *Jewish Philanthropy* 1999), Katsenelson was so committed to Hebrew that, a few years later, he led the opposition to the organization’s adoption of Yiddish as an official language. He felt that “Russian and Hebrew were all one needed” for elementary education in OPE schools (185). He was a nationalist who encouraged the use of Jewish language and literature to promote Jewish ethics and avoid assimilation on the one hand, while opposing political expressions of Jewish nationalism, including Zionism (which, though a small movement, was growing); for him, the Jews were by nature apolitical³⁶ (Horowitz *Empire Jews* 134–5). He and his wife had both provided their medical skills to the Russian army in the Russo-Turkish War (Menda-Levy), apparently as a voluntary act of patriotism.

The Hebrew-language biography quotes Pushkin in the original Russian, sometimes without Hebrew translation; readers were thus expected to know Russian or at least be able to look it up. Some very basic biographical information about Pushkin is provided for those who do not know much about Russian literature, perhaps students in OPE schools. Leaving out any discussion of Pushkin’s actual attitude towards the Jews, this text presents Russian Jews as a people who love and learn from Pushkin just the other nations of the Empire, encouraging them to build their own literature as well.

The monograph begins with a straightforward reference to the auspicious occasion celebrated in 1899: “on the twenty-second of the month of May, the Russian people will celebrate the centennial of the birthday of its great poet, Alexander, son of Sergei, Pushkin (V).³⁷ By reading this translation,

³⁶ Though he later became a Zionist, at this time he was a territorialist with some interest in Jewish agriculture (Menda-Levy).

³⁷ “בעשרים וששה לירח מאי יחוג עם הרוסים את חג היובילים ליום הולדת משוררו הגדול אלכסנדר בן סערגיי פושקין.”

Jews of the Empire were participating in this Russian celebration. Not all Jews were interested in this and Katsenelson had to make a case for it in the introduction. The Judeophobic sentiments of nineteenth-century Russian culture—sentiments that appear in Pushkin’s work in a few instances—presented a problem for Jews in the Empire, turning some away. In fact, Ben-tsiyon Katz recalls that Katsenelson was not the first person who was approached to write the monograph section of *Mishirey pushqin*. Baron David Ginsburg (Dovid Gintsburg) had agreed to write the biography of Pushkin, but his research for the project revealed the poet’s negative attitude towards Jews.³⁸ Gintsburg backed out of the project and transferred his interest to Mikhail Lermontov, a Russian poet who seemed to be more philosemitic (Kats 30). Katsenelson may be addressing this Jewish ambivalence towards the Russian writer when he straightforwardly explains why the Jews love (or ought to love) Pushkin. Quoting from the original Russian, he emphasizes the “longing for freedom” that Pushkin expresses in his poetry, to which the Jews can relate:

Would the Jewish people of Russia really ask: “What am I to Pushkin and what is Pushkin to me?” No! It wouldn’t ask about this. Most of its children, too, learn Pushkin’s poems in their schools. As one of the peoples of Russia it, too, feels the honor and the value, which the memory of the poet destined for the land of his birth, and as one of the peoples of Russia it, too, longs for the good days, the days of peace and blessing, which the poet hoped to bring to his land, the time when his prophecy will come, which he prophesied on his soul saying:

*And long will I be loved by the people,
For having awakened good feelings with my lyre,
For having, in my cruel age, glorified freedom,
And called for mercy for the fallen.*³⁹ (in Russian; vi)

³⁸ This probably refers to the “презренный еврей” (despicable Jew) in the poem “The Black Shawl” or the Jewish userer in “The Covetous Knight”; see Fyodor Dostoevsky as an example of how much Jews could love a writer who apparently hated them. In this anthology, Frishman translates “Judith”, a poem which Jews considered to be an indication that Pushkin had sympathy for them. Levinson mentions this in the introduction to his 1937 translation of *Evgenii Onegin*. See Chapter 4.

³⁹ השאול ישאל איפוא עם העברים אשר בארץ רוסיה: מה אני לפושקין ומה פושקין לי? לא! הוא לא ישאל בזאת. מרבית ילדיו ילמדו גם הם את שירי פושקין בבתי ספרם. כאחד מעמי רוסיה ירגיש גם הוא את הכבוד והיקר, אשר יעדה זכר המשורר לארץ מולדתו, וכאחד מעמי רוסיה ישא גם הוא את נפשו לקראת הימים הטובים, ימי השלום והברכה, אשר חפץ המשורר להביא לארצו, עת תבוא נבואתו, אשר נבא על נפשו לאמר:

«И долго буду тем любезен я народу,
Что чувства добрыя я лирой пробуждал,
Что в мой жестокий век возславил я свободу,

These are more lines from “I have built myself a monument,” the poem quoted in the title pages. Katsenelson’s aim is to suggest that Pushkin really was on the side of the Jews and in fact of all oppressed “peoples of Russia,” and that a genius cannot belong exclusively to his own nation (vi) but rather expresses ideas that will belong to, or even help, other nations as well. Quoting it in Russian, Katsenelson also establishes that Pushkin (in his original language) already belongs to the Jewish audience of the book.

While the title pages spoke to both a Jewish and a non-Jewish audience, Katsenelson’s monograph has a message for the Jews of Russia, whether educated in Russian literature or not. Jews can, do, and should love the Russian national poet, who—like them—chafed under tsarist oppression and longed for another kind of unity than the political variety; while Jews united under their own sacred books, they were to unite together with the other peoples of the Empire under Russian books such as Pushkin’s. Not only that, they must work to develop their own literature in Hebrew, following Pushkin’s example of how to progress.

Although Katsenelson was writing a short biography of the poet, he also took the opportunity to reflect on the state of Hebrew literature foregrounded by the process by which Russian literature itself had been changed before and by Pushkin. He argues that Pushkin brought Russian poetry out of what he calls “Romanticism” and into what he calls “Realism,”⁴⁰ indicating that Hebrew literature does and should follow a similar, if not yet completed, path. For example, Katsenelson wants his readers to understand Pushkin’s production of realist literature as an important goal for the developing Hebrew literature at the time, a part of becoming up-to-date relative to contemporary literatures. Katsenelson compares the history of Hebrew literature with that of Russian literature, pre-Pushkin:

Our Jewish readers know that there were days of our new literature when this imaginative poetry found itself a place in its midst as well. In the beginning of the firstfruits of our literature poets also sang about the happiness of the shepherd, as he sat in the

И милость к падшим призывал.»

⁴⁰ He may not be using these terms as we understand them today, but he is probably echoing Vissarion Belinskii’s reading of the novel.

beauty of the grass in the midst of sheep of his flock—playing flutes and relishing the majesty of nature and the beauty of creation; and as his soul is poured out to the bosom of his wife, of inestimable beauty, it contemplates lofty and transcendent thoughts like Plato and Aristotle in their time. Then poets sang about the happiness of the peasant and his pleasures as he walks, under the light of the sun which blazes at noon, behind his plow that is hitched to a yoke of oxen, and in his heart he scorns the tumult of the town and its noise and he does not envy nobles and aristocrats of the land, who have gold and silver, but cannot enjoy the majesty of nature, which he, the poor peasant, enjoys as he follows his plow. Then our poets sang about the delight of the spring and the pleasantness of the summer, about the splendor of the olive tree and the beauty of the grapevine, about the radiance of the rose and the prettiness of the lily, and they would sing this song of theirs in days of snow and heavy rain while they sat imprisoned in their narrow room full of darkness and stench[...] Then the poets also sang about fairy love, about love as fierce as death, which they had never known and had not observed[...] Our poets sang not about the contemplations of their spirits, and not about the feelings of their hearts, but rather they played with their imitations of the works of others' hands. Surely the poets of all *amei-ha'aretz* [lit. "peoples of the land," with connotations of ignorance] also sang thus in those days.⁴¹ (Katsenel'son xi–xii)

Thinking about how far Hebrew poetry had come from its beginnings, Katsenel'son recalls imitative, neoclassical Hebrew poetry from earlier in the *Haskalah*, which had given eventually given way to new material. The artistic orientation may have been changing, but of course the Hebrew language itself was better suited to the grapevine and olive tree than to the snow and dank rooms of the Jews' lived reality in Eastern Europe. Katsenel'son explains how Russian literature, too, had to deal with classicism and its inclination towards lofty poetry when it imitated Greco-Roman poetry with fixed phrases (*melitsot*) that did not necessarily have much to do with Russian life. Katsenel'son disdains this kind of poetics, but also Romanticism, because "life as it is, with all its virtues and faults, is much more appropriate for poetic material than imagined life, which they created in their imaginations"

⁴¹ קוראינו היהודים יודעים, כי היו ימים לספרותנו החדשה והשירה הדמיונית הזאת מצאה לה מקום גם בתוכה. אז בראשית בכור ספרותינו שרו גם משוררים על אושר הרועה, בשבתו בנאות דשא בתוך צאן מרעיתו—מחלל בחלילים ומתענג על הדר הטבע ויפעת הבריאה; ובהשתפך נפשו אל חיק רעיתו, אשר אין ערוך ליפיה, היא היגה דעות רמות ונשגבות כאפלטון ואריסטו בשעתם. אז שרו משוררים על אושר האכר ותענוגותיו בלכתו, תחת אור השמש הלוהט בצהריים, אחרי מחרשתו הרתומה לצמד בקר, ויבזו בלבו להמון קריה ולשאונה ולא יקנא בשרים ורוזני ארץ, אשר זהב להם וכסף, אבל לא יוכלו להתענג על הדר הטבע, כאשר יתענג הוא, האכר הדל, ההולך אחרי מחרשתו. אז שרו משוררנו על חמדת האביב ונעימות הקיץ, על הוד הזית ויפעת הגפן, על זוהר השושנה ויפי החבצלת, וישירו את שירתם זאת בימי שלג וסגריר בשבתם כלואים בחדרם הצר המלא אופל וצחנה [...] הלא ככה שרו גם משוררי כל עמי הארץ בימים ההם. אז שרו משוררים גם על האהבה בת-השמים, על האהבה העזה כמות, אשר מעודם לא ידעו אותה ולא הכירוה [...] לא את הגות רוחם שרו משוררינו, ולא את רחשי לבם, כי אם השתעשעו בחקותם מעשי ידי אחרים. הלא ככה שרו גם משוררי כל עמי הארץ בימים ההם.

(xv).⁴² Hebrew poetry, he points out in a footnote, has been spared Greco-Roman neoclassicism thanks to the good influence of the prohibition against idolatry, but started out with Romanticism. But while the work of Avraham Mapu and the early work of Judah Leib Gordon was Romantic, Gordon later turned to Realism (xiv–xv).

With this idea about Hebrew literature and “realism” announced in the first half of the book, it makes sense that in addition to such biblical-themed poems as “Judith” (based on the story of Holofernes) and “Prophet” (which links the speaker of the poem to the prophet Isaiah), or potentially philosemitic⁴³ works such as “Unfinished Story” (*Nachalo povesti*), several nature poems would be included among the Hebrew translations. Some of these are taken from *Evgenii Onegin*, Pushkin’s novel in verse which Belinskii noted for, among other characteristics, its realism, as I shall discuss in the following pages. They can then serve as an example for aspiring Hebrew writers of how it is possible to get Hebrew literature to relate to the here-and-now of life at home in the Russian Empire. As we shall see, this does not actually result in a “realism” of reality, but virtual reality.

Thanks to Katsenelson’s lesson on Pushkin appreciation and literary development, the translations are delivered to the reader as a part of an overall message: the Jews of Russia are to celebrate Pushkin’s centennial with proper appreciation for a poet that they should really get to know (if they do not already), and they should work to foster Hebrew literature in this direction. This quest of national literature, with all its sidesteps, was on a well-trodden path.

2.5 TEXTBOOK EXAMPLES OF NATURE POEMS

The stanzas from *Onegin* that are translated here stand on their own out of context, but play a narrative role within the novel. The excerpt comprising “*Tkufas tishray*” (see below for an explanation of titles) is from a part of the novel after Onegin rejects Tatiana but before Lensky invites him to the Larins’ party. It introduces a period of boredom which may contribute to Onegin’s subsequent

⁴² “החיים כמו שהם, עם כל מעלותיהם וחסרונותיהם, ראויים הם להיות חומר לשירה יתר הרבה מהחיים המדומים, אשר בראו להם בדמיונם.”

⁴³ “Judith” and “Prophet” are poems that could be expected to translate more easily into Hebrew thanks to their ancient Near Eastern inspiration, and together with the unfinished story that begins with a suffering Jewish family, they support an idea of Pushkin having something special in common with the Jews. Here, that is their shared interest in the ancient Hebrew texts as well as his empathy for minorities of the Empire.

fatefully cruel behavior towards Lensky, Tatiana, and Olga at that party. The stanza comprising “*Khoyref*” (5:2) transitions the narrator’s attention from Onegin’s to Tatiana’s state of mind after his rejection of her (but also before the party). The previous stanza (5:1) explains that winter was late in coming, but had finally arrived; the very next stanza (5:3) meta-poetically suggests that the reader will find this description of winter inferior to those of senior Russian poets. Chapter 5 continues by describing Tatiana’s far more positive relationship with winter before addressing her melancholy. The original text of “*Tkufas nison*” appears after the duel in which Onegin slays Lensky, introducing the melancholy spring that follows the tragedy. The Hebrew translation takes these stanzas out of their narrative context to focus on the weather.

It makes sense that the biblical and metapoetic poetry would be supplemented by poems that fit the vision of “realism” laid out in Katsenel’son’s monograph. While translating “Prophet” into Hebrew would be an interesting experiment, as if returning the Isaiah-inspired Russian text to the Hebrew language, translating *Onegin* into Hebrew might do more to enrich the language with new material. The selections of *Onegin* that were chosen for Hebrew translation represent just one of many aspects of the novel that would have been challenging for Hebrew: nature, which was both inoffensive and uncontroversial, but also tackled an area that had long been an interest of *maskilim*; some of the earliest writings by Sh. Y. Abramovitsh in the 1860s had been translations of science and nature books,⁴⁴ and he and other Hebrew writers had been working on this for several decades. In *Onegin*, the sun chases the snow downhill, winter stands at the door, and various creatures animate the description with their seasonal behavior as they interact with the natural environment, each other, and humans. Even the Russian peasants, in these stanzas, serve as a further extension of Pushkin’s seasonally descriptive behavior. This lively, three-dimensional way of writing about the weather opens the door for Hebrew; rather than a scientific catalogue of dew points, windchill and life cycles, it includes some basic terminology while depictions of insects, birds, larger animals, and humans express the changes that take place as the seasons come and go.

In addition to the Hebrew word for “winter,” Frishman uses the Hebrew months in the naming

⁴⁴ See Abramovitsh’s 1862 translation of Harald Othmar Lenz’s *Gemeinnützige Naturgeschichte*.

of these poems, adding a Hebrew flavor and giving the traditional calendar some modern poetic function, but these titles also obscure the origin of the excerpts. In the original text of *Evgenii Onegin*, the *Onegin* stanzas are numbered, not titled. Thus naming the translated poems after seasons is also a way that this Hebrew anthology avoids mentioning that they are translations from the famous novel; rather than citing *Evgenii Onegin* as the source and taking on responsibility for the *Onegin* stanza form, it disguises these stanzas as lyric nature poems. Not only in Hebrew, but in the Russian titles (provided in the table of contents in parenthesis next to the Hebrew ones) he provides only the names of seasons. While the more educated parts of the audience may have recognized *Onegin* immediately (in spite of metrical differences discussed elsewhere in this chapter), readers who might have looked for these titles in Russian anthologies of Pushkin would have been at a loss. The evidence that this was a conscious process of obscuring the source in *Onegin* stems from: the edits Frishman makes to the text, the fact that if they were excerpts, they may have come from a book which notes their origin, and the distinctive form of *Onegin* which should have been familiar. There were certainly Jews at this time who would have instantly recognized the imagery as coming from *Onegin*, but Frishman does not seem interested in making it clear.

The closest (currently available) Russian source for the titles of these stanzas as well as for the decision to translate them is the 1892 edition of *Ruskaia Khrestomatiia* [Russian Chrestomathy], A.D. Galakhov's anthology⁴⁵ for students of Russian, also published in Saint Petersburg. Although the titles are not exactly identical, the fact that these are excerpts of a longer work suggests that Galakhov provided Frishman with his source. In Table 2.1 below Frishman has chosen the same passages as Galakhov and has similar, but not identical, titles in Russian.

⁴⁵ Nabokov writes of 5:11, though I have found no other *nineteenth*-century anthology so far: "This stanza often appears in Russian schoolbooks as a separate poem entitled Winter; and in 1899, a certain Plosaykevich made a 'Child chorus for two voices' out of the stanza, which he dubbed the octave 'The Russian Winter' and the sextet 'The Sportive Lad' (*Mal'chik-Zabavnik*)" (v. 2 of 4 p. 491).

TABLE 2.1 *Onegin* stanzas, Hebrew titles, Russian titles

CH. : VERSE	HEBREW TITLE	FRISHMAN'S RUSSIAN	GALAKHOV'S RUSSIAN
7:I	<i>Tkufas nison</i> [“The period of Nisan”]	<i>Vesna</i> [“Spring”]	<i>Nastuplenie vesny</i> [“The Advent of Spring”]
4:XL–XLII	<i>Tkufas tishray</i> [“The period of Tishrei”]	<i>Osen'</i> [“Autumn”]	<i>Osen' i zima</i> [“Fall and Winter”]
5:II	<i>Khoyref</i> [“Winter”]	<i>Zima</i> [“Winter”]	<i>Zima</i> [“Winter”]

Like those eventually translated by Frishman, Galakhov's excerpts from *Evgenii Onegin* are titled not by their numerical place within the larger text, but by words indicating their seasonal themes. Although we shall see some small differences, they are excerpts from the same parts of the novel, some beginning mid-stanza and up to three *Onegin* stanzas in length. Like Galakhov, Frishman omits the first four lines of Chapter 4 Stanza XL, a decision for which I can see no other conspicuous reason. But while Galakhov indicates in his end notes that these are from the novel, Frishman never does.

The difference between Galakhov's text and *Mishirey pushqin's* suggests Frishman's aversion to presenting these stanzas as part of the novel or at least his awareness that that is where they came from. Though Galakhov's “Zima” [“Winter”] consists of *Evgenii Onegin* Chapter 5, Stanzas I–II, Frishman's “Khoyref” includes only Stanza II. The Hebrew version thereby omits the mention of the novel's heroine, Tatiana, which among Galakhov's excerpts is an obvious signal that this text comes from *Onegin*. What is left is a translation of Stanza II which presents itself as lyric nature poetry, not an excerpt from a novel.

TABLE 2.2 Omitted lines

ONEGIN STANZAS USED	GALAKHOV'S TEXT	FRISHMAN'S TEXT
4:XL	Lines 1–4 omitted	Lines 1–4 omitted
4:XLII	Lines 3–4 omitted	
5:I–II		Stanza I omitted

The one piece of editing in Frishman's translations which differs from the poems in the Galakhov anthology is in “*Tkufas tishray*” in what would be Stanza XLII of Chapter 4 of *Evgenii Onegin*. Frishman matches Galakhov's text even in the deletion of the first four lines of Stanza XL, but he differs

from Galakhov by including Lines 3–4 of Stanza XLII. Galakhov deletes this significant parenthetical remark from the stanza, losing the rhyme-pairs for Lines 1–2 in the process: As discussed elsewhere in this chapter in the section on Frishman’s prosody, the Hebrew translator includes the parenthetical remark of Lines 3–4 about rhyming “*morozy-rozy*” [“frosts-roses”]. This indicates that if Frishman used Galakhov, he still knew he was translating *Onegin* and used the original text to translate this memorable couplet very successfully into Hebrew.

Galakhov’s use of the poems for his didactic purposes may help to explain the choice of these stanzas from *Onegin*, given what we have already seen about Katsenelson’s contribution to the book. For unlike Frishman, Galakhov writes in his end-notes:

These poems, taken from Eugene Onegin, constitute the best example of description of Russian seasons within the masterly selection true to nature, of characteristic features, of the precision of their exemplary presentation, which, in addition, is notable for artistic-poetic grace. They give the teacher ample materials for many-sided analysis (by content, dispositions, stylistic features and language).⁴⁶ (374)

Jewish readers may have encountered Galakhov’s chrestomathy in the course of their education, but this note to teachers of Russian literature tells us how people saw the importance of these stanzas for students of Russian literature. That the accuracy and craftsmanship of these descriptions of nature were to aid the teacher of Russian literature in instruction makes it a good choice for the Hebrew anthology, given the *maskilic* project and the thoughts on Pushkin and Hebrew literature which were expressed in Katsenelson’s introduction. These stanzas are just what is called for: a depiction of the reality of local nature (as opposed to Biblical nature), a sort of realism. As Pushkin writes in the stanza following the one that Frishman calls “Winter,”

But, maybe, pictures of this kind
will not attract you;

⁴⁶

Эти стихотворения, взятые из Евгения онегина, представляют наилучший образец описания русских времен года по мастерскому подбору верных природе, характеристических признаков, про образцовой точности их представления, которое, сверх того, отличается художественно-поэтической грацией. Преподавателю дают они обильный материал для многостороннего анализа (со стороны содержания, диспозиции, стилистических особенностей и языка) [.]

all this is lowly nature;
 there is not much refinement here.
 Warmed by the god of inspiration,
 another poet in luxurious language
 for us has painted the first snow
 and all the shades of winter's delectations.
 He'll captivate you, I am sure of it,
 when he depicts in flaming verses
 secret promenades in sleigh;
 but I have not intention of contending
 either with him at present or with you,
 singer of the young Finnish Maid! (Nabokov's translation)

Но, может быть, такого рода
 Картины вас не привлекут:
 Всё это низкая природа;
 Изящного не много тут.
 Согретый вдохновенья богом,
 Другой поэт роскошным слогом
 Живописал нам первый снег
 И все оттенки зимних нег:
 Он вас пленит, я в том уверен,
 Рисую в пламенных стихах
 Прогулки тайные в саях;
 Но я бороться не намерен
 Ни с ним покаместь, ни с тобой,
 Певец Финляндки молодой!

Thus in Stanza 5:3, Pushkin draws attention to the realism of his own writing in contrast to the Romanticism of peers and predecessors. The “flaming verses” and “luxurious language” that paint the snowy landscape and the Hebrew Orientalism described by Katsenelson, though as different as winter and summer, belong to parallel (though not necessarily simultaneous) literary traditions of Romanticism. These depictions of nature are written and later chosen for translation not because of some ideal perfection, but for their deviation from that mode of expression.

Regardless of why they did not identify these stanzas excerpts from *Evgenii Onegin*, the people who put together this Hebrew anthology were not only promoting Russian culture and its lessons for the Hebrew literature, they also wanted to have an OPE school curriculum which was up to date with Russian schools. Regardless of whether these excerpts were inspired by Galakhov's or

another chrestomathy, they reflect an awareness of how Pushkin was taught to non-Jewish students in the Empire and they suggest that students of OPE schools may have been imagined as part of his audience. Not only OPE students would benefit from this, because many Hebrew writers so far had gotten a more traditional *kheyder* (*cheder*) education and educated themselves in Russian culture; a book like this could have been very helpful and interesting for such an audience.

These stanzas from *Evgenii Onegin* were chosen for their focus on the Russian seasons and realistic depictions of nature. They were a part of the curriculum in Russian schools for the same reason. In *Mishirey pushqin*, these stanzas took on an additional importance as the realistic depiction of this universal topic was a major ongoing project of Hebrew literature. The audience could benefit from this as a part of its education in Russian literature or as inspiration for Hebrew writing.⁴⁷

2.6 WHY TRANSLATE PUSHKIN?

Katsenelson's untranslated quote above is not the only indicator of Russian literacy among the audience of this book, since Russian titles of poems, in parenthesis, follow each Hebrew title in the table of contents. This editorial choice appears to be a way for readers to go back and consult the appropriate Russian original text if they so wish.⁴⁸ The notion that many, if not most or all, of the expected audience of this book was literate in Russian and even familiar with Pushkin's works in the original, perhaps, sets these translations apart from what theorists such as Venuti usually expect of a translation. For an audience who already could and did read Pushkin in Russian, what was the point of translating him—perhaps Jews could have found another way to celebrate the centennial, one which would have been more visible to Russians. For a Yiddish-speaking people who mostly did not understand Hebrew books, a Hebrew translation could not bring Pushkin to the masses. Indeed, the apparent audience is only a small segment of the Jewish population: people who had

⁴⁷ Frishman's own original poem "BaHoref" (bakhoyref) starts out as a naturalistic description of winter, with the realistic frozen moustache, then an ominous death of a bird that was left behind and the normal feeling of "will there ever be spring again" which then appears to mean something greater than just the weather, involving hope and life. The contrast between summer and winter evokes that between Middle East and Eastern Europe. The mention of the dried bones and whether they will resurrect makes it even clearer, while the snow is reminiscent of the Diaspora. Finally, the poem is centered around the question of whether or not the bones can resurrect. (כב)

⁴⁸ As we shall see later on, however, this would not work with all of the titles because some of them appear to have been invented for this book.

received or were in the process of receiving the elite education to read poetry in Hebrew, yet not so currently immersed in the *yeshivah* world that they would avoid secular books. Thus most of the readers could have been expected to be those *maskilim* and other advocates of Hebrew who had received the traditional Jewish education and decided to embrace secular books, or perhaps students in OPE schools; this was not a self-perpetuating demographic, as Katsenelson, who worried about assimilation, well knew. A small number of readers who knew Hebrew and not Pushkin may have been reached, but they must already have been amenable to reading secular books and would soon learn Russian; perhaps the OPE wanted to use this as a textbook in one of its schools.

This can be compared to a nineteenth-century Russian translation of a French text (the nobility spoke French, the rest spoke Russian) into Old Church Slavonic, Greek or Latin—rather than into Russian, the people’s vernacular. In Pushkin’s time, when a great deal of literary translation was changing the Russian literary scene, the upper classes were speaking French to each other, the most educated were reading ancient Western classics as well, and the peasants were illiterate while their Bible was in Old Church Slavonic; it was in the Francophone Russian context that Pushkin pioneered the use of Russian as a language of high literary culture. Russia’s elites already knew how to read the original, and the (generally illiterate) people of Russia could not understand a text in Greek; various Jewish elites knew non-Jewish vernaculars and/or classical Hebrew, while the masses read, spoke, and understood Yiddish (with Hebrew illiteracy being the mark of an uneducated person). It might also be compared to Tatiana’s letter to Evgenii in 3:xxvi, where Pushkin’s narrator addresses Russian multilingualism, Westernization, and translation:

Another problem I foresee:
saving the honor of my native land,
undoubtedly I shall have to translate
Tatiana’s letter. She
knew Russian badly,
Did not read our reviews,
and in her native tongue expressed herself with difficulty. So,
she wrote in French.
What’s to be done about it! I repeat again;
as yet a lady’s love
has not expressed itself in Russian,

as yet our proud tongue has not got accustomed
to postal prose. (Nabokov 1964 vol. 1 166)

Еще предвижу затрудненья:
Родной земли спасая честь,
Я должен буду, без сомненья,
Письмо Татьяны перевести.
Она по-русски плохо знала,
Журналов наших не читала,
И выражалася с трудом
На языке своем родном,
Итак, писала по-французски...
Что делать! повторяю вновь:
Доныне дамская любовь
Не изъяснялася по-русски,
Доныне гордый наш язык
К почтовой прозе не привык.

The situation in Pushkin's time was that elite women and men had French as their mother tongue and used Russian to communicate with illiterate servants. While most peasants only knew to speak Russian, the elites read French novels; but only the elite men were offered access to the kind of education that would allow them to read Russian magazines (on the rise at this time) or ancient languages. In subsequent stanzas, Pushkin describes those things that only men read, highlighting the gendered difference in the register, as well as the language, of the reading material. In the case of the love letter—the epistolary novel and the theme of love had both been around a long time before Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*⁴⁹—Tatiana had read many fictional ones and her French “mother tongue” was the obvious choice of language for her letter. The love letter, as Pushkin notes, did not have a solid model in Russian literature at the time. Therefore, as the novelist Pushkin wishes to introduce new genres to Russian literature and *Onegin*'s narrator wishes to convey the content of Tatiana's letter to the audience, the letter must be “translated” from a French “original.” Although things have changed dramatically since Pushkin's time with the decline of French among the aristocracy and eventually the Revolution and subsequent mass literacy in Russian, it is hard to imagine

⁴⁹ Cited repeatedly in *Evgenii Onegin*.

a nineteenth-century audience for the novel which would not have been able to read a French love letter.

The similarity to the language system of fin-de-siècle East European Jews would not have been lost on Katsenel'son and Frishman. Many Jewish intellectuals drew inspiration from the knowledge of how Russian literature had transformed. While some earlier, *Haskalah*-period translations may have had a more didactic focus of bringing scientific knowledge to the traditionally-educated Jews in Hebrew, this fin-de-siècle translation does not seem designed with the primary intention of bringing new literature (Pushkin) to an ignorant audience (Jews who could read Hebrew but not Russian), but rather to plant the Hebrew flag on the Russian poet and expand the Hebrew library. Now Pushkin was available in Hebrew, and what translating Pushkin could do for Hebrew could be an inspiration to the younger poets and prose writers alike.

2.7 TRANSLATING PUSHKIN INTO HEBREW: DOVID FRISHMAN

Though Katsenelson's monograph aims to inform even readers who do not know anything about Pushkin, Dovid Frishman's translations in *Mishirey pushqin* are written for the highest, rather than the lowest, common denominator. If readers were students who did not know Pushkin's original texts, it seems that Frishman also expected some of them to refer to the originals. If they did not know all of the traditional Jewish sources that give the texts their Hebrew language, looking up these stanzas in Russian might be the only way to make sense of them. The Hebrew text with all of its idiosyncrasies had a Russian foundation to resolve what it really intended to say.

Dovid Frishman, like his friend Katsenelson, was inclined toward a liberal Jewish politics of Europeanism, instead focusing on Hebrew literature. Neither an old *maskil* nor a young Zionist, Frishman prioritized aesthetics. Although he was a creative writer, his role in developing and maintaining a Hebrew literary establishment was more significant; during his lifetime, he edited several Hebrew periodicals and headed the Stybel publishing house. Frishman's study of German had led him to see translation as a crucial component of literary development. Hebrew, he imagined, could follow a similar path to that taken by German and Russian.

His translations from Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin*, which imagine Hebrew as a modern, perhaps even spoken language, exemplify both the insider nature of the Hebrew literary project in Europe as well as its aesthetic mission. Frishman wanted to create a humanistic literature, which he had already, in 1883, declared to be “the secret of nationalism”⁵⁰ in contrast to “the conversations of idlers, that have the smell of the study-house wafting from each and every word.”⁵¹ If the goal was to attract the youth to Hebrew literature instead of drive them away, he claimed, the model of Judah Leib Gordon was instructive:

Is it not only with the power of beauty and craft of the artist that we will bring these under the wings of our Divine Presence! And all of us, in our youth and old age, do we not know that Gordon is for now the one writer that we could put forth his works in front of someone who has tasted the flavor of another literature? Behold I am certain and my heart is set. For if we give the poems of Gordon for our young sons to read, they will be Jews with all their soul and their might [...] ⁵² (“*Bashuk shel hasofrim vehasfarim*” 108)

Frishman's goal was to foster “the power of beauty and craft of the artist” specifically in Hebrew, at a time when young Jews were increasingly able to access these features in Russian or German literature. If Hebrew could not provide this, the youth would seek it elsewhere. Frishman found an earlier model of this nationalism-of-the-book⁵³ in the works of the Hebrew Bible (Jewish education had traditionally focused on the Talmud instead, though the *Haskalah* attempted to change this): “is it not our Torah, is it not our seers and our prophets who aroused us time and again to remind us who we are?”⁵⁴ He claims that the prophets achieved this because they composed their bitter condemnations of the people of Israel “with their beautiful and unique style and tremendous

⁵⁰ “סוד הלאומיות.”

⁵¹ “שיחות בטלנים, שריח בית-המדרש נודף מכל מלה ומלה.”

⁵²

הלא רק בכח היופי וחרושת-האמן נכניס את אלה תחת כנפי שכינתנו! וכולנו, בנעורינו וזקנינו, האם לא נדע, כי גורדון הוא לפי שעה המשורר האחד שנוכל לשום את מעשי ידיו גם לפני איש, שטעם טעם ספרות אחרת? - הנני בטוח ולבי סמוך, כי אם ניתן את שירי גורדון למקרא לבנינו הצעירים, יהיו אלה ליהודים בכל נפשם ומאודם.

⁵³ “To make us into a nation, into nationalists (in the sense that we understand this).”

“לעשות אותנו לעם, ללאומיים (במובן זה שאנחנו מבינים).”

⁵⁴ “הלא תורתנו, הלא חזונו ונביאינו אשר עוררו אותנו כפעם בפעם להזכירנו מי אנחנו!”

spirit” (111).⁵⁵ Frishman in disagreement with his younger colleagues instead sought for the Jews a humanistic national literature of high artistic quality. Iris Parush explains,

Without the revival of literature as a work of art, according to Frishman, there was no sense and no chance for the national revival movement. Yet/however/nevertheless this literary revival, as Frishman understood it, had a completely different significance from the one accepted by the majority of critics of his time. The revival of Hebrew literature and absorption of the traditional Hebrew canon were, in his opinion, paradoxical. The attachment to the traditional Hebrew literary canon was bound to trip up any chance of the internalization of the humanistic and aesthetic values of European culture, and the revival of Hebrew literature and obviously the revival of the nation, depended upon this internalization. All pretense of Hebrew creation according to European norms, without internalization of the values of European culture, resembles a failure from the start, and seeing as it is so, Hebrew literature, that has not yet internalized the values of European culture, is in a trap with no escape. This literature, so long as it is authentic, is unable to attain universal recognition, and when it pretends that it has internalized the values of European culture, it is unoriginal and not credible.⁵⁶ (150)

Frishman did not mean that Jews should become like other Europeans in every way or simply imitate European poetry, and he was an admirer of Bialik's poetry. But while the traditional Hebrew canon had its place and the violence of European culture was horrifying to him, he nevertheless understood it to have—when it came to high culture—something that Jews should import into their own literature through translation. These values include the value of literature as a craft.

Frishman's goals are reminiscent of the pan-Russian culture of Pushkin that Katsenelson evokes: literary rather than political strength. Jews, long accustomed to being a People of the Book instead of a military or political power, easily understood Pushkin's competition with the tsar in “I have built myself a monument.” Frishman saw the potential for a modern, secular, belletristic literature to do

⁵⁵ “בסגנונם היפה והמיוחד וברוחם הכביר.”

⁵⁶ ללא תחיית הספרות כמלאכת מחשבת אין, לדעת פרישמן, לא טעם ולא סיכוי לתנועת תחייה הלאומית. אולם לתחייה ספרותית זו, כפי שפרישמן מבין אותה, משמעות שונה לחלוטין מזו המקובלת על מרבית המבקרים בתקופתו. תחיית הספרות העברית ויניקה מן הקנזן העברי המסורתי הם, לדעתו, תרתי דסתרי. הזיקה לקנזן ספרותי עברי מסורתי עתידה להכשיל כל סיכוי להפנמת הערכים ההומניסטיים והאסתטיים של התרבות האירופית, ותחיית הספרות העברית וממילא תחיית האומה, תלויים בהפנמה זו. כל יומרה ליצירה עברית על-פי נורמות אירופיות, ללא הפנמת ערכיה של תרבות אירופה, נדומה מראש לכשלון, וכיוון שכך, שרויה הספרות העברית, שטרם הפנימה את ערכיה של תרבות אירופה, במלכוד חסר-מוצא. ספרות זו, כל עוד היא אותנטית, אינה יכולה להשיג הכרה אוניברסלית, וכאשר היא מעמידה פנים שהפנימה את ערכיה של תרבות אירופה, היא לא מקורית ובלתי-אמינה.

for modern Jews what the Torah and artists such as Pushkin had both done for the Jews' ancient ancestors and for modern Russians, respectively.

Translating Pushkin—who had imitated the biblical style in his “Prophet” and to whom Gordon was compared—was a way of bringing Pushkin to the Hebrew youth, rather than having them abandon Hebrew in favor of greater literature. Though Frishman can have had no doubt that most readers of secular literature in Hebrew would learn Russian and possibly German, he used these translations to show that Biblical Hebrew was the source of Jewish national creativity. The fact that all of the poems in *Mishirey pushqin* have a Russian referent allows Frishman to be especially adventurous in his means of expression, because readers could look up the Russian (or perhaps should learn Russian, if they could not already look them up).

Frishman's emphasis is on the lexical means of expression, which he privileges over the technical aspects of Pushkin's poetry. Hebrew in the Russian Empire of the 1890s, which was pronounced in the Ashkenazi accent,⁵⁷ was using a new system of versification. Hayyim Nahman Bialik had introduced syllabo-tonic (accentual-syllabic) meters, but these only included ternary meters and entertained an invariably bi- or multi-lingual audience that did not require Hebrew for access to world literature. It was thus particularly challenging and interesting to attempt to translate a modern Russian novel-in-verse into this language, a challenge which Frishman did not try to meet beyond a few demonstrative excerpts.

These translations play with the possibilities of the Hebrew language and try to increase them. In addition to the usual daunting challenges *Evgenii Onegin* presents to translators with its form as a verse-novel (written in “Onegin stanzas”), the content of the novel was beyond the range of expression in European Hebrew. Hebrew lacked sufficient lexical, idiomatic, vernacular and other means with which to describe modern Russian life, the climate, government, sexuality, household items, or transportation in a consistent manner, which prose writers were trying to produce. Sim-

⁵⁷ Ashkenazi Hebrew differs from contemporary spoken Hebrew in many ways. Most importantly here, it is pronounced with a penultimate stress system, while modern Israeli Hebrew usually places the stress on the final syllable of a word. Other important differences include the quality of the vowels and the pronunciation of the letter ך, which in Ashkenazi Hebrew can be pronounced as “t” or “s” depending on a (real or implied) diacritical mark, but is always “t” in Israeli Hebrew.

ilarly, the form of the novel—the “Onegin stanza—” was beyond the prosodic reach of Frishman and the Hebrew language in 1899 for linguistic reasons. The problems in Frishman’s translation of *Onegin* stanzas suggest that the triumph of Hebrew was not inevitable—indeed, a full translation of the novel did not appear in Hebrew until long after it had in Yiddish, by which time Hebrew had already acquired the advantages of a vernacular for a small number of people.

2.8 ASHKENAZI HEBREW MEETS THE *ONEGIN* STANZA

The translator of *Onegin* must always make choices about where her greater interest lies: with the *Onegin* stanza form or with the literal meaning and other literary effects of Pushkin’s text. The general difficulties presented by the task of the *Onegin* translator interact with the limitations of Hebrew prosody in fin-de-siècle Europe.

The phonology of the Hebrew language was well-suited to certain aspects of the sound patterns within *Evgenii Onegin* and ill-suited to others, with significant consequences. Although the difference in meter proves to be detrimental to—and favored over—conveying the original meaning of the text, we shall see in a discussion of rhyming that this unique moment in Hebrew literature is not to be underestimated. Like a disabled athlete creating new ways for the body to run or swim, the Hebrew translator emphasizes inaccessible prosodic features, creating a Hebrew version which is not the same as the original. He thereby turns the translation inward as a means of polishing the Hebrew language, which is a higher priority than transmitting either the form or the content of Pushkin’s text. Although Frishman cannot transmit all of the features of the original in Hebrew, he uses the original text to inspire new creation in Hebrew which could entertain secular Hebrew literature’s small audience, much of which was literate in Russian as well and could compare it to the original. The *Onegin* stanza proved to be an insurmountable problem for Frishman in translating these excerpts, causing him to use an adapted version of the distinctive meter. His adaptation, in an attempt to sound as close to Pushkin’s meter as nineteenth-century Hebrew was able, presented serious handicaps for the translation of literal meaning. Many lines for which a basic Hebrew translation could easily have been found had to be modified to suit this meter. Privileging this adapted

Onegin stanza form over literalist translation of meaning, Frishman pushes Hebrew prosody to the limits set by its phonology and his level of talent, exposing its range—which awaited new talent in order to be overcome.

2.9 HEBREW PROSODY OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

While the Hebrew literature written on the heels of the *Haskalah* is known for its innovations in its literary content and lexicon, Frishman's translations were also part of a dynamic period for the formal features of Hebrew poetry. Like other European poetries during their own modernization periods, Hebrew poetry already had its own repertoire of traditional forms but was eventually "taught" by its poets to use Western ones. Hebrew intellectuals such as Frishman had keenly studied the process by which German and Russian poets had sought to take their languages from traditional folk-poetry to the high-culture forms, a process which culminated in the admiration which Europe (and the *maskilim* and their successors) now showed for German and Russian literature. Crucial to this process was contact with classical and contemporary literature in other languages (dead or living). Similarly to the way that Russian poetry adapted to meters influenced by Western European poetry but settled on syllabo-tonic conventions most suitable to the phonetic features of the Russian language,⁵⁸ Hebrew prosody took much of its influence from Russian syllabo-tonic meters⁵⁹ and adapted them to its phonetic system.

In the Pale of Settlement in 1899, the Hebrew language had a penultimate stress system⁶⁰ which was very different from that of the Israeli Hebrew spoken by millions of people today. Poems written in the European "dialect" of Hebrew appear today to be free verse with some rhymes, because their meters are not perceived when they are read aloud in the so-called "Sephardi" accent adopted by Zionists in the early twentieth century. The state of Hebrew meters in Europe in the 1890s was dynamic. Although Hebrew had been generating new poetry on and off for millennia, it was the

⁵⁸ For a summary in English of Vasilii Trediakovskii and Mikhail Lomonosov's eighteenth-century programs for the syllabo-tonic verse into Russian, see M. L. Gasparov (1996) 229–235.

⁵⁹ As well as from German, English, and Yiddish (Harshav 2000:37). The norms were imported by Bialik from Russian poetry (70) and the Russian system of versification is an accurate frame of reference for describing Hebrew prosody.

⁶⁰ This means that the stress fell not on the last syllable of a word, but on the second-to-last one. Examples of English words with penultimate stress are "another" and "mother."

young poet Hayyim Nahman Bialik who introduced Western syllabo-tonic, i.e. “accentual-syllabic,” meters⁶¹ to the ancient language in its Ashkenazi accent. By the 1930s, Bialik’s own music was imperceptible in the new accent, but in the 1890s he was the astounding young poet bringing new rhythms to the old tongue.⁶²

Bialik favored ternary meters and a “biblical” tonic, free style he invented himself. Due to the stress system of the Ashkenazi Hebrew language and its very recent adoption of syllabo-tonic verse, Hebrew poetry in 1899 was dominated by ternary meters: dactylic (ẋxx), anapestic (xẋẋ), but most of all amphibrachic (ẋẋx) forms. The product of Frishman’s work to translate *Evgenii Onegin* stanzas demonstrates the constraints that Hebrew poetry was under at the time.

Binary meters such as the iamb, a building block of the *Onegin* stanza, did not become common in Ashkenazi Hebrew until after Yaakov Fichman began using it in the 1930s (Harshav 2000:447–8). The limitations of Hebrew prosody at this time may be one of the reasons why Frishman did not translate the whole novel, and why he and others wanted Bialik to translate it; it may also have contributed to Bialik’s refusal to translate *Onegin*. The fact that *Onegin* stanzas seemed impossible in Hebrew was a reason to at least try it; Frishman knew that Russian and German writers had done the same in the interests of changing the prosody of their own language.

2.10 ONEGIN STANZAS BY PUSHKIN AND FRISHMAN

The accent and rhythm of Ashkenazi Hebrew were more suitable for amphibrachs than for iambs. Thus while a line within the *Onegin* stanza form is an iambic tetrameter, this is not duplicated in Frishman’s translation. Iambic tetrameter takes the following form, with “x” indicating an unstressed syllable and “ẋ” indicating a stressed one: ẋẋ ẋẋ ẋẋ ẋẋ, thus containing four “feet” of iambs (with each foot represented as ẋẋ). In the Russian system (borrowed by Hebrew poetry), the rules for iambic tetrameter included the following:

⁶¹ This means that the system counts both the number of syllables in a line as well as the number of stressed syllables. The basic unit within this system is the metrical “foot.” Feet may be “binary,” containing two syllables, or “ternary,” containing three. A line of poetry typically has several feet.

⁶² He also created a neo-Biblical style in other poems.

- (1) Each unstressed (x) position must contain an unstressed syllable; only stressed positions (x́) may contain a stressed syllable.
- (2) The final stressed position (x́) of a line must contain a stressed syllable; all the other stressed positions (x́) may contain either stressed or unstressed syllables.
- (3) Monosyllabic words can be counted as stressed or unstressed.
- (4) After the final foot, the line may contain one or two more unstressed syllables. A line x́x x́x x́x x́x with no unstressed syllables at the end has a masculine ending and, when rhymed with another masculine-ending line, would thus have a masculine rhyme such as “milk-silk” or “instead-ahead”; a line x́x x́x x́x x́x(x) with one unstressed syllable at the end has a feminine ending and may have a feminine rhyme such as “German-Herman” or “Dalmatian-nation”; a line x́x x́x x́x x́x(xx) has a dactylic ending and may have a dactylic rhyme such as “myopia-utopia” or “vitiligo–I go.”

Pushkin’s *Onegin* stanza is an iambic tetrameter form which is often described as having three quatrains and a couplet, with its rhyme scheme of AbAbCCddEffEgg. (Capital letters indicate feminine rhymes, which consist of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable: “gorilla-vanilla.” This is as distinct from masculine rhymes, such as “blink-stink,” represented in lower case.) This rigid form of all *Onegin* stanzas can achieve great variety by not realizing all of the stresses in a line or by staggering words across feet and ideas across lines. The first four lines of Chapter 5, Stanza 2 provide an example of Pushkin’s varied interpretation of the metrical constraints. Here (x) and (x́) represent the actual stressed and unstressed syllables in the line, rather than theoretical ones. (I am transliterating the Russian but not phonetically and italicizing stressed vowels.)

- (1) x́x x́xx x́xxx zima krest’*ianin* torzhestvuia
- (2) x x́x x́xxx x́ na drovniakh obnovliaet put’
- (3) x́x x́xx x́ xxx ego loshadka sneg pochuiia

(4) x́xx x́x x x́x pletëtsia rysiú kak nibud'

The final foot always contains a stressed syllable (x́), but not all of the other feet do. In this example, Line 1 does not stress a syllable in the third foot, while in Line 2 there is no stressed syllable in the second foot. In the above example, which represents the AbAb part of the stanza, extra unstressed syllables appear at the end of Lines 1 and 3.

These constraints do not work with nineteenth-century Ashkenazi Hebrew, newly introduced to syllabo-tonic meters and still using a penultimate stress system, which means that most Hebrew words ended with an unstressed syllable and masculine endings were difficult to achieve. As Frishman did in his other translations of Pushkin's poetry, he adapted the *Onegin* stanzas using a ternary meter.

It is the amphibrach (x́xx) which Frishman employs in his translations of Pushkin's *Onegin* stanzas, substituting amphibrachic tetrameter in place of iambic tetrameter. Below are the Russian original and the Hebrew translation of Chapter 5, Stanza 2. (For English translation, see the discussion of the content in the next section.)

5:II	חֲרֵף
Зима!..Крестьянин торжествуя На дровнях обновляет путь; Его лошадка, снег почуя, Плетется рысью как-нибудь; Бразды пушистые взрывая, Летит кибитка удалая; Ямщик сидит на облучке В тулупе, в красном кушаке. Вот бегаёт дворовый мальчик, В салазки жучку посадив, Себя в коня преобразив; Шалун уж заморозил пальчик: Ему и больно и смешно, А мать грозит ему в окно...	הַחֲרֵף... כָּבֵר חוֹבֵק הָאֶבֶר יְדִים וּבְעֵגְלַת-הַקָּרַח יִפְלֵס לוֹ אֲרֶח; וְסוֹסוֹ בְּשֵׁלֶג בְּכַשְׁלוֹן-בְּרַבִּים יִתְנַהֵל בְּכַבְדוֹת וַיִּמְשׁוֹד בְּטָרַח. שֵׁם עֵגְלַת-חִפְזוֹן בְּמְרוֹצָה עוֹבְרַת, וַחֲרִיצִים עֲמֻקִּים בְּאַרְץ חוֹפְרַת; וְלָבוֹשׁ בָּהּ יוֹשֵׁב הַרְכָּב בְּאַדָּר, וַחֲגוּרָה אֲדָמָה עַל-מִתְנֵיוֹ לְהִדָּר. שֵׁם רֵץ מִן-הַחֲצָר בְּכַפָּר אֶחָד נֶעַר וְהוֹשִׁיב אֶת-כְּלָבוֹ לְתוֹד עֵגְלַת-חֲרֵף וְהִיָּה לְסוֹס לָהּ הַרְתוֹם מוֹל-עֲרֵף; כָּבֵר קַפְאָה מְקַרָּה גַם-אֶצְבַּע הַבֶּעַר, וּמְכֹאֹב גַּם-יֶחֶד הוּא יָדַע עִם-נַחַת... וְאִמּוֹ בְּחִלּוֹן לוֹ אֶצְבַּע שׁוֹלְחַת...

Scansion of the first four Hebrew lines reveals, instead of Pushkin's iambic tetrameter, Frishman's amphibrachic tetrameter (I have transliterated into the Polish Hebrew accent, and spaces here indicate the breaks between words):

haḥoyref kvor ḥoyvek huikor yodayim	x́x x x́x x́x
uveglas hakerakh yifalays loy oyraḥ	x́x x́x x́x x x́x
vesusoy bashleg bekhishloyn birkayim	x́x x́x x́x x́x
yisnahayl bekhveydus veyimshoykh betoyrah	x́x x́x x́x x́x

The advantage of using amphibrachs in place of iambs is that the first two syllables of an iambic or amphibrachic line are unstressed and then stressed (x́x), so that similarity in sound is present at the beginning of each line (so the first two syllables of this stanza's first line are "zima" in Russian and "haḥoy" in Hebrew). We can see here how well amphibrachs suited Ashkenazi Hebrew, as most of the words in these four lines are themselves amphibrachs (haḥoyref). But the rules for amphibrachs are different than those for iambs; stress may fall in an unstressed position but must fall on the stressed position. Frishman adheres to the form more strictly than required.

Another difference from the *Onegin* stanza is that Frishman does not employ its pattern of alternating masculine and feminine rhymes; in fact, he uses no masculine rhymes at all. This is for similar reasons; before the great changes in the accent which were to take place in Palestine in the twentieth century, Hebrew's penultimate stress system made it virtually impossible to use masculine rhymes. Most words ended with an unstressed syllable and were thus only suitable for feminine rhymes, leaving monosyllabic words and a small number of others (such as "ani") which could appear at the end of a line in a masculine rhyme. Nineteenth-century Hebrew best lent itself to feminine rhymes. Thus Frishman's rhyme scheme is similar but not identical to that of Pushkin, because in the Hebrew rhyme pattern ABABCCDDEFEGG, all endings are feminine. The end of each final amphibrach provides the rhyme and no extra syllables are required.

One result of these changes is a difference in line lengths between the Russian and the Hebrew. While an iambic tetrameter of Pushkin's would be 8 syllables long in a line with a masculine ending and 9 syllables long in a line with a feminine ending, Frishman's lines are uniformly 12 syllables long. Each line translated into Hebrew gains either 3 or 4 syllables of length relative to the original. Although we will not discuss here the relative compactness of Hebrew and Russian, this difference of several syllables proves to be significant.

2.11 CONSEQUENCES OF FRISHMAN'S *ONEGIN* STANZA FORM

The problems faced by translators of prose novels are well-documented; two languages, coming from two different cultures, are not equivalent; translations of *Evgenii Onegin* that use precisely the same *Onegin* stanza form face even more challenges, as the best equivalence they can find may not fit the meter; Frishman's translation in an adapted meter is further challenged. The use of amphibrachs, though required by the state of Hebrew at this time, requires him to fill in the extra syllables with extra Hebrew words, adding extra information not present in the Russian original. Privileging sound patterns over accuracy in literal meaning or in sense, Frishman shows an interest in expanding the repertoire of Hebrew verse forms through translation, as Pushkin once did for Russian. Thus his project of simulating an *Onegin* stanza in Hebrew, even though it differs from the Russian, is a high priority. Although he faces all of the usual problems of translation, his determination to create a modified *Onegin* stanza creates a new problem for which he is compelled to find a solution that displays the ingenuity of which Hebrew was capable.

When Frishman's use of amphibrachs approximates the meter within the constraints of nineteenth-century Ashkenazi Hebrew, some, but not all, of the *Onegin* stanza effect is maintained. This is because of a small similarity between the two meters: the first part of an amphibrachic line is an iamb (an iamb is x \acute x and an amphibrach x \acute xx, so they both begin with an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable). Additionally, Ashkenazi Hebrew had some half-syllables that could be squeezed into an amphibrachic foot without making it sound too much longer than an iamb. Beyond that, the similarity is a weak one. (They both require four stresses per line, which are optional in an iambic tetrameter and mandatory in amphibrachic tetrameter.)

The use of amphibrachic tetrameter leaves the lines a little bit too long for a compact language like Hebrew to accurately translate something from shorter lines in Russian, because it requires the addition of extra information, repetitions, and overemphasis. Hebrew in 1899 was even more concise than it is today,⁶³ so adding 4 syllables to each line was a significant change. Those syllables

⁶³ A grammatical feature mostly out of use today is the addition of suffixes to verbs in order to indicate the direct object, for example, and Modern Hebrew uses object pronouns as separate words.

then needed to be filled with something. This factor directly contributes to some of the creative “infidelities” of Frishman’s translation. The ternary meter of the translations compel him to embellish a significant number of lines within each stanza.

Indeed, Frishman keeps strictly to the meter and deals with the extra syllables in the lines by occasionally adding emphasis or extra information. By sticking closely to his conceit of a Hebrew *Onegin* stanza, he prioritizes the invented poetic form despite his major departures from that of Pushkin. Keeping that commitment requires Frishman to add a great deal of embellishment, often at the end of a line. For example, you may notice that in Frishman’s translation of Lines 5–12 of 5:II, the boy does not just transform himself into a horse, he harnesses himself. Here I have translated Frishman’s Hebrew rendering to compare it with Nabokov’s literalist translation of Pushkin as a means of demonstrating the addition of content by the former.

NABOKOV	FRISHMAN
<p>Winter! The peasant, celebrating, in a flat sledge inaugurates the track; his naggy, having sensed the snow, shambles at something like a trot. Plowing up fluffy furrows, a fleet kibitka flies: the driver sits upon his box in sheepskin coat, red-sashed. Here runs about a household lad, a small “pooch” on a hand sled having seated, having transformed himself into the steed; the scamp already has frozen a finger. He finds it both painful and funny— while mother, from the window, threatens him...</p>	<p>The winter... Already the peasant fondles his hands:⁶⁴ and in the ice-wagon paves himself a path; and his horse in the snow with knee-stumbling moves with difficulty and pulls the burden. There a haste-wagon passes with running, and digs deep furrows in the earth; and dressed in it sits the rider in a mantle, and a red belt on his loins for beauty. There runs from the yard in the village one lad and sits his dog within a winter-wagon and becomes the horse for her that is harnessed across the neck; already also frozen from cold is the finger of the brute and pain with pleasure he knows together... and his mother in the window extends him a finger...⁶⁵</p>

Because of the 12-syllable rule Frishman has made for himself, he needed to add extra poetic material to the majority of the lines in this translation.

One way Frishman stretches the line is with extra clarifying information, such as here in “Winter” Line 6, explaining that furrows are being dug “*bo-orets*,” “in the earth”. In the original, it is so

⁶⁴ This is a biblical expression which means “to sit idle,” similar to “twiddles his thumbs.”

⁶⁵ Isaiah 58:9 has a finger being “sent”:

אָז תִּקְרָא וַיְהוֶה יַעֲנֶה, תִּשְׁוֶע וַיֵּאמֶר הֲנִנִּי: אִם-תִּסְרִי מִתּוֹכָךְ מוֹטֵה, שְׁלַח אֶצְבְּע וְדַבֵּר-אֲוֹן.

Then shalt thou call, and the LORD will answer; thou shalt cry, and He will say: ‘Here I am.’ If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking wickedness;

obvious that snow-furrows are dug in the earth (and not, in 1899, the sky) that the meaning of the text is not significantly altered by this addition. Similarly, in Line 12 of this stanza, the finger freezes “*mikoroh*,” “from frost”—which is the only way they could have frozen. But in Line 8 we can see how this type of addition can have a more significant effect upon meaning. Whereas in Russian the driver is simply wearing a red sash, in Hebrew he is wearing a red sash “*al-mosnov luheydeyr*,” “on his loins for beauty”. Of course a belt must be situated on the driver’s loins, Pushkin makes no suggestion that it is a fashion statement. This information comes from the translation.

Lines 3 and 4 of Chapter 4 Stanza XLI—translated by Frishman as part of “*Tkufas tishrei*” (“The Season of Tishrei,” or “Autumn”)—provide another example of the kind of embellishment in which non-obvious meanings are compulsory (beyond the changes in meaning that are typically made in translations that do not have to conform to a certain form). In the original text, two wolves appear without much description:

with his hungry female,
the wolf comes out upon the road; (Nabokov)

С своей волчихою голодной
Выходит на дорогу волк;

In the Hebrew translation, however, the details are more specific:

There, behind the she-wolf hungry since yesterday,
behold the wolf comes out to seek his prey.

שם אחרי הזאבה הרעבה מאמש
הזאב הנה יוצא לבקש לו טרף

Here, too, the meaning of the original is supplemented; the she-wolf is hungry “since yesterday” and her companion comes out “to seek his prey.” These explanations do not contradict what Pushkin wrote, but they tell us things that he did not care to, all in order to accommodate a different meter than the one he used. They provide a gloss which reads like the Midrash of Jewish religious texts, but fills in gaps that do not seem particularly important.

Another way in which Frishman added to meaning while accommodating a longer line was by replacing a simpler word or phrase with a flowerier one such as figurative language or explicit visual descriptions, stretching out the compact meaning over a few words. In this stanza of “Winter,” the first and final lines of the translation describe hand gestures, whereas in the Russian they are simply verbs for which Hebrew equivalents could easily have been found:

Зима!..Крестьянин торжествуя	הַחֶרֶף... כְּבֵר חוֹבֵק הָאֶכָר יָדָיִם
Winter! The peasant, celebrating,	The winter... Already the peasant fondles his hands

and

А мать грозит ему в окно...	וְאָמוּ בְחַלּוֹן לוֹ אֶצְבַּע שׁוֹלְחַת...
while mother, from the window, threatens him...	and his mother in the window sends him a finger...

Frishman replaces the more abstract verbs with images of what is happening, interpreting Pushkin’s words for the reader. This technique is sometimes even used to expand verbs that already describe physical actions. In Chapter 4 Stanza XLI [“Tkufas tishrei”] the horse, upon becoming aware of the wolves, snorts: “*khrapit*.” In Hebrew, he could have done the same, but Frishman stretches it out to “*yashmi’a koyl-nah(a)roy*” [“makes his snort heard”]. This can become quite extreme as in Lines 8–9 of the same stanza:

На утренней заре пастух	בְּבֹקֶר הַרְזָעָה אֵין יָדוֹ אוֹחֶזֶת
the herdsman at sunrise	In the morning the shepherd does not grasp with his hand
Не гонит уж коров из хлева,	שׁוֹט שׁוֹטֵף לְהַעִיז הַפָּרוֹת מִרְפָּת,
no longer drives the cows out of the shippon,	the quick whip to herd the cows from the barn,

Here the meaning of Line 9 is stretched and pulled to fill up not only the translation of Line 9, but the second two feet of Line 8 as well. In the Russian, the shepherd “no longer drives the cows out”; in Frishman’s Hebrew he “does not grasp with his hand the quick whip to herd the cows.” This is an image which is not present in Pushkin’s text and which Frishman added in order to lengthen his

lines. The phrasing must, to some extent, reflect Biblical Hebrew's means of expression (and indeed Frishman saw the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, not the rabbinic literature, as the spring of Jewish culture) because of the limitations of the language.

Another method which Frishman uses to complete his extra syllables is reminiscent of the way that Biblical Hebrew marks emphasis: repetition. In 7:1, translated by Frishman as “*Tkufas nison*” (“The Season of Nisan” or “Spring”]), we can see quite a few examples of this:

NAVOKOV	FRISHMAN
<p>Понимы вешними лучами, С окрестных гор уже снега Сбежали мутными ручьями На потопленные луга. Улыбкой ясною природа Сквозь сон встречает утро года; Синяя блещут небеса. Еще прозрачные, леса Как будто пухом зеленеют. Пчела за данью полевой Летит из кельи восковой. Долины сохнут и пестреют; Стада шумят, и соловей Уж пел в безмолвии ночей.</p>	<p>כָּבֵר קוֹי אֹזֶר-אָבִיב יְהַדְפּוּ, יִרְדְּפוּ מִהָרִים מְסֻבִּיב אֶת-נַחְלֵי הַשְּׁלֵג, וּכְבֵר עַל-הָאָחוּ הַנִּסְחָף יִשְׁטֹפוּ, וְהָיוּ לְשֵׁטֶף הַנִּדְלָח בַּפֶּלֶג. הַבְּרִיאָה כְּחֹלְמָה וּבְנִפְשׁ צוּהֶלֶת אֶת-בְּקָר הַשָּׁנָה לְשֵׁלֹם שׁוֹאֵלֶת: בְּתַכְלֵת פִּי-שָׁנִים שְׁמַיִם נִשְׁקָפוּ, הַיַּעְרוֹת, כְּמַעַט עוֹד נִחְשָׁפִים, עֵטְפוּ כְּשֶׁלֶל נּוֹצוֹת רְכוּזֵת כָּל-יֶרֶק זְרוּעַ; הַדְּבוּרָה מִבֵּיתָהּ, בֵּית-דּוֹנָג, חוֹלְפֶת וּמִסָּה בְּשֹׁדָה מְסֻבִּיב אוֹסְפֶת; הַבְּקָעוֹת חֲרִבוּ, הַשָּׂדֶה צְבוּעַ; הַעֲדָרִים יִהְיֶימוּ, וְדוֹמָם בְּלֵיל כָּבֵר יִשִּׁיר הַזְּמִיר אֶת-שִׁירוֹ בְּחֵיל.</p>
<p>Chased by the vernal beams, down the surrounding hills the snows already have run in turbid streams onto the inundated fields. With a serene smile, nature greet through her sleep the morning of the year. Blueing, the heavens glisten. The yet transparent woods as if with down are greening. The bee after the tribute of the field flies from her waxen cell. The dales grow dry and varicolored. The herds are noisy, and the nightingale has sung already in the silence of the nights.</p>	<p>Already the lines of spring light have blasted,⁶⁶ have chased the rivers of snow from the surrounding mountains and already they have washed onto the eroded meadow and become the muddied flow in the stream. Creation, dreamily and with exulting soul, Is greeting⁶⁷ the morning of the year: heavens in the double blue⁶⁸ are visible,⁶⁹ the woods, almost still bare, are wrapped with every green thing strewn like feathers; The bee is passing from her house, a wax-house, and gathering her tribute around in the field. The valleys dry up, the field is colored; The flocks/herds grunt, and in silence at night The nightingale has already sung his song valiantly.</p>

The first example of redundancy appears in Line 1, where in place of Pushkin's "gonimy" ["chased"] Frishman uses two similar-sounding verbs (roots h.d.f. and r.d.f., meaning "blasted, chased"). In other words, he uses the wordiness of two verbs instead of one in order to fill up the extra syllables. In Line 7, where Pushkin uses the verb "to be blue" (translated by Nabokov here as "blueing"), Frishman literally doubles down: he writes "tkheyles pi-shnayim" ["double blue"]; rather than constructing a new verb which would mean "to be/come blue," he uses up three extra syllables by describing it as "double." In Lines 10–11 we see the greatest use of repetition, with the word for "house" appearing twice and the word "misoviv" (from around), encountered in the first quatrain, returning in Line 11. Finally, in a nod to the way that biblical Hebrew used to express emphasis, in Line 14 Frishman uses a form of repetition which uses the same root and meaning in two parts of speech: "yoshir hazomir es shiroy" ("the nightingale has sung his song")⁷⁰.

The change in meter, prompted by Hebrew phonology, helps to explain instances of the translator's seemingly unmotivated "infidelity." The meter is so problematic for Frishman writing in the Ashkenazi Hebrew of 1899 that it handicaps him in conveying the literal meaning or style of Pushkin's text. At the same time, Frishman takes the opportunity to create a "Hebrew *Onegin* stanza"

⁶⁶ Push/thrust

⁶⁷ Lit. asks the peace of, asks how it's doing

⁶⁸ Zechariah 13:8:

וְהָיָה בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ, נֶאֱמַם-יְהוָה, פִּי-שְׁנַיִם בָּהּ, יִכָּרְתוּ יַגְוֹעוּ; וְהִשְׁלִשְׁתִּי, יוֹתֵר בָּהּ.

And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.

Deut. 21: 16–17:

וְהָיָה, בְּיוֹם הַנְּחִילוֹ אֶת-בְּנָיו, אֵת אֲשֶׁר-יְהִי, לוֹ-לֹא יוּכַל, לְבַכֵּר אֶת-בְּכוֹן-הָאֹהֳבָה, עַל-פְּנֵי בֶן-הַשְּׂנוּאָה, הַבְּכוֹר. כִּי אֶת-הַהֶבְכֵר בֶּן-הַשְּׂנוּאָה יִכִּיר, לָתֵת לוֹ פִּי שְׁנַיִם, כֹּל אֲשֶׁר-יִמְצָא, לוֹ: כִּי-הוּא רִאשִׁית אֵאָנוּ, לוֹ מִשְׁפַּט הַבְּכוֹרָה.

Then it shall be, in the day that he causeth his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved the first-born before the son of the hated, who is the first-born; but he shall acknowledge the first-born, the son of the hated, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath; for he is the first-fruits of his strength, the right of the first-born is his.

⁶⁹ Judah Leib Gordon uses this a lot. See "The Love of David and Mikhal: First Poem" [*Ahavat david umikhal: hashir harishon*] and "The War of David on the Philistines" (*Milhamot david baplishtim*).

⁷⁰ Another example of this phenomenon, using synonyms to lengthen the line, appears in Line 12 of Chapter 4 Stanza XL. In the Russian, we have the word "priblizhalas" which means "came near." Hebrew has a word which approximates this meaning, and which appears in the translation: "korvuh." But in addition to that, Frishman adds the word "bu'uh" which means "came" and which adds two syllables to the line.

within those constraints and to create something new for the Hebrew language through the use of Russian, even using uniquely Hebrew poetic techniques in a modern context. Just as meter is an important consideration for translators, it must be accounted for in the study of translations, because it has serious consequences for other features of the translated text and can give insight into the philosophy and goals of the translator. With the extra syllables that the amphibrachic tetrameter with exclusively feminine endings allows him, Frishman takes the opportunity to show his readers what, on top of conveying Pushkin's text, Hebrew is capable of doing in these lines. In the course of translating a text he knew would interest many Jewish readers, Frishman shows off several techniques that can be used in the construction of belletristic Hebrew literature: techniques that link the new, secular Hebrew literature with that of the ancient prophets.

2.12 RHYME MATTERS

As discussed earlier, Frishman's adherence to the rhyme scheme is both meticulous and self-consciously imperfect: although most of the complexities of the rhyme scheme are preserved, masculine rhymes are lost, while the rhyme pattern ABABCCDDEFEGG is maintained. Ternary meters and feminine rhymes are Frishman's usual response to binary meters and masculine rhymes, and he does not try to innovate in rhyming conventions. But that does not mean that he is uninterested in the rhyme, and in fact it becomes a part of the literary conceit that Hebrew, the receiving language of this translation has a well-established modern literature behind it.

Perhaps the most important rhyme in the novel appears in Lines 1–3 of Chapter 4 Stanza XLII, a stanza which Frishman proudly translates:⁷¹

⁷¹ See later in this chapter how a likely source of inspiration for these choices, the chrestomathy of Galakhov, omits these lines. If indeed Frishman was influenced by that source, it is even more significant that he chose to reintroduce these lines.

И вот уже трещат морозы	וּבְכֹר עַל-הַשָּׂדוֹת יִתְגַעֵשׁ הַקָּרָח
And there the frosts already crackle	And already on the fields quakes the ice
И серебруются ср?едь полей...	וּבְשִׁמְלַת-הַבְּסָף כְּבָר אוֹתוֹ יַעֲטֹפוּ... .
and silver midst the fields	And as the silver dress already they are wrapped in it...
(Читатель ждет уж рифмы розы; (the reader now expects the rhyme “froze-rose”—	(הֵן חִבּוּ הַקּוֹרְאִים לְחַרוֹז פֶּה – הַפֶּרַח: (Lo, the readers wait for the rhyme here “the flower:”
На, вот возьми ее скорей!) here you are, take it quick!)	וַיְהִי-נָא, לְקַחוּהוּ חֵישׁ-מְהֵר וְחֲטֹפוּ (! Here it is, please, take it fast and snatch it!)

In this meta-poetic quatrain, Pushkin foregrounds the fact that he is a poet writing verses, reminding the reader of his presence and claiming to be able to anticipate what the reader wants from the text. It is an unflattering moment for the reader, as Pushkin tells us that we expect a predictable, boring rhyme-pair and that if he must oblige, he will do so in this cheeky way—as a parenthetical aside. In Russian the predictable rhyme is “morozы-roзы” [“frosts-roses”], two things that are not normally found together. The challenge for a translator of these lines into any language is to find a way to rhyme two words which have the same meaning as those, to carry over the rhetorical strategy. This was not just difficult for Hebrew translators; the 1847 French prose translation by Dupont omits these lines entirely (125), as do the German translations of 1940 (4:27 98) by Lippert and 1854 by Bodenstedt (143). In 1881 Henry Spalding—*Onegin’s* first English translator—rendered these lines into English as follows:

Already crisp hoar frosts impose
O’er all a sheet of silvery dust
(Readers expect the rhyme of “rose”,
There! take it quickly, if ye must). (4:XXXII 118)

So in this English translation which had appeared before Frishman’s Hebrew one, the translator is unable to approximate the relationship of “frosts-roses,” instead rhyming “impose-rose.”

Two decades later, Frishman met this challenge much better in Hebrew than Spalding had in

English, rhyming “*kerah-perah*” [“ice-flower”], a very close approximation of the original rhyming pair. Frishman’s lines thereby invite the reader to imagine that this rhyme had been predictable and oft-used, despite the fact that it had not (Abramovitsh 25).⁷² Thus the rhyme here, pretending to be trite, is one more element of the virtual reality created by Hebrew literature in the nineteenth century: as if his neologisms are commonly used to describe these things, as if this simple rhyme were trite from too much use, as if people read Pushkin in Hebrew translation, as if Line 4 were colloquial language. Later in 1937, translations of this stanza by Avraham Levinson and Avraham Shlonsky both used the same rhyme pair, a perfect match persisted even through the great shift in Hebrew pronunciation.

Less believable than the conceit that this rhyme has been heard many times before is the simulation of colloquial language in Line 4 of this passage, where Frishman imagines that Hebrew is as natural as the Russian “*На, вот возьми ее скорей!*,” [“here you are, take it quick!”]. Inevitably, the translation comes across as more synthetic:

Here it is, please, take it fast and snatch it!

ויהי-נא, לקחווהו חיש-מהר וְחֹטְפוּ!

As elsewhere in the translations, this line paraphrases itself in order to achieve the desired number

⁷² The clear instances I have seen of this rhyme in Hebrew prior to 1899 are in a poem by Y. L. Gordon and in fiction by Sh. Y. Abramovitsh. Gordon’s poem “*Hanasher use‘irei haya‘ar*” (title transliterated in the new accent here) contains the following lines:

אך סְעָרוֹת חֶרֶף זְקָנָה וְקָרַח
עִקְבוֹת עַת חֶרְפוֹ עֵדֶן לֹא הֶעֱבִירוּ,
עוֹד בִּיפֵי עֲלוּמִים יִבְשִׁיל כָּל פֶּרַח
וְנִגְהוֹת בְּקֶר עַל שְׁמִיּוֹ יִצְהִירוּ.

So here *kerah-perah* is rhymed for what may be the first time but did not become trite, although its appearance in Abramovitsh’s “*Susati*” may serve as a good background for the conceit of triteness:

והרוח הולך וסוער, והקולות הולכים ומתגברים. עמוד החוזר באויר חוטפני ואני חוזר בו בתוך שאר בריות משונות. שם כשפניות זקנות רוכבות על מכבדות ומגרפות, ועלמות יפהפיות – אלה על שעירים, אלה על דיות וינשופים ואלה על חתולים. צעקניות הן ופטפטניות, קול הברה והמולה באזני ושפת לא ידעתי אשמע: “שרלאי ואמרלאי, בזך בזייד, בזבזייד, מסמסייד! חרי חמימא לפומייכו, נשי דחרשייא, קרח קרחייכו, פרח פרחייכו!”—הן פורחות ואני פורח, עוצם עיני מפני השעמום, מתיגע ומזיע. והנה כתבנית יד אוחות בי, פעם בראשי ופעם בעקבי, ואני צועק ויורד מטה ופוקח עיני.

of syllables. Here Frishman uses two synonyms (“take it quick” and “snatch it”) for emphasis and it sounds long-winded even for imaginary speech.

With prosody being one of the more frustrating elements of poetry for its translators, it is no wonder that it was frustrating for Ashkenazi Hebrew in Russia at the turn of the century. Frishman could not translate the novel into pure *Onegin* stanzas because they were beyond the capacity of Hebrew prosody at the time, so he uses neither a binary meter nor any masculine rhymes. The consequences of the metrical change are more significant for his translation than the consequences of the rhyme scheme. While the change in meter deposits several extra syllables into each line, which must then be filled with extra material, the change in rhyme does not prohibit Frishman from achieving an outstanding translation of the most prominent rhyme of the novel, a fact of which he must have been proudly conscious. Thus although the translation contains serious departures from Pushkin’s original text, it was still able to achieve something noteworthy on the level of sound patterning. The virtual reality of translating into Hebrew in 1899 reaches a new height with the make-believe metapoetry of the newly invented rhyme that the translator would have us pretend we have already heard.

2.13 CONCLUSION

Readers of *Mishirey pushqin* in 1899 were expected to be somewhat literate in Russian or even familiar with Pushkin, at least eventually. This anthology could not serve to bring a major author into the consciousness of the Jewish masses, a goal which would have been much more effectively accomplished with a Yiddish translation. Nevertheless, translating Pushkin into Hebrew was instrumental for Jewish intellectuals with different and even conflicting agendas.

For the liberals in the OPE, Pushkin was an ideal focus for Russian patriotism. This anthology conceptualizes both Russia and its Jews, with Pushkin’s stamp of approval: Russia, united by a pan-Russian culture shared by its ethnic minorities, and the Jewish minority, so devoted to Pushkin that they have made him available in the ancient tongue of the Bible. Similarly, it showed that the Jewish minority had an ancient tongue for use on special occasions, such as Pushkin’s centennial. At the

same time as these messages were projected outward towards the Russian Empire, *Mishirey pushqin* was also directed towards the Jewish community, at once promoting the twin Enlightenment goals of education in the imperial culture (for readers who did not yet know Pushkin in Russian) and Hebrew education.

Dovid Frishman, one of the greatest advocates for Hebrew translation, translates and lightly disguises three excerpts from *Evgenii Onegin* into fin-de-siècle Hebrew within this anthology. Reading Frishman's now-archaic translations in their original Ashkenazi accent reveals the amphibrachic meter and feminine rhymes necessitated by a penultimate stress system. The phonetic features of Hebrew in 1899 had real implications for the transmission of meaning, as the amphibrachic lines compelled Frishman to add "extra" words, an extreme case of the expected conflicts that occur between form and meaning in translation. This metrical problem demonstrates the gap between what Hebrew was capable of and what writers hoped it would be able to do, but also how a creative writer could adapt and use these problems as an opportunity to display the richness of the Hebrew language. Thus the excerpts from *Onegin* are chosen not just as lyrics that could stand alone without the context of the novel, but also because they describe the desired new material: Russian nature, its seasons, and the beings that inhabit them.

While the phonetic and prosodic features of Hebrew made translation more difficult and possibly less accurate, the lexical limitations of Hebrew in Europe provided writers with an extraordinary opportunity to exploit and play with the apparent poverty of the language and demonstrate its wealth. Although Frishman's neologisms do not seem to have been incorporated into the Hebrew lexicon of later years, they added another, creative dimension to the task of the translator. *Mishirey pushqin* is not an example of translation as a way of conveying foreign material into the idiom of the people, but into a literary language that was not the people's spoken language. The compound nouns (or *smikhuyot*), which comprise the neologisms themselves, had no preexisting association with what they signified in these translations and make little sense without context. The translator must hint at these meanings using strong contextual cues, conspiring with the reader to make

believe that the relationship between words and their meanings had long been established. This technique is boosted by readers' familiarity with Pushkin's Russian text.

Although this opportunity is provided by the use of Russian imperial culture to advance Jewish culture, the process of mining traditional Hebrew sources for the means of describing Pushkin's world is as much on display in *Mishirey pushqin* as Pushkin's own ideas are. The apparent handicaps of fin-de-siècle Hebrew in translating these nature passages from *Onegin* are shown to be creative assets in the hands of the right poet. The reader's pleasure lies not merely in reading Pushkin, which might be done in Russian anyway, but in the foregrounded richness of the Hebrew language.

CHAPTER 3

Jewish Activists, Modernism, and a Russian Classic: Yiddish Translations by A. Y. Grodzenski and Leyb Naydus During and After the Great War

Я знаю: дам хотят заставить
Читать по-русски. Право, страх! (Pushkin 3:xxvii)

I know: some would make ladies
read Russian. Horrible indeed! (Tr. Nabokov)

Его уж нет. Младой певец
Нашел безвременный конец!
Дохнула буря, цвет прекрасный
Увял на утренней заре,
Потух огонь на алтаре!.. (Pushkin 6:xxxii)

the youthful votary of rhyme
has found an end before his time.
The storm is over, dawn is paling,
the bloom has withered on the bough;
the altar flame's extinguished now. (Tr. Johnston)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The two Yiddish translations of *Evgenii Onegin* were written and published between 1917 and 1926, during the translation frenzy⁷³ that inspired Levinson to translate the novel into Hebrew and Fr-

⁷³ This is described in more detail in Kenneth Moss, *Jewish Renaissance in the Russian Revolution*. Moss argues that the February Revolution was an important event for what he calls “Jewish culturists,” because it “meant that the intellectuals, activists, and writers who had collectively shaped the contours of post-traditional Jewish culture within the narrow legal, political, and discursive bounds of tsarist Russia could now articulate and act on their visions of Jewish culture without constraint” (9–10), if only for a while.

ishman to offer Bialik the job. Between the two editions of Grodzenski's translation and the later publication of Naydus' efforts, *Evgenii Onegin* was one measure by which the Yiddish literary world was besting the Hebrew one. For East European Jewish literature of the 1910s and 1920s, this measure—translations of world literature—was considered an important one. By the time of the Russian Revolution, when East European Jewish intellectuals were considering both Hebrew and Yiddish as options for a Jewish national language of the future, they formed publishing houses such as Stybel in Hebrew and Kletskin in Yiddish in order to make the new literatures self-sufficient by supplying them with translations. Advocates for both Hebrew and Yiddish were able to publish numerous translations from Russian, German, English, French, and other languages. While Dovid Frishman sought a Hebrew translator of *Onegin* in vain during this time, both Arn-Itsik Grodzenski and Leyb Naydus were both independently working on this project in Yiddish despite great personal and communal suffering brought on by the war. Naydus actually died during the war, when he had finished translating nearly four chapters of the novel, which were published along with his other translations of Pushkin and Lermontov—comprising a set which, according to Shmuel Niger, generally comprised the best Yiddish translations of each (“Pushkin un Lermontov oyf yidish.” 70). Both Naydus and Grodzenski were political activists and Yiddishist nationalists, though in rival groups. They also represented different parts of the literary world. Grodzenski was a minor poet and novelist who later found his professional success in populist journalism and was simultaneously a passionate labor union activist and advocate for Yiddish culture in Vilna, even landing himself in prison for a critique of a Polish politician (Hirsh Abramovitsh 44–5); Naydus' activism for the territorialists got him expelled from two schools, but his wealthy background allowed him to focus on becoming a prolific and innovative poet with a large following among Grodno youth.

The fact that two such different people labored to translate *Evgenii Onegin* into Yiddish touches upon several different questions of Jewish culture in Eastern Europe during the World War. This chapter explores why, like Frishman and Levinson in Hebrew, the Yiddish writers Grodzenski and Naydus, also wanted to get *Onegin* translated into a Jewish language at this time, and why this project

was far more successful in Yiddish. This chapter connects the context for these translations and the visions for Yiddish culture that they were meant to advance.

The intellectual worker Grodzenski and the travelling bard Naydus, both of whom are overlooked but significant and representative figures of the development of Yiddish literature at a time when Jewish culture was in the crossfire of warring empires and another nation's struggle for independence. Pushkin was a uniting factor among the many political factions of Jews in this unstable but liberating time, as evidenced by the diverse range of political positions between Frishman, Levinson, Grodzenski and Naydus. While Naydus and Grodzenski were both Yiddishists and activists, they had very different audiences in mind for their translations. Grodzenski's translation, for a working-class audience, aimed to educate Jews and elevate Yiddish culture, while that of Naydus was composed for a more bourgeois and Russified audience, and posthumously published for that audience despite being only half-done.

3.2 GRODZENSKI: BIOGRAPHY AND CONTEXT

The story of *Onegin's* Yiddish translator Arn-Itsik Grodzenski (b. 1891 Vekshnyai, Kovno, d. 1941 Vilne/Ponar) is, in some ways, the story of Yiddish literature in the interwar period.⁷⁴ While Yiddish was still seen by some as bad German, he sought to prove that both this maligned language and his own maligned, disabled body could generate a respectable modern, secular Jewish culture. His translation of *Evgenii Onegin* was a part of his determined efforts on behalf of the development of Yiddish culture. Looking at Russia and Poland for examples, he hoped that Yiddish, as the language of the Jewish folk and its working class, would have a literature that would be a part of world literature, self-sufficient and complete with translations, tuned into its surroundings while challenging the notion of national literature determined by geography or states, comprehensive in its library, accessible to the folk, and supported by professional organizations. His politically radical leanings led

⁷⁴ Although he played a significant role in Yiddish journalism and literature in Vilne, Grodzenski has no surviving archive of manuscripts. This is not unusual for Vilne's Yiddish writers; like so many others, Grodzenski and his family were annihilated along with most evidence of their having existed. The resulting discussion is almost archaeological in nature. What follows is, for now, the only extant biography of him in English. Arn-Itsik Grodzenski's biography is a microcosm of what was going on in interwar Vilne's Jewish community.

him to play crucial though not glorious roles in the development and maintenance of Yiddish culture through populist journalism, tedious or testy meetings, fundraising, and labor union activism. For Grodzenski, Pushkin was an example of a previous culture-maker, a provider of material that could elevate Yiddish culture, a neighbor of the Jews, and an opponent of the tsar.

Traditional Jewish religious culture in Hebrew had indirectly spawned the stateless Yiddish language, which was used to express the lived experience of East European Jews; a rabbinic, *misnagdic* (as opposed to Hasidic) family revered for its Hebrew learning was the origin of this multiply-disabled radical Yiddishist, and translator of Pushkin. Grodzenski came from a family of Orthodox rabbis, the most famous of which was his uncle, Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzenski (or Grodzienski; 1863–1939). Like many other young Jews who joined the new movements and despite his hearing and speech disabilities, the nephew Arn-Itsik studied in a *kheyder*, but was still reached and convinced by the revolutionary fervor, which put him in conflict with his family. His decision to learn a trade in Antwerp, in order to become a true member of the proletariat, may have been the last straw (Hirsh Abramovitsh 42). His marginal status as a person with multiple disabilities may have separated him from the Orthodox world enough to encourage his departure; his achievements in spite of them certainly earned him respect. The efforts to revive him after his stillbirth punctured his palate, making it very difficult for people to understand his nasal speech (Charney *Vilne* 244). As a small child he lost most of his hearing in an accident. This hearing loss led to another accident, while he was a war refugee in his twenties in Ekaterinoslav, in which a streetcar severed his legs (Abramovitsh 42–3). He was married to a dentist and they had three children; the entire family was murdered while Vilne was under Nazi occupation.

As Yiddish was overcoming its reputation as a distorted language, Grodzenski, too, tried to demonstrate his own creativity—both of which processes benefitted from the translation of Pushkin. His tramway accident did not stop his literary work but set off a prolific period during which he published a semiautobiographical novel about life after the streetcar accident, two translations of Pushkin's works, a translation of Maxim Gorky's *Foma Gordeev*, and more. His translation of *Evgenii Onegin* soon became the libretto for the Yiddish performance of Tchaikovsky's famous opera

by that name. This was the beginning of his career as a writer, editor, and journalist. He headed a major Yiddish newspaper and served as an administrator and activist within the writers' professional and labor organizations. Grodzenski achieved a level of success that many a Jewish writer could not, even a "fine bourgeois life" (Charney *Vilne* 245), and his name was associated with his tireless efforts to build Yiddish culture and advocate for the Jewish working class.

The work that Grodzenski performed for the sake of a Jewish national culture in Yiddish within the former Pale of Settlement of the Russian Empire, along with his underlying views of national culture which inspired these efforts, should not be dismissed next to the triumphs of competing ideologies, but perhaps admired. This period of Yiddish culture, with leaders like Grodzenski, differed from what had come before it—a nineteenth-century Yiddish literature that arose, in part, to convince the reader to study other languages and switch to Hebrew literature—and has not been replicated in the Jewish cultures of today. Already contemporary to Zionism, which demanded a huge revision of national culture, Grodzenski's Yiddishism was built with an acceptance of the culturally diverse Jewish community's uniquely stateless role as a minority in the Russian Empire and whatever new states arose locally in its place. His translation of *Evgenii Onegin* served as a part of the career aimed at realizing his vision of Jewish culture. Grodzenski's view of Jewish culture and history entailed a different relationship with non-Jewish culture and with other new and old expressions of Jewish identity.

3.3 GRODZENSKI'S VISION OF CULTURE

Grodzenski knew that, as a writer alone, he would not singlehandedly change the state of Yiddish culture—he saw how that needed to be built with novels and poems and plays, but also with other institutions: theater, journalism, professional organizations, and relationships with European literature. He himself wrote novels, poetry, and a play, but his translations and journalism and committee work had a greater material impact upon the Yiddish cultural world than any novel.

Perhaps, in a national culture with a state, these diligent efforts might not have been as crucial to him. But Grodzenski saw that for Jews, with only the sorts of cultural institutions built by him-

self, his uncle's Orthodox type, and the Zionists, extra action needed to be taken to make Yiddish culture flourish. Yiddish had already found in Sholem-Aleykhem (Sholem Rabinovitch) a national writer⁷⁵, or a Dan Miron puts it, "there was no Yiddish Bialik for the modernists to cut their teeth on; or rather, the Yiddish Bialik, namely Perets, had asserted his dominance mainly through prose fiction and not through his lyrical poetry" (*From Continuity to Contiguity* 172). Despite the work of Sholem-Aleykhem, Y. L. Perets, and the contemporary modernists, the ultimate result was the interest of young writers and some wealthy magnates who could run a publishing house—not as much as Grodzenski wanted for Yiddish. As he (and possibly his fellow members of the Theater Society) noted in a letter to Jewish communal leaders, other nations enjoyed state and municipal funding for their cultural activities, while Yiddish culture had to operate independently of governmental support (Maks 166).

In contrast to the liberal Russification and Hebraization that had inspired the OPE schools and translation of Pushkin, Grodzenski approached Yiddish literature from the political left. His service as secretary in organizations representing Vilne's writers and journalists was a kind of activism to help build all facets of the desired Yiddish culture in Vilne and elsewhere. He had aspired to become a real member of the working class but also a Yiddish writer, and this activity united those two identities of writer and worker. In addition, the labor unions needed to achieve a standard of wages and working conditions that would enable the professions of Yiddish journalism and literature to be worth engaging in. The writers' union saw itself as representing not just its membership of writers and journalists, but as waging the "struggle for Yiddish language, schooling, and culture" (Reyzen 196). Yiddish writers also needed to participate in international organizations; it opened a door for stateless literatures around the world when the Yiddish chapter of International PEN⁷⁶ was officially recognized with Vilne as its center. The Yiddish PEN Club saw itself as a voice to tell the world about the Jewish plight (104) and demonstrating that the International PEN needed to change its apolitical stance to one that opposed totalitarianism (105), giving the Yiddish writer a mission for

⁷⁵ See Slezkine for a discussion of Sholem Aleykhem as the Jewish Pushkin.

⁷⁶ Now known as PEN International; the acronym stood for "Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists, and Novelists." Reyzen describes this organization in more detail in *Vilner almanakh*.

the material improvement in the lives of Jews via a place in world literature. As what we now call the “international community” was becoming visible, Grodzenski sought its sympathy for the plight of East European Jews and saw cross-cultural communication as a key means of achieving that. This was not quite the same mission as the internalization of European humanism that drove Frishman’s translation, but it does come from a desire to have a Jewish literature—in this case, Yiddish, the language of the Jewish masses—that would be an official member of this world literature club.

Translation played a role in both internal matters of Yiddish culture as well as external matters involving its place in world literature. Participating in an international writers’ organization was a way of showing Yiddish literature to the world, and one of the goals of this relationship was for the local Yiddish PEN clubs to produce a list of Yiddish literary texts for translation so that not only the writers, but East European Jewish culture itself, could be presented to the international community of writers and readers (Reyzen 106). But before the formation of the Yiddish PEN Club Center in Vilne in which he was a founding member, Grodzenski had already made major contributions to the reverse process through his translations of Pushkin and other writers.

The relationship between Yiddish literature and others was not a symmetrical one. While few Yiddish or even Jewish writers⁷⁷ were known to non-Jewish readers (and Jews had long been mythologized in European literature in both reverential and hateful, but generally unrepresentative and often false ways), Jews always lived surrounded by non-Jews and their culture. Educated Jews read non-Jewish literature in large amounts and even became experts on non-Jewish writers—Grodzenski’s Jewish contemporary, M. O. Gershenzon, became one of the foremost experts on Pushkin. So while on the one hand, Grodzenski presents his translations of Pushkin “to the Jewish [Yiddish] reader,” his reasons for doing so are more complicated and reflect his ideas of literature and culture in general, as well as his aspirations for Yiddish.

Although he did not explain it as clearly among the many paratexts to his translation of *Evgenii Onegin*, Grodzenski does answer the question “why Yiddish Pushkin?” in a preface to the second edition of his translation of the narrative poem, “*Poltava*.” “*Poltava*” is one of Pushkin’s more na-

⁷⁷ Such as Grigorii Bogrov and S. G. Frug in Russian.

tionalist works, dealing with Russian history and bearing some themes of loyalty (written under the tsar's censorship). Grodzenski argues that the Jewish reader needs this translation because: (a) it is a moving piece of fine literature in its sounds and imagery; "Art for Art's sake!" (9); (b) "the cultural importance of a literature overall is evaluated based on how much it possesses not only of its own, but of the foreign; (c) Pushkin was the greatest Russian poet, Yiddish literature unfolded in the Russian Empire, there was no Pushkin in Yiddish so far but that need must be filled, and "*Poltava*" is a good representation of Pushkin's talents; (d) a great universal poetic work will always have a drop of national blood, which makes it great (9–10). This justification contains in it several statements that can, themselves, be translated into directives for Yiddish literature: (a) Yiddish literature should strive towards an art-for-art's sake approach that emphasizes beautiful sounds and images and provides a compelling emotional experience; (b) Yiddish literature should contain a library of translated works; (c) Yiddish literature should acknowledge its geographical, political, and cultural relationships with other nations and see this as a part of its context; (d) Yiddish literature can embrace the national character or *pintele Yid* that can be found in its works. Though this is a short, concentrated paratext (and there is little else available in which Grodzenski's ideas were so clearly expounded), it shows how translating Pushkin, including *Evgenii Onegin*, served as both theory and practice for getting the Jewish vernacular's literature some respectability within world literature.

Grodzenski's own choices of what to translate into Yiddish suggest that he was motivated in part by a desire to bring in literature that spoke to the revolutionary spirit, including works by Jack London and Maxim Gorky. But in addition to Gorky, Grodzenski translated other writers of the Jews' neighboring languages: "W. Kochanowski"⁷⁸ from Polish and Alexander Pushkin. While literature could bring new ideas to the masses that were relevant to their lives, it was also important for the Jewish population of Eastern Europe to have some level of cultural literacy with regard to the overthrown Russian Empire that had ruled over it for so long as well as the new Polish state in which many Jews now found themselves. Yiddish literature had a didactic purpose as well as a need to expand its library for the sake of literary development. Grodzenski states in the introductions to both

⁷⁸ I have not been able to find an original Polish text with the same title to determine if this is Jan Kochanowski.

the “*Poltava*” translation and the 1919 edition of the *Evgenii Onegin* translation that he considers the Yiddish literature to have developed as a part of Russia, and that therefore it is an “abnormal phenomenon in our literature, that in spite of creating itself for the most part in Russia, it still does not have any significant works of the greatest poet of Russia” (1919: vii). Implicit in this is an idea of Yiddish literature and East European Jews as somewhat indigenous to the region, or at least local. Whereas Zionists writing in Hebrew wanted to leave the area entirely, Grodzenski’s work was openly diasporist.

By mentioning the former Russian Empire as the home of modern Yiddish literature, Grodzenski is grounding Yiddish letters in their geographical home and expressing a view of cultural relations quite different from the increasingly popular Zionist ones. The struggle of the Jews in Eastern Europe during the difficult interwar period inspired people to seek a variety of solutions. Though today, Zionism and Israel can trace their successes in part to the Zionist schools and political organizations of interwar Vilne, and many Orthodox Jews still associate themselves with the history of Chaim Ozer Grodzenski’s circles of the “Jerusalem of Lithuania” so much that non-Hasidic ultra-Orthodox Jews are often called “*Litvish* [Lithuanian],”⁷⁹ A. Y. Grodzenski and his colleagues envisioned no “return” to the Land of Israel, neither through waiting eternally for a *Moshiah*, nor by taking it themselves. Rather, they saw themselves as an ethnic minority with real ties to its geographical location in European countries, as a people that ought to fight for rights and fairness within that location. Culturally, this was to be a two-way street; the Jews needed to be educated about the culture of their neighbors and rulers, while the Gentile governments ought to support Jewish institutions as well as Gentile ones (the Friends of Yiddish Theater aimed to eventually get the government to support Yiddish theater; Maks 166).

Translation served not only to expand the artistic capacity of Yiddish and broaden its library, but also played a new kind of didactic role. Indeed, *Evgenii Onegin* itself was not just considered to express a certain national Russian character like “*Poltava*”, but also addresses the relationships between Russian culture and that of Western Europe. The novel is sprinkled with numerous refer-

⁷⁹ For example, see *Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski*, Volume 40 of The Eternal Lights Series of plasticized books for Orthodox Jewish children; Volume 1 is devoted to the Vilna Gaon.

ences to Russian and Western culture: to Byron, Derzhavin, the Muses. Evgenii, Pushkin's narrator tells us, received a French education from his tutors, studied Latin and Adam Smith, and dressed like a London dandy, "but *pantaloons, frock coats, waistcoats*, / There are none of these words in Russian" (1:XXVI).⁸⁰ Many foreign words and names are footnoted in Russian editions for the sake of schoolchildren and other readers who did not receive the Lyceum education of Pushkin. They serve in Grodzenski's Yiddish edition as a means of educating the Jewish reader both about the culture of the recently deposed Russian Empire⁸¹ in which the Yiddish readers had grown up, but also about the Western European and classical Greco-Roman literature so frequently cited by Pushkin.

The translation of *Onegin* also served another cultural aim of Grodzenski's. In his fundraising efforts for the theater society, he claims that theater is considered the world over to be a measure of national culture overall (Maks 165). His translation of *Evgenii Onegin*, which is at least as well-known as an opera as it is a novel, was first published in 1919 in Ekaterinoslav after his accident and after the publication of "*Poltava*." There, Grodzenski and Jewish musician Leo Zeitlin may have been collaborating on the opera, because they were both in Ekaterinoslav during the war and a partial manuscript of the libretto was found in the Zeitlin papers. It was probably not the sole motivation for making a Yiddish *Onegin*, but Grodzenski quickly adapted his translation of the novel into a translation of the libretto for the Tchaikovsky opera. The first performance of the opera in Yiddish occurred in 1922, in advance of the second edition of the novel's translation, and was the first performance of Vilne's first Yiddish opera company (which used the space of a Polish theater). Opera being a new genre for Yiddish, it, too, debuted as a translation from another literature. One of the desired outcomes of the translation of the novel was to accelerate the progress of the Yiddish theater itself to incorporate new genres.

Affordable theater productions can be a more democratic cultural product than verse novels. They do not require the same level of literacy as reading a novel, but they do provide people with a social, recreational activity of a few hours at a time and a communal experience. While Hebrew

⁸⁰ "Но *панталоны, фрак, жилет*, / Всех этих слов на русском нет."

⁸¹ Grodzenski wrote the first draft of this translation while in Ekaterinoslav. When he went back to Vilne, it was Polish Vilne. He was no fan of the Polish government.

literature and even theater were gaining traction in the former Russian Empire at this time (Habimah in Moscow would soon stage a Hebrew version of “The Dybbuk”), it was hardly a mass medium because it lacked native speakers and had to be learned. Nearly all of the East European Jews knew Yiddish. As we see now, when Yiddish theaters stage Yiddish plays to audiences with much less knowledge of the language than those in interwar Vilne, theater can also serve as a way of preserving language by making sure it is spoken and heard. Taken together with Grodzenski’s other activities and positions, his translation of *Evgenii Onegin* fits into a program for the fortification of Yiddish culture. The novel-libretto helped introduce Vilne’s Jewish community to opera in its own language as well as to poetic forms, images, and feelings of another culture.

3.4 *EVGENII ONEGIN* FOR THE LOVE OF THEATER

Grodzenski, who would go on to write about and advocate for Yiddish theater for many years, was motivated by love of the fledgling modern Yiddish theater to translate *Evgenii Onegin*. In the first edition of this Yiddish *Evgenii Onegin*, which came out in 1919 in Ekaterinoslav, he announced on the title page that “using the text of the translation for a libretto without the permission of the translator is invited.” In other words, the translation was written with the expectation, knowledge, or hope that it would be used in the Yiddish theater. On the one hand, the theater was one of Grodzenski’s priorities for the Yiddish masses and clearly a great love of his. But on the other, it was one area where his speech and hearing disabilities made him a highly visible audience member and a very unlikely participant. As it turned out, although Grodzenski has no webpage at the YIVO Encyclopedia, he is twice credited with this major contribution to the theater arts in Yiddish.

After 5000 copies of the Yiddish *Onegin* quickly sold, Grodzenski himself was the one to convert it to a libretto (“*Morgn yevgeni onyegin*” 3) and in December of 1922, in a major event that attracted visitors from other Jewish cities, *Evgenii Onegin* opened in Yiddish. Tickets were sold by the bookstore “Lektor.” Advertised in Jewish (not just Yiddish) newspapers as the “Gala Opening of the First Yiddish Opera Theater,” the performance was not just the first time *Onegin* was shown in

Yiddish—it was apparently the first-ever Yiddish opera production in Eastern Europe.⁸² The committee faced almost impossible conditions in trying to put this opera together (“*Baym geburt fun a yidishe opere*” 4) and the conditions of life were so bad at the time that advertisements for the performance promised that the space would be heated. While other runs of Grodzenski’s *Onegin* followed, its other triumph was in paving a way for other Yiddish opera performances, eventually including some original Yiddish libretti.

The libretto, though only a partial manuscript remains,⁸³ is today Grodzenski’s best-remembered accomplishment. Perhaps this early success amplified his fondness of and devotion to Yiddish theater in his subsequent years. The manuscript of the libretto was found by Paula Eisenstein Baker among the possessions of Yiddish musician and Yiddish *Onegin* director Leo Zeitlin, who was in Ekaterinoslav at the same time as Grodzenski. Zeitlin and Grodzenski may have planned this together; Grodzenski may have translated the novel in order for a Yiddish version of the opera to be performed. In any case, the invitation to essentially “Steal This Book” expresses the hope for an opera performance, which may or may not have been the primary goal.

Translating the libretto and performing the Russian opera in Yiddish is an unusually direct expression of that utility of translation: to introduce new forms and genres into the target language, allowing future artists to create new works after the ground has been broken. In this case Grodzenski’s translation introduced an entire new art form to the Yiddish language at a time when there was no Yiddish libretto or composition or even social infrastructure to put on an opera, conditions that necessitated the use of Russian material (“*Baym geburt fun a yidishe opere*” 4). His activism on behalf of the theater in subsequent years demonstrates a strong commitment to this art form. While acting secretary of the Theater Society, he proposed and likely wrote a memorandum sent to Vilne’s Jewish community appealing for funding, in which his motivation for theater activity is explained:

The theater-system is considered throughout the entire world to be an indication of human culture, and by various peoples to be the degree of cultural quality, in the sense of

⁸² Yiddish opera was performed first in London ten years before, but what happened in Vilne was far more ambitious and comprehensive (Ran 246).

⁸³ Based on my search in Israel and the United States, but not in Europe. I am grateful to Paula Eisenstein Baker for sharing this and other materials with me.

national possessions, artistic talent, and spiritual development. The various states understood this well and they always maintained this cultural item of their peoples with the greatest attention[... Yiddish theater] receives no support, neither from the kingdom nor from local rule, and consequently such a situation harms our folk-culture[...] We must point out that especially here in Vilne—the city of the Jerusalem of Lithuania—the Yiddish theater-system is found in especially bad material conditions, which has a detrimental effect on the local cultural life. The local Jewish masses are in need of a better Yiddish artistic theater, more than elsewhere. At the same time, such a theater has no space here, because it lacks here its own building[...]⁸⁴ (Qtd. in Maks 165–6)

The organization wanted, most of all, to get a dedicated building belonging to the Yiddish theater, and ultimately hoped to get Polish government funding (Maks 166). Grodzenski saw theater as a significant cultural institution, perhaps because of its democratic nature; even those who could not read well, or those who did not have enough time to read, could share in the collective recreational and cultural experience of the theater. In his newspaper *Ovnt-kurier*, he wrote daily about theater productions from the previous day. Abramovitsh recalls that Grodzenski

“would not miss any new theater performance. He would sit near the very stage, put a hand on his ear, making his own kind of a ‘loudspeaker,’ so he could hear better. Naturally, due to his not hearing he made mistakes, but people did not want to offend him and allude to his physical defects.”⁸⁵ (45)

Abramovitsh repeatedly describes Grodzenski as sensitive and easily angered because of his multiple disabilities, he still went all over town and surprised the community by his energy for all of

⁸⁴ דער טעאטער-וועזן ווערט אין דער גארער וועלט באטרעכט אלס דער סימן פון דער מענטשלעכער קולטור און ביי די באזונדערע פעלקער אלס דער שטאפל פון דער קולטור-מדרגה, סיי אין זין פון זייער נאציאנאל אייגנטום, סיי אין זין פון זייער קונסט-פעאיקייט, זיי אין זין פון זייער גייסטיקער אנטוויקלונג. דאס האבן גוט פארשטאנען די באזונדערע מלוכות און זיי האבן תמיד געפלעגט אט די דאזיקע קולטור-פאזיציע פון זייערע פעלקער מיט דער גרעסטער אויפמערקזאמקייט[...] [דער יידישער טעאטער] באקומט ניט קיין שטיצע ניט פון דער מלוכה און ניט פון די זעלבסט-פארוואלטונגען, און במילא שאדט אזא לאגע אונדזער פאלקס-קולטור[...] מיר מוזן אופמערקזאם מאכן, אז באזונדערס ביי אונז אין ווילנע—די שטאט פון ירושלים דליטא—געפינט זיך דאס יידיש טעאטער-וועזן אין באזונדערס שווערע מאטעריעלע באדינגונגען, וואס רופט זיך שעדלעך אפ אויפן היגן קולטורישן לעבן. די היגע יידישע מאסן נייטיקן זיך אין א בעסערן יידישן קינסטלערישן טעאטער, מער ווי וואו אנדערש. אין דער זעלבער צייט האט אזא טעאטער דא ניט קיין ארט, מחמת אים פעלט דא אן אייגענער בנין[...]

⁸⁵ פלעגט נישט דורכלאזן קיין שום נייע טעאטער-רעצענזיעס וועגן נעכטיקע פארשטעלונגען. ער פלעגט זיך זעצן ביי דער סאמע בינע, צולייגן די האנט צום אויער, מאכנדין א מין אייגענעם אופן פון א "הילכער," אז ער זאל בעסער הערן. נאטירלעך, האט ער צוליב זיין נישט דערהערן געמאכט טעותן, אבער מען האט נישט געוואלט אנרירן און פאררופן זיך אויף זיינע פיזישע מומים.

this activity. His journalism gave him a major role to play in Vilne's Yiddish theater, because he had a large audience reading these reviews. Grodzenski's conviction that theater was an important national cultural institution—as well as his enjoyment of it, presumably—led to this constant commitment to a medium in which he was continually confronted by his hearing impairment.

3.5 GRODZENSKI'S VIEW OF PUSHKIN

The paratexts (introductions, footnotes, etc.) of Grodzenski's translations provide a rare opportunity to understand not just why he translated Pushkin, but who he thought Pushkin was and why he thought it was important for Jews to read Pushkin. As is the case for Pushkin fans of different times and places, he found a Pushkin that was quite relatable to himself and his contemporaries, the Yiddishist revolutionaries who had broken away from their family traditions.

In his paratexts on "*Poltava*, he writes of Pushkin as a young prodigy, an excellent student who loved to read and who had a critical relationship with the upper classes ["*hoykhe fenster*" or "high windows"] and its leadership, the upper spheres ["*hoykhe sfern*"]. The frivolity and restrictiveness of aristocratic life was hard for Pushkin to endure (1923: 3–7) as, perhaps, was the religiously strict bourgeois life of Grodzenski's family. The emphasis on Pushkin's bookishness creates a link between the Russian poet and the Yiddishists and other Jewish writers, who—typically in *kheyder* and *yeshivah*—had started out as bibliophiles valued by the Jewish community.

The emphasis on Pushkin's disconnection from his objectionable social class becomes the young Yiddish revolutionary's reading of the novel *Evgenii Onegin*. Grodzenski introduces it with the famous quotation from Vissarion Belinski: "*Evgenii Onegin* is a historical poema in the full sense of the word, even though there is not one historical personage that can be found among its characters" (3). He agrees with Belinsky that the novel expresses a realist vision of Russian society, but not about politics. The Pushkin that Grodzenski describes is a revolutionary who rejects the hypocrisy of Russia's upper classes. This is in contrast to Belinsky's tone in the rest of his essay: "It is high time we realized that a Russian poet can only prove himself to be a truly national poet by portraying in his works the life of the educated estates" (20).

Grodzenski's introduction makes a scathing commentary on the Russian aristocracy and credits Pushkin with seeing what was wrong with his society. They entertained themselves with new ideas coming from abroad, but did not live up to the proclaimed ideals of liberalism; Catherine the Great loved Voltaire but never freed the serfs. They enjoyed Byronism's egotistical notion that Man had to get away from other men, as if everyone else but the elite individuals was base and to be disdained (4–5). Though many critics are sympathetic to the novel's eponymous prototype of an anti-hero, Grodzenski describes Evgenii as someone intentionally devoid of feelings who only experiences his "spleen" because it is the sickness of Russian society. Through the character of Onegin, he argues, Pushkin was able to address the follies of the Russian aristocracy (which had just been toppled a short time before the translation was published. We can expect that Grodzenski shed no tears for the Russian aristocracy, though he was also against the new Polish government).

For Grodzenski, the novel was a revolution in Russian literature because of its realism, as it was for many Russian intellectuals including Dostoevsky, but the social criticism of the novel was a crucial aspect of that revolutionary realism:

With *Evgenii Onegin* Russian literature made the attempt to separate itself from the influence of foreign perspectives, stepped toward self-criticism and self-analysis, and brought to [?] Russian society its own creation taken from its own real life.⁸⁶ (6)

This speaks to a discussion going on in both Hebrew and Yiddish literary circles of the early twentieth century, the discussion which led to the translation project. If the novel itself is one of Pushkin's achievements in creating a truly Russian literature, distinguishing itself from the foreign influences, what does it mean to translate the novel into Yiddish? Grodzenski wanted the same for Yiddish, a modern Yiddish literature that would be self-critical, taken from the real life of East European Jews⁸⁷—but apparently, he saw the incorporation of foreign perspectives as an important part of Yiddish literary activity in this time.

⁸⁶ מיט "יעווגעני אונעגין" האט די רוסישע ליטעראטור געמאכט דעם פרוב זיך אפצושיידן פון דער השפעה פון פרעמדע אַנשוויאונגען, איז צוגעטראָטן צו זעלבסט-קריטיק און זעלבסט-אַנאַליזירונג, און האָט צוגעטראָגן דער רוסישער געזעלשאַפט אַן אייגענע שאַפונג גענומען פון איר אייגענעם רעאַלן לעבן.

⁸⁷ This kind of Yiddish fiction already existed, especially in the works of Sholem Aleykhem, who had recently died.

Grodzenski also brings up class issues which may easily parallel the way that many Yiddishist revolutionaries have thought about the relationships between Hebrew and Yiddish. He claims that without Pushkin, modern Russian literature would not have happened, for the following reasons: people who spoke Russian during Pushkin's time were considered to be "*ameratsim*," ignoramuses, Russian writers were persecuted by the aristocracy and the tsarist court, while most of the (Russian-speaking) population was illiterate (4). He also notes that in Pushkin's time, the Russian aristocracy used French while the peasants used Russian (3). Pushkin actually makes this point when "translating" Tatiana's letter from French into Russian for the Russian reader, inventing novelistic and love-letter-language for the new Russian novel. East European Jews at this time, with the masses speaking Yiddish and the elites studying Hebrew and/or non-Jewish languages such as Russian, could be reminded of this example and the possibility of a new literature and culture in the language of the masses.

Translating this novel accomplished many desired tasks at once. It acquainted the Jewish reader with one of the greatest works of the great poet of Russia, the Empire in which the Yiddish-speaking audience had lived. It provided an example of a high poetic form in the language of common people and an example of how that could be accomplished. It expanded Yiddish literature by expanding the Yiddish library. It resulted in Eastern Europe's first Yiddish opera performance, to be followed by other translated and original Yiddish operas. The translation was prepared in a way that could educate the Jewish reader about Russian and Western culture. It also showed the aristocracy in a negative light at a time when Yiddishism and revolutionary fervor often went together. Grodzenski's Pushkin fit in with the spirit of his times and he wanted to make him available to the Jewish masses.

This suggests that although a portion of the potential readers may well have been Russified Jews who would have known Pushkin's text in the original Russian, the aim of the translation was more democratizing: for theater and for education. The translation was for a mixed audience that included both Russified Jews and those who did not know Russian.

3.6 THE TRANSLATOR'S FOOTNOTES

Grodzenski's translation is amply annotated with footnotes that may confirm and even reveal information about the state of Yiddish literature and secular Jewish education of the time. In the educational and literary project of which this translation was a part, *Evgenii Onegin* is both a means and an end. It is also a way of bringing Jews to Yuri Slezkine's "Pushkin faith" (127). In order to understand Pushkin's text, the readers will glance at footnotes about his world. In order to learn about this world, Jews could read this text. *Evgenii Onegin* is both a means and an end. This can be seen from the footnotes, which also suggest that he translated this novel for a readership of Jews who did not know the Russian language and did not know much about Russian and Western culture.

Grodzenski's annotations for *Evgenii Onegin* are uniquely able to tell us about his readers because he marks two kinds of footnotes. Footnotes from the Russian text, including original footnotes of Pushkin's, are numbered and translated into Yiddish. Grodzenski distinguishes his own notes, special for the Jewish reader, by starring them instead of numbering them. Pushkin's text is full of cultural references to celebrities of the time, historical events, his own biography, literary texts, artistic movements, local customs, political philosophies, French and other foreign words plus plenty of Western culture. Thus the footnotes point to differences in what ethnically Russian and Jewish people might have needed in their footnotes.

Grodzenski is translating a Russian text into Yiddish, but his footnote for the Yiddish translation "*fusremel*" (stirrup, literally, "little foot-frame" 1:xxxiv) defines it by printing Russian and Polish synonyms; he explains the Yiddish translation to the Yiddish-speaking audience using Slavic translations. He chooses this strange way to translate the Russian and uses Russian and Polish words to explain what is meant. This demonstrates Grodzenski's expectation that at least some of Grodzenski's expected audience was familiar with Russian or Polish, at least enough to make use of these words. Even if they did know Russian and Polish, they still may not know enough about non-Jewish cultures in order to understand all of the references in the novel. In addition to the need for an opera, perhaps they needed the footnotes themselves.

Even Russian editions of *Evgenii Onegin* are often accompanied by footnotes to help readers un-

derstand the novel's sundry references to contemporary and classical culture. The Russian footnotes translated by Grodzenski explain foreign words, personal names, and define Homer as "a famous Greek poet (from the ninth century before Christ)" (14). Jews, however apparently needed such definitions as: Zeus, Helen of Troy (144), the Muses (201–2), "Lyceum—high school of Alexander the First where Pushkin studied." Grodzenski defines "pilgrimke—those who go up on foot [*oley-regel*] to the holy places are called 'pilgrims'" because he chooses to transliterate Pushkin's word to describe the Orthodox pilgrimages in Slavic language (*pilgrimke*), transliterating it into Semitic terminology ("*oley-regel*") in the footnotes rather than in the body of the text (187).

Grodzenski expected his Jewish reader to need translations of French, people and places of Europe, Russian Orthodox culture and anything about ancient Greece and Rome. In the process of reading the footnotes to understand the novel, the Jewish audience would have learned quite a bit of elementary material about Western culture. And even though many of Grodzenski's readers would have already know the text in their acquired language of Russian, they may have found the Yiddish footnotes helpful in explaining things that Russian editions did not expect them to be curious about.

On one hand, Grodzenski produced exactly what Vladimir Nabokov, whose four-volume *Onegin* made him the world's most famous self-reflective translator, accused verse translations of being. Nabokov believed there to be an unresolvable conflict between the literal meaning of the text and its form. For Nabokov, verse translations could not be literal translations, but rather "the term 'literal translation' is tautological since anything but that is not truly a translation but an imitation, an adaptation or a parody" (*Onegin* in English, 134). But considering how the audience seems to know the Russian original somewhat, the nature of these translations as adaptation and parody is not entirely unconscious. But given that, Grodzenski also acknowledges *Onegin's* need for footnotes, anticipating Nabokov's demand for extensive "footnotes reaching up like skyscrapers" (143). Grodzenski's footnotes are not skyscrapers but they are also for a literate audience born in the Russian Empire, not far away America, while what Nabokov really meant was not just to make the background material known to the reader. Nabokov's footnotes also try to help the reader understand the nuances of Pushkin's language, something which is not a priority in Grodzenski's text. Nabokov's translation

of the same novel ensured that *Evgenii Onegin* would be typically used as an example in discussions of the role of annotation in translations, even as the cultural dimensions of this discussion are often poststructuralist or postcolonialist in nature. Nabokov's version, with its unrhymed text and substantial commentary, is foreignizing to the extreme. Grodzenski's work combines what might be called an "indigenizing" translation by reproducing the form, and a "foreignizing translation" whose footnotes draw attention to the translated nature of the text. Had translation theorists including Nabokov and Lawrence Venuti read Grodzenski's Yiddish translation, they might have found his to be a contradictory approach.

Footnoting carries political significance in the commentary to 1:1, the stanza in which Pushkin's African heritage is alluded to. Pushkin had included among his footnotes an explanation of his family background and his ancestor Ibragim Gannibal. But the footnote shrank to one line in 1833 and then was gone, so that the final edition of Pushkin's lifetime would not explicitly mention his blackness (Shaw 93). Grodzenski re-integrates this information into the text, not using (or, perhaps, having much access to in Ekaterinoslav) the original footnote but plainly stating: "*pushkins elterzeyde iz geven an afrikaner neger*" (36). [Pushkin's great-grandfather was an African Negro]. At a time when this was not the most popular view of the man who was supposed to express the pure Russian soul, Grodzenski uses the footnotes to make a point about Pushkin's otherness for the Jewish readers, who were conscious of their own otherness.

3.7 FORM AND CONTENT: GOOD ENOUGH?

Grodzenski's translation fulfills the mission of educating the Jewish masses and was reasonably successful in the sense that it was published in a second edition and helped initiate the age of Yiddish opera. But the second edition received a brutal review by critic Shmuel Niger (brother of Grodzenski's friend, the writer Daniel Charney) in *Tsukunft*. Niger shared Grodzenski's interest in the translation of foreign works for the sake of developing Yiddish literature as well as his idea that Russian literature should be a priority due to its proximity (135), but finds Grodzenski's translation utterly wanting. While a poet-translator might duplicate the original, creating something of an original

work of his own in the translation, Grodzenski, he writes, is a weak poet and has maintained a formal resemblance to the *Onegin* stanza which lacks in musicality and has poor rhymes (135).

Niger accepts two kinds of translations: those which poetic artistry has made different from the original but into works of art in the receiving language, and those which convey the content of the original in a less artistic rendering. He finds Grodzenski wanting on not one, but both of those accounts. Citing Belinsky's idea of Pushkin's "mathematical" use of language, Niger writes that Grodzenski turns Pushkin's precision into banalities and flowery phrases, "*melitsehs*" (136). For that part of the Yiddish readership which knows Russian, the "false translation" ("*falshe fartaytsherung*") can be perceived in every line of the translation and that Grodzenski inadvertently mistranslated some of the Russian as well (136–7). Niger even delivers a cruel personal insult in the process, writing that Grodzenski "crippled" Pushkin's small details that convey the truth about the life of the upper classes, Evgenii, and Tatiana (136). Reflecting on the fact that he is reviewing the "second, improved edition," Niger claims that it would be better not to even have such a bad translation into Yiddish (137). This is because the translation fails to convey a sense of how good the original Pushkin was. Niger does not want just a sketch of the meter and the plot; he wants the reader to feel Pushkin the genius.

3.8 INACCURACY

The many people involved in disseminating this translation—publishers, the many people involved in putting on the opera—apparently disagreed with Niger's idea that they would have been better off without this translation. It was remarkable that a translation of *Evgenii Onegin* would have been printed in Ekaterinoslav during the commotion of war, revolution and pogroms.⁸⁸ Farlag Visnshaft, the publisher of Grodzenski's first edition of *Evgenii Onegin* in Ekaterinoslav, was a short-lived wartime enterprise and its handful of publications constituted much of what literary publishing was happening while otherwise in the city "[p]aper was an extremely scarce and strategic commodity, allocated exclusively for the hand-rolled cigarettes and leaflets of numerous fighting armies and

⁸⁸ I am indebted to Iosif Vaisman for this observation.

militias of different colors” (Vaisman). Probably the most important thing published there besides Grodzenski’s translation was Perets Markish’s *Pust un pas*. It is indeed odd that this publisher was actively printing under such conditions, but perhaps this can be explained by the fact that wealthy Jews in northern cities such as Vilna were evacuated to such places; a temporary swelling of the Jewish population in Ekaterinoslav may have been the reason why this publishing house came to exist for a short while. The fact that Leib Naydus was writing his translation at the very same time indicates that Grodzenski was not alone in his interest in *Onegin* (whether on the part of the intelligentsia or the reading public) during the worst war European Jews had ever seen.

It is possible that people disagreed with Niger regarding the quality of the translation, but it is more likely that they simply prioritized other interests over the precision desired by Niger, because Niger was right that the translation differs from the original in matters of music and precision. Grodzenski’s translation itself is one of the more well-known early Yiddish translations of Pushkin, but it proves easy to critique on both counts, such as the rhythms of 4:VII and the literal meaning in 5:II (below). Critiques of the musicality must begin with the idea that Grodzenski generally sustains the *Onegin* stanza’s iambic tetrameter and rhyme pattern. Unlike Frishman’s attempts in Ashkenazi Hebrew, Grodzenski’s Yiddish easily include masculine rhymes such as *mir-shir* below. In Yiddish, unlike in Frishman’s Hebrew of 1899, iambic lines were no problem. This stanza from Chapter 4 Stanza VII demonstrates how Grodzenski adheres to the meter and how he deviates from it as well.

PUSHKIN (translated by Nabokov, with my initialed modifications)	GRODZENSKI
<p>The less we love a woman the easier 'tis to be liked by her, and thus more surely we undo her amid seductive nets [-S.F.]. Time was when cool debauch was lauded as the art of love, trumpeting everywhere about itself, and taking pleasure without loving. But that grand pastime is worthy of old apes [-S.F.] of our forefathers' vaunted times; the fame of Lovelaces has faded with the fame of red heels and of majestic wigs [-S.F.].</p>	<p>The less certainly we love,— the more the woman likes us [the more we are liked by the woman]; with that we destroy her faster in dazzling nets without end. Whoring, it used to happen, was coldly boasted often with bold love, puffed up by itself, without love taking pleasure. But [nor] the joke is accessible, important for apes only, illustrious only [nor] in the old times; the old fame of the Lovelaces, and also the fame of red shoes with wig-fame, faded fast.</p>
<p>Чем меньше женщину мы любим, Тем легче нравимся мы ей, И тем ее вернее губим Средь обольстительных сетей. Разврат, бывало, хладнокровный Наукой славился любовной, Сам о себе везде трубя, И наслаждаясь не любя. Но эта важная забава Достойна старых обезьян Хваленых дедовских времян: Ловласов обветшала слава Со славой красных каблуков И величавых париков.</p>	<p>וואָס ווייניקער מיר ליבן זיכער,— אַלץ מער דער פרוי געפעלן מיר; דערמיט פארניכטן מיר זי גיכער אין נעצן בלענדערניש אָן שיעור. דאָס זנות, פלעגט טרעפן, האָט קאַלטבלוטיק גערימט זיך אָפּט מיט ליבע מוטיק, פון זיך אַליין צעבלאַזנדיק, אָן ליבע נחת קלייבנדיק. נאָר צוגענגלעך איז אָט דער שפּאַסן, דער וויכטיקער פאַר אפּפן גאָר, גערימט אין צייטן אַלטע נאָר; דער אַלטער רום פון די לאַוולאַסן און אויך דער רום פון רויטע שיד מיט שייטל-רום פארוועלקט האָט גיך.</p>

All deviations aside for now, this translation manages to do what Dovid Frishman had wanted for Hebrew but been unable to achieve himself and unable to find someone else who was willing to try: the *Onegin* stanza in a Jewish language. Here Hebrew had failed—and thanks to Grodzenski, Yiddish triumphed. Despite Niger's derision for deaf Grodzenski's use of sound, despite the flaws in execution, and despite the musical superiority that Naydus' translation would demonstrate some years later, this translation is an achievement of Yiddish prosody on the most basic level. This was important because of the relatively low cultural status of Yiddish and the recent modernization of

its poetry. It demonstrated that Yiddish, too, could produce high culture in this high-cultural form of the novel-in-verse (and then the opera), beyond the novels which took advantage of the spoken nature of Yiddish to produce first-person stories about Jewish life.⁸⁹.

It was not hard to write *Onegin* stanzas in Yiddish. Grodzenski, whose poetic gifts were far less than Pushkin's and whose hearing and speech were impaired, composed hundreds of them for this translation and they were considered good enough to set to music for the libretto. This historic achievement was nowhere near perfect, however. Grodzenski's translation both breaks the basic rules and interprets the meter very differently than Pushkin's text does. In lines 7–8 of this stanza, which end with the grammatically rhymed long words *tseblozndik* and *klaybndik*, line endings that should be masculine are instead dactylic (a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables). These dactylic endings are not only a change from the rhyme-ending, but also create a fundamental change in the meter; these two lines are now iambic trimeters instead of tetrameters. They are almost like tetrameters with masculine endings due to the number of syllables and the difference being mainly at the end of the line, but they are not. This quotation is taken from the second and improved edition of the translation, which means that it was Grodzenski's personal best.

Though he mostly adheres to the meter, Grodzenski's interpretation of the meter is noticeably different from Pushkin's, especially in lines with longer words. Though Pushkin wrote this novel in a complex verse form, he took advantage of the various opportunities for variation that it allowed, including caesurae, enjambments, and especially the possibility of unrealized stresses in all but the fourth iamb of the tetrameter. Thus for example, Pushkin skips the stress on the third foot in Line 6, thanks to the 3-syllable word "*slavilsia*", then skips the stress on the first iamb in Line 7 thanks to an unstressed "o." The variations in which of these are skipped is crucial for the use of this form throughout an entire novel because rather than a sense of dull repetition, Pushkin creates and surprises the reader's expectations. But Grodzenski's translation seems to have almost the opposite approach, cautiously working towards hitting the beats on the iambs and skipping stresses as if only when necessary, which is part of why Niger found it so unmusical. In order to avoid monotony, an

⁸⁹ These include the works by fictional persons "Mendele Moykher-Sforim" and Sholem Aleykhem. For an in-depth discussion of how this was achieved, see Dan Miron, *A Traveller Disguised*

Onegin stanza needs to have a variety of rhythms among its lines, and Grodzenski has much less variety than Pushkin. Meanwhile, if he had put “*tseblozndik*” and “*kaltblutik*” earlier in Lines 7–8, these long words could have allowed for an iambic tetrameter without all of the stresses realized.

At the same time, to achieve the fidelity that he has for the formal features of the text, Grodzenski sacrifices some of its literal meaning. Some clear examples in this stanza include the first two lines, which literally mean (in Russian): the less we love a woman / the more easily we are liked by her,” but Grodzenski adds the word “*zikher*” which contributes unnecessary intensification while fitting better into that line’s meter than the word “*froy*”, which gets bumped down to the next line. In the second line “easier” is translated to “more,” perhaps again for the sake of the meter, giving us: “the less we love for certain / the more we are liked by the woman.” Sometimes these changes seem unnecessary, such as in Line 13, “with the fame of red heels” translated to “and also the fame of red shoes,” with a superfluous “also” taking the up the syllable that might have been used for “heels” to describe the aristocratic shoes.

3.9 ZIMA

The difference in meaning between Pushkin and Grodzenski can be greater than those small details, however. In 5:II, Grodzenski is much closer to the meter than Frishman (who translated this stanza for *Mishirey pushqin*), yet not much closer to the meaning.

NABOKOV	GRODZENSKI	FRISHMAN
<p>Winter! The peasant, celebrating, in a flat sledge inaugurates the track; his naggy, having sensed the snow, shambles at something like a trot. Plowing up fluffy furrows, a fleet kibitka flies: the driver sits upon his box in sheepskin coat, red-sashed. Here runs about a household lad, a small “pooch” on a hand sled having seated, having transformed himself into the steed; the scamp already has frozen a finger. He finds it both painful and funny— while mother, from the window, threatens him...</p>	<p>Winter already...The peasant already happily departs on his sleigh⁹⁰ the horsie drags himself quietly, slowly, and tries also to go more hastily; the iron bars carve narrow lines, moving off with snow fine; in pelisse wrapped the coachman sits, his red belt with buttons flashes. The yard-boy leads the pup into a children’s sled and he turns meanwhile also into a horse himself; the childish gang makes mischief [<i>shtift</i>]: a scamp [<i>shtifer</i>] freezes already in snow his finger and it hurts [him].</p>	<p>The winter...Already the peasant fondles his hands⁹¹ and in the ice-wagon will pave himself a path; and his horse in the snow with knee-stumbling will move with difficulty and will pull the burden. There wagon-haste passes with running, and digs deep furrows in the earth; and dressed in it sits the rider in a mantle, and a red belt on his loins for beauty. There runs from the yard in the village one lad and will seat his dog within a winter-wagon and will become the horse for her that is harnessed across the neck; already also frozen from cold is the finger of the brute and pain with pleasure he will know together... and his mother in the window sends him a finger...</p>

The basic form of the *Onegin* stanza can easily be accommodated by Yiddish. Shimen Frug had introduced Western, syllabo-tonic meters to Yiddish some decades beforehand and Hayyim Nahman

⁹⁰ Changed around for readability in English: more like “Winter already... there departs happily / the peasant on his sleigh already”

⁹¹ This is a biblical expression which means “to sit idle.”

Bialik had written a small oeuvre in Yiddish (in addition to his better-known Hebrew works), so iambic meters were no problem. We can see here how the shortest vowels are generally counted as full syllables, so that “shlitl” functions as two-syllable word. Yiddish has varied word origins and stresses, making it easy enough to create an iambic meter as well as both feminine and masculine rhymes. It even allows for some variety in the expression of the meter here, with Grodzenski skipping a stress in about half of the lines. Grodzenski’s translation has both masculine and feminine rhymes in their place, although all of his masculine rhymes use monosyllabic words.

Lexically, the materials of winter and the *Onegin* stanza come more easily to Grodzenski’s Yiddish than they did to Dovid Frishman and, presumably to Avraham Levinson, who was writing a Hebrew translation at this time.⁹² Yiddish, a Germanic language that originated in the Rhineland and had developed for centuries with winter every year and even had spent some of this time in the Russian Empire, had words to describe winter and its technology. If anything was missing from the Yiddish lexicon, it was not a problem, because the language was welcoming to loanwords (which Hebrew welcomed more in prose than in poetry; Frishman’s own essays contain many such words). Thus the different kinds of snow-vehicles, including the sled, do not require the kind of neologism used by Dovid Frishman in his translation of the same stanza. Whereas Frishman had created terms such as “ice-wagon” and “winter-wagon,” Grodzenski already had access to such concepts in Yiddish, even “sled.”

The translator’s choices can still veer away from the original meaning despite an adequate vocabulary. Although Yiddish has adequate language for it, Pushkin’s kibitka never appears in this translation of the stanza. This is because, as Niger wrote, the translation is missing quite a lot of Pushkin’s original details. Several omissions and substitutions can be noted in this stanza and they are some of the more interesting images. In Pushkin, the sledge and kibitka are images of winter not merely because they are only used in winter; here their significance is the effect they have on the fresh, early-winter snow. The peasant not only begins his journey, but marks his path in the ground as he moves through the new snow; the (cold) snow looks like (warm) down (“*pushistye*”) which is

⁹² I have not been able to find Levinson’s original version from this period. The published version is in the new, so-called “Sephardi” accent.

plowed by the kibitka as if in agriculture. Grodzenski omits the first image, which is ambiguous in Russian anyway (“*obnovliaet put’*”), but his preservation of the second image misses the texture of the snow.

When it comes to the antics of the scamp, Grodzenski’s translation is again far away from the original both in detail and expression. In place of the mother in the window, Grodzenski inserts a “childish gang” and separates the scamp into two children. The clever Line 13, “*emu i bol’no i smeshno*” [“it is both painful and funny for him”] disappears entirely, replaced with the simpler “*s’tut im vey*” [“it hurts (him)”]. Perhaps the mirth is displaced onto the mischief-making, but this image is lost in the translation.

This significant difference in meaning contrasts with a look at Frishman’s work with a much weaker vocabulary. Though we have seen in the previous chapter how Dovid Frishman’s translation of the same stanza tends to embellish Pushkin’s content in order to deal with the extra syllables necessitated by the difficulties involved in writing an *Onegin* stanza in Hebrew in 1899, that early attempt at translation seems to be closer to the original than Grodzenski’s does. Frishman’s version loses the downy texture of the snow but maintains the plowing action. He does not omit entire lines of content and creates what for the ancient language was a reasonable translation of the pain and mirth: “*umakhoyv gam-yakhad hu yeda im-nakhes*” (“and pain with pleasure he will know together”).

In these “infidelities” is evident the other half of Niger’s complaint; when the translation is different from Pushkin’s, it does not replace Pushkin’s images with exciting new Yiddish ones. These details make up the novel and are the means by which Pushkin builds the characters (Niger is influenced by Belinsky; 135). Grodzenski does not provide an alternative that similarly captures the child’s reaction to his frozen finger, but simplifies it instead. Despite his strong belief that Yiddish readers and writers were in great need of translations such as this, Niger concludes that such a translation is not worth writing or keeping in the Yiddish language because he does not see this as filling that need. The translation maintains the plot and the basic form, but not the nuances.

The omissions are not limited to those outside of the main story. For example, in Chapter 3

Verse II, the following exchange occurs between Lenski and Onegin as they discuss the evenings Lenski spends as a guest of the Larin family: “I still don’t see the problem here.” / “But boredom, that’s a problem, my friend” (*—Ia tut eshche bedy ne vizhu. / “Da skuka, vot beda, moi drug.”*) This line expresses Onegin’s life philosophy at the time, as he has tried so hard to flee the boredom of his existence. Grodzenski translates this as “I see no misfortune in it.” / “It is just boring, my friend” (69). Although the plot is more or less intact after such a change is made, the character of Onegin is: now it is “just boring,” not so bad, whereas in the Russian boredom itself is harm. The replacement does not convey a similar sentiment to the original, but reduces it to something simpler.

Although Grodzenski’s footnotes provide the Yiddish reader with a great deal of information about Russian, Western, and classical Greco-Roman culture, this is only the case when he translates the references. Some of them are lost, such as “*koshurka*” (5:VIII) and “*Lel*” (5:X), which are eliminated from the text, and de-Russified elements such as 2:XXXV: “At theirs on fat *maslenitsa* / Russian blini were to be found” (“*U nikh na maslenitse zhirnoi / Vodilis’ russkie bliny*”) which becomes “On Christmas eve after eating they would still eat / stuffed blintzes quite a lot” (“*oyf vaynakht flegn zey nokh esn / gefilte blintzes gor a sakh*”) (62), making the holiday more recognizable and the food into a dish served in Jewish homes. These elements of Russian culture, once eliminated from the Yiddish version, require no footnotes.

Another translation of *Onegin* which did not capture the nuances was the rebuked libretto of the famous Tchaikovsky opera, a translation of the novel from one medium to another. The opera’s popularity persists until today despite its own infidelities. As Boris Gasparov writes, critics of the libretto’s differences had quite a lot to rebuke:

Pushkin’s creation lost in its operatic incarnation what was most precious and exciting about it: the author’s delicate irony and ever-shifting tone, his cat-and-mouse game with the reader [...] In the opera, some characters are unambiguously “good,” and some others (first and foremost the title character) are unambiguously “bad” [...] In the novel, the narrator often rather unceremoniously pushes his character aside, feeling free to chat about them with the reader over the characters’ heads, as it were. In the opera, the characters appropriate the narrator’s witty, nonchalant, gossipy remarks about themselves, transposing them into the first person as expressions of their own thoughts and

feelings. The result, from a purely literary point of view, is sometimes simply hilarious[...] (60–1)

With Grodzenski's translation, it is clear that the audience did not agree with Nizer; after all, the original Yiddish version was reissued twice: once adapted for opera, then published in a revised edition. Grodzenski and a number of fellow Yiddishists found it adequate, as it was, for their purposes: to bring the great work of the great Russian poet to the Yiddish reader and to get the opera performed in Yiddish. At the time, they did not find it necessary to provide a more accurate translation for the masses. The opera, already having lost a great deal of nuance, could be well-enough served by this translation.

Grodzenski's translation was a success that came out in both a first and a second edition despite the war. It served to promote cultural literacy as well as to build up the institution of the Yiddish theater and give Grodzenski a place in Yiddish theatrical history that he would not have achieved merely for writing plays such as "*Muterlekhe gefiln*" ("Maternal feelings"). It was also a huge achievement for Yiddish poetry to have a verse novel written in *Onegin* stanzas at a time when Hebrew writers despaired of the same. What it did not do was demonstrate the capacity of Yiddish for high-quality, polished, musical verses; this was done by Naydus' translation of the same novel.

3.10 LEYB NAYDUS: THE RUSSIFIED, ARISTOCRATIC YIDDISH POET

The Yiddish translators of *Onegin* represented different aspects of the Polish-Jewish⁹³ world. Grodzenski had come from one of the most famous rabbinic families in the *Misnagdic* world; Leyb Naydus (1890–1918) was born into a Russified Jewish family unusual for its aristocratic lifestyle. While Grodzenski's Yiddishist projects focused on the Jewish masses, Naydus' audience was a more educated, Russified, and bourgeois segment of Jewish society that reflected a new stage in the language wars. Naydus, in his Pushkin-like performance of Yiddish poethood, appealed to an audience that was turning back to Yiddish after Russification.

The typical wealthy Jewish family would still be urban if not international, but Naydus' family

⁹³ Or Lithuanian-Jewish.

actually lived in a country manor in Kustin.⁹⁴ His parents were Reykhel Naydus, about whom he wrote some poetry but little else is known, and Itsik Naydus, a wealthy *maskil*, landowner, and manufacturer who had tried his hand at both agriculture and Hebrew poetry. While the Jewish population of Eastern Europe was overwhelmingly urban, the Naydus family home looked just like an estate of the Polish and Lithuanian aristocracy. The family spent some of their time in Grodno for the sake of the children's education but unlike most East European Jews of his time, Naydus spent much of his childhood in nearby Kustin, enjoying the outdoors. He received some childhood instruction in Hebrew subjects but did not study in *yeshivah*. Following in some of his father's footsteps, Leyb Naydus began writing poetry not only in Hebrew and also Yiddish at around the age of ten and even prepared his first collection of poems, "*Palevia Panno*," in Russian (Zak "*Biografishe notitsn*" v-x).⁹⁵

His aristocratic, Russified Jewish upbringing did not prevent him from becoming an activist, though it did prepare him to be quite at home with non-Jewish poetics. Like the children of Polish and Lithuanian nobility (Kvietkauskas 212), Naydus received a mostly private education, including not only those tutors but private schools as well. This did not insulate him from the social movements among the Jewish youth and while still a young teenager he became involved in the "S.S.," or Zionist Socialist Workers' Party, the major territorialist organization (and rival of the autonomist Bund) which demanded not only cultural, but political autonomy for the Jews, without which a class-conscious proletariat could not develop to overthrow capitalism (Jacobs 119–120). As a student, he was expelled from business school for his participation in this movement, in which he continued to be active throughout his short life. After being expelled from business schools in Radom and Bialystok for his political activism, he went to the realgymnasium in Vilna but dropped out in his final year without taking the exams, devoting himself full-time to Yiddish poetry instead (Zak "*Biografishe notitsn*" V-IX). Mindaugas Kvietkauskas points out the role of Naydus' socioeconomic class in not only the educational privileges he had, but also in his ability to reject them:

⁹⁴ Today Kuścin, Sokółka County, Podlaskie Voivodeship, Poland, is very near the Polish-Belorussian border and not 50 miles south of the Lithuanian border.

⁹⁵ This was apparently not published, or if it was, the publication may have been lost.

To most other Yiddish writers in the Russian empire, who were not permitted to enroll at state *gymnazia* and universities because of the anti-Jewish *numerus clausus* and therefore had no chance of qualifying for certified professions, such an act of renunciation would have been unthinkable. Naydus, however, was following to the letter the ideological program outlined in the first issue of *Di literarische monatshriftn*: to reject all compromises with the humiliating conditions of Jewish life in the Diaspora and to seek the spiritual heights of Yiddish literature as if anti-Semitism did not exist. Naydus could afford to adopt such an attitude because of the financial and moral support of his wealthy family. (214)

Naydus certainly did not live as extravagantly as an aristocrat; his practical, disapproving father did not wish to support a poet's career (Zak "In letstn yor" 31). Whether Naydus was a quintessential "Bohemian" ("*Biografishe notitsn*" XIII) or "introduced 'dandyism,' the refined and fashionable lifestyle of the English and French cultural elite of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, into Jewish life" (Kvietkauskas 214), Naydus was indeed "*a yid fun a fremder velt*" ["a Jew from a foreign world"] (Rozhanski 12), as demonstrated by the Jewish and "foreign" world of his poetry. Yaakov Fichman used the term "*fargoyishn*" (to make *goyish*, to make Gentile) to describe what Naydus did in his poetry (Rozhanski 11). This means that it was unusually aesthetic, Westernized, Orientalist, neoclassical, outdoorsy, pagan, ornamental, aristocratic, treating themes that were far away from the lived reality of Yiddish speakers.

Among the peculiarities of Naydus' life and work that made him into a peculiar Yiddish poet and translator of Russian literature were the roles played by women in shaping his career. Although we shall see that Naydus' literary influences have been generally identified to be non-Jewish men, the personal influences on his poetry were Jewish women, especially his beloved "Kh. G." and his grandmother, who lived with the family in Kustin—a factor. Even when it came to Jewish material, Naydus and his biographers acknowledge the influence of his grandmother on the young poet as he grew up in Kustin. She lived with the family and helped to bring him up. Described as a "*Tsene-rene* Jewish woman with a deep love of nature" ("*a tsene-rene yidene mit a tifer libe tsu der natur*") (Leksikon 6 vols 213), the grandmother was known for avidly reading the *Tsene-rene*, *Taytsh-khumesh*, *tkhines*, or *Menoyres hameor*, traditional Jewish women's religious reading and prayer in Yiddish. At night when she put Naydus to bed, she told him stories from these books (Zak "*Biografishe notitsn*"

VII–VIII),⁹⁶ which by itself was not altogether unusual. It was unusual, among Yiddish writers, that a woman should be seen as the main source of Jewish tradition in a man’s life, with her Yiddish books undercutting the significance of the Talmud (which was taught to Jewish boys by men) and *sforim* in Hebrew. Naydus may have seen a parallel here with Pushkin and his nanny, who figures in Pushkin’s poetry as a source of Russian folk culture. She may have also been his teacher of Yiddish, because Naydus was called “Lionie” by those close to him and his sister was known as “Rashel”—they spoke Russian even in Jewish company (Zak “*In letstn yor*” 32–3).

What people thought was so remarkable about Naydus’ grandmother was her combination of Jewish religious feeling—and the corresponding Yiddish women’s books—with a level of outdoorsiness that was not typical within Eastern Europe’s largely urban Jewish community. The problem of nature in Jewish literature was not only in Hebrew, but even in Yiddish, and Naydus quotes Mendele in the introduction to one of his cycles,⁹⁷ indicating that he also wants to work on this problem. Growing up on family-owned land in Kustin with a grandmother who taught him to appreciate the outdoors, Naydus wrote a tremendous amount of nature poetry, including the ecstatic and erotic “*Di erd dervakht*” or “The Earth Awakens” and the pantheistic “*Di fleyt fun pan*” or “Pan’s Flute”; his nature poems generally describe environments familiar to him—such as the spring in Kustin described in “*Di erd dervakht*”—but also Orientalist imagined nature.⁹⁸ “*Di fleyt fun pan*” begins with a quote from Sh. Y. Abramovitsh’s Mendele Moykher-Sforim, self-consciously trying to continue the work started by Abramovitsh to bring nature into Yiddish literature, often used neoclassical and modern pagan imagery to make his point. For example, in the fifth and sixth stanzas of “*Di erd dervakht*” Naydus anthropomorphizes the spring earth:

[...]
in her hot morning bed;
red and fresh, her hair

⁹⁶ Naydus recalls this in poems of the cycle “*Mame erd*” or “Mother Earth”, for example. Zak, who was a friend, remembers her this way as well.

⁹⁷ Mendele Moykher-Sforim (Sh. Y. Abramovitsh), generally identified as the “grandfather” of modern literature in both Hebrew and Yiddish, also made a point of writing about nature in Jewish languages for an audience that he felt was too cut off from it. Naydus quotes one of these descriptions in the epigraph to “*Di fleyt fun pan*.”

⁹⁸ Future comparisons should be made between Naydus’ Yiddish poetry and Shaul Tchernikowski’s Hebrew poetry.

she cuddles herself wildly in rays,
full with joy of first sin...

Her full breasts she reveals,
towards the sun she thirstily extends them,
strolls around her domain
And the sun from high up, from afar
like a shameless squanderer,
sends in rays greeting after greeting... (1958 103)

[...]
אויף איר הייסן מאַרגן-בעט;
רוי און פריש, די האָר צעפאַלן,
צערטלט זי זיך ווילד אין שטראַלן,
פול מיט פרייד פון ערשטן חטא...

אירע פולע בריסט אַנטפלעקט זי,
צו דער זון זיי דאַרשטיק שטרעקט זי,
גיט זיך איבער אין איר רשות;
און די זון פון הויך, פון ווייטער, ווי אַ פאַרשייטער,
שיקט אין שטראַלן גרוס נאָך גרוס...

Nature is personified and eroticized in lines which have some Hebrew words but pagan thoughts. Even the “sin,” though it evokes the Garden of Eden, seems to have nothing to do with the Biblical story of Adam and Eve. Mother Earth and the Sun God, forbidden and mocked in Jewish tradition, project towards each other in an innocently sexual manner. Naydus displays the Yiddish language, the *Mame-loshn* [Mother Tongue], with all her underexplored capacity for expressing this high-brow sensuality. The eroticism in some of his poetry was so shocking that actress Sonia Staraduv’s father did not want Naydus visiting his daughter (Zak “*In letstn yor*” 31–2). Naydus has Esau speak in the voice of Jacob.⁹⁹ Naftole Vaynig writes that Naydus not only anthropomorphized, but also “Judeomorphized” [“*yudeomorfizirt*”] nature, creating a new synthesis (2: 93). This effort would be supplemented when he would Judeomorphize non-Jewish literature through translation.

⁹⁹ I am referring to the story of Jacob disguising himself as Esau in Genesis 27. Blind Isaac is tricked by texture, remarking that “The voice is the voice of Jacob but the hands are the hands of Esau.” By writing about such unlikely material in Yiddish, Naydus does not merely subvert the Jewishness of Yiddish, but also highlights it in the process. The strange combination of subject matter and language of expression creates an impression of Yiddish as the Jewish national language, even as many of Naydus’ contemporaries considered Hebrew to be the true voice of Jacob.

Naydus' social milieu included Russified Jewish women who turned to Yiddish out of national feeling, but still had internalized Russian poetry. Khaye Gozhanski, with whom Naydus had a years-long romance until his death, was a Warsaw student who inspired much of his poetry and whose approval he clearly sought.¹⁰⁰ She was also the person who convinced him to switch over completely to Yiddish and stop his work in Russian (Zak 1924 XII). In the first pages of *Lirik: ershtes bukh* (*Lyric: first book*), which Naydus designed for publication in Ekaterinoslav during the war wanting to make a “*livre d'artiste*” (Kvietkauskas 214), is printed a copy of a handwritten dedication from the author to his love (3). During this time, young Jewish women from Russified families—often better at non-Jewish languages than their male counterparts due to differences in education—may have been the better part of Naydus' audience. Wrote Niger, disapproving of Naydus and of women:

he remained unknown only because his reader, more correctly, his [female] reader—the young educated [*intelligent*] society-lady, or former fat bourgeois student, who declaimed Balmont by heart, has not yet learned Yiddish. She will learn it—and on Yiddishist student evenings a young soprano will replace the ordinary Frug to read Naydus aloud.¹⁰¹ (Qtd. in Vaynik 76)

Only then, Niger writes, will there be a receptive Yiddish audience for “luster of form and elegance of subject.” Without paying too much attention to the question of what kinds of literature would appeal to Jews who received Russian-language education, Niger assumes that women have shallow

¹⁰⁰ The inspiration she provided can be seen in poems such as “*Dayne oygn*” and “*Nokh mayn toyt*.” Gozhanski is named in Zak, *Yoyvl bukh* 40.

¹⁰¹ ער איז געבליבן אומבאקאנט נאר דערפאר, וואס זיין לעזער, ריכטיקער, לעזערין—די יונגע אינטעליגענטע געזעלשאפטס-דאמע, צי געוועזענע פעטע בורגער-קורסיסטקע, וועלכע דעקלאמירט באלמאנטן אויף אויסנווייניק, האט זיך נאך נישט אויסגעלערנט יידיש. זי וועט זיך אויסלערנען—און אויף יידישיסטיש-סטודענטישע אונטן וועט א יונגע סאפראנא אנשטאט דעם גלאטן פרוג, פירלייענען ניידוסן.

Not long afterwards, Naydus wrote a similar piece in *Tsukunft*:

... Just because his reader, more correctly, [female] reader—the young educated society-lady, the familiar Petersburg or Kiev [female] student, who declaims Bal'mont (and it is also true... Nadson) by heart—has not learned Yiddish yet. She will learn it, and if there is no other trend in literature, a young soprano will read Naydus at Yiddishist student evenings. (Niger 1920 432)

נאר דאס, וואס זיין לעזער, ריכטיקער, לעזערין—די יונגע אינטעליגענטע געזעלשאפטס-דאמע, די געוועזענע פעטערבורגער אדער קיעווער סטודענטין, וועלכע דעקלאמירט אויף אויסווייניק באלמאנטן (און ס'איז רעכט אויך... נאדסאנען)—האט זיך נישט אויסגעלערנט קיין אידיש. זי וועט זיך אויסלערנען, און אויב עס וועט דאן נישט זיין קיין אנדער מאדע אין ליטעראטור, וועט א יונגע סאפראנא פארלייענען אויף אידישיסטיש-סטודענטישע אונדען ניידוסען.

taste in literature and imagines Naydus' poems being read someday in a women-dominated space along with the sentimentalist Shimen Frug, who they could presumably read already due to the fact that he wrote a great deal in Russian. Although Frug wrote during Decadence and Symbolism, his work was more Romantic and his modern/ist innovation was that he quite literally did new things: he was the Jewish poetic voice in Russian and introduced syllabo-tonic versification in Yiddish. Naydus does deserve some of the comparison; his main innovation in content was to write "foreign" poetry in Yiddish and, like Frug, he was a pioneer in Yiddish poetic form. Not unlike the Jewish women derided by Niger in this comment, Naydus himself had a more Russified and secular education than the typical Hebrew or Yiddish male writer (or Niger himself), who came out of the *heder* and *yeshivah* system. Joining the radical political movements after growing up in wealthy or bourgeois families, these women—and Naydus—surely had different expectations from Jewish poetry than their peers educated in Judaica. For some, unlike even Frug, the canon was Pushkin, Lermontov, Frug, and their counterparts from other languages (such as Heine and Goethe), and the new material was Bal'mont and Mayakovsky and Yiddish. Naydus' association with Russified Jewish women and their taste may underlie some of the negative reception his work received on the part of male critics.¹⁰² But since these women readers' tastes were shaped by Russian-language poetry, Naydus was providing them with material—including the translation of *Onegin*—which would help provide them linguistically Jewish while artistically more cosmopolitan.

Indeed, nature is not the only unusual feature of his work at this time in Yiddish poetry. Neo-classical and Orientalist material is prominent along with references to contemporary Western culture and the result was a poetry which was seen as *goyish* (Rozhanski 11). For example, in "*Tsvey khavertes*" he subverts the reader's expectations comparing a blue-eyed blonde woman and a brown-eyed, dark-haired woman between whom he is torn, his soul preferring the blonde and his blood burning for the brunette. These women might be expected to represent Christian and Jewish culture or women according to their hair color, but Naydus reroutes the reader instead to La Gioconda and a Greek Bacchante—drawing instead from the Italian Renaissance and ancient Greece (71).¹⁰³

¹⁰² For more on the perception of women readers, see Iris Parush, *Reading Jewish Women*.

¹⁰³ "La Gioconda," known in English as the Mona Lisa, was a widely reproduced image already in Naydus' time. One

Although his poem “*Ikh vintsh, mayn kind*” expresses the Jewish longing for Palestine, it is a part of his Orientalism rather than necessarily an expression of Zionist politics; Naydus Orientalizes the Jews of Europe in this poem and others such as “*Dayne oygn: oktavn*,” as the East European descendants of the ancient Hebrew past, but this association did not mean geographic return. The S.S. was not advocating for resettlement in the Middle East and differed vehemently from other Zionist groups on this matter.¹⁰⁴ Naydus’ nature poems, described as Romanticism or Decadence, might also contain a Yiddishist response to Hayyim Nahman Bialik’s Hebrew poem, “*’El-hatsipor*” [“To the Bird”] (1892). The young Bialik had looked to an imagined Palestine to write Hebrew nature poetry for his small and elite audience. In Naydus’ poetic world, the neoclassic inspiration for the description of this imagined nature is apparent, in contrast to the sensual experience that saturates his poetry about indigenous East European nature.

Bialik, who turned down the job of translating *Onegin* into Hebrew, and Naydus, who tried to finish a translation into Yiddish, represent not just two different Jewish languages but two sides of Pushkin’s model applied to the future direction of Jewish culture: Bialik assembles indigenous Jewish sources and Naydus assembles non-Jewish sources, both for the sake of the production of new Jewish literature. The application of this model is especially complex when it comes to the nuances of Jewish identity. In Bialik’s poetic world, the European present of the Jews is foreign, while Hebrew is indigenous to the Land of Israel. But for Naydus, writing in a language indigenous to Europe, it is the other way around. This is not because of their chosen languages, however, but rather their interpretations of those choices. After all, like Bialik, Naydus and his audience were turning from a more European language to a more Jewish one (in Bialik’s case, from Yiddish to

of Naydus’ influences, the French writer Théophile Gautier, describes La Gioconda, which he called “*Sphinx de beauté*,” in his *Guide de lamateur au Musée du Louvre ; suivi de la vie et les oeuvres de quelques peintres* (26), where he devotes several pages to this painting. Naydus’ translations of Gautier’s poetry lead the section “*Antologie fun der frantsoyzisher lirik*” of *Fun velt-pornos* (73–85). Naydus may or may not have seen this guide to the Louvre, but he was aware of the cultural importance of the painting.

¹⁰⁴ These poems can be read as longing for Zion, which may actually be read as an example of Naydus straying from the S.S. party line. However, this difference over geographic return was a major fault line within the Zionist movement. Naydus might have joined a different group instead if he really wanted to focus on Palestine. However, it seems that all groups were represented at his funeral, suggesting that they appreciated this poetry.

Hebrew; in Naydus' from Russian to Yiddish¹⁰⁵). The difference lay in the nature of their literary projects.

3.11 PARNASSIAN POETRY FOR A PEOPLE IN PAIN

Naydus' efforts to translate Pushkin into Yiddish constitute a part of his overall approach of writing largely "*goyish*" (non-Jewish) Yiddish poetry. While generally acknowledged classics of Yiddish literature—Sh. Y. Abramovitsh, Y. L. Peretz, Sh. Sh. Frug, and H. N. Bialik—had worked to create a Yiddish literature that presented the East European Jewish world, a project which twentieth-century Yiddishist writers such as Grodzenski and his colleagues harnessed to a new (after-the-fact) goal of building a world-class Jewish literature in Yiddish, Naydus worked towards that same project by a means of incorporating foreign material. Pushkin had done both kinds of work for Russian literature: Russifying foreign material that was considered to be culturally sophisticated and adapting Russian indigenous elements to a Western style of literature.

The Jewish-themed part of his oeuvre (such as the poem "*Dayne oygn*," or "Your Eyes") includes Orientalist imaginings of the Jewish past and longing for redemption from suffering reminiscent of some of the poetry of Frug or Bialik's Hebrew poem "*'El-hatsipor*" in their presentation though not their message, as the agricultural and socialist redemption of the Jewish people that the S.S. imagined was not supposed to happen in Palestine. He also has Jewish poems situated at home in the Polish-Lithuanian countryside, female and somewhat foreign to the urban readers of Yiddish poetry, which may also be an attempt to express possibilities of a postrevolutionary Jewish future in which Jews have gone back to the closer relationship with nature that their ancient ancestors were presumed to have had. His poetics of writing *goyish* Orientalist and nature poems should not be seen separately from this vision of the Jewish past and future, but rather as his own intervention to create an intermediate stage in Yiddish that would reawaken what Jews needed in order to imagine a drastically different future.

Naydus' literary influences are considered to be Russian and Western European male poets—

¹⁰⁵ Further research should establish just how natural Yiddish was for Naydus; I suspect that he was what we would now call a heritage speaker.

mainly Pushkin, but also Mikhail Lermontov, Aleksandr Blok, Valerii Briusov, Konstantin Bal'mont, and Igor Severianin, Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, Emil Verharn, and Edgar Allen Poe (Zak "Der virtuoze" 38).¹⁰⁶ Yankev Glatshteyn writes that Naydus wanted to be a "world poet" in Yiddish; "[h]e wanted to be a Yiddish Edgar Allen Poe, a Yiddish Verlaine, a Yiddish Lermontov, a Yiddish Goethe" (148). At the time, there had been no such Yiddish poet. Frug's fame among non-Jews was for his Russian poetry and Bialik's for a few works in Hebrew (translated into Russian for a mixed audience), even though they were then considered to be the best Yiddish poets. While the themes of sexual failure and Jewish misery appeared in the work of Grodzinski and other contemporary young poets during this period of massive death, disease, displacement, and poverty, reading Naydus was a different experience.

In 1942, recalling the Great War of Naydus' time, Arn Yoyl Zakuski observes: "When one reads him [Naydus], one might think that he lived in the finest, most prosperous period of life on the terrestrial globe. That the human species had no other worries and no other business to take care of besides arranging and improving its lyric feeling-world [*gefihn-velti*]. With him all is harmonic, perfect" (6-7).¹⁰⁷ Zakuski was apparently in the mood for such harmony when he wrote this rationale:

The difficult Jewish life, the poverty, want, insecurity of the existence, the miserable conditions, persecutions... Well, it's true. But poets have to be able to distinguish themselves from that, to free themselves from entangling in oppressive spider-webs [*shpinfarveb*], displace themselves from the day-to-day and hoist up the weak towards themselves, sprinkle sublime ideas onto them, awaken desires that undoubtedly doze in everyone. To stimulate, to give zest, premonitions.¹⁰⁸ (Zakuski 17)

¹⁰⁶ For a discussion of these influences, especially Verlaine, see Vaynig Part 2.

¹⁰⁷ ווען מען לייענט אים, קען מען מיינען, אז ער האָט געלעבט אין דער פיינסטער, בליענדיקסטער תקופה פונעם לעבן אויף דעם ערד-קיילעך. אז דער מענטשן-מין האָט נישט געהאַט קיין אַנדערע דאגות און קיין אַנדערע עסקים צו דערליידיקן, אַחוץ איינצואַרדענען און גוטשטעלן זיין לירישע געפילן-וועלט. בין אים איז אַלץ האַרמאָניש, פערפעקט.

¹⁰⁸ דאָס שווערע ייִדישע לעבן, די אַרעמקייט, דחקות, אומזיכערקייט מיט דער עקזיסטענץ, די קלאַגערדיקע באַדינגונגען, רדיפות... נו, ריכטיק. אָבער פּאַעטן דאַרפן זיך קענען אַרויסהייבן דערפון, באַפרייען זיך פון פאַרפלאַנטערנדיקן און דערדריקנדיקן שפינפאַרוועב, זיך שטעלן איבער דעם טאַג-טעגלעך און אַרויפציען צו זיך די פאַרשמאַכטע, אַריינשפריצן אין זיי דערהויבנדיקע אידעען, אויפּוועקן באַגערן, וואָס דרעמלען בליי-ספּאָ אין יעדערן. אַנערן, געבן שוונג, אַנווען.

Safely in Argentina, but well aware of what was going on in Europe, Zakuski agrees with Naydus' self-described rationale for his unusual poetics. In “*Tsu eynem*,” after acknowledging the truth of the accusations that his poetry is unusually pretty and *goyish*, Naydus writes:

I extend the 4 cubits
and our language that portrays only suffering;
I adorn it and fire it up
with the finest extraordinary gold.

I want thereby to elevate
the soul of the people, that languishes and torments,
and to refine its belief
in the proud beauty of the world!

and I build in grey exile
the rich castle of ivory;
as the figure of Apollo,
life should be beautiful! (*Litvishe arabeskn* 255)

כ'צעשפרייט די ד' אמות
און אונזער שפראך וואָס פּיין נאָר מאַלט;
איך ציר עס און צעבלאַם עס
פּיין פּינסטן אויסטערלישן גאַלד.

איך וויל דורכדעם דערהויבן
די זעל פון פאַלק, וואָס שמאַכט און קוועלט,
און לייטערן זיין גלויבן
אין שטאַלצער שיינקייט פון דער וועלט!

און כ'בוי אין גרויען גלות
דים רייכן שלאָס פון עלעפאַנטביין;
ווי די געשטאַלט אַפּאַלאָס,
אזוי זאַל זיין דאָס לעבן שייין!

While defending the Parnassian characteristics of his poetry—including its treatment of nature, “the golden treasures of the Orient,” and Aphrodite—Naydus adds a Jewish dimension, a national purpose. With echoes as well of Pushkin, Naydus contends that by adorning the Yiddish language

and using it to create beauty that does not normally exist for the Jewish people, he can have some effect on them. Although it is not clear that this assistance to the Jewish imagination leads to a particular political action, it the image of language, the soul of the people, and fire reminds the reader of Pushkin's line, "*glagolom zhgi serdtsa liudei*" ["ignite people's hearts with words"] ("*Prorok*"). This is not all that remarkable for Jewish modernism and in some respects also echoes Frishman and Katsenel'son's ideas, but what differentiates Naydus is that he makes this all seem natural because he is at home in this *goyish* world of country estates, ballets, and the like, making him an authentic ambassador. He does not need to acquaint himself with all of this material, but to translate his experience into Yiddish poetry.

There was an audience for Yiddish poetry that did not reflect a more typical Jewish experience. Whether this reminder of beauty during hard times was intended for the growth of the S.S., the enticement of Russified Jews to Yiddish literature, or to improve the people's mood, some Jews did enjoy Naydus' often *goyish*, ecstatic, escapist poems during their worst times. In the Vilna ghetto months before his own death and 25 years since the death of Naydus, Naftole Vaynig wrote a 123-page monograph about him which won a "literary prize from the Judenrat" (Krutikov "Yiddish Literature after 1800"). In the last months of his own life, Vaynig justified the content of Naydus' poetry as an escapism which can lead to political action:

Not only for himself does he want to build the castle of beauty. He wants to wrest the people from greyness, from pain, and show it beauty, to be able to bathe it in the rays of the sun. With that he also means to say that it's enough already to wail like Lamentations, that with only negative motifs one cannot live and one should not live, that incessant *shloyshheven* [editors have a question mark; could this be "mourning?"] will not get us out from the national 4 cubits, that the time has already come to get out onto the road that travels to light and sun and beauty, that light, sun, and beauty are literally liberating forces.

Without a doubt such a poetic creed is a program no worse than ours as politically-sounding. I believe, however, that this program of Naydus' is not less political than those political poems that ostensibly speak with political-social categories and phraseologies.¹⁰⁹ (Vaynig Part One 70)

¹⁰⁹

ניט פאר זיך בלויז וויל ער בויען דעם שלאס פון שיינקייט. ער וויל ארויסרייסן דאס פאלק פון דער זון. דערמיט מיינט ער אויך צו זאגן, אז גענוג שוין איכהדיק צו קלאגן, אז בלויז מיט נעגאטיווע מאטיוון קאן מען ניט ארויסרייסן פון די

Despite all the non-Jewish content, Naydus' poetry should be seen as a uniquely Jewish phenomenon. He carried on Mendele's effort to write about nature in Yiddish, often used neoclassical and modern pagan imagery (such as Pan's Flute) to make his point, and acknowledged "*vos in di shirim mayne / farnemt mayn folk a kleynem ort*" ["that in my poems / my people occupies a small part"] ("*Tsueynem*" 254); just as Naydus uses Yiddish poetry to write his foreign, Parnassian poems, he uses the Hebrew word "*shirim*" to write about that Yiddish poetry. This may also serve to remind the reader that Naydus does not overlook the Jewish people in his writing; rather, his more openly Jewish poetry (concerning Jewish women, holidays, the ancient past, the national future) resembles his apparently non-Jewish poetry (concerning nature, urban life, Greco-Roman and Western culture).

Naydus, a Jew raised as a low-ranking aristocrat, apparently also found the inspiration for his literary treatment of his grandmother from Pushkin's writings about his enserfed nanny Arina Rodionovna as a transmitter of folk culture to the young national poet, and this was one means by which he writes about Jewish life in Kustin. On the power of this concept among Russified Jews of the time, David Roskies writes:

Pushkin, after all, had imbibed Russian folk culture not from his French-speaking mother but from his Russian-speaking nanny, the famed Arina Rodionovna. By the same token, Ansky urged the members of the thoroughly acculturated St. Petersburg Jewish elite to "import" a Yiddish-speaking nanny from the Ukrainian outback. Properly employed, who knew what modern-but-authentic Jewish folk culture these women might nurture in the next generation of Russian-speaking youth! ("Ansky, Pushkin's Nanny and the Revival of Jewish Life in St. Petersburg: Travelogue")

Naydus' grandmother may have been his main source of Yiddish language as well; his parents may have spoken a Slavic language at home. But Pushkin's introduction of new content and forms to Russian literature, writing Western poetry in Russian, translating, was the model that Naydus generally followed. Much of his original poetry, experimenting with Western poetics, read to his audience as

נאציאנאלע ד' אמות, אז ס'איז שוין די צייט געקומען ארויסצוגיין אויפן וועג וואס פירט צו ליכט און זון און שיינקייט, אז ליכט, זון און שיינקייט זיינען בפירוש באפרייערישע כוחות.

בלי שום ספק איז אזא דיכטערישער אני-מאמין א פראגראם, ניט ערגער ווי אונדזערע כמו פאליטיש-קלינגענדיקע. איך האלט אבער, אז נידוסעס דאזיקער פראגראם איז ניט מינער פאליטיש, איידער אזעלכע פאליטישע לידער, וואס ריידן כלומרשט מיט פאליטיש-געזעלשאפטלעכע קאטעגאריעס און פרשזעאלאגיעס.

if it were translated from another language—or worse, to some, not *hey mish* (Niger 1920 481).¹¹⁰ Ultimately, Naydus’ themes received more criticism than praise from other writers, even some of those who considered him to be a great poet. The highest praises that he received (along with more criticism) were awarded for the way his poetry sounded.

3.12 MUSICALITY AND POETRY

Choosing to translate *Evgenii Onegin* reflects Naydus’ controversial fascination with poetic form. The controversy over Naydus’ poetry did not begin until after he had met his true foe, which damaged his career and took his life: the First World War. After putting together *Lirik* in Ekaterinoslav, Naydus went against the trend and returned to Vilna from there in 1915—the same year as the mass evacuation of Vilna’s elites. *Lirik* was published in Vilna but did not receive the attention he expected for it,¹¹¹ as the city’s Jewish community—now consisting of its original poor, its poor refugees, and very few of its original elites. Under wartime conditions—though Yiddish culture did surprisingly well, all things considered—a few writers remained behind in Vilna and had to work harder to keep Yiddish literature going. Naydus did his part by organizing “evenings” of which he became the star, playing music, singing with real talent, reciting his own poetry.

In addition to the often sensual depiction and evocation of non-Jewish and nature material, Naydus’ poetry was a sensual experience itself, foregrounding the sense of sound. He even set some of his poetry to music that he composed himself. His appearances at the literary evenings were popular in part because the poet not only declaimed his poetry—he also sang well and played and even improvised music. This musical talent was, most of all, deployed in the meters, rhymes, and other sonic features of his poetry. *Lirik*—which is introduced with an epigraph from Paul Verlaine

¹¹⁰ Along with foreign, non-Jewish material, Naydus inserts many foreign words as titles and epigraphs as well as words within the lines of his poems, such as the above “Bacchante” [*vakkhanke*]. These are not always written in Yiddish script, either; *Intime nigunim* begins with quotations in French and German from Charles van Gerbeghez and Friedrich Nietzsche (while the quote from Edmond Rostan at the beginning of *Di fleyt fun pan* is translated into Yiddish (113)). Among the titles not in Yiddish script are “*Con sordino*” and “*Andante cantabile*.” The edition of Naydus’ collected works published in Buenos Aires in 1958 even includes footnotes to explain to the reader such borrowings as “*plach*” and “*lavande*” (127) and names including Astarte (131) and [Edvard] Grieg (176).

¹¹¹ Kvietkauskas writes that *Lirik* was “undistributed in consequence of the German occupation” (216).

in French: “de la musique avant toute chose!”¹¹²—intentionally blurred the lines between music and poetry (a distinction also blurred by the Hebrew word “*shir*” which Naydus used in “*Tsu eynem*”). The first poem is entitled “*Lirishe overture*” or “Lyrical Overture”; titles of poems include “*Chanson triste*” (yes, that is French) and “*A kale-lid*” or “A Bride-Song”; the last poem of the book, “*Der agonaft: sonet*” or “The Argonaut: Sonnet” is in a section all its own, which is called “*Finale*.”

Zak describes Naydus as the “high priest” of “the music of verse—the god of poetry” (XIII). Introducing new poetic forms to Yiddish, Naydus created “sonnets, octavas, terzinas, triolets, Sicilians, madrigals, ghazals, and so on” (Yafeh 557). His rhymes are often surprising, thanks in part to his pairing of words of different origins, especially Germanic and Semitic such as “*dine-shkhineh*” [“thin-Divine Presence”] (“*Fingerlekh*” 68) “*R’ Aryeh-di ’arie*” (Rabbi Aryeh-the aria) and “*bimes-pantomimes*” (“platforms-pantomimes”) (“*A kabaret in vald*” 175). The musicality is often energetic and sometimes even flamboyant; in the poem “*A nakht-tsug*,” each of the five septets contains the following couplet: “tra- ta- ta- ta, / tra - ta- ta- ta” (137–8). The entire poem “*A legendare nakht*” [“A Legendary Night”] is a tongue-twister in which nearly every word begins with a sibilant (such as the sounds “s,” “sh,” “z”) with some repeating consonant clusters (such as “shl,” “shv,” “shp”) and may have been written for performance.

These poems, though considered by Niger to be sometimes *badkhnish*,¹¹³ “making poetry into a game and art into a stunt” [“*makhn fun poezie a shpil un fun kunst—kunts*”] (Niger “*Lirishe siuethn*” 429), or worse, as form without substance, a body without a soul (429–431), though Naydus been acknowledged as sharing poetics with *Di yunge* or being an unconscious forerunner of the *Inzikh* movement¹¹⁴ in American Yiddish poetry (Niger “*Lirishe siluethn*” 428; Rozhanski 12–13). Together with his non-*heykish* motifs, they are part of a literary program outlined in the Yiddish modernist journal *Di literarische monatshriftn*, which Naydus may have been following (Kvietkauskas 214–5). Naydus himself addresses this effort in his poem “*Ikh bin der eyntsiker*”:

¹¹² Spelled “de la musgue avant tout chose” and corrected in the errata; perhaps the typesetters could not write French.

¹¹³ *Badkhn*—a Jewish wedding jester; before the rise of modern Yiddish poetry, the *badkhn*’s performance was the main example of Yiddish verse.

¹¹⁴ Both were in the United States during the first decades of the twentieth century.

I am the only one who has found
in our mother tongue the beautiful sound;
I have revealed in her secret suns,
precious charms of the richest brilliance.

I am the only one who has understood
how to make colorful the grey rhyme;
like the feathers of the pheasant,
my secret rhyme shines iridescent.

I am the only one, I am the one
who weaves the airiest web of music,
squanders ornaments, radiant stones for you
with the finest kind of hues.

I am the only one that can compel
our language in supple rhymes,
that has diverted her from the narrow paths,
and guided her back to the wide country road. (*Litvishe arabeskn* 264)

איך בין דער איינציקער, וואָס האָב געפונען
אין אונזער מאַמע-שפּראַך דעם שיינעם קלאַנג;
איך האָב אַנטפלעקט אין איר געהיימע זונען,
קמיעות טייערע פון רייכסטן בלאַנק.

איך בין דער איינציקער, וואָס האָט פאַרשטאַנען
צו מאַכן פאַרביקער דעם גרויען ריים;
אזוי ווי פעדערן פון די פאַזאַנען,
לויכט רעגנבויגנדיק מיין פערז געהיים.

איך בין דער איינציקער, איך בין דער איינער,
וואָס וועבט דעם לופטיקסטן מוזיק-געשפּין,
פאַרשווענדט אייך צירונגען, צעשטראַלטע שטיינער
מיט די שאַטירונגען פון פיינסטן מין.

The youthful arrogance exhibited here goes hand in hand with a sense of literary-historical purpose and reveals the connection between form and content in the final two lines. Naydus saw his task of beautifying not only the content—taking Yiddish from the narrow path to the wide dirt road, which would be surrounded by pastoral scenery—but also the form. Rhyme, which like feather iridescence is not seen in isolation but as a part of a patterned plumage when viewed from a certain angle, is an element which gives more value to that patterned whole. He is even willing to overuse, to “squander”

them, like the literary influences apparent from this high ornamentation: Naydus' foregrounding of sonic aesthetic features evokes American poet Edgar Allen Poe's nineteenth-century poem "The Bells," which had more recently become famous among the early twentieth-century Russian and East European modernists through its Russian translation by Konstantin Bal'mont (and subsequent musical adaptation by Sergei Rachmaninoff). Naydus himself translated (Bal'mont's Russian translation of) Poe's "The Bells," which had taken on a second life as a modernist, art-for-art's sake poem. The medium was the message; for Naydus, the display of poetic opulence in Yiddish was a crucial point to make. It was also an excellent reason for such poet to choose Yiddish over other languages. In Russian or even in Hebrew, Naydus could never have made such boasts as "I am the only one," but in Yiddish at the time there were still opportunities to be the only one.

In Russian, such a boast would have been absurd because of its gold standard of Pushkin and all of the experiments he had conducted in nineteenth-century Russian poetry. Pushkin's figure and transformative effect on Russian poetry were surely an inspiration for Naydus, who similarly imported Western and Orientalist poetic form and content. The literary evenings were another way that Naydus captured the attention of the youth and made himself a kind of travelling star after leaving Vilna.

3.13 TRANSLATING SOUNDS

Naydus translated *Onegin* during a difficult time that also proved to be the end of his life. The war compelled Naydus' return to Grodno and Kustin, where in the winter of 1917 his dear grandmother, who had lived with the family throughout his childhood, passed away. Khaye Gozhanski was dying far away of tuberculosis¹¹⁵ and Naydus himself suffered symptoms of "extraordinary fatigue and apathy." Some of his poems from 1918 express premonitions of his own death. Against medical advice to rest in Kustin, he exerted himself to write more, telling his worried mother: "I place/lay the entire weight not on the length of life, but on the content" (Zak "*Biografishe notitsn*" xvi). Already exhausting himself with the writing, he arranged tours to lecture on Yiddish literature and perform

¹¹⁵ Her death, far away from Naydus, followed shortly after his. The news of his death may have contributed to the timing of her own (xii).

at literary evenings. Without the financial support of his wealthy family, he used the tour money to support his writing and to rent a place in Grodno at such a low rent that his neighbors were sex workers (Zak “*In letstn yor*” 31). But on the road in the wartime winter of 1918 were huge numbers of people carrying germs from one place to another and Naydus, initially mistaking his additional illness for a cold, died suddenly of diphtheria in Grodno. On his sickbed lay not only unpublished original works, but his translations of Baudelaire’s *Les fleurs du mal* and Pushkin’s *Evgenii Onegin*, one of the projects on which he had been stubbornly working too hard prior to his death (Zak 1924 XIV–XVI).

It was not a long leap from Naydus’ original work to translation, because so much of what he had done had been as a self-conscious fitting of Yiddish onto other forms and fancies. A prolific adapter, he had already published a translation of Pushkin’s fairy-tale poema “Tale of a Dead Princess and Seven Heroes.” His collected works include translations of Lermontov, Baudelaire, and various French and other poets, such as Marinetti, Verlaine, Blok, Sologub, Bal’mont, Briusov, Shelley, Poe, Goethe, Heine, Arthur Schnitzler, Sappho, and Knut Hamsun. (The Lermontov translations are in *Rusishe dikhtung* and the others are in *Fun velt pornos*.) It is also not surprising that among this small library of translated poetry that he produced during those last few years of his life were around three hundred pages of Pushkin, because Pushkin had demonstrated the method of adapting French and other foreign material to build a modern literature. And so even at a time in his life when he was depressed, sickly, and thinking about his own death, Naydus did not only focus on writing original texts, but also on this massive translation project; Pushkin’s *Evgenii Onegin* took a great deal of time in the last year of his life. This Yiddish poet, who aimed to transform and broaden the scope of Yiddish poetry, spent much of his deathbed literary efforts on the translation of a Russian novel—rather than focusing exclusively on creating original works of literature. It happened because translating the verse novel *Evgenii Onegin* is a unique creative act in the field of translation, a major undertaking which most people did not dare to do and which could potentially make a memorable literary contribution. Yiddish in particular, although it was gaining literary status thanks in no small

part to its modernists, was associated with common speech and not with “refined” culture such as this highly structured, formally complex Russian masterpiece.

The *Onegin* stanza is the poetic form which Naydus worked at more than any other, thanks to this translation. While his own oeuvre of original poems includes many experiments with form that leave some readers cold, the complaint was not that he failed to execute them but that his enthusiasm for musical Yiddish poetry overshadowed other features. Though these are sometimes described as translation-like poems, they can also be described as exercises for the young poet and the young poetry. It is fitting, then, that the translation of *Onegin* would be one of the projects of this young Yiddish poet, pushing the limits of his own work and of Yiddish poetry. What he creates here are not just Yiddish renderings of the text, but a Yiddish text that, through its creative use of sound, demonstrates that the aesthetics of the language exceed expectations. With the various forms that Naydus tried, he showed that each of them could be done well; the difference is that with *Evgenii Onegin*, the language is run through the same form for hundreds of different stanzas, each with its own musical interpretation of the rules. The formal structure creates anticipations which are constantly surprised without being broken. There is no form which Naydus practiced quite as many times as the *Onegin* stanza, so in terms of musicality this is his most thorough exercise in Yiddish musical-poetic creativity. The translator’s death was long before he would have edited the whole of this text, so we do not know which flaws he might have corrected if he had had more time, but the text still usually reads as a musical one whose rhythm carries the reader ahead.

Naydus accomplishes this fluent effect in part by his Yiddish renderings of the *Onegin* stanza form itself, the way it sounds. For the purpose of illustrating this quality, Naydus’ version can be compared with Grodzenski’s.

PUSHKIN	NAYDUS	GRODZENSKI
chem men'she zhenshchinu mi lyubim, tem legche nravimsya mi ey, i tem eyo vernee gubim sred' obol'stitef'nikh setey. razvrat, byvalo, khladnokrovnyi naukoy slavilsya lyubovnoy, sam o sebe vezde trubia, i naslazhdayas' ne lyubya. no eta vazhnaya zabava dostoyna starikh obez'yan khvalenykh dedovskikh vremyan: lovlasov obvetshala slava so slavoy krasnykh kablukov i velichavikh parikov.	vos ventsiker mir libn, shetsn, gefint di froy in unz mer prakht— un in farfirerishe netsn vert zi alts gikher umgebrakht; der glaykhgiltiker znus der kalter— fun libe-lere tomid halt er. s'tromaytert, s'poykt fun zikh der znus, er veys keyn libe, nur genus; nur ot dos vikhtikernst shpasn past far di alte malpes nor fun voykgebentshtn zeydns dor: farvelkt der rum shoyn fun lovlasn, mitn rum fun roytin shukh-kabluk un mayestetishn paruk!	vos ventsiker mir libn zikher,— alts mer der froy gefeln mir; dermit farmikhtn mir zi gikher in netsn blendernish on shir. dos znus, flegt trefn, hot kaltblutik gerimt zikh oft mit libe mutik, fun zikh aleyn tseblozndik, on libe nakhes klaybndik. nor tsugenglekh iz ot der shpasn, der vikhtiker far affn gor, gerimt in tsaytn alte nor; der alter rum fun di lovlasn un oykh der rum fun royte shikh mit shaytl-rum farvelkt hot gikh. ¹¹⁶

Both translations intend to follow the meter and the rhyme pattern; both deviate from it as well. As discussed earlier, Grodzenski's translation uses the line endings “*tseblozndik-kleybndik*” in a way that deviates from Pushkin's original form by creating dactyls. This was in Grodzenski's second, revised edition, while Naydus' translation is unfinished and never had final revisions made, meaning that some of the latter's deviations from the meter may have been conscious placeholders intended to be edited before the first edition would be printed.¹¹⁷ Despite the fact that this is a rough draft, Naydus achieves more rhythmic variety (and thus more sonic similarity to Pushkin's Russian stanza) than Grodzenski does. Both translations must rely on the same technique for avoiding a sing-song, repetitive version of the iambic tetrameter: using caesurae and varying the length of words. When words are two syllables long, the same length as an iamb, poets can vary their positions within a line (and metrical foot). While Grodzenski uses words ranging from one to three syllables, Naydus' richer vocabulary includes several words of four or five syllables as well, allowing for much fewer realized stresses, such as in the final line—“*un mayestetishn paruk*” (2 stresses instead of 4). Naydus

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4:VII	NAYDUS	GRODZENSKI
Чем меньше женщину мы любим, Тем легче нравимся мы ей, И тем ее вернее губим Средь обольстительных сетей. Разврат, бывало, хладнокровный Наукой славился любовной, Сам о себе везде трубя, И наслаждаясь не любя. Но эта важная забава Достойна старых обезьян Хваленым дедовским временем: Ловласов обветшала слава Со славой красных каблук И величавых париков.	וואס ווינציקער מיר ליבן, שעצן, געפינט די פרוי אין אונז מער פראכט— און אין פארפירערישע געצן ווערט זי אלץ גיכער אומגעבראכט; דער גלייכגילטיקער זנות דער קאלטער— פון ליבעלערע תמיד האלט ער. ס'טרומייטערט, ס'פויקט פון זיך דער זנות, ער ווייס קיין ליבע, נור גענוס; נור אַט דאָס וויכטיקערנסט שפאָסן פאסט פאר די אלטע מאלפעס נאָר פון ווילגעבענטשטן זיידנס דור: פארוועלקט דער רום שוין פון לאָוּלאָסן, מיטן רום פון רויטן שוין-קאַבלוק און מאַיעסטעטישן פאַרוק!...	וואָס ווייניקער מיר ליבן זיכער— אַלץ מער דער פרוי געפעלן מיר; דערמיט פארניכטן מיר זי גיכער אין געצן בלענדערניש אָן שיעור. דאָס זנות, פלעגט טרעפן, האָט קאַלטבלוטיק גערימט זיך אָפט מיט ליבע מוטיק, פון זיך אליין צעבלאַנדיק, אַן ליבע נחת קלייבנדיק. נאָר צוגענגלעך איז אַט דער שפאָסן, דער וויכטיקער פאַר אַפּפּן נאָר, גערימט אין צייטן אלטע נאָר; דער אַלטער רום פון די לאָוּלאָסן און אויך דער רום פון רויטע שוין מיט שייטל-רום פאַרוועלקט האָט גיך.

¹¹⁷ Naydus uses the half-syllable “*tn*” as a syllable sometimes, but he uses the word “*mitn*” here as a single syllable.

also uses more commas to create caesurae. Both of these Yiddish translations surpass what Dovid Frishman did in his adaptation of the *Onegin* stanza to clunky European Hebrew amphibrachic tetrameter with feminine endings and a rhyme scheme that otherwise follows Pushkin's pattern. But while Grodzenski provided the Jewish readership with its first full translation of the novel, Naydus was the one whose translation demonstrated the capacity of the Yiddish language for this kind of poetry.

Naydus' methods in this translation evoke his own original, translation-like poetry. For example, this stanza contains one of his characteristic techniques in creating memorable Yiddish rhymes: the rhyming of Semitic words with words of other origins. Although he was not the first person to do this, he does it more frequently and quite fluently. Here he rhymes "znus-genus" (a noun of Hebrew origin with a Germanic participle) and "nor-dor" (a Germanic adverb with a Hebrew noun). This is in addition to the macaronic rhymes Pushkin wrote into the original (for example, in 1:VI, the Russian "*Iuvenale*" is rhymed with the Latin "*vale*") and can be found throughout the translation. For example, in Stanza 1:V, Naydus rhymes the Germanic "*gefin ikh*" of the first line with the Hebrew-origin word for education, "*khinekh*" in Line 3. The word "*khinekh*" is nearly (phonetically) a palindrome, repeating "*nikh*" backwards ("*khin*") as well as forwards ("*nekh*"). Another playful example of Semitic-Germanic rhyme is the not-quite-synonymous "*geshtorbn-korbn*" "died-victim" in 2:XXXVI. Since the Semitic words are a part of Yiddish, it would have been hard to write without them, but Naydus uses them quite a lot even with that said, also rhyming them with each other such as in 1:VII "*ashirus*" with "*gvirus*." In 1:VIII he does both, rhyming the word "*geon*" ["genius"] with the Germanic "*fartroyen*"¹¹⁸ and the Hebrew-origin words "*tayveh*" and "*gayveh*" with each other. In his translation of a novel which itself contains so many foreign words and demonstrates Pushkin's facility for incorporating them into Russian verses Naydus calls attention to the internal linguistic diversity of Yiddish, to his own facility with rhyming words of different origins (often expressed as macaronic rhyme in his own original works), and to his own facility with rhyming words

¹¹⁸ This is the YIVO transliteration; regionally also pronounced "*fartreyen*."

in Hebrew—after all, he had quit writing Hebrew poetry in favor of becoming exclusively a Yiddish poet.

3.14 DEATH, *ONEGIN* AS A LIVING TEXT, AND THE AUDIENCE

Naydus' translation, though itself a pleasure to read, does not achieve the most basic measure of what it was supposed to do—over four chapters are missing. Despite his frenzied efforts to write while facing premonitions of his own death, Naydus did not finish the translation; as published, it ends with a partial translation of Chapter 4, Verse XLIII (the chapter usually ends with LI). It appears that Naydus did not manage to completely translate his last stanza. Dated “Kustin, 1918,” this ending is shortly after the novel's change in seasons occurs around November. Evgenii (Eugene) has rejected Tatiana, but has not yet offended Lensky, who is still alive and writing poetry to Olga. He has not yet even invited Evgenii to the fateful party. In the case of this posthumously published *Onegin* translation, readers are advised that numerous errors have been found in the numbering of the stanzas and that they must consult the actual order of the stanzas (111), presumably by reading another (original or translated) version of *Onegin* in addition to this one.

If the purpose of the translation were to provide *Evgenii Onegin* for a Yiddish audience that lacked access to the Russian original text, which was likely at least one of Naydus' motivations when he undertook this tremendous task, the product finalized by the translator's death was inadequate to the task of bringing *Onegin* to a new audience. Thus, its publication must have been driven by other, less obvious motivations. The “Naydus Commission,” a group of Naydus' friends and fans formed after his death, got it published in 1926 as a separate volume of posthumous collected works, this one called *Rusishe dikhtung (pushkin un lermontov)*, containing Naydus' translations of poems by both Pushkin and Lermontov, as well as a reprint of “Tale of a Dead Princess” and the four chapters of *Evgenii Onegin*. Overall, Naydus' translations constitute two volumes out of the planned six-volume set, the other being *Fun velt-pornos* (1928) which is mostly French poetry. Along with other manuscripts of the deceased poet that they had found, they published it because they considered it to be of high quality and wanted to preserve the entire oeuvre of a prolific, talented young poet whose

life was cut short. It was interesting because Naydus, who had such ambitious goals for Yiddish poetry, wrote it as a part of his poetic strategy.

This *Onegin* is preceded by a note from the editorial commission explaining that Naydus' death stopped him halfway through and how this affected the translation. Not only was Naydus unable to finish a first draft of the translation, he was also unable to return to certain parts that he had been planning to fix at the end. It also explains which passages are missing from the translation in addition to those missing from the original, because of course the original *Onegin* itself is peculiar in that way. Even during Pushkin's lifetime, there was more than one version of the novel and all versions are missing certain stanzas (Nabokov 1 3–5). Other sections, especially "Fragments from Onegin's Journey," are sometimes published as a part of the novel or as appendices and sometimes not. Thus it is not only the narrative voice which draws the reader's attention to the poet and his writing process, but the very structure of the text itself that does not allow us to forget that drafts were written and rejected or that the censor and other external factors influenced its publication. This effect is magnified in Naydus' posthumously published half-translation, which adds an extra layer of drafting and incompleteness to that already present in the original text. It does not allow the reader to forget the translator, whose existence and demise are clearly demarcated by the cutting short of the translation work. Unlike an unfinished original text that is posthumously produced, the reader need not wonder what else would have come; the reader knows that in Naydus' longest published piece of writing, Pushkin's last four chapters are missing. (The translation contains none of Pushkin's footnotes or epigraphs, and though Naydus would surely have enjoyed translating its descriptions of faraway lands, none of "Onegin's Journey.") This is another way that the young poet is honored after his death; even his unfinished translation was considered to be worth printing.

Even within the part that he managed to translate, the reader is left with a quandary: the editors add that the numeration of stanzas contains several errors "and while reading one needs to take into account the actual order of the stanzas" (111). There are two obvious places for readers to go with this advice: to the Russian text or to Grodzinski's Yiddish. Where they would go probably depended upon their language skills; the educated Jewish woman derided by Niger, who spoke

Russian at home and learned Yiddish for political reasons, could go directly to Pushkin, while the less-educated, or heder-educated reader from a traditional Yiddish-speaking household—actually requiring a Yiddish translation for access to the novel—would have to go to Grodzenski’s full translation. These people would have also had different motivations for reading the partial translation, and very different experiences of it.

For the native Yiddish speaker, Shmuel Niger gives a possible use for the translation is indicated in a 1927 review of *Rusishe dikhtung*. He praised the translation as one that is not literal but gets the spirit of Pushkin’s mathematical use of language, also noting that Naydus does not “cripple”¹¹⁹ the lines as much as Grodzenski does (69). Because, as he notes, Naydus’ own works were much like translations themselves, this translation is like another of Naydus’ new creations—being so good in its own right (this is a surprise, given Niger’s previous criticism of Naydus), it does not need to be closer to the original. Because Naydus translated works of Pushkin that have elsewhere been rendered in Yiddish, these new translations could help Yiddish readers get closer to the original through reading multiple versions (68). Niger himself, who strongly opposes Grodzenski’s method of translation, never explicitly advises his readers to consult that version in addition to Naydus’. But together with the editors’ advisory about stanza numeration, his article suggests that readers of Naydus’ *Onegin* had to compare it with Grodzenski’s or with the original as they went through the text—though it would also be possible to start with the Naydus translation and switch over to Grodzenski’s just before the end of Chapter 4. Thus, extrapolating from Niger’s rude comments, Naydus’ translation can be seen as a “prosthetic” to Grodzenski’s translation, helping the Yiddish reader get closer to Pushkin by consulting multiple versions.

Of the two translations, that of Naydus sounds more musical and natural, but was the translation as close to the content of the novel? Both tend to be periphrastic, favoring style and ease of expression in Yiddish over the literal conveyance of precise meaning, but Niger still argues that Naydus’ is closer to the original (despite the copious footnoting of Grodzenski). At times Naydus is actually less accurate than Grodzenski; for example, in 1:L, Pushkin mentions his African heritage

¹¹⁹ Niger was almost certainly aware that Grodzenski was a double amputee who had difficulty with speech and hearing, which makes this comment especially cruel.

in that famous line, usually translated as “under the sky of my Africa.”¹²⁰ Grodzenski, in the midst of a periphrastic translation of these and surrounding lines, has “of Africa, my home” along with a footnote providing the important detail that “Pushkin’s great-grandfather was an African Negro.” Naydus has only “by the African heaven-flame” with no possessive pronoun, and if he was planning to footnote the section and make the connection between Pushkin and Africa, he died too soon.

There are instances in which Grodzenski is farther from Pushkin and Naydus closer, as well, such as in 2:xxxv. Nabokov translates the second couplet as follows: “with them, during fat Butter-week / Russian pancakes were wont to be”¹²¹ Grodzenski’s translation changes it to, “on Christmas Eve they would still eat / filled *blintses* quite a lot;” Naydus has “on ‘Maslenitsa’ they would be / frying countless ‘*blinis*.’” In this example Grodzenski domesticates Pushkin’s Russian culture not only switching holidays but also by using the Yiddish word “*blintses*,” which is etymologically related and an analogous though distinct culinary item relative to *blini* in a way not so different from Nabokov’s “pancakes.” He does not specify their Russianness at all, however. Naydus introduces into the Yiddish text (recall that *Onegin* itself is macaronic even in Russian) “*Maslenitsa*” and “*blines*,” Yiddishizing the latter. (The Russian singular and plural are “*blin*” and “*blini*”; the Yiddish word for blintz is “*blintse*” in singular and “*blintses*” in the plural; Naydus creates a plural “*blines*,” for which the singular would be either “*blin*” or “*bline*.”) In so doing, he not only maintains the unfamiliar holiday, but also has a closer translation for “*russkie bliny*” by showing them to be Russian and distinct.

Such liberties with the text are taken throughout by both translators, with meaning added and taken away. The difference between Naydus’ adding and subtracting meaning and what Grodzenski does is that Grodzenski subtracts without adding very much; Naydus’ changes tend to be more artful paraphrases, closer to the spirit of what is being said. For the reader who did not have sufficient Russian to read Pushkin’s text, the side-by-side translations could help until halfway through,

¹²⁰ “Под небом Африки моей.” This line is one of the only ones footnoted by Pushkin himself.

¹²¹ “У них на масленице жирной / Водились русские блины;” Maslenitsa is a Slavic holiday preceding Great Lent; meat is forbidden already, but it is the last chance to have dairy products before Easter.

though it seems unlikely that many readers who were so motivated to pore over *Onegin* would not have known Russian.

3.15 FOR THE YOUNG WOMAN STUDENT

It is inevitably tempting for readers of *Onegin* to look at the stanzas about the duel between Evgenii and Lenski as a literary foreshadowing of Pushkin's own death in a duel, as one of the instances which made Pushkin a prophet of his own future.¹²² At least it is hard to read those stanzas without thinking of Pushkin's own death. The reader of Naydus' translation, however, would be unable to read the translation without also thinking of Naydus' death, which is so powerfully evoked by the unfinished nature of the work. This unfinished translation is thus another part of Naydus' unwitting contribution to Yiddish culture: the figure of the poet who died too young. If he had lived longer, perhaps he would have been considered to be a Yiddish Pushkin. By this time, the poet who died too young was already a figure in Russian poetry, as noted by Roman Jakobson:

If you can imagine how slight the contributions of Schiller, Hoffmann, Heine, and especially Goethe would have been if they had all disappeared in their thirties, then you will understand the significance of the following Russian statistics: Batjuškov went mad when he was thirty. Venevitinov died at the age of twenty-two, Del'vig at thirty-two. Griboedov was killed when he was thirty-four, Puškin when he was thirty-seven, Lermontov when he was twenty-six. Their fate has more than once been characterized as a form of suicide. Majakovskij himself compared his duel with *byt*¹²³ to the fatal duels of Puškin and Lermontov. (*Language in Literature* 296)

Although Jakobson wrote this later, in 1931, the trend he describes was already visible before the suicide of Mayakovsky. Naydus' early death became a large part of how he has been remembered and like Pushkin, Naydus, too, wrote of his death, although for him it was more of a foreseeable event due to his illness. He imagined his death, his girlfriend before and after it, and wondered about how he would be remembered, in poems such as "*Nokh mayn toyt*" ("After my Death").

¹²² After getting angry at Evgenii for dancing and flirting with Olga, the young poet Lenski challenges him to the fateful duel. Pushkin died in a duel with his wife's pursuer and brother-in-law. The poems "*Prorok*" and "*Exegi monumentum*" are also examples of how Pushkin appears to have predicted the future.

¹²³ *Byt*: "Opposed to this creative urge toward a transformed future is the stabilizing force of an immutable present, overlaid, as this present is, by a stagnating slime, which stifles life in its tight, hard mold" (277).

While Pushkin and Lermontov died aristocratic deaths in duels, Naydus died a humble Jewish death from a disease caught in the chaos of war. His funeral was a major event in Grodno, attended by the youth and every Jewish organization across the political spectrum, recalled by Avrom Zak as a solemn display full of “ribbons, wreaths, red flags” (“*Biografishe notitsn*” XVIII). It was after this death that the Naydus Commission, a group of young friends and fans, formed to collect his manuscripts from family and publish them. As Niger predicted, an actress did perform Naydus’ poetry at literary evenings after his death—but with great personal sadness (Zak “*In letstn yor*” 32). Eternally young in the few published photographs, Leyb Naydus has been commemorated in at least the following ways: the enormous funeral; a performance of his poetry and others’ poetry about him at the State Theater marking 30 days after his death; the formation of the Naydus Commission to gather his manuscripts and edit them for publication, planning a 6-volume set; publications of memories and criticism, often marking an anniversary of his death, wondering what kind of poet he would have become if he had lived longer. The journal of Grodner Jews in Argentina, *Grodner opklangen*, treats Naydus as an emblem of the (marginal compared to Vilna and Warsaw) decimated community that it was documenting and memorializing, perhaps as a “city poet” of Grodno. Later Yiddish poets would be killed, their biographies forever linked with the *Khurbn* and the purges of Stalin, superseding the tragedies of World War One forever in Jewish memory; although the war was responsible for Naydus’ illness and many other Jews died during the First World War, his death produced his final Yiddishization of a Russian literary feature, that of the prolific poet who died too young. This is strongly felt in the *Onegin* translation. Naydus, who unlike Pushkin and Lermontov felt that he was going to die soon, draws attention to himself in his poems of that last year as an innovative poet who belonged on the Parnassus dying young. This is a novel about, among other things, the young death of a poet, by a poet who died young. It would not have been lost on Naydus, who in dealing with the inevitability of his fatal illness was trying to find an afterlife in poetry. So along with making the Yiddish language speak *goyish* and providing Yiddish culture with dandyism or bohemian subculture, he associates his fatal illness with the early deaths of Russian poets. Though

his standing among Yiddish readers was not parallel to the acclaim of Pushkin or Lermontov, the memorialization he received from the Grodno community was similar.

How many people would have really read this is uncertain, but nevertheless there must have been enough of an expected small audience for *Rusishe dikhtung* for it to have been published at all, and it is likely that a large part of the audience consisted of Naydus' preexisting audience. In other words, the book *Rusishe dikhtung* and the partial translation of *Evgenii Onegin* it contains were of interest to those people who already knew *Onegin* in Russian (perhaps even by heart) and who wanted to enjoy Naydus' rendering. They did not require the most faithful or even complete translation because they did not rely upon it for access to the original text, but rather would have been interested in seeing how successfully the late poet had managed to write a Yiddish version. How beautiful could a Yiddish *Onegin* be? This *Onegin* can be seen as a literary feat of Naydus' and of Yiddish. The publication of a partial translation of a novel that readers are expected to somehow finish in its entirety demonstrates an esteem for the translator and translation which is remarkable within the field of literature and publishing (if not so unusual in Jewish languages). It is a consequence of the ways that Yiddish literature was still, quite intentionally forming and being developed by true believers with their respective visions of what this process must entail. Within the literary community from Grodzenski to his negative reviewer Niger, the belief in the need for translations was this strong, promoting not only hasty or lackluster work but also unfinished work as a text worth purchasing and studying. This is similar to Tchernikhowski's sentiment that Levinson's Hebrew translation of the novel should be published despite its flaws, but it was the Yiddish literary world that actually managed to publish *Onegin*.

3.16 CONCLUSION

Although both Hebrew and Yiddish literature were being built up during the period of and after the World War and the 1917 Russian Revolution and intellectuals called for translations of Pushkin into both, *Evgenii Onegin* enticed multiple writers to render it in Yiddish while no one was willing to meet Dovid Frishman's demand in Hebrew. Yiddish, to be sure, had a much larger potential audience than

Hebrew and its main competition among the reading public was not its ancient Semitic companion, but rather the non-Jewish languages of Europe. The two published translations played distinct roles in the expansion of the Yiddish literary world, though some of the differences can be attributed to circumstance rather than technique. If not for the chaos of the late 1910s and the resulting material and social conditions of East European Jews, not only might Grodzenski have kept his legs in Vilna with him and Naydus have avoided catching diphtheria from soldiers and refugees on the trains, but the Yiddish cultural apparatus would also have been more stable and might have been on a larger scale and the Hebrew one might have been able to publish Levinson's translation during this time. On the other hand, the urge to translate from Russian into Yiddish was also bolstered by the political changes of this period, which discouraged the use of Russian among Jews who lived in Poland and Lithuania and replaced generations of Russification with a new interest in Yiddish. *Onegin* was a core text of Russification and dear enough to bring along to the world of Yiddish. These historical forces, however, did not figure in the translators' here-and-now. Their thinking was about Yiddish literature from the inside out.

A. Y. Grodzenski and Leyb Naydus, though actively involved in two competing political movements, both demonstrated their interest in international literary relations and deparochializing Yiddish literature. Grodzenski volunteered in the Yiddish PEN Club on the institutional level and introduced his translations of Pushkin with statements about the need for translated Russian literature in particular because of the unique historical relations between Yiddish and Russia. Naydus, though he has left less of a paper trail outside of verse, wrote not only translations of world poets that would fill two volumes, but also explicitly used non-Jewish forms and contents to inspire and fill much of his own "*fargoyisht*" (made Gentile) poetry. Grodzenski's hopes in translating *Onegin*, which were actually realized during his lifetime, was to make the story familiar to Jews and to challenge East European Yiddish musical theater to produce a Yiddish opera. Lacking such explicit statements, one can only speculate about Naydus' own motivations; given what is known about his career and apparent from his own poetry, he felt up to the challenge of making a translation which would not only introduce the *Onegin* stanza and plot but would demonstrate the translator's own virtuosity

by providing a skillfully written text in Yiddish. While Grodzenski himself had the opportunity to convert his translation into a libretto for the first Yiddish opera performance in Eastern Europe, Naydus' meticulous work took too long relative to his own life and was published posthumously as a half-translation which could not serve as a Yiddish substitute for the novel. This was not at all what he had in mind, but in a way it brought him closer to Pushkin as the promising and prolific Yiddish poet whose life was cut short by misunderstanding and recklessness, such that the precious manuscripts he left behind must be edited and published—a new category of Yiddish writer. In the process of writing this translation, Naydus used Pushkin's text to demonstrate his own virtuosity with some of the same literary techniques used in the original novel, such as the musicality of the verse and the surprising multilingual rhymes. He thereby showed not only his own abilities as a writer, but also invites the reader to see in Yiddish the linguistic richness that could be deployed towards the creation of high culture in a folk vernacular, as happened with Russian thanks to Pushkin's work.

The contents of the translations do similar work for Yiddish culture. Grodzenski's translation, though not as impressive an example of *Onegin* stanzas nor close to Pushkin's meaning line by line, presents the overall plot of *Evgenii Onegin* in the full eight chapters, while also providing educational footnotes which help the Yiddish reader understand Pushkin's references to unfamiliar (non-Jewish) topics. Naydus' translation, unable to serve the same educational purpose or convey the story of the novel, exhibits the combined poetic abilities of himself and the Yiddish language in sonorous stanzas, and unintentionally reproduces the novel's tension between completeness and incompleteness. Grodzenski's translation challenged Yiddish cultural institutions more than it did the language, and Naydus' challenged the language more than the institutions.

The popularity of *Onegin* among Jewish intellectuals in the emerging Polish state, by inspiring more than one Yiddish translation, allows us to see two types of literary figure in action: a mainstay of the literary institutions whose work held them all up, and a virtuoso groundbreaking poet. Translating *Onegin* served the ends of both writers as a means of developing Yiddish literature according to the model of Russian literature and implicitly demonstrated that Yiddish was more suitable for

this than Hebrew, despite the higher cultural status of that ancient language. When Hebrew literature finally did come around to have full translations of the novel, this would repeat itself. Historical and biographical events made Grodzenski the definitive translator and Naydus the auxiliary despite a marked difference in poetic achievement; years later, Hebrew would become the famous case of a Jewish-language *Onegin* and Yiddish the auxiliary.

CHAPTER 4

Onegin Settles in the Russian Diaspora: Avraham Levinson and Avraham Shlonsky's Hebrew Translations in Palestine, 1937

“А мне, Онегин, пышность эта,
Постылой жизни мишура,
Мои успехи в вихре света,
Мой модный дом и вечера,
Что в них? Сейчас отдать я рада
Всю эту ветошь маскарада,
Весь этот блеск, и шум, и чад
За полку книг, за дикой сад,
За наше бедное жилище,
За те места, где в первый раз,
Онегин, видела я вас,
Да за смиренное кладбище,
Где нынче крест и тень ветвей
Над бедной нянею моей... (Pushkin 8:XLVI)

“To me, Onegin, all this glory
is tinsel on a life I hate;
this modish whirl, this social story,
my house, my evenings, all that state—
what's in them? All this loud parading,
and all this flashy masquerading,
the glare, the fumes in which I live,
this very day I'd gladly give,
give for a bookshelf, a neglected
garden, a modest home, the place
of our first meeting face to face,
and the churchyard where, new-erected,

a humble cross, in woodland gloom,
stands over my poor nurse's tomb. (Tr. Johnston)

Я жил тогда в Одессе пыльной...
Там долго ясны небеса,
Там хлопотливо торг обильный
Свои подьмет паруса;
Там всё Европой дышит, веет,
Всё блещет Югом и пестреет
Разнообразием живой.
Язык Италии златой
Звучит по улице веселой,
Где ходит гордый славянин,
Француз, испанец, армянин,
И грек, и молдаван тяжелый,
И сын египетской земли,
Корсар в отставке, Морали. (Pushkin, "Onegin's Journey" xx)

I lived then in dusty Odessa...
There for a long time skies are clear.
There, stirring, an abundant trade
sets up its sails.
There all exhales, diffuse Europe,
all glitters with the South, and brindles
with live variety.
The tongue of golden Italy
resounds along the gay street where
walks the proud Slav,
Frenchman, Spaniard, Armenian,
and Greek, and the heavy Moldavian,
and the son of Egyptian soil,
the retired Corsair, Morali. (Tr. Nabokov)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Between the time when Dovid Frishman translated excerpts of *Evgenii Onegin* for the 1899 centennial of Pushkin's birth and the 1937 centennial of Pushkin's death, no Hebrew translations of *Onegin* were published. During the period of the Great War, when Frishman failed to convince any of his first choices to translate *Evgenii Onegin*, Avraham Levinson (1891–1955) translated the novel into Hebrew. In 1919 he sent it to Frishman's *Hatkufah*, but Frishman was not in Moscow, and in 1923

to the Stybel Publishing House, where despite the approval of Yaakov Fichman and Shaul Tcherni-
hǒovski for its publication, A. Y. Stybel decided not to publish it. The reason was that the publisher
was in financial hard times (Halperin 472). Thus the publication of *Evgenii Onegin* in Hebrew was
delayed until long after it had been successful in Yiddish. Between 1899 and 1937, a time period
equivalent to Pushkin's lifespan, Hebrew changed tremendously. A new literary center developed
in Palestine which could support not one but two publications of *Evgenii Onegin* in the same year,
and where the pronunciation had come to sound very different from that of Frishman in 1899. It
was even spoken by some people in their daily lives.

Zionists in Eastern Europe tended to see themselves as exiles and rejected calls to assimilate into
the local population, though they did study Russian literature and culture. Many Zionists in Pales-
tine saw themselves as having come home from a long exile, but these Jews did not assimilate into
the local population of Arabs; instead, they brought their culture with them. Yiddish, a piece of the
Diaspora identity that was meant to be purged from the Jewish spirit in Palestine, still competed with
Russian and Hebrew. In both Europe and Palestine, many Zionists who rejected Yiddish still held
onto Pushkin and other Russian literature. They even studied Russian literary criticism. Though
there were many, like Hayyim Nahman Bialik, who had sought creative revitalization through “re-
casting the indigenous traditions of Judaism as a secular-national patrimony” (Moss 106),¹²⁴ other
Hebrew writers wanted to become a part of world literature—which, to them, still meant modern
European literature.

Thus the translations of Pushkin continued in Palestine, where although they could be under-
stood as preserving something for future, Hebrew-speaking generations, they still seemed to have
an audience that knew Pushkin in Russian anyway. The two translations of *Evgenii Onegin* appeared
in time for the Jewish community's celebration of Pushkin's 1937 centennial marking 100 years since
his death. In this way, Zionist Jews in Palestine participated in the global celebrations of this centen-
nial in which the Soviet Union and Russian Diaspora competed for cultural legitimacy as conferred

¹²⁴ In Yiddish, this played out differently and involved folk culture, neo-Romanticism, Hasidism, and so on (Moss 106–7).

by Pushkin—as if by leaving Europe for the Middle East they, too, had become a part of this Russian Diaspora.

The two Hebrew translators of *Evgenii Onegin* in 1937 both used Pushkin as a vehicle for cultural and linguistic transformation of Hebrew culture, but also had strong personal connections to this particular project. Like the Yiddish translators of the Great War, they were both poets and activists engaged in a broad range of cultural and political activities. Avraham Levinson was a public intellectual, a major Zionist theoretician and activist who was sent back from Palestine to Europe to preach Hebrew and Zionism. Avraham Shlonsky (1900–1973) was a famous poet of the Zionist Yishuv in Palestine. The differences between them are borne out in their translations, where Levinson provides a more scholarly version with footnotes and a thorough introduction, while Shlonsky takes the opportunity to create new words and to create Hebrew *Onegin* stanzas that actually mimic the sound of Pushkin's own. Metrical statistics demonstrate that Shlonsky's translations sound more like the original than Levinson's do, though some critics preferred Levinson's translation—which seems invested in conveying a scholarly version of Pushkin to the audience in Hebrew—to Shlonsky's more famous version.¹²⁵ Shlonsky won tremendous acclaim for his translation, which is still in print, because it seemed to represent the creative spirit of the original text, while using Hebrew language and Jewish culture as the raw material.

Both of these two Avrahams were strong advocates of Hebrew creativity and nation-building in Palestine, yet enthusiastic about translating this piece of non-Jewish literature that they had enjoyed while living in the Jewish Diaspora. The complexity of the text, its prestige and popularity, combined with the movement to expand Hebrew literature in Palestine, inspired these translators with a sense of ambition. Shlonsky was proud of having accomplished this when Bialik had not (Halperin 470), and Levinson was proud of being a competitor to a famous and accomplished poet such as Shlonsky (Ḥanokh 11). Although they did not see themselves as being a part of the Russian Diaspora, they did consider the Hebrew *Onegins* to be both an important part of their overall project of Hebraism and Zionism as well as an individual achievement of the translators.

¹²⁵ Shlonsky eventually added much more scholarly material in the 1966 edition.

4.2 AVRAHAM LEVINSON, THE ZIONIST OBSESSED WITH TRANSLATING *EVGENII ONEGIN*

Avraham Levinson (1891–1955) was a contemporary of *Onegin*'s Yiddish translators, Leyb Naydus and Arn-Itzik Grodzenski, in Eastern Europe. Like them, he was also an activist with an interest in language. But the three of them lay across a spectrum of socialist nationalist Jewish movements during the 1910s and 1920s: at one end was Grodzenski, a Yiddishist trade unionist and diasporist; in the center Naydus was a Yiddishist and Socialist Zionist territorialist; the much younger Shlonsky was a member of the Zionist groups *Tes'irey Tsiyon* and *Hehaluts*, actually emigrating to Palestine in 1921;¹²⁶ Levinson was a Hebraist Labor Zionist proponent of mass emigration to Palestine who moved there in the 1930s. Like Grodzenski, Levinson was not remembered for his poetry, but for his other activities as a public intellectual. He began translating *Onegin* during the Great War, but could not publish it until after his emigration to Palestine. What kind of nationalist invests enough energy into foreign literature in order to translate a complex verse novel?

Though he clearly spent a great deal of time on reading Russian literature and criticism, Levinson's life was completely devoted to his Zionism: geographically as he moved and travelled from city to city, professionally, as he did everything for this cause including his writing, even a large part of his family life. He came from a well-to-do family in Lodz (Shapira 8) that enabled and participated in his political activities; in his archive are a number of family letters written in Hebrew, itself an ideological choice. After receiving both Jewish and secular education growing up, including a *maskilic kheyder* education under *Hovev zion* R' Khaim Yankef Kremer and gymnasium in Lublin, Levinson dropped out of medical school in Leipzig when he decided to become a lawyer. Intending to defend the Jewish people from persecution, he studied law¹²⁷ at the University of Warsaw's war-exiled and Russian-speaking campus at Rostov-on-Don (Shapira 8–9). In the meantime he was politically involved in the new Labor Zionism, even visiting Palestine on the eve of the Great War before he and his displaced family settled there (Shapira 9).

Looking at Levinson's career, it would seem surprising that he would have devoted time to trans-

¹²⁶ Unlike the other translators discussed in my study, Shlonsky is the subject of a recent and thorough biography: *Hamestro* by Hagit Halperin.

¹²⁷ After a year waiting for this and studying math.

lating Russian literature when he was so busy with Jewish activism and politics. As Israel Cohen recalls of Levinson's Zionist activity, "there was not a corner in which his personality was not felt" (206).¹²⁸ Levinson was involved, often in major roles, in many overlapping Zionist organizations in many East European cities, including: *heḥalutz* in Kharkov, *Yardenah* at Warsaw University, *Tse'irei tsiyon*, *Hapo'el hatsa'ir*, the *Hit'ahdut*, *V'ad hapo'el hatsiyoni*, *Tarbut* in Poland and what was called Russia; he also represented them at internal conferences as well as large, international Zionist Congresses. He even travelled across Poland to preach Zionism as well and did Zionist work in Vienna for a while. Levinson's central role in these organizations, as well as his oratory skills, landed him a short career in local politics, first as the *Hit'ahdut* delegate to the Polish Sejm, and then as the deputy mayor of majority-Jewish Brisk de-Lita, the highest position a Jew could hold in that city. Eventually, frustrated with Jewish life and politics in Poland and worried about the future, he immigrated in 1936 to Palestine (Shapira 11–13). There, he continued to work for Zionist and Hebrew institutions: the Hebrew University (which sent him to Europe to preach Hebraism), the Center for Education of the Flow of Workers (for a brief, frustrating period), and the Center for Culture (Shapira 14–15), all the while working nights on other jobs and selling off his beloved library to make ends meet, activities which drained him (Ḥanokh 12).

For Levinson, the work of Zionism and the work of Hebraism were two sides of one and the same national revival ("*Hatarbut ha'ivrit bagolah*" 293), and as a man far more interested in the written and spoken word than in political squabbling, cultural work was his the political activity he most enjoyed. An article in *Davar* commemorating the first anniversary of his death recalls him as "the public activist with the soul of a bard" ("*Bemle'ut shanah lemot 'avraham levinson*").¹²⁹ He wrote several languages, Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, and Polish, but aimed in all of these to promote national revival and the use of Hebrew. He even thought that it was shameful how, unlike other nations during their national revivals, the Jews conducted their business in all the languages of the world (297). He wrote many books and articles on the purpose and history of Hebraism and Zionism while living in Poland and in Palestine. While he was very interested in the arts, his most

¹²⁸ "לא היתה פינה, שאישיותו לא היתה מורגשת בה."

¹²⁹ "העסקן הצבורי בעל הנפש של פייטן."

visible legacy is in his writing about the history of the political and cultural movements in which he participated and about visiting post-World War Two Poland.

It is not clear that Levinson hoped for a Hebrew staging of the Tchaikovsky opera, but like A. Y. Grodzenski, he had a lifelong commitment to theater; Due to his able body, he was able to be more involved in the theater world than Grodzenski was and to act in plays. While still in Lodz in the early 1910s, Levinson helped Yitshak Katznelson establish a pioneering Hebrew theater troupe called *Habamah ha'ivrit* (Shapira 9), where he also served as an actor (Tash). With this troupe, Levinson went to the 11th Zionist Congress in Vienna to perform plays by Herzl and others (in Hebrew) (Shapira 9). In Palestine, he translated requested plays for the Hebrew theater; was hired to write new Hebrew songs and to translate Yiddish and Russian ones for performance (Cohen 206) that generally exhort the Jewish people to labor on the land or take revenge as they conquer it, alluding to the destruction of the Jewish past in Europe and the uncertainty of the future.¹³⁰ Through his theater and performance-driven activities, Levinson focused on Jewish rather than non-Jewish material, exhibiting the other side of the modern project of national culture-building. A Hebrew performance of a Russian opera would have been incongruous with this approach to theater, though as I shall discuss later, his translation of Pushkin does fit in with his body of Jewish translation work.

Although he was one of the greatest advocates for Hebraism, Levinson was himself an avid reader and writer of texts not only written in non-Jewish languages, but even in Yiddish. Even as he lay the foundation for the massive switch of European-born Zionists from Yiddish to Hebrew, he himself retained an ambivalent relationship with this diasporic Jewish language and diasporic Ashkenazi culture. In a speech before the 18th Zionist Congress in 1933, Levinson the fiery orator tried to explain his typical nationalist agenda:

The rule of the spirit is not only autonomous, it is sovereign, it uses only one crown of one tongue and one culture. Our Hebraism is a shutter in the face of the multiplicity of languages of the Hebrew people, that weakens the force of the fertilization and growth and the quality of the yield of the nation's spiritual forces. With this my intention is not to negate the value of the diasporic tongues and the cultures that were created in them, and particularly Yiddish. I did not come to negate, but to obligate. I want only to stress

¹³⁰ A number of Levinson's original songs and translations of songs are available at <http://zemereshet.co.il>.

more strongly the great and crucial obligation of the Hebrew tongue and culture in the Diaspora, in which our spiritual assets are the only signs of our national existence. In this matter there is no room for compromises and concessions. And hence our dream of the Hebraization of the Diaspora, the imposition of the Hebrew language, education and culture in the Diaspora as much as possible.¹³¹ (“*Hatarbut ha’ivrit bagolah*” 293)

Admonishing the Congress for its use of other languages in place of Hebrew, Levinson envisioned Hebraism as a massive transformation of Ashkenazi Jewish society which would be necessary to achieve the national goals of the Congress. Although in other aspects of his political and professional life, he preferred a more democratic approach, he wanted Hebrew to be imposed on the masses from above by the Hebraist, Zionist vanguard through intervention in communal institutions. In Israeli history, Hebraism has proven to be a force that suppresses Yiddish¹³² though this preacher for Jewish unity under one language (who even called for the use of Hebrew language in Europe) actually wrote many of his Zionist materials in Yiddish. Like the *maskilim* of an earlier generation who used Yiddish to promote the study of Hebrew (and non-Jewish languages) because Yiddish was the language that the masses could understand, Levinson used Yiddish (and non-Jewish languages) to promote Hebrew and Zionism and quite a bit for its own sake as well.

In general, his best-remembered work in Yiddish was for the movement: an important and well-known Yiddish pamphlet on *Hapo’el hatsa’ir* founder A. D. Gordon (Cohen 206), Yiddish Zionist poetry including the hymn for *Tse’irei tsiyon* (Tash), and that party’s Yiddish weekly, *Erd un arbet*,

¹³¹ ממשלת הרוח היא לא רק אבטונומית, היא סוברנית, היא משתמשת רק בכתר אחד של לשון אחת ושל תרבות אחת. העבריות שלנו היא תריס בפני ריבוי הלשונות של העם העברי, המחליש את כוח הפריה והגידול ואת איכות התנובה של הכוחות הרוחניים של האומה. בזה אין כוונתי לשלול את ערך לשונות הגולה והתרבויות שנוצרו בהן, וביחוד את האידיש. לא לשלול אני בא, אלא לחייב. אני רוצה רק להדגיש ביתר עוז את החיוב הגדול והמכריע של הלשון והתרבות העברית דווקא בגולה, שבה נכסי הרוח שלנו הם הסימנים היחידים של הווייתנו הלאומית. בנידון זה אין מקום לפשרות וויתורים. ומכאן שאיפתנו לעבריותה של הגולה, להשלטת הלשון, החינוך והתרבות העברית בגולה עד קצת גבול האפשרות.

¹³² Yael Chaver writes:

In 1923, the British Mandate authorities named Hebrew as one of the official languages of Palestine, along with English and Arabic. Nonmainstream positions in the Yishuv concerning the language choice, such as the position supporting the legitimation of Yiddish, were frowned upon and strongly discouraged. The Yishuv was beginning to construct a mainstream narrative that could not concede the existence of an alternative culture—or even a subculture—marked by language because such an admission would cast doubt on the total success of the project (16).

This may be one of the reasons why Russian culture was easier for some to accept.

which he edited (Shapira 9–10). Despite his express wish to negate the Diaspora, he also published numerous translations of Yiddish poetry and drama, which I will return to. But more remarkable was the fact that together with Avraham Sutzkever, he established a major Yiddish-language quarterly journal in Israel in 1948, “*Di goldene keyt*,” subtitled “Quarterly for Literature and Social Problems.”¹³³ This would be one of the most important Yiddish literary periodicals for decades to come and it may seem strange that one of the greatest advocates of Hebraism would participate. Levinson’s attitudes after the Holocaust, though beyond the scope of this dissertation, may have been affected by the pain he felt at the loss of immediate and extended family in Europe as well as the trip he took to Poland afterwards to see the extent of the destruction. After advocating, essentially, the replacement of Yiddish with Hebrew in Europe before the war, he worked on preserving Yiddish culture in its own, new exile: Hebrew-speaking Israel. In the first volume of *Di goldene keyt*, his article is a praise piece for the new Hebrew culture of labor in Palestine, not at all about the Yiddish language or culture in which he wrote it.

Before the war caused Levinson’s personal suffering and changed the landscape of Jewish languages and cultures, he was already translating not only Yiddish works, but texts from non-Jewish languages as well, raising the question of what his intentions were for non-Hebrew culture. Was that to be preserved as well? An article in *Davar* on the anniversary of his death made sense of Levinson this way:

the zealot for his movement that had an open heart for the respect of the nation’s personages who were outside the domain of his movement, the zealot for Hebrew and the true lover of Yiddish exulted in emptying it into the Hebrew vessel, he had the spirit of poetry and sang and rhymed easily, and happy and radiant with his success dressing the Jewish-Russian creation of Frug in a fresh and lively Hebrew garment, for the sake of bequeathing him to the future generations. A. Levinson, who “extended” (with his translations) the lives of Frug, Dubnov, A. D. Gordon (with his pamphlet that explains about him)—it is fitting that it should extend his life as well for the sake of those who

“פערטל-יארשריפט פאר ליטעראטור און געזעלשאפטלעכע פראבלעמען.”¹³³

knew and loved him and also our young future generations.¹³⁴ (“*Bemle’ut shanah lemot avraham levinson.*”)

In other words, his translations of European Jewish texts, whether from Yiddish or from non-Jewish languages, were a means of endowing the Hebrew language, people, and culture with whatever of their past could be salvaged in translation, for the sake of Hebrew supersessionist posterity. This does not appear to resolve the tension between Hebraism and the Yiddish language, as the latter would be obsolete in this vision of the future. It does, however, demonstrate some commitment to preserving—at least in Hebrew—certain selected cultural treasures from the rejected Jewish past. How were these to be chosen?

In his discussions of cultural selection and engineering, Levinson—a non-Marxist who disagreed with the Soviet interpretation of socialism—looked to postrevolutionary Russia for ideas and examples which helped him to formulate his vision of rejecting diasporism and creating a new Hebrew culture. Even in Palestine, he seems to have stayed current with what was being done and said by Jewish and non-Jewish cultural workers in the USSR, especially in the realm of literature. Reflecting at around 1940¹³⁵ on way that the Soviet revisers of the Russian canon wanted to get rid of bourgeois culture but after some time had passed, “2–3 revolutionary lines of Pushkin or of Lermontov were enough to forgive thousands of lines that were written out of submission to the Russia of the “*pomeshchiki*” (landowners) and to the Russia of the tsars” (“*Tarbut besh’at herum*” 305).¹³⁶

Arguing for a canon-reformation that would promote the Hebrew socialist revolution (308), Levinson explains that it would not preserve all of Jewish culture, but rather “those assets that have value that will last for generations, only those static elements that have dynamic force, that have the ability to stand up over time, to fight in the capacity of ‘striven [with God and men] and pre-

¹³⁴ הקנאי לעברית והאובה אהבת-נפש את האידיש ושש להריק ממנה אל כלי העברית. בעל רוח-השירה ושר וחורו על נקלה, ומאשר וקורן בהצליחו לשוות ליצירה היהודית-רוסית של פרוג לבוש עברי רענן ותוסס, למען הנחילו לדורות הבאים. א. לוינסון, ש”האריך” (בתרגומיו) את חיי פרוג, דובנוב, א. ד. גורדון (בחוברתו המסבירה עליו)—ראוי שמעריך גם את חייו למען ידעוהו ויאהבוהו גם דורותינו הצעירים הבאים.”

¹³⁵ Hebrew year 5700.

¹³⁶ היו מספיקות 2–3 שורות מהפכניות של פושקין או של לרמונטוב כדי לסלוח אלפי שורות, שנכתבו מתוך כניעה בפני רוסיה של ה”פומישצ’יקים” (בעלי-אחוזות) ובפני רוסיה של הצארים.

ailed.’”¹³⁷ Bialik’s work with gathering Jewish sources for his poetry and *Sefer ha’agadah* served as an example of preservation and destruction (306).

Aware of what was going on as the Soviets remade Russian culture, Levinson was optimistic that major geographic and even linguistic changes could be made to Jewish culture. In *The Hebrew Movement in the Diaspora* (1935), he lays out the following program of Hebraism:

- (1) The Hebrew tongue is our national tongue, the language of the beginning of our formation at the dawn of our historical life, the revealed and concealed language of the soul of the Hebrew nation; in it were cradled eternal values of our national culture.
- (2) No other tongue—Jewish or non-Jewish—has the power to impart to its nation by means of translation the values of its Hebrew culture without diminishing its character and counterfeiting its cultural content.
- (3) The Israeli¹³⁸ people adapted several tongues to itself in the Diaspora, in which it created a rich culture. But all the tongues of the Diaspora were forgotten and of the works that were composed in them were kept for generations only those that were returned to the people in their Hebrew garment.
- (4) Yiddish is also one of the languages of the Diaspora and therefore the laws of the diaspora that caused the uprooting of tongues in Israel apply to it as well. Even the Yiddish tongue will be forgotten in Israel under the pressure of the assimilating influence of the state language and for this reason there is no advantage to the “naturalness” of Yiddish over Hebrew.
- (5) Yiddish is one of our means of protection in the war of our existence against the destructive forces of the Diaspora. And therefore, we are not fighting against Yiddish. We are fighting

¹³⁷ This passage evokes the story of Jacob’s struggle with the angel:

אותם הנכסים, שיש להם ערך קיים לדורות, רק אותם האלמנטים הסטעטיים שיש להם כוח דינאמי, שיש להם היכולת לעמוד בפני הזמן, להלחם בבחינת “שרית ותוכל”.

¹³⁸ “Hebrew nation,” “Israeli people,” and “in Israel” are ways of referring to the Jewish people (not the State or Land of Israel) without using the term “Jew.”

against Yiddishism, that undermines the national foundation of the Hebrew tongue and culture.

- (6) Hebrew is the tongue of unity and the completion of our national recognition and therefore we oppose all bilingualism that leads to schism of our monistic recognition and weakens our Hebrew power in the war for our spiritual existence.
- (7) Hebrew is the tongue of our national future, the language of our national revival on the soil of the homeland. And therefore we oppose all Hebraism that denies the historical ideal of the Israeli people.
- (8) The Diaspora is against the tongues of Israel. And therefore both Hebrew and Yiddish need nurturing and developing by communal measures. But in this war for existence, Hebrew has more power than Yiddish. Nurturing the language and culture in the Diaspora demands enormous sacrifices, that the people will bring only on the Hebrew altar, whose historical holiness protects it and with which the genius of Israel was revealed in all its splendor.¹³⁹
(*Hatnu'ah ha'ivrit bagolah* 167–8)

In this Aḥad Ha'am-inspired vision, Levinson dispenses with Yiddish by claiming that he has not

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- 139
- (1) הלשון העברית היא לשוננו הלאומית, שפת ראשית התהוותנו בשחר חיינו ההיסטוריים, שפת הנגלות והנסתרות של נשמת האומה הישראלית; בה נאצרו כל ערכי-הנצח של תרבותנו הלאומית.
 - (2) שום לשון אחרת, –יהודית או בלתי-יהודית– אין בכוחה להקנות לאומה ע"י תרגום את ערכי תרבותה העברית מבלי להמעיט את דמותה ולזייף את תכנה של התרבות.
 - (3) האומה הישראלית סגלה לעצמה כמה לשונות בגולה, שיצרה בהן תרבות עשירה. אבל כל לשונות הגולה נשתכחו ומהיצירות שנתחברו בהן נשתמרו לדורות רק אלו שהוחזרו לעם בלבושן העברי.
 - (4) גם האידית היא אחת מלשונות הגולה ומשום כך חלים גם עליה חוקי-הגלות שגרמו לעקירת הלשונות בישראל. אף הלשון האידית עתידה להשתכח בישראל תחת לחץ ההשפעה המטמיעה של לשון המדינה ומעט זה אין יתרון של "טבעיות" לאידית על עברית.
 - (5) האידית–היא אחד מכלי-הגנתנו במלחמת קיומנו נגד כוחות-ההרס של הגלות. ומשום כך–אין אנו נלחמים באידית. אנו נלחמים באידישיזם, החותר תחת היסוד הלאומי של הלשון והתרבות העברית.
 - (6) העברית היא לשון האחדות והשלמות של הכרתנו הלאומית ומשום כך אנו מתנגדים לכל דו-לשוניות המביאה ליגני פילוג הכרתנו המוניסטית והמחלישה את כוחנו העברי במלחמה קיומנו הרוחני.
 - (7) העברית–היא לשון עתידנו הלאומי, שפת תחיתנו הלאומית על קרקע המולדת. ומשום כך אנו מתנגדים לכל עבריות המתכחשה לאידיאל ההיסטורי של העם הישראלי.
 - (8) הגלות היא נגד לשונות-ישראל. ומשום כך גם העברית גם האידית זקוקות לטיפוח ולפיתוח באמצעים ציבוריים. אבל במלחמות-קיום זו גדול כוחה של העברית מהאידית. טיפוח הלשון והתרבות בגולה דורש קרבנות עצומים, שהעם יביאם רק על מזבח-העברית, זו שקדושה היסטורית חופפת עליה ושבה התגלה גאון-ישראל בכל הדרו.

internalized the antisemitic view of the language, but that the mother tongue could be dispensed with because it had no chance of enduring. Levinson's claim that the thousand-year-old Yiddish language would be swallowed up rests upon the story of Jewish texts written in Greek and Arabic, which had to be translated into Hebrew to be preserved for the Jewish community as it moved around the world, picking up new languages and discarding the old ones. He suspected that modernity was bringing about conditions that would replace Yiddish with non-Jewish languages such as German, Russian, English, and Polish. With the frequent use of the "power" and "war" to producing a sense of urgency, Levinson attempts to distinguish between the demise of Yiddish and the defeat of Yiddishism. Because Yiddish is doomed to "be forgotten in Israel under the pressure of the assimilating influence of the state language," the language itself is doomed and its best works can only be preserved by translation into Hebrew. The phrase "forgotten in Israel" here meant "forgotten by the Jews," but in the decades since this was written, the Yiddish language has actually weakened "under the pressure of the assimilating influence of the state language" of Hebrew. Levinson participated in both sides of this process. His translations of Yiddish and of Russian-Jewish literature such as that of Shimen Frug were meant to function as in his point number 2 of this program), to preserve some cultural creations of the Diasporic language in a Hebrew garment, with the conviction that Hebrew would overtake Yiddish. Yet his work on *Di goldene keyt* makes him one of the key preservers of Yiddish under an assimilating influence of Hebrew that he himself worked tirelessly to create.

Levinson condemned famous Jewish Pushkinist M. O. Gershenzon (1869–1925), who saw Jewish nationalism and separatism as the source of antisemitism, and who therefore "occupied all his days with investigation of Russian literature and to whom one line of Pushkin was closer than all of living and suffering Judaism" (*Levisus hatsiyonut* 58). Levinson nevertheless appears to have read Gershenzon's Russian works diligently, as well as the work of other Russian critics, perhaps because the USSR had made more dramatic cultural change than any other contemporary example. Yet Levinson, a passionate advocate for Hebrew culture in Palestine and resistance to assimilation, became a Hebrew translator of non-Jewish Russian literature in general, and of Pushkin in particular.

The answers to this question go back to the time of Dovid Frishman or even the *Haskalah*, but Levinson's more individual reasons are also instructive for understanding the relationship between Hebraist Zionism and Russian culture. The revolutionary changes seen in Russia, the former empire in whose Pale of Settlement Hebraism and Zionism had developed, were inspiring to those who sought a Hebrew revolution despite the bad taste it left in their mouths, in no small part due to the important role the Russian language played in their access to non-Jewish literature and thought. As he distinguishes his socialism from that of the USSR, Levinson must delve into it to make the distinction and still needs the example of cultural transformation that was provided by the Bolsheviks. Similarly, his dreams for Hebrew literature also find some inspiration in the history of Russian literature. Aside from plays that were commissioned by theaters, all of his translations of non-Jewish writers are from Russian literature.

Like the Soviet Russians he discusses above, Levinson forgives the Russian classics their contextual flaws and loves even the most antisemitic. Fyodor Dostoevsky "hated not the Jews, but historical Judaism"¹⁴⁰ ("Al dostoyevski" 118) and at his best "Dostoevsky cries out from all our 248 organs" (123) with his expression of human tragedy. Having followed the currents in Soviet literary criticism, Levinson writes about the aristocrat Pushkin's "revolutionary" lines in the introduction to his Hebrew *Evgenii Onegin*. Thus for Levinson, Pushkin was not only a censorship-suppressed Russian revolutionary; Levinson's Pushkin, "who like the rest of his generation did not know the Jews, knew intuitively to penetrate Israeli history and to place himself on the side of the eternal people in its war against its oppressors and the suppressers of its freedom,"¹⁴¹ ("Aleksandr pushkin veyetsirato" xxi) would have even been practically a Zionist sympathizer thanks to his dream of freedom for all peoples of humanity, even the Jews (xx). Levinson also claims that Pushkin knew Hebrew; citing Dostoevsky's famous "Pushkin Speech," Levinson defies the conjecture that Pushkin was too national of a writer to be widely translated; he asserts that Pushkin's influences from different cultures

¹⁴⁰ "לא את היהודים, אלא את היהדות ההיסטורית."

¹⁴¹ המשורר, שלא הכיר ככל בני דורו את היהודים, ידע מתוך אינטואיציה אמנותית לחדור אל נבכי ההיסטוריה הישראלית ולהעמיד את עצמו על צד העם הנצחי במלחמתו נגד מציקיו ומדכאי-חרותו.

of the world made him the most universal Russian writer of the nineteenth century (xlv-xlvi). Participating in a long history of Pushkin criticism, Levinson, like many of his contemporaries in the field of Russian literature, finds support for his own political views in Pushkin's large body of work—this seems a decent motivation for translating him into Hebrew, but is certainly not sufficient to explain Levinson's decades-long effort to publish a translation of Pushkin's most difficult-to-translate work, *Evgenii Onegin*.

He had already drafted his translation of *Evgenii Onegin* in Europe by the end of World War One and was searching for a publisher just as Dovid Frishman, who continued to promote Hebrew translations of Russian literature long after his own publication of *Mishirey pushqin*, had failed to convince either Bialik or Volfovski to do the work. But Levinson was too late: Frishman was gone in 1919 when Levinson submitted it for consideration at *Hatkufah*, the war had made money tight for publishers, and he was unable to publish it in either the journal *Hatkufah* or the Stybel (book) publishing house despite some interest on their part (Halperin 472). Levinson's translation was submitted to *Hatkufah* two decades after Frishman's *Mishirey pushqin* for the 1899 centennial of the poet's birth had included a few *Onegin* stanzas modified for Ashkenazi Hebrew; nearly two additional decades passed between Levinson's 1919 attempt to publish and the actual date of publication in Palestine for the 1937 centennial of Pushkin's death; all together, it took the entire lifespan of the Russian poet to make this happen. In Poland, working together with his friend Gershon Ḥanokh from the *Hitahdut*, Levinson appeared to prefer this to the basic work of Zionism that he usually engaged in. Ḥanokh recalls how Levinson used his other talents as a bargaining chip, saying:

“you can pump (*oyspampen* in his parlance) whatever you want out of me: an article, a lecture, participation in the center, but on one condition—at night you sit with me and listen to my translation of *Evgenii Onegin*...” I was forced to pay him this “honorarium” and at night he would take out his thick notebook and read me Pushkin's lines in Hebrew and Russian. A night barely passed when he did not attend to this notebook of this and did not introduce changes and corrections, especially after every reading together/group reading.”¹⁴² (“*Avraham levinson: shloshim leftirato*” 11)

¹⁴² “אתה יכול לשאוב מממי (אוספאמפּען—בלשונו) כל מה שאתה רוצה: מאמר, הרצאה, השתתפות במרכז, אבל בתנאי אחד—בלילה אתה יושב אתי ושומע את תרגומי לייבגני אונגין;” ... נאלץ הייתי לשלם לו “הונורר” זה ובלילה היה מוציא

Thus during his years as a young activist for Hebrew and Zionism, Levinson worked every night on perfecting his translation of *Onegin*, a passion which he continued for years. In the 1920s when Ḥanokh had preceded Levinson in immigrating to Palestine, Levinson wrote him for more help. It appears that this obsession with translating *Onegin* may have even been a real or potential source of teasing:

Besides this—please do not make fun of me—I have *okonchatel'no* [finally] prepared to print my *Onegin*. By the way, I have a request for you. I would like to finally print this work. The poet Yitshak Katsnelson—they say that you like him a lot—even from the days in America!! took it upon himself to do the final editing and now in the land they are printing a lot of literary pieces. *Omanut, Hamitspeh, Kupat shel sefer*, and others. Katsnelson sent some letters to the publisher of *Omanut* and others. You'd be doing him a good turn if you spoke with the appropriate parties on the matter of the printing of my book. I do not have money, blessed is God. Yet I would give up thousands of dollars if only the book were printed. In your letter back let me know if there is hope that the book will be accepted for publishing.¹⁴³ (Levinson "Letter to Gershon Ḥanokh" 2)

This letter demonstrates both the personal importance of the translation to its hardworking creator, and the growing differences between the Hebrew publishing worlds of Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Levinson is writing to Ḥanokh in Palestine because he hopes that there would be a better chance of publishing his book with support from this new center. This is at the same time as A. Y. Grodzenski was preparing his second edition of the Yiddish *Onegin* and Leyb Naydus' friends were going through his writings to prepare the collected works which would include the half-translation of *Onegin*. Levinson had been unable to make the connection with Frishman and was starting to see new hope for Hebrew publishing in Palestine.

Levinson moved to Palestine in 1936 and immediately set to work to get his translation pub-

את מחברתו העבה וקורא לפני את חרוזי פושקין עברית ורוסית. לא עבר לילה כמעט שלא טיפל בה במחברתו זו ולא הכניס שינויים ותיקונים, ביחוד לאחר כל קריאה בצוותא.

¹⁴³ מלבד זאת—אל נא תלעג לי—הכשרתי אקאנטשאטיעלנא לדפוס את "אוניגין" שלי. דרך אגב יש לי בקשה אליך. הייתי רוצה להדפיס סוף כל סוף את היצירה הזאת. המשורר יצחק קצנלסון—אומרים, שאתה אוהב אותו מאד—עוד מימי אמריקה!! קבל עליו את העריכה האחראית. והנה, בארץ מרבים בזמן האחרון להדפיס דברים של ספרות. אמנות, המצפה, "קופת של ספר"—ועוד. קצנלסון שלח אילו מכתבים אל המו"ל של "אמנות" ועוד. היית מיטיב עושה לו דיברת עם הגורמים המתאימים בדבר הדפסת ספרי. כסף אין לי, ברוך השם. אולם הייתי מוותר על אלפי הדולרים ובלבד שהספר ידפס. במכתבך החוזר תודיעני, אם יש תקווה שהספר יתקבל להדפסה.

lished, only to discover that a famous and younger poet, Avraham Shlonsky, had undertaken the same task (in a much shorter period of time) and would become the definitive translator of *Onegin* into Hebrew. This sounds like a tremendous disappointment for Levinson, who worked on the project for two decades, but Ḥanokh remembers him as being good-natured about it:

And having prevailed after many years, when he had already settled in the Land, to publish the translation in an elegant issue and to compete with the outstanding poet-translator Avraham Shlonsky who also published his own translation—this was, it seems to me, the peak of the achievements that he was proud of in creative life. And it was an obligation of every friend “to compare” certain rhymes that he knew by heart and to give his opinion: whose translation was more faithful to the source...¹⁴⁴ (“*Avraham levinson: shloshim leftirato*” 11)

Levinson was not the rank and file of the Zionist movement in Europe, but rather a visible figure. He wrote a Yiddish poem which became a well-known hymn for the *Tse'irei tsiyon* movement in 1817–8 (Tash). He gave fiery (Yiddish, Polish, and Hebrew) speeches in favor of Zionism and Hebraism, including at Zionist conferences. Having worked on a draft of this ambitious project, he was extremely persistent in carrying out one what appears to be one of his lifelong favorite projects. The translation of Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin* was not just an ideologically motivated activity to advance the Hebraist program somehow, but very personally important to Levinson. Thus after the initial rejection, Levinson continued working on the translation for nearly two decades, (unfortunately leaving no trace of the original in his archive). Pushkin, the Russian national poet, held a significant place in the consciousness of this pro-Hebrew Jewish nationalist. He would also be important for another Zionist intellectual, the famous poet Avraham Shlonsky.

¹⁴⁴ ומשזכה לאחר שנים רבות, בשבתו כבר בארץ לפרסם את התרגום בהוצאה מהודרת ולהתמודד עם המשורר-המתרגם המובהק אברהם שלונסקי אשר הוציא את תרגומו גם הוא—היה זה, דומני, מרום-ההישגים שהתגאה בו בחיי-היצירה. והיה זה מחובתו של כל ידיד “להשוות” חרוזים מסויימים שידעם על פה ולחוות דעתו: תרגומו של מי מאמן יותר למקור...

4.3 AVRAHAM SHLONSKY, STILL IN PRINT

Of all of the twentieth-century Jewish translations of *Evgenii Onegin*, the only one still in print is that of Avraham Shlonsky (1900–1973) into Hebrew. Its changing text has been republished several times over the decades, including a special edition in 2007, while the other translations are hiding away in rare-book collections. The first edition has a brown embossed (fake leather) cardboard cover with gold lettering, and a tall, thin “album” shape reminiscent of the printed Talmud. Inside is a great deal of white space surrounding the galleys of stanzas and illustrations, which are much smaller than the book itself.¹⁴⁵ The illustrations are the same set by Soviet artist Nikolai Vasilievich Kuz'min as those found in Avraham Levinson's translation, but in stark contrast, Shlonsky's first edition provides no introduction and few endnotes. Levinson's translation included extensive footnotes and a 40-page scholarly introduction. Both were published in 1937. Even in its time, Shlonsky's version was considered to be a significant achievement for Hebrew literature, and its publication during the Pushkin jubilee celebrations in Palestine sounded throughout the Russian Jewish Diaspora. A Russian letter from Palestine to Harbin, China, demonstrates both the scope and the type of the reception:

At a Pushkin soiree arranged by the Club of Immigrants from Russia, attendees were invited to arrive having taken with them a little book of *Evgenii Onegin*. At the soiree A. Shlonsky read a few chapters of his translation, and the public followed in the original. The effect was exceptional. People who knew Russian and Hebrew equally well asserted that during the time of this unusual reading they forgot in which language the original had been written.

To a Russian lady, knowing not a word of Hebrew, they read the first stanzas of the translation without saying what they were reading.

“Why, that is *Evgenii Onegin!*” she exclaimed.

The common opinion agreed that this translation is not only worthy of Pushkin, but also congenial.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Subsequent editions have been less elaborate and much smaller in size, but retain the illustrations.

¹⁴⁶ На устроенный Клубом выходцев из России пушкинский вечер присутствовавшие были приглашены явиться, захватив с собой книжку “Евгения Онегина.” На вечере А. Шпионский прочитал несколько глав своего перевода, а публика следила по оригиналу. Эффект был исключительный.

Scholars show no surprise that Avraham Levinson's scholarly translation was overshadowed by that of Avraham Shlonsky, for the latter was a leading poet in Palestine at the time, while the former was an essayist and translator. Himself an immigrant to Palestine from the Ukraine, Shlonsky wrote Futurist poetry in the 1920s and 1930s which was influenced by that of Vladimir Mayakovsky.¹⁴⁷ Shlonsky was at the center of poetic activity on the Yishuv¹⁴⁸ during the 1930s when his translation was first published: he worked as editor, critic, translator and most significantly as an innovative poet. He was a pioneer of the new "Sephardi" accent in poetry and "continually wrote and rewrote himself into the Hebrew cultural scene as consummate artist and ideologue. Affiliating his artistic persona with a new Zionist language, ideology, and land (Brenner 368), he led the rebellion against the previous, Europe-based generation of poets such as Bialik and Tchernichovsky. This is not sufficient to explain what was so different about his translation to make it such a success. I argue that the translation fit into the evolution of his influential poetry and career and that the preference for Shlonsky's translation is connected to his poetics and to the contemporary Hebrew literature.

Shlonsky's Futurism, like Mayakovsky's, is tied to the past even as it reaches for the new, and similarly, the New Hebrew was tied to Russia. Looking at passages from the Shlonsky translation, translating them into annotated English and comparing them to the others, I will identify the ways in which this famous translation made a unique contribution to the development of Hebrew language and culture: Hebraization of Pushkin, Westernization of Hebrew, and the introduction of new words

Люди, одинаково хорошо знающие и русский и иврит, уверяли, что во время этого необычного чтения они забыли, на каком языке написан оригинал.

Русской даме, не знающей и слова иврита, прочитали первые строфы перевода, не сказав, что читают.

— Да, ведь это "Евгений Онегин"! — воскликнула она.

Общее мнение сходится на том, что это перевод не только достойный Пушкина, но конгениальный.
(L., S. El. 1937 2)

This is from a letter sent from Palestine to a Russian-language Zionist newspaper in Harbin, China.

¹⁴⁷ Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893–1930) was the Futurist bard of Russian Communism, and his work addressed the proletariat. Shlonsky's work addresses immigrants and refugees. This theme is discussed in Ari Ofengenden, *The Self and the Passion for Absence: The Aesthetic of Negativity in the Modernist Poetry of Abraham Shlonsky*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2010.

¹⁴⁸ The Jewish community in Palestine before 1948.

and sounds. At the same time as he strives for the spirit of the text rather than the letter of it, Shlonsky omits, amends and otherwise changes *Evgenii Onegin* in a way which appears quite free.

4.4 SHLONSKY IN HISTORY: LITERARY CONFLICTS FROM ONE DIASPORA TO ANOTHER

Avraham Shlonsky was at once a groundbreaking, innovative iconoclast and a holdover from the Diasporic past. This poet and translator was a prominent example of how the new Hebrew culture in Palestine, which rejected the “Diasporic” past of the Jews, remained emotionally and intellectually as part of Europe. Some amount of Russian was acceptable because of its international prestige and accessible because many Jewish immigrants to Palestine knew the language already. They knew Russian because they had been born in the Russian Empire, and their celebrations of the Pushkin jubilee of 1937 were similar to others around the globe. Shlonsky and his fellow Jewish celebrants in Palestine behaved as if they were part of the large Diaspora of exiles *from* Russia. As many distanced themselves from the language of their birth (Yiddish) and rejected the land of their birth (the Pale of Settlement), familiar classic and contemporary Russian literature functioned as a surrogate for what they had left behind. Pushkin was familiar, accessible, prestigious and, though not actually Jewish, was an acceptable piece of culture brought to Palestine from the Jewish Diaspora. Not being Jewish and not writing in Yiddish, Pushkin could not signal those aspects of Jewish life and culture whose suppression was a major goal of the Zionist project.

After Hayyim Nahman Bialik had been considered the Jewish Pushkin and Vladimir Mayakovsky the Russian modernist rebel who wished to grab his predecessor’s laurels, Shlonsky sought to be a Pushkin, a Bialik and a Mayakovsky for the new Hebrew literature. In contact with Russian Futurism and Soviet intellectuals,¹⁴⁹ Shlonsky became a Mayakovsky-like figure for Hebrew poetry. Shlonsky’s pan-Russian activity provides the context in which his translation participated through attention to Mayakovsky’s relation to Pushkin and participation in the international celebrations of Pushkin’s jubilee.

¹⁴⁹ Some of these letters are published in *Mikhtavim layehudim bevrit-hamo’tot*.

Avraham Shlonsky was very familiar with Vladimir Mayakovsky's (1893–1930) writings¹⁵⁰ and with Russian Pushkinism in general,¹⁵¹ and the family drama of Russian Futurist rebellion against Pushkin and the other classics provided a model of intergenerational conflict as companion of aesthetic change. Pushkin, once a newcomer who challenged poetic norms, became for the Futurists a metonym for old, outdated literary tradition they wished to replace. In 1912, Mayakovsky, along with the other authors of the Futurist manifesto “Slap in the Face of Public Taste,” wrote that “the Academy and Pushkin are less understandable than hieroglyphs. / Throw Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, et cetera et cetera from the steamship of Modernity”.¹⁵² The Futurists sought to clear away the old forms and the canon to make way for a new and modern literature, a demand which is remarkably similar to those of some Hebrew writers and which identifies individual writers as the canonical problem. But in the process of claiming Pushkin's old laurels for himself and his generation, Mayakovsky continued to intimately address the classic poet in his own poetic work, with Pushkin in the role of an elder brother: of similar status, but with some more experience, approachable if only he were still alive. This is most apparent in the poem “Jubilee,” (1924) written for the 125th anniversary celebration of Pushkin (after the Revolution and the new status it gave to Mayakovsky). Addressing Pushkin with “vy” (the formal “you”), Mayakovsky imagines their posthumous relationship:

[Maybe / I / alone / truly regret / that today/ you are not alive. / I / need to speak / with you / alive. / Soon / I too / will die/ and will be it. / After death / us / they will stand almost side by side: / you at P, / and I / at M]

¹⁵⁰ Ofengenden (2010) writes that Shlonsky “was influenced by the Cubo-Futurist poems of Vladimir Mayakovsky” (21). Mayakovsky was one of the poets that Shlonsky translated into Hebrew.

¹⁵¹ This is apparent from Shlonsky's annotations to his 1966 edition of *Evgenii Onegin* as well as from his letters to Soviet intellectuals (1977).

¹⁵² “Академия и Пушкин непонятнее гиероглифов. / Бросить Пушкина, Достоевского, Толстого и проч. и проч. с Парохода современности.” Burluk, D., Khlebnikov, V., Kruchenykh, A. and Mayakovsky, V. “Poshchchina obshchestvennomu vkusu: manifest iz sbornika ‘Poshchchina obshchestvennomu vkusu’” [“A Slap in the Face of Public Taste: A Manifesto from the Collection ‘A Slap in the Face of Public Taste’”]. In Mayakovsky, V. V.. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [Complete Collected Works]. 12 vols. Vol. 1. *Stikhi, poemy, stati*, 1912–17. 1939. p. 399–400. 8/23/2011 <http://feb-web.ru/feb/mayakovsky/texts/mp0/mp1/mp1-399-.htm>

Может
 я
 один
 действительно жалею,

 что сегодня
 нету вас в живых.

 Мне
 при жизни
 с вами
 сговориться б надо.

 Скоро вот
 и я
 умру
 и буду нем.

 После смерти
 нам
 стоять почти что рядом:

 вы на Пе,
 а я
 на эМ

Mayakovsky imagines that they will be neighbors in literary encyclopedias, aware that he, too, will be dead and old-fashioned someday. Along with this kinship, Mayakovsky the rebel promises: “I love you, / but living, / and not as a mummy” (341).¹⁵³ Thus Pushkin the metonym is rejected, while Pushkin the poet and man is beloved. Stephanie Sandler writes of this poem that Mayakovsky “strongly singles himself out” to declare a “unique relationship with a misunderstood Pushkin” (104). He demonstrates his personal love for Pushkin against “a contrasting and diminished background” (104), the “Pushkiniana” of the twentieth-century, with its varied ways of studying, celebrating, drawing, sculpting, rehabilitating, reading and writing about Pushkin which was prominent

¹⁵³ “Я люблю вас, / но живого, / а не мумию.”

both in the Soviet Union and in the Russian Diaspora. But despite Mayakovsky's claim of uniqueness as he tries to be a national poet like Pushkin, this poem is also a part of that widespread celebration of the poet.

Mayakovsky's kinship with Pushkin was pertinent to the Hebrew writers living in the 1930s in Palestine as they staged a second revolution in Hebrew poetry. The connection between Pushkin and Mayakovsky was drawn by Leah Goldberg, Shlonsky's contemporary and fellow modernist poet, as one which derived from Mayakovsky's search for new literary forms:

But how did Mayakovsky arrive at Pushkin, [Mayakovsky] who betrayed, apparently, all of the tradition of the forms of Russian poetry, who waged war against the forms that Pushkin created? Mayakovsky the revolutionary who tramples on all that is sacred, who destroys all the harmonies whereas harmony was the element of Pushkin and it was learned from him by all who came after him? One who knows how Mayakovsky worked on the new form, how much energy he invested in it, how he polished every letter in his poems, will understand that it was necessary for his spirit to be close to the greatest of the poets of his land who gave her the teachings [torah] of a new style during his lifetime. Was Pushkin not in his lifetime a man of the cultural rebellion in his land? He came out—like Mayakovsky after the Revolution—against all that was accepted as sacred, against Karamzin and Derzhavin. Surely, too, the poems of Pushkin and his poetic worldview were in their time “a slap in the face of public taste” [*makat lehi leta'am hatsiburi*].¹⁵⁴ (Goldberg 1937)

For Goldberg, Pushkin and Mayakovsky were engaged in essentially the same enterprise. The classic poet, Pushkin, rebelled against his predecessors and the cultural norms of his time to introduce new forms for Russian poetry, which would eventually become revered and standard. Goldberg describes Pushkin's literary endeavors of the previous century as Futurist in nature: both Pushkin and Mayakovsky were iconoclasts and innovators. She goes so far as to connect their unnatural deaths. Although Pushkin was killed in a duel and Mayakovsky committed suicide, for Goldberg

¹⁵⁴ אולם כיצד, הגיע לפושקין מאיאקובסקי, זה שבגד, לכאורה, בכל המסורת של צורות השירה הרוסית, שנלחם בצורות שיצר פושקין? מיאקובסקי המהפכן הבועט? בכל הקדושים, ההורס את כל ההרמוניות ואילו ההרמוניה היתה האלמנט של פושקין ואותה למדו ממנו כל הבאים אחריו? מי שיודע איך עבד מיאקובסקי על הצורה החדשה, כמה כוח השקיע בה, איך לטש כל אות בשיריו, יבין, כי רוחו צריך היה להיות קרוב גדול משוררי ארצו שנתן לה תורת סגנון חרשה בזמנו.. האם לא היה פושקין בזמנו איש המרד התרבותי בארצו? הוא יצא—כמיאקובסקי אחרי המהפכה—נגד כל הקדשים המקובלים, נגד קאראמזין ודרז'אבין. הן גם שירי פושקין והשקפת עולמו השירות היו בשעתם “מכת לחי לטעם הציבורי”.

they both died because of being movers and shakers.¹⁵⁵ Thus, while Mayakovsky rebelled against Pushkin's work, it made perfect sense to people in Tel Aviv (and elsewhere) that he should consider Pushkin a kindred spirit. These common features of Mayakovsky and Pushkin also point to a crucial element of Hebrew culture in the 1930s: although Hayyim Nahman Bialik had been a Pushkin of sorts for Hebrew in Europe, Shlonsky strove to become the Mayakovsky of the Jewish community in Palestine as it moved away from European Hebrew linguistic and poetic forms.

Mayakovsky had written a manifesto declaring the obsolescence of Pushkin and other classics; not long afterward, in the twenties, Shlonsky wrote literary manifestos, opposing melitsa allusiveness¹⁵⁶ which was the dominant form of expression in the work of Hayyim Nahman Bialik. Bialik had been the leader of Hebrew poetry in the Ashkenazi accent of Europe in part thanks to his use of language borrowed from traditional Jewish texts and could best be understood by actually going back to (or remembering) the originals. From his early career in the late nineteenth century until today, he has been compared to Pushkin; both are credited with fashioning modern poetry in their respective languages through innovations in prosody, vocabulary, themes and genres and both have been received as national poets and poet-prophets. As Zalman Epshteyn wrote in 1935, "what Pushkin was to the Russian language, no less and maybe even more, our Bialik was to the Hebrew language. With the latter the entire horizon is wider."¹⁵⁷

Epshteyn was neither the first nor the last to make this comparison—Shlonsky himself has called Pushkin "the Russian Bialik."¹⁵⁸ One crucial aspect of Pushkin's accomplishments was unavailable to Bialik, however: the incorporation of spoken, vernacular language into poetry. While Pushkin incorporated spoken Russian into his poetic vocabulary, such a thing did not exist in European Hebrew during Bialik's time. Instead, he endowed the many layers of Hebrew used in his poetry with new syllabo-tonic sound patterns.

¹⁵⁵ Goldberg may be referencing Roman Jakobson's 1931 essay, "On a Generation that Squandered Its Poets."

¹⁵⁶ Seidman 1997: 302.

מה שהיה פושקין לשפה הרוסית הוא, לא פחות ואולי עוד יותר, ביאליק שלנו לשפה העברית. אצל האחרון האופק כולו יותר רחב.

¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁸ In a speech to the Academy of the Hebrew Language (942).

Because Bialik's major work¹⁵⁹ was written in Europe, in the Ashkenazi accent, and with heavy allusiveness to older Hebrew texts, it was timely for the new generation of poets in Palestine to rebel against it. As Hebrew literature was violently suppressed in the Soviet Union and acquired new centers of creativity in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv¹⁶⁰ the reading public gradually became a speaking public as well. Bialik's work loses its very meter when read aloud today in Israeli Hebrew due to its shift (during his lifetime) from penultimate (Ashkenazi) to final ("Sephardi") stress, along with other phonetic changes; for example, the Ashkenazi "SHAbes" becomes the Israeli "shaBAT." Naomi Seidman writes that Shlonsky and other Moderna poets 'perceived their greatest achievement as the creation of a monolingual, "natural" Hebrew, one that could express their new environment without undue self-consciousness or linguistic borrowing" (1997: 297). Shlonsky rejected both what he called allusive *melitzah* and Hebrew-Yiddish bilingualism in a moment when Hebrew was itself developing what could be called "internal diglossia"; the gap between the lofty quasi-biblical¹⁶¹ style that characterized the Hebrew poetry of Bialik's generation and the vernacular that could already be heard on the streets of Tel Aviv was increasingly apparent to the younger generation of writers (302).

These conditions allowed for a generational rebellion aiming to "dethrone Bialik" (Brenner 383) and his contemporaries, and "lowering the register of Hebrew poetry" (Seidman 302). Ofengenden writes that "Shlonsky conducted a successful rebellion against Chaim Nachman's Bialik [*sic*] and his work brought a modernist, secularist sensitivity to Hebrew culture which was until this time dominated by Bialik's Jewish romantic nationalism" (330). Shlonsky, then, whose work would also become dated by the rapidly changing language and culture,¹⁶² was able to employ several features

¹⁵⁹ Bialik died in Palestine and tried his hand at the new accent, but his most successful and canonical poetry was written in the Ashkenazi accent in Europe.

¹⁶⁰ Writers also fled to Western and Central Europe, but had no Hebrew vernacular to draw upon there. Many of these, such as Bialik, did end up in Palestine.

¹⁶¹ Quasi-biblical, including other layers of Hebrew as well, most of them quite old.

¹⁶² Ofengenden sees Shlonsky's decline as a result of cultural change. Disagreeing with the position of Gluzman and Brenner, Ofengenden sees him as a more aestheticist, universalist poet who did not enjoy manual labor and insisted that poetry must be able to transcend the political:

It is no coincidence, then, that after the declaration of the Jewish state, the first Arab-Israeli war, and the growing awareness of the almost total annihilation of European Jewry, Shlonsky's position as a poet quickly declined. The heroic image of the pioneer speedily transformed into that of the elite soldier, and

of the developing vernacular in his poetic endeavors: the new accent, the new colloquialisms, and the obsolescence of still-living Hebrew poets. In this context, Shlonsky and his contemporaries took up some of the same poetic challenges faced by their predecessors in the Pale as well as the new ones created by spoken Hebrew.

There are many direct parallels between Shlonsky and Mayakovsky. They were both public figures during times of not only literary but also political and cultural change on the new scale of the twentieth century. The two almost-contemporaries share Futurist play with sound, an emphasis on movement and modernity, a desire to break with one past or another. Mayakovsky, who had written jingles after the revolution, wrote about modernity and for the inspiration of the Revolution that toppled the Russian tsar; Shlonsky wrote about physical exodus from Russia and for the inspiration of Jewish émigrés in Palestine to build a new society. These poets, and others, expected poetry to help facilitate the creation of the radically new societies that they wished to create in place of the old life under tsarist rule. Along with the old societies that needed to be replaced, whether pre-revolutionary Russian or diasporic Jewish, were their classical poetries. But Mayakovsky could not be an iconoclast without Pushkin and both he and Shlonsky expended some of their new creative energy on the past, on Pushkin.

Shlonsky shared with the Russian futurists a strong emphasis on “lexical innovation” (Kronfeld 108). But because he was writing in Hebrew, his process and motivations differed from theirs. Chana Kronfeld writes,

This acute need to renovate the languages becomes for Shlonsky not just a matter of modernist disappointment in realism and symbolism. It is necessary in order to help Hebrew extricate itself from the status of a defective polysystem, to fill in the gaps in the lexicon and the stylistic registers, and to work toward the establishment of a highly differentiated, stratified system which all types of discourse can then draw on. [...] Ironically, the rebellious, modernist desire to shatter the archives of petrified traditional

all cultural, non-political manifestations of Zionism were swiftly marginalized. During the early 1950s Shlonsky tried to appeal to this new consensus by moving his ideological position considerably, from what had been socialist-pacifism toward what then constituted mainstream Zionism, but by then he had already lost his central position to the Statehood writers and poets, typically soldiers who had fought in the War of Independence. (341)

language serves a constructive collective goal of reviving and preserving the old-new Hebrew tongue. (Kronfeld 109)

Though scholars do not agree about whether Shlonsky should be called a Futurist, he had a lot in common with the Futurists. Though Hebrew and Russian writers came from related contexts (and both knew the Hebrew Bible, Russian literature, and Western literature), the differences between the Hebrew and Russian languages and cultural revolutions ensured that similar writers would have different fates. Both Mayakovsky and Shlonsky went from being radical outsiders to figureheads of the post-Revolutionary (or post-*aliyah*¹⁶³) communities, but Mayakovsky committed suicide and Shlonsky outlived the hegemony that he enjoyed in the twenties and thirties.

Shlonsky was as far from the land of Russia as he was close to its thinkers. He belonged to the group of people which lay in between European Hebrew and Eretz-Israeli Hebrew literature. Well-versed in sacred texts (and their Yiddish-inflected study) but also shaping the new spoken Hebrew, writers like Shlonsky enjoyed a particularly fertile ground in which to plant their words. As with the European Hebrew writers their work would lose much of its meaning when read by a secular Israeli audience of native Hebrew speakers. Part of Shlonsky's modernism was to play with biblical allusions and archaic language (these were also features of European Hebrew poetry). He was at once ground-breaking New Hebrew innovator and holdover from the diasporic past. His work of blending different layers of Hebrew into a new sound resembles the work of Bialik (though for Shlonsky there was the new layer of spoken Hebrew) and also the work of Pushkin. Thus it is perhaps no surprise that, like Mayakovsky, Shlonsky the translator invested heavily in Pushkin.

Though he was a part of the Zionist movement to leave the Jewish Diaspora for Palestine, Shlonsky's Pushkinism also places him within the post-1917 "Russian Diaspora." As an émigré who still had ties to Soviet culture, and as someone who never considered himself Russian, Shlonsky's (and the Yishuv's) place within world Pushkinism is unique.

The Pushkiniana leading up to 1937, to which Mayakovsky (d. 1930) had considered himself exceptional, was shaped by rehabilitation and modification of Pushkin to meet the ideological needs

¹⁶³ Here I mean that the Zionist settlers in Palestine—Shlonsky arrived during the Third Aliyah—changed their language, culture, and social class in Palestine. Benjamin Harshav calls this a revolution.

of the Soviet Union,¹⁶⁴ “seen anew, transformed into a hero that the new Soviet man could admire, if not emulate” (Sandler 107). Meanwhile, communities of Russian émigrés which had formed all over the world conducted their own celebrations which competed with the Soviet one. As they waited for the USSR to blow over, émigrés attempted to hold onto what they saw as legitimate Russian culture with Pushkin as metonym, “dueling Pushkins” with the Soviet state and claiming authenticity:

During the “jubilee year” in the Soviet Union and in the cities and towns of Europe, Egypt, China and the United States, exhibits were staged, books of and about Pushkin were printed and reviewed, statistics of visitors, readers, numbers of editions were collated. Scholars, writers and regular people attended concerts, readings, “celebratory meetings” (*torzhestvennyye zasedaniia*) to commemorate Pushkin. [...] this fondly held hope of wishes that could restore the Russia they so missed, was a constant of the émigré publications. Whether dreaming of the extermination of the Soviets or of a miraculous return to a land where both Russias could merge again, émigré authors focused the lens of Pushkin’s anniversary squarely on the future of Russia and Russian culture [...] He was a sign of the unity of the Russian diaspora. Pushkin was also the territory which had to be won in the cultural war with Soviet power. Most important, through his agency many Russian émigrés were united in spirit with the Russians left on the other side. (Brintlinger 181–2)

Against this global backdrop (which around one dozen Soviet state-sponsored Yiddish translations of Pushkin works in 1937 alone), the Yishuv, too, had its own Pushkin jubilee complete with concerts, celebratory evenings, literary supplements in the press, performances, and new books (of translation). Although the Zionists in Palestine generally considered Russia to have been the diaspora and *Eretz-Israel* to be home, they exhibited similar behavior to that of the Russian émigrés in China and Western Europe (both places to which some Jews had fled from the USSR, and played a role in *Pushkiniana*). The translation of *Evgenii Onegin* by Hebrew poet Avraham Shlonsky was perhaps the crown jewel of the Yishuv’s Pushkin jubilee. It was anticipated by the newspapers before it came out, was the centerpiece of several public events, and was considered miraculous, as we shall see later.

At the same time as his immersion in Pushkin’s work marked Shlonsky with the Jewish Diaspora

¹⁶⁴ Many poets, such as Anna Akhmatova, celebrated Pushkin in ways that did not advance the goals of the Soviet power, but they were suppressed and worse.

he had left behind, his pioneering literary styles were soon to be accused of the same obsolescence from which he had sought to liberate Hebrew poetry. While Shlonsky was still a young and active poet¹⁶⁵ and had not yet written the translation of *Evgenii Onegin*, writers like him were subject to rhetoric like that of “Slap in the Face of Public Taste.” In an essay entitled “*Al ’ot hazeman*” (On the Sign of the Times), Shlonsky’s style, if not himself, becomes the stodgy poetry which needs to be cleared away for new literary growth. The author, poet Rachel (Bluwstein),¹⁶⁶ herself an émigré and a translator of Pushkin, promotes a poetics of simplicity which renders Shlonsky’s aesthetic “*ḥartumei ’artsenu*” (“the hieroglyphics of our land” or “the Egyptian magicians of our land”) due to the use of *melitzah* or neologisms still beholden to forms of religious Hebrew. Almost a manifesto, “*Al ’ot hazeman*” is presented as a review of Shlonsky and other poets’ recent work. Of Shlonsky in particular, she writes:

and now you pick up “To Mother and Father” (A. Shlonsky, “To Mother and Father,” Ketuvim Publishers) and you read, and read it again, and it is right “to forgive” Shlonsky his illusions, because of his ability to be such a man of his time.

It seems to me that there is no place for argument here: simplicity of expression and a deluge of similes and metaphors—how can that be? Because metaphors can (not only in the sorcery of language that the hieroglyphicists of our land aforementioned), metaphors can indeed be an unmediated outcome of a poetic worldview, which is to say: the eye is set thus and not otherwise, and the emotion bursts forth from the womb in this garb, the model of “lucky” children, who are born with a silver spoon [lit: in a tunic].¹⁶⁷ (8)

In other words, Shlonsky’s deluge of figurative language, which might otherwise be irritating, is acceptable because of quality and simplicity. This review of Shlonsky’s work does not necessarily argue, as Miryam Segal has claimed, that Shlonsky’s poetry is “the embodiment in Hebrew poetry

¹⁶⁵ Michael Gluzman draws a connection between Rachel’s text and Acmeist works such as Osip Mandel’shtam’s “The Morning of Acmeism” (Gluzman 120–1).

¹⁶⁶ Rachel herself was a Hebrew modernist poet in Palestine at this time. She, too, translated Russian poetry.

¹⁶⁷ ואז אתה נוטל את “לאבא-אמא” (א. שלונסקי, “לאבא-אמא”, הוצאת “כתובים”) ואתה קורא, ונכון “לסלוח” לו לשלונסקי את תעתועיו, בגלל כשרונו זה להיות כל כך בן לתקופתו. דומה עלי, כי אין פה מקום לקושיה: פשטות הביטוי ומבול דמויות והשאָלוּת – הא כיצד? כי כן יכולות ההשאָלוּת (ולא רק בלהטי הלשון של חרטומי-ארצנו הדברים אמורים) יכולות ההשאָלוּת להיות תוצאה בלתי אמצעית של ראית-עולם שירית, לאמור: העין ערוכה כך ולא אחרת, והאמוציה מגיחה מרחם בלבושה זה. דוגמת ילדים “בני-מזל”, הנולדים בכתונת.

of [Bluwstein's] simplicity of expression" (83), although Rachel's text indeed does try "to naturalize [Shlonsky's] adornments by claiming that metaphor is actually the natural and immediate mode of expression for this particular poet" (83). Michael Gluzman reads the same text as a stronger criticism of Shlonsky than that— "[w]hile admitting to his genius, [Rachel] claims that one needs to forgive Shlonsky's tricks in order to enjoy his poems. In indirectly referring to Shlonsky as one of our country's "hieroglyphic artists (*hartumey artsenu*), she sets him up as the oppositional figure against whom she works' (120). Gluzman correctly connects Rachel to the Acmeist manifestos, but the reference to hieroglyphics actually evokes the Futurist "Slap in the Face of Public Taste," reminding Shlonsky and his peers that their work, too, can become incomprehensible. In a Palestine where poets like Rachel used a different Hebrew that further stripped of Bialik's heavy allusiveness, Shlonsky may have seemed to have more in common with Bialik's newly archaic genius than with the competing modernist poetics of Rachel. Thus, like Bialik, Shlonsky was an innovator whose work would call for some kind of comparison to Pushkin, and like Bialik, he lived to see the language move past his creative contributions. His translation of Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin* was written a decade after Rachel called his poetics "hieroglyphic."

Like his Zionist peers in Palestine, Avraham Shlonsky the poet-translator is between the Jewish Diasporic past and the Russian Diaspora, between Pushkinism and Zionism, between obsolete and groundbreaking, between the classic and the modern, Pushkin and Mayakovsky, Bialik and Rachel. It was in such a position that the *moderna* poet took time away from writing his original poetry in Hebrew to translate a nineteenth-century Russian classic which Bialik's and Rachel's generations knew, but which would be unfamiliar to future generations of native Hebrew speakers. Replacing the potential for nostalgia for Yiddish and other "diasporic" relics with nostalgia for the respectable Russian poets, Shlonsky's community occupied itself with the Pushkin centennial with the enthusiasm of the Russian diaspora. But as we shall see, Avraham Shlonsky not only preoccupied himself with the old, he made it into something new.

4.5 HEBRAIZATION, DOMESTICATION, JUDAIZATION

While Shlonsky eventually translated several other works by Pushkin such as the Little Tragedies, *Onegin* in particular presented Hebrew with interesting challenges and helped him win the Tchernichovsky Prize (in 1946) along with much acclaim. His rendering the Russian text into something which could appeal to readers- in an “indigenizing” or “domesticating” way- as an artistic work in its own right in Hebrew was met with enthusiasm. Shlonsky’s friend and colleague Leah Goldberg called it a miracle and identified it as the height of Shlonsky’s accomplishments as a translator (1950: 35). A Russian-Jewish critic pseudonymed “Belov” enthusiastically reviewed a later version in a Soviet journal *Masterstvo perevoda*. Shlonsky’s translation Judaizes Pushkin’s text while rendering it into Hebrew, but this could not fool his audience of contemporaries, many of whom knew Russian.

Although decades would pass before Avraham Shlonsky’s oft-reissued, plastic translation of *Evgenii Onegin* would contain any kind of translator’s note among its paratexts, his vision of the translation project is expressed in several places. The book’s lack of introduction or translator’s statement was more than compensated for by Shlonsky’s public appearances during the year of the centennial. Due to his celebrity, his philosophy of translation can be found in public speeches and letters as well as in the final version of the translation. For example, the aforementioned letter sent to the Russian-language Zionist newspaper “*Gadegel*” (“The Flag”)¹⁶⁸ in Harbin, China demonstrates how Shlonsky publicly proclaims his relation to the text and the prospect of its translation:

A. Shlonsky recounts that to translate *Evgenii Onegin* was the dream of his life. While still a 16-year-old youth he translated “Tale of Tsar Saltan.”

“Three principles guided me, when I at last took on *Evgenii Onegin*,” says A. Shlonsky. “First of all, reverence for Pushkin and a desire to mark his centennial anniversary. Further, it has always been painful for me to think that the Palestinian¹⁶⁹ youth, that has already grown up in our country and lost all connection with the Russian language and literature, will be deprived of the fortune that has fallen to our lot—the fortune of reading Pushkin. The third principle was a desire to demonstrate to myself and to

¹⁶⁸ “Gadegel” is a Russian transliteration of the Hebrew word “Hadegel.”

¹⁶⁹ Shlonsky is referring to Jewish youth growing up in Palestine, not to ethnic Palestinians.

others, that Hebrew, that “dead,” covered in the dust of ages, language, is so revived and rejuvenated, that into it one can communicate 6000 lines of Pushkin.”¹⁷⁰

The “three reasons” given can be reduced to two potentially conflicting loyalties: loyalty to Pushkin and loyalty to Hebrew,¹⁷¹ since the second reason of the happiness of Hebrew youth ultimately goes back to Shlonsky’s own reverence for Pushkin. Loyalty to both Pushkin and Hebrew, however, is a conflict of interest. On the one hand, he expresses nostalgia for the Russian culture from which the new Hebrew youth are cut off—after all, this was the culture of the Zionists who raised the young Hebrew speakers while they arguably maintained a higher level of Russian literacy than the East European peasants. On the other hand, he is committed to the Hebrew project. This conflict is played out in his translation as it navigates the problems of fidelity, domestication versus foreignization, Hebraization and Judaization. Shlonsky’s translation complicates these questions because—as this Russian-language letter to Jewish émigrés in China demonstrates—it is not exactly designed to do what he gives as his second reason. Much of his readership in Palestine already knew the novel in Russian.

When people read aloud from this translation, the Russian-speaking woman in the letter to Harbin recognized it as *Onegin*. It is celebrated not as much for being “faithful,” but for being a “masterpiece”—the same word which is used to describe the original text. Nabokov, who mocked and condemned attempts at beautiful translations of *Onegin*, claiming that they necessarily come at the expense of literalism, would have had a fit if he could have read Hebrew.¹⁷² For Aminadav Dykman, one of the main achievements of the translation is in its replication of the sounds of

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А. Шлионский рассказывает, что перевести “Евгения Онегина?” было мечтой его жизни. Еще 16-летним юношей он перевел “Сказку о царе Салтане”. Он не жалеет года тяжелого труда.

– Мною руководили три причины, когда я, наконец, взялся за “Евгения Онегина”, - говорит А. Шлионский. – Во-первых, благоговение перед Пушкиным и желание отметить его столетнюю годовщину. Затем мне всегда было больно думать, что палестинская молодежь, выросшая уже в нашей стране и потерявшая всякую связь с русским языком и литературой, будет лишена счастья, выпавшего на нашу долю, – счастья читать Пушкина. Третьей причиной было желание доказать себе и другим, что иврит, этот “мертвый”, покрытый пылью веков язык, настолько оживлен и омоложен, что на нем можно передать 6000 строк Пушкина. (“S.”)

¹⁷¹ The third loyalty could be to Hebrew youth, who are caught between the two others.

¹⁷² Aminadav Dykman shows that Shlonsky did not read Nabokov’s translation in the sixties (2008: 333).

Pushkin's stanzas, even on the level of the line, more closely than most *Onegin* translations around the world (" *Al onyegin*" 340–2). In particular, as the meters are duplicated the rhymes stand out as having intentionally matched Pushkin's as closely as possible, using rhyme pairs with as much lexical or phonetic similarity to Pushkin's pairs as possible. For example, he translates the rhyme pair "*stala-stradala*" as "*hayah lah-savalah*" (341). Dykman also shows that Levinson's translation is more literally accurate and that Shlonsky does not replicate different historical layers and registers of the language used in the Russian. But to this I would add that Shlonsky does innovative things with the words he does use, much as in his own poetry, marking this translation as uniquely Hebrew and uniquely his, also ensuring that it would be an artifact of Yishuv Hebrew.

The way that Avraham Shlonsky translates *Onegin*, then, can be seen as part of his own modernist poetics. But rather than merely using the translation to strip Hebrew of its traditional Jewish meanings, Shlonsky actively Judaizes Pushkin's text. Shlonsky may not have the particular image of a "*Kazak* in a shtreyml," but Judaization is a significant feature of his translation style. Judaization is not the same thing as Hebraization, although they overlap significantly. Hebraization is, essentially, the translation into Hebrew, which may involve both avoidable and inevitable Judaizations. These are elements of Jewish culture not present in the original text, but present in the translation as changes to the original, foreign meaning or even as additions. Judaization can be an aspect of domesticization, a process by which the foreignness of the original text is erased. Domesticization also includes other techniques, such as omission of points of cultural difference, to produce a text in translation which does not seem foreign. The effect of this is deceptive and for Shlonsky, the use of these Judaizing elements accomplishes two things. First, it makes the translation thoroughly his because it seems so culturally different from Pushkin. Second, Shlonsky's Judaizing elements seem to point to traditional Jewish sources. But there does not seem to be a connection between the sources and the translated lines that point to them; by association with Pushkin's text, they work to reduce the weight of allusiveness.

In a speech to the Academy of the Hebrew Language in 1968, Shlonsky explained his method of translating *Evgenii Onegin*, and how he "come[s] to translate an author (because [he] translate[s] an

author, and not a book)” (495). In Shlonsky’s view of the Russian *Onegin*, Pushkin himself had to translate his own thoughts, many of which were in foreign languages anyway, and so the translator is ultimately responsible to what he presumes those thoughts to be:

A man “translates” his formless emotion, which prior to having a form is nothing, into “poetic being” by virtue of the formed shape. This is translation from nothing into something, by way of the giving of shape.¹⁷³ And form—not only in the formal sense, but also in the sense of melody. And thus, here is also “translation,” but here the poet is the master, and he who chooses for himself the melody. The translator must be subservient to the melody that was already chosen, and that not he, but another, chose. Therefore, what is the art of translation? Servitude within servitude. For there is servitude in the very creation—to the particular topic, to the particular plot, to the particular emotion; the man of the original seems to be saying: I seek this until I exhaust it, “with all might”—that is to say: I am enslaved to this. And here comes the translator to the man of the original, to him who created substance from nothing, and seeks to be a second master and to create substance from substance. In the sense of a slave’s slave (492).¹⁷⁴

Using Jewish imagery and intertextuality to evoke Hegel and Russian modernist ideas about literature, along with the Cultural Zionism of Aḥad Ha’ām, Shlonsky understands the process of writing original texts to be itself a form of translation. The author renders emotions into text, and the translator—according to Shlonsky—must try to glean what those emotions were in order to render them into a new language. The source text in its original language is thus only a mediation of the material to be translated, not the translation itself. Shlonsky does not aim to translate the original words, but sees them as subservient to the “emotion” and “form,” and the “nothing” is only available to Shlonsky through the words of the original text. He will not, therefore, translate them literally. Being a “slave” is for him being like an actor onstage, who in order to play the role of Pushkin must keep his own self offstage (494). On the one hand, he expects that the same kind of purge must be

¹⁷³ Shlonsky’s choice of words here makes one think of Sinai.

¹⁷⁴ אדם “מתרגם” את הרגשתו ההיולית, אשר בטרם היות לה צורה הריהי בבחינת אין, ל”הווייה פיוטית” בזכות הצורה המעוצבת. זהו תרגום מאין ליש ע”ו מתן צורה. וצורה – לא מבחינה פורמאלית בלבד, אל?א בבחינת ניגון. ובכן, גם כאן “תרגום”, אלא שכאן המשורר הוא השליט, והוא הבוחר לו את הניגון. המתרגם מוכרח להשתעבד לניגון שכבר נבחר, שאחר, ולא הוא, בחרו. אכן, מהי אמנות התרגום? עבדות בתוך עבדות. שהרי עבדות יש בעצם היצירה – לנושא המסוים, לעלילה המסוימת, להרגשה המסוימת; כביכול, אומר איש המקור: אני מבקש זאת עד מיצוי, “בכל מאוד” –? כלומר: אני עבד לזה. וכאן בא המתרגם אל איש המקור, אל זה שיצר יש מאין, ומבקש להיות שליטמשנה וליצור יש מיש. בחינת עבד של עבד. (492)

done to the target language, but this is a tightrope because on the other hand, he argues against literal translations of national material. Rather, he tries to translate them in word-combinations that would be plausible in the target language, while somehow trying to approximate how he thinks the original writer would have written, but in Hebrew (494–5). The ultimate result, we shall see, is a very domesticating translation, almost the “*Kazak* in a *shtreym*l” (495) which he does not intend to present. The “*Kazak* in a *shtreym*l” is a metaphor for absurd cultural replacements that can occur in translation—here, a Cossack wearing a fur hat associated with Hasidim. Although not going so far as the *shtreym*l, Shlonsky himself, in an afterword to the latest version of his *Onegin*, refers to the translation as “this masterpiece’s Hebrew garment” (1966: 668).

Neither Shlonsky, nor Soviet Jewish critic Belov in his review of the Hebrew translation, invented this comparison between translation and clothing.¹⁷⁵ Lawrence Venuti writes¹⁷⁶ that this is a common metaphor used by those who see the underlying meaning of a text as separable from its expression in language, and hence translatable.¹⁷⁷ Shlonsky subscribes to this not uncommon view of translation, which explains his claim that he translates the author and not the text. But inherent in the process of translating an author and not a book is a great deal of guesswork about authorial intent in order to find some kind of essence of the text. In the 1960s, Vladimir Nabokov described a “paraphrastic” translation as

offering a free version of the original, with omissions and additions prompted by the exigencies of form, the conventions attributed to the consumer, and the translator’s ignorance. Some paraphrases may possess the charm of stylish diction and idiomatic conciseness, but no scholar should succumb to stylishness and no reader should be fooled by it. (vii–viii)

Nabokov’s scorn for domesticating translation rests on its unreliability for scholarly purposes and for getting at something like the “essence” that translators like Shlonsky seek. But while Venuti’s

¹⁷⁵ In his review of Shlonsky’s translation, “Belov” also uses the metaphor of national dress (308).

¹⁷⁶ About John Denham’s similar statement in 1656.

¹⁷⁷ Venuti writes that these translation-as-clothing metaphors assume “that meaning is a timeless and universal essence, easily transmissible between languages and cultures regardless of the change of signifiers, the construction of a different semantic context out of different cultural discourses, the inscription of translating-language codes and values in every interpretation of the foreign text” (49–50).

domesticating translation is typically marked in the twentieth century by “invisibility” of the translator and the translation to readers due to conventions and rules in the English-language publishing world (1–32), Shlonsky’s domesticating translation gains much of its prestige due to the *visibility* of the translator. The fame of the translator as a poet, and the fact that many of his readers—who were celebrating Pushkin’s centennial with pomp, circumstance and devotion—were not dependent upon him for access to the text, means that Nabokov’s description might be reframed for this translation. Nabokov’s scorn, after all, is for the deceit he perceives in English and other translations of Pushkin which are intended for audiences that do not know Russian.

Nabokov’s description of a paraphrastic translation suits Shlonsky’s *Evgenii Onegin*, however the circumstances of Palestine in 1937 suggest that Nabokov’s contempt for such translations would be inappropriate here. The exigencies of form do drive Shlonsky’s neologisms, “omissions and additions,” and “charm.” This translator does indeed try for “stylish diction” and something which will be beautiful in Hebrew. But no scholar of Shlonsky’s milieu would have been likely to “succumb to stylishness” in the way that Nabokov suggests. Leah Goldberg, for example, wrote that the work surpassed the expectations set of a translation being either beautiful or faithful, but not both (“*Avraham shlonsky*” 31). As someone who knew the original text, she found this translation to be “like a kind of miracle” (“*kemin nes*”) (45), although such a reader may have a different set of expectations to be satisfied than would a reader with no prior exposure to Pushkin in Russian. It seems that a reader who knows Pushkin in Russian should read the translation for a Jewish, Hebrew version; a reader who knows no Russian would want to know what Pushkin has to say in the first place.

Although Shlonsky’s immediate, approving audience consisted largely of people who already enjoyed *Evgenii Onegin* in Russian, it is clear from his public statements and from the Zionist-Hebraist movement of his time that young people born in Palestine would not have access to the text in Russian. For those readers, Nabokov’s concern about the deception may be warranted (though it may be tempered by many Hebrew readers’ awareness of the peculiar history of translations into He-

brew). Also, there is a difference between Shlonsky's philosophy of translation and the translation he actually writes, a difference which points to the impossibility of the ideal he describes.

The following analysis will demonstrate Shlonsky's domestication and Judaization of Pushkin's text by closely looking at one passage and its translation:

1:VIII	SHLONSKY
<p>Всего, что знал еще Ев?гений, Пересказать мне недосуг; Но в ч?ем он истинный был гений, Что знал он т?верже всех наук, Что было для него измлада И труд, и мука, и отрада, Что занимало целый день Его тоскующую лень, — Б?ыла наука страсти нежной, Которую воспел Назон, За что страдальцем кончил он Свой век блестящий и мятежный В Мол?давии, в глуши степей, Вдали Италии св?оей.</p>	<p>תקצר עתנו להביע כל יתר למודיו כלם; אך התורה שבה הגיע למדרגת גאון משלם שהיא בלבד, עודנו נער, היתה לו גיל, עמל וצער, יום ולילה שובבה את עצלותו העצבה, — היתה תורת השוקה נסערת, אשר נזון לה שר תהלה ויכל בתהו בגללה חיים של מרי ותפארת בקצה מולדביה נדחה, הרחק מרומי הברוכה.</p>
NAVOKOV	SHLONSKY
<p>All Eugene knew besides I have no leisure to recount; but where he was a veritable genius, what he more firmly knew than all the arts¹⁷⁸ what since his prime had been to him toil, anguish, joy, what occupied the livelong day his fretting indolence— was the art of soft passion which Naso sang, wherefore a sufferer he ended his brilliant and tumultuous span in Moldavia, in the wild depth of steppes, far from his Italy. (99)</p>	<p>Our time will be short to express the entire remainder of all his learning; but the discipline [<i>torah</i>] in which he attained the level of an accomplished genius [<i>gaon</i>] which alone, him still a youth,¹⁷⁹ was for him a joy, toil and sorrow, and day and night led astray¹⁸⁰ his melancholic idleness,— was the discipline of tempestuous desire, to which Naso¹⁸¹ sang a song of praise and for its sake completed¹⁸² in emptiness¹⁸³ a life of rebellion¹⁸⁴ and glory at the edge of remote¹⁸⁵ Moldavia, far from blessed Rome.</p>

One way that Shlonsky alters the meaning of the text to seem more Jewish is through the use of specific Biblical vocabulary which is used as a Jewish equivalent of the Russian term (which had no religious significance). In Hebrew literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this approach of drawing on Biblical sources was difficult to avoid and writers tried to strip those words of their Biblical significance. Shlonsky, writing later, has access to a broader modern vocabulary in Hebrew and has more of a choice than did his predecessors. Among the examples here, he had clear alternatives for some. For example “*torah*” is used to translate an ironic use of “*nauk*” (“learning” or “arts”). Etymologically, “*torah*” has a slightly closer affinity to “*nauka*” than does the more obvious “*mada*” (which is used by Levinson) with its connotations of knowledge. In addition, because it is being used tongue-in-cheek, its tremendous historical burden is used to add to Pushkin’s sense. “*Ga’on*” is used to translate “*geniia*” (“genius”) and is similarly ironic.¹⁸⁶ 186 Because both Russian

¹⁷⁸ Nabokov uses “arts” because of Ovid’s “Ars amatoria” [Russian: “*Nauka liubvi*”], but by the twentieth century the word also meant “science.”

¹⁷⁹ “*Odena naar*” [“still a lad”] is found in Judges 8:20, “And he said unto Jether his first-born: ‘Up, and slay them.’ But the youth drew not his sword; for he feared, because he was yet a youth.”

¹⁸⁰ As in Jeremiah 8:5, “Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.”

¹⁸¹ Known in English as “Ovid.”

¹⁸² Hebrew has other words for “to finish.” This classical Hebrew word evokes the blessing over Sabbath wine, which quotes Genesis 2:2, “and on the seventh day God *finished* His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.” Also Psalms 78:33, when God smites the lusty, dissatisfied complainers: “Therefore He *ended* their days as a breath, and their years in terror.”

¹⁸³ This word immediately evokes Genesis 1:2, “Now the earth was unformed and *void*, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters.” But with the preposition added as in Shlonsky’s text, it also appears in Job speaking about other people’s corruption in 6:18: “The paths of their way do wind, they go up into the *waste*, and are lost” or about God in 12:24: “He taketh away the heart of the chiefs of the people of the land, and causeth them to wander in a *wilderness* where there is no way” and similarly Psalms 107:40: “He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the *waste*, where there is no way.” I have added italics to indicate where the word is used in the JPS translation. “*Batohu*” also appears in a Hasidic/nationalist song of Shlonsky’s cousin Imanuel Harusi, “*Yerushalayim ir hakodesh*” [“Jerusalem, the holy city”]:

”בְּמִחְצָבָה נָפַל אָבִיךָ / וְנִשְׁמָתוֹ בְּתוֹהוּ. / אֵין דָּבָר, סֵגֵר אֵת פִּיךָ / תְּהִי חוֹצֵב כְּמוֹהוּ.”

“In the mine your father fell / and his soul in the void. / It does not matter, close your mouth / be passionate like him.”

¹⁸⁴ Strong similarity to the word “*mri*,” “bitterness,” which would also make sense here but is probably just an association.

¹⁸⁵ This has been used to describe Zion: “For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they have called thee an *outcast*: ‘She is Zion, there is none that careth for her.’” Jeremiah 30:17.

¹⁸⁶ Even-Shoshan dates “*gaon*” to biblical and thus certainly Semitic origins. Although it is phonetically similar, the Russian “*genii*” is identified by Vladimir Dal’ as having a Latin origin. The Oxford English dictionary explains that the Latin root is (not Hebrew, but from a verb): “a. L. *genius*, f. **gen-* root of *gi-gn-ere* to beget, Gr. *gignesqai* to be born, come into being.” Although the Latin roots of “genius” have been questioned by Isaac Mozeson (1989), who suggests that

and Hebrew have changed since the novel and its translations were composed, “*mada*” and “*nauka*” both mean “science,” and Levinson’s translation makes more sense.

Some of Shlonsky’s alterations make more significant changes to the meaning of the text. Not all of these are Judaizations through vocabulary, but rather cultural changes in meaning. These changes, if they were not made merely for the sake of metrical convenience, demonstrate that the new Hebrew culture in Palestine was not equivalent to Russian in matters of sexuality. “*Zanimalo*” (“occupied”) is translated as “*shovevah*” (“led astray”), as if leading astray from the path of righteousness. Instead of “*strasti nezhnoi*” (“tender passion”), Shlonsky’s Hebrew Evgenii experiences the opposite variety: “*teshukah nis’eret*” (“tempestuous desire”), which expresses a different intensity in relating to women than that described by Pushkin. Finally, Shlonsky’s Naso does not merely sing, he sings “*tehilah*” (“a song of praise”).¹⁸⁷ All in all, Shlonsky intensifies the sense of disapproval in the passage as well as Evgenii’s and Naso’s passion for their amorous pursuits along with the subversive irony.

Perhaps the greatest Judaization of this stanza can be found with regard to Naso’s Moldavian exile away from Italy, in the last couplet. Shlonsky borrows from the Jewish sense of exile from Zion and replaces some of Pushkin’s meaning with it.¹⁸⁸ Shlonsky and his contemporaries in Palestine—not far from Italy or Moldavia, along the Mediterranean—had generally arrived there from birthplaces within Eastern Europe, which included Moldavia. Thus Shlonsky’s Moldavia is not wild steppes, (Moldavia was part of the Pale of Settlement), but “*nidaḥah*” (“remote”). Pushkin writes that Naso is “*vdali Italii svoei*” (“far from his Italy”), and Lotman explains that “*v kishinevskii period P neodnokratno provodit paralleli mezhdu svoei sud’boi i sud’boi Ovidiia*” (“during the Kishinev period P[ushkin] repeatedly drew parallels between his fate and the fate of Ovid”) (558). The exile is a personal one. But in translation Shlonsky removes the possessive pronoun and replaces it with “*habrukhah*” (“blessed”), using the city of Rome as a metonym for Pushkin-Naso’s “Italy.” He thus more closely evokes the Jewish exile, which is often depicted in synecdoche as exile from the

the origin is indeed Hebrew, they are generally accepted as the origin. On the other hand, the phonetic suggestiveness must surely have made a difference.

¹⁸⁷ In Judaism, these are typically sung to the Jewish God. For example: the Hebrew word for Psalms is *Tehilim*.

¹⁸⁸ Although Shlonsky mentions Pushkin’s exile in one of his few endnotes to the translation, he does not do so in reference to this stanza.

holy city of Zion, rather than the exile of a poet from his country. By referring to “blessed Rome,” Shlonsky both introduces and deflates the Jewish concept of exile from Zion.

The classical registers of Hebrew and Aramaic in the language of this translation must have appealed to Shlonsky’s readers because Pushkin’s work itself is a classical text using an exceptionally wide vocabulary and references obscure to almost any twentieth-century audience. Shlonsky transfers the Russian word-play into Hebrew-play, not translating it but representing it by attempting something similar with Hebrew. The different historical layers of Hebrew in the text are not standing in for particular historical layers of the Russian language. Ultimately, this is an ironic Judaization¹⁸⁹ of the text, a “domestication” in Venuti’s terms.

The extent of Judaization in Shlonsky’s translation is such that “Belov”’s editors at the Soviet Journal “The Craft of Translation”¹⁹⁰ inserted a disapproving footnote at one point in his praise the translation. Belov points out that in the translation of Chapter 3’s “Song of the Girls,”¹⁹¹ Shlonsky inserts a gazelle (“*ayelet-khen*” or “pretty doe”) in place of beauties (“*krasavitsi*”) among the many words used to describe girls. For Belov, this demonstrates Shlonsky’s strength as a translator, despite Hebrew’s rich vocabulary of synonyms for young women: “a literal translation would have sounded dull, flavorless, inexpressive and would not have conveyed the tone of a folk song. A. Shlonsky bravely introduces into the folkloric verse the image of a pretty gazelle—and achieves the needed effect” (308).¹⁹² The editor of *Masterstvo perevoda* could not let this claim go unchallenged, however, and intervenes with a footnote to Belov’s text.

But with the introduction of *new* images (gazelles, deer), that is with the substitution of images of the original with other national colors, which come into conflict with the color of the original, one cannot agree. Such a substitution is not redeemed even through

¹⁸⁹ For more on the “Judaization” and “Hebraization,” see Julia Galperin, *Hapoemah ‘yevgeni onegin’ shel a.s. pushkin: tirgumah leivrit biydei a. shlonski vehashvaah khalakit im tirgumah leanglit biydei v. Nabokov*. Dissertation, Bar-Ilan University 2006.

¹⁹⁰ “*Masterstvo perevoda*.”

¹⁹¹ Russian: “*Pesnia devushek*.” The “Song of the Girls” is one of the few sections of the novel not written in the *Onegin* stanza form and is not numbered as one of the *Onegin* stanzas. Rather, Chapter 3 Stanza 39, which precedes the “Song of the Girls,” explains that the serf girls are forced to sing the song to ensure that they do not eat any berries while they pick them for the master (Tatiana’s father).

¹⁹² «Но дословный пепевод звучал бы тускло, пресно?, невыразительно и не передавал бы нар?одной песенной интонации. А. Шлионский смело вводит в стих фольклорный образ м?иловидной газели—и нужный эффект до?стигнут.»

the approximation of the author and his work to the readers of another language and another culture.¹⁹³

The same features of the translation which earned Avraham Shlonsky both his acclaim and the Tchernichovsky Prize, along with some criticism.

4.6 "TO WRESTLE WITH CREATIONS LIVING, CONCRETE AND REAL"

Pushkin's material afforded Shlonsky an opportunity to write about new things in a different way as the novel expressed a different set of cultural norms. One example of this is the portrayal of human sexuality and romantic love, which in Europe had become a preoccupation of Hebrew writers. Shlonsky overcompensates in his translation of these ideas, producing a more macho outlook than Pushkin's.

Although the fact that Avraham Levinson also translated *Evgenii Onegin* into Hebrew for the Yishuv's 1937 celebration suggests that something had fundamentally changed since Dovid Frishman's translations of 1899 in Saint Petersburg,¹⁹⁴ Shlonsky himself did not think this was an easy feat for the Hebrew language. Certainly Shlonsky's reflections on the past from the hindsight of the 1960s express an opinion about Hebrew in the 1930s which is not so different from the preoccupation with realism once voiced by Y. L. Katsenel'son in his preface to Frishman's 1899 translations.¹⁹⁵ Shlonsky did not view his first try as a complete and perfect one, revising the translation more than once in the decades after its publication until a final version appeared in 1966, indicating dissatisfaction with the original which he attributed to the state of the Hebrew language in the 1930s. The "masterpiece's Hebrew garment," he wrote in the afterword to the 1966 edition, had had to be

¹⁹³ «Но с введением новых образов (газели, ланы), то есть с заменой образов оригинала образами иной национальной окраски, вступающими в противоречие с колоритом подлинника, согласиться нельзя. Подобная замена не искупается даже приближением автора и его произведения к читателем другой языка и другой культуры.»

¹⁹⁴ The changes which took place between Frishman's translations of excerpts of *Evgenii Onegin* in 1899 and the 1936–7 jubilee activities are also discussed in the previous two chapters.

¹⁹⁵ This is discussed in an earlier chapter of this dissertation. Dr. Y. L. Katsenel'son's introduction to Frishman's translations of Pushkin emphasized the importance of realism for the development of Hebrew literature and the need for Hebrew to adapt so that it could describe the snowy Russian reality of the Jews rather than their sunny imagination of *Eretz-Israel*. Pleased that Hebrew literature had skipped the phase of European neoclassicism, Katsenel'son encourages realism in the new Hebrew literature. (xv)

brought from its original form to “the maximum of the objective (of the language itself) and subjective (of the translator) ability as it stands today” (668).¹⁹⁶ One of those improvements which Shlonsky observed over the decades was, as he wrote to Israel Mintz in the USSR: “development of the linguistic-poetic potential of Hebrew to wrestle with creations living, concrete, real and elevated in their poesy as Pushkin’s *Onegin*” (107).

Despite the tremendous success of the original 1937 translation, it was only in 1966—in the second decade of Israeli statehood, as Yehudah Amichai was becoming world-famous for his Anglo- and German-influenced Hebrew poetry¹⁹⁷—that Shlonsky considered Hebrew and the *Evgenii Onegin* translation to have succeeded in achieving this kind of realism:

It was a great challenge for Hebrew to provide the special coupling of the real and the poetic. At first this was a solely poetic language (as it were), flowery, spiritual, afterwards occurred the struggle for the secularization of the language (secularization—the switching of sacred to secular, *Sekul’iarizatsiia*) but the two things—the sacred and the secular—lived apart. Now, it seems to me, I have proven that Hebrew is capable of the coupling of these “extremes,” of the mixture of the element of the transcendent with the element of the concrete.¹⁹⁸ (107)

By “at first,” Shlonsky may be referring to the state of the Hebrew language long before his translation of 1937, but he clearly does not think that the problem had been resolved in time for his first translation, because it is only in the 1960s that he takes credit for the “coupling of extremes.” Shlonsky intertwines his fate with those of both the Hebrew language and his translation of *Evgenii Onegin*, so that what is difficult for Hebrew is difficult for him. What Hebrew is capable of, it is up to this poet to demonstrate, and as demonstrated by a letter to the Soviet critic Bielov, Shlonsky believes he can

¹⁹⁶ The original Hebrew in Shlonsky’s letter to the USSR:

התפתחות האפשרות הלשונית-פיוטית של העברית להתמודד עם יצירות חיות, ממשיות, ריאליות ונעלות בפיוטיותן כאונייגן של פושקין.

¹⁹⁷ Amichai is used here to represent the shift from a conversation with Russian and German literature to a conversation with English-language literature

¹⁹⁸ קושי גדול היה לעברית לתת את הזיווג המיוחד של הריאלי-והפיוטי. תחילה היתה זו לשון רק-פיוטית (בביכול), מליצית, רוחנית, אח”כ החל המאבק לחילוניה של הלשון (חילון – הפיכת קודש לחולין, *Секуляризация*), אך שני הדברים – הקודש והחול – חיו לחוד. עכשיו, נדמה לי, הוכחתי כי העברית מסוגלת לזיווג “הקצוות” האלה, למזיגת האלמנט של הנשגב עם האלמנט של הממשי.

demonstrate the abilities of Hebrew through his translation of this novel in verse: “the match that is between the real and the sublime—a marriage that is the virtue of virtues of the Pushkin ‘novel in verse’—was made possible with time with more strength and more vitality” (254).¹⁹⁹ The question arises: is there room for sex in this marriage?

Sex stands between the sublime and the concrete that Hebrew sought to express, because although it is not always so concrete, it was a perceived deficiency of the language and literature. Although novels had been written in Hebrew beforehand, sexuality entered Hebrew fiction toward the end of the nineteenth century (Pinsker 156). At this time, Romanticism and even Realism were outdated themselves, and the literary models for sexuality were provided by Decadence, Symbolism, and political movements such as Zionism. Thus, modern Hebrew fiction of Europe marked male sexuality with “[p]assivity, ‘effeminization,’ fetishism, and erotic entanglements” as well as “relationships between sexual desire and writing,” and “homoerotic and homosocial desire” (Pinsker 162). Women are described as “inaccessible and unattainable objects of masculine desire, or are passionate, voracious, and sexually obsessed women” (163). In Palestine these became the New Hebrew Man and, to a lesser extent, the corresponding new feminine type. At the time of Shlonsky’s translation, with Modernism and Zionism in full swing, Russian Symbolism (with its more woman-friendly interest in Sophia²⁰⁰) was overtaken by a more masculine aesthetic²⁰¹ which was to be shared by Shlonsky.

Shlonsky’s emphasis on the concrete, though a long-standing one in modern Hebrew literature, highlights for us some parallels between Futurism’s response to Symbolism and Pushkin’s response

¹⁹⁹ והזיווג שבין הריאליות והגשגבות – זיווג שהוא מסגולת-הסגולות של ה“רומאן החרוזי” הפוסקיני – נתאפשר עם הזמן ביתר כוח ויתר חיוניות.

²⁰⁰ Divine Wisdom in the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition, but by now a theme in Russian symbolism; see Aleksandr Blok’s and Vladimir Soloviev’s poetry on the Wonderful Lady (*Prekrasnaia Dama*).

²⁰¹ Futurism’s machismo may be found in F. T. Marinetti’s “The Futurist Manifesto,” though not so much in the Russian “Slap in the Face of Public Taste,”? and in Zionist thinking going back at least to Max Nordau. Marinetti writes,

Noi vogliamo glorificare la guerra — sola igiene del mondo — il militarismo, il patriottismo, il gesto distruttore dei libertari, le belle idee per cui si muore e il disprezzo della donna. / 10. Noi vogliamo distruggere i musei, le biblioteche, le accademie d’ogni specie, e combattere contro il moralismo, il femminismo e contro ogni viltà opportunistica o utilitaria. (6–7)

Zionism has been a project of Jewish remasculinization since the writings of Max Nordau.

to Romanticism. The novel itself gave Russian literature post-Romantic models for the literary types of the anti-hero (who would become the “superfluous man”) and the novel-reading lady with an extramarital love interest (Tatiana remains faithful to her husband; Anna Karenina will not).²⁰² *Evgenii Onegin* abounds in references to Romantic literature of the West including to several other novels, showing its difference from them.

Chapter 4 Stanza VII is an example of this critical intertextuality. The first stanza of this chapter²⁰³ (see below) begins with a memorable line about women’s affections and ends with a condemnation of male licentiousness. Rhetorically, this stanza appears at first to represent the thoughts of the speaker but will in a few stanzas be identified as thoughts of Evgenii (4:IX). In Stanza 8, it is revealed that the antisocial behavior of the lecher is to be rejected due to the inconvenience it can cause for him, so the reader should not think that the problem is one of morals. Rather, Stanza 7 declares obsolete the older generation’s literature and fashion, mockingly comparing it to apes, and includes a direct reference to Samuel Richardson’s 1748 pre-Romantic novel *Clarissa Harlowe*. The novel’s rapist villain, Lovelace, is mentioned as a type from the past whose glory is gone.

The relative popularity of Shlonsky’s translation as compared with Levinson’s reflects the difference in their translation practices as demonstrated in this stanza. Levinson’s translation is literally closer to Pushkin’s, while Shlonsky’s sounds more like Pushkin’s (phonetically). I have made some changes (initialled) to Nabokov’s translation here.

²⁰² This idea comes from Belinsky, although I received it from reading Lotman’s “The Transformation of the Tradition Generated by *Onegin* in the Subsequent History of the Russian Novel” (174).

²⁰³ The numbering is unusual here. This stanza is preceded in Shlonsky’s version by several others which were not part of either book edition of *Evgenii Onegin* published during Pushkin’s lifetime. The first four stanzas of the chapter were published as an excerpt of the novel in *Moskovskiy vestnik* in 1827 and Stanzas 5–6 remained in manuscript form until after the poet’s death (Lotman 1995: 630; Nabokov Commentary 414). In 1937, Shlonsky included the first four as part of the chapter, and marked what is generally known as Stanza 7 “v-7” (v-vii). In the final edition he includes dashed lines in place of Stanzas 5–6 and names Stanza 7 as itself. This is a peculiar case in which adding more materials may be the less scholarly approach; to maintain the integrity of Pushkin’s text as it was published during his lifetime, translations usually omit these or relegate them to the footnotes.

PUSHKIN	LEVINSON	SHLONSKY
<p>Чем меньше женщину мы любим, Тем легче нравимся мы ей, И тем ее вернее губим Средь обольстительных сетей. Разврат, бывало, хладнокровный Наукой славился любовной, Сам о себе везде трубя, И наслаждаясь не любя. Но эта важная забава Достойна старых обезьян Хваленыя дедовских времен: Ловласов обветшала слава Со славой красных каблучков И величавых париков.</p>	<p>כָּל שְׁנִפְחִית אֶהֱב הָאִשָּׁת, נוֹסִיף לְגִבִּיר אֶהֱבָתָה, וְצוּד נְצוּד וְדַאי בְּרִשָּׁת הַפְתוּיִים אֶת-נִשְׁמָתָה. יֵשׁ וְחֻכְמֵי אֶהֱבָה שְׁבָחוּ אֶד אֶת-הַזְמָה קֶרֶת-הַרוּחַ, הַמִּתְפַּאֲרֶת עַד אֵין-סוּף וְנִהְיִית בְּלִי אֶהֱב. אֶד מְלֹאכָה זוֹ מְשַׁבַּחַת יָפָה הִיא לְקוֹפִים זְקֵנִים מִימֵי-תְפַאֲרַת קְדָמוֹנִים. הַוֵּרֵד גָּאוֹן לְזוֹבְלָסִים, יַחַד עִם קְפֻלְטִים מְפֹאֲרִים וְהוּד סוּלִים אֲדָמִים.</p>	<p>נָשִׁים – כְּמַעוֹט אֶהֱבָתֵנוּ, כֵּן תִּעָצֵם אֶהֱבָתֵנוּ, וְכֵן בְּרִשָּׁת מִדּוּחֵינוּ נִשְׁפִּיל לְבִטָּח לְלַכְדֵּן. פְּרִיצוֹת אֵין-לֵב הֵיטָה מוּחֲזָקֶת תּוֹרַת הַחֲשֵׁק הַמְּבַהֲקֶת, מִכְרָזוֹת עַל עֲצָמָה בְּלִי סוּף; וּמִתְעַלְסֶת בְּלִי אֶהוּב. אֶד זוֹ גְדֻלוֹת הַשְּׁעִשׁוּעַ יָאָה רַק לְזִקְנֵי קוֹפִים מִימֵי סִבְיָנוּ הַיָּפִים: אֶד הַלּוֹבְלָסִים, כְּיָדוּעַ, עִם הָעֵקֶב הַמְּאָדָּם וְרוּם קְפֻלְט – פְּנֵה הַזָּדָם.</p>

PUSHKIN	LEVINSON	SHLONSKY
<p>The less we love a woman the easier 'tis to be liked by her, and thus more surely we undo her amid seductive nets [-S.F.]. Time was when cool debauch was lauded as the art of love, trumpeting everywhere about itself, and taking pleasure without loving. But that grand pastime is worthy of old apes [-S.F.] of our forefathers' vaunted times; the fame of Lovelaces has faded with the fame²⁰⁴ of red heels and of majestic wigs [-S.F.].</p>	<p>As we decrease love of Woman, we'll strengthen²⁰⁵ her love more²⁰⁶ and we will most certainly captivate²⁰⁷ in a net of seduction her soul. At times the sages of love just praised cold-spirited lechery, that boasts²⁰⁸ to infinity²⁰⁹ and enjoys without loving. But that lauded craft is nice for old monkeys from ancient days of glory. Exaltation of Lovelaces was brought down together with magnificent wigs and the splendor of red slippers.²¹⁰</p>	<p>Women—as our love is scanty, thus will their love grow, and thus in the net of our seduction we will succeed²¹¹ for certain to ensnare them. Heartless licentiousness used to be held²¹² as the distinguished doctrine²¹³ of desire, proclaiming about itself without end; and delighting without loving. But this greatness of the game is befitting²¹⁴ only to elders of monkeys from the nice times of our grandfathers: but the Lovelaces, as is known, with the heel [dyed] red and height²¹⁵ of wig—their glory is departed.²¹⁶</p>

²⁰⁴Nabokov translates “*slava*” as “fame” here, but it could just as well be “glory” and this is probably how the Hebrew translators saw it.

²⁰⁵“*lagbir*” is also found in David Frishman’s translation of Pushkin’s “The Prophet:” “נָגַע אֶל-עֵינַי לְגִבִּיר בִּי חֵיל” It is otherwise an unusual form.

²⁰⁶This is a use of the infinitive “to increase” with biblical origins. Literally, “we will increase to strengthen her love.”

²⁰⁷This is a biblical doubling of the verb for the sake of emphasis. Here it is in addition to the emphasizing adverb “*vadai*.”

²⁰⁸Or “praises,” “glorifies.” This word comes from the same root as “ancient days of glory,” a few lines later. The reflexive form is compatible with the Russian.

²⁰⁹Also, put simply, a Kabbalistic term for the divine.

²¹⁰Or: “soles.”

²¹¹From the same root as “*haskalah*,” “enlightenment.”

²¹²The compound verb form here, “to be + present,” typically translated into English as the past progressive (“was being held”) here seems to refer to a different sort of present-in-the-past, and can be translated as “used to + infinitive.”

²¹³“*Torah*.”

²¹⁴Reminiscent of the Passover song “*Ki lo naeh, ki lo yaeh*.”

²¹⁵Or: “pride,” “haughty.”

²¹⁶This construction is very close to the rabbinic “*panah zivah, panah hadarah*” from Genesis Rabbah 68 (defined in Even-Shoshan 1977: 2095).

In a sense, Shlonsky stutters out this stanza with two added caesurae (indicated by dashes in Lines 1 and 14.). In this case, the prosodic feature of the caesura may indicate some difficulty in accommodating the meaning, rhyme and meter all at once, for Pushkin's two added caesurae are together in Line 5.

Several of the problems with translating this into Hebrew are apparent in as the translations are compared and come up with similar wording. Shlonsky and Levinson seem to have come up independently with nearly identical translations for the rhyming ends of Lines 7 and 8: Shlonsky has "*beli sof / [...] beli 'ehov*" and Levinson has "*'ein-sof / [...] beli 'ehov*." Both have interpreted "*zhenshchina*" to mean women in general, and not one indefinite woman; Levinson's stays closer to the original, however, by using a singular form, while Shlonsky pluralizes. Neither Hebrew translator has translated the emotions described in the first two lines very thoroughly; "love" in Line 1 of Pushkin is a verb, whereas the translators each turn it into a noun accompanied by another verb or an adjective. Their men do not "love less," but have a decreased love. Similarly, Line 2 uses a common Russian equivalent of "to like," "*nravit'sia*," which literally means "to be liked; to please" thus the subject of the verb is the men who are liked by the woman. Instead of being liked more easily, the men in both Hebrew versions are increasing women's love for them (for the men).

But in the second line, Shlonsky has no male pronouns to indicate male involvement; women's love grows as if it were an autonomous agent (the subject of the verb, rather than the object), whereas in Levinson's translation the men are implicated in the growth of the women's love. Shlonsky's translation lets them off the hook, compensating grammatically by having a male possessive ending in the word "*maduhenu*" ("our seduction") in Line 3. This hardly makes it equivalent, and Shlonsky later overcompensated for this, so that the final version of Line 2 reads, "*ken khish nirkosh ahavatan*" ("thus quickly we will gain possession of their love").

The word "*khladnokrovnyi*" ("cold-blooded") does not exist in Hebrew, but it could have through a literal translation here which might then have been absorbed by the language (especially through Shlonsky; this did not happen). Avraham Levinson might not have been expected to create a neologism for this; Avraham Shlonsky, rather than writing a calque such as "*karat-hadam*," and gen-

erating a new expression, uses the old expression “*’eyn-lev*” (“without heart; heartless”). In biblical Hebrew and in the early modern Hebrew literature, the heart usually symbolized knowledge and understanding, and thus “*’eyn-lev*” indicated a lack of those qualities.²¹⁷ This expression appears biblically in Hosea 7:11, “[a]nd Ephraim is become like a silly dove, without understanding”²¹⁸ and in Jeremiah 5:21, “[h]ear now this, O foolish people, and *without understanding*, that have eyes, and see not, that have ears, and hear not” [emphasis added].²¹⁹ This expression was used in the ancient Jewish manner into the twentieth century, although it seems to have been used in the Western manner—with the heart symbolizing emotion rather than intellect—before Shlonsky wrote his translation. The best example is in Neḥamah Poḥachevsky’s “*Hameshek*” (“The Settlement”), where she writes:

What good is there in all the education of her brother-in-law, in all his development, if there is *no heart* and no dedication? Here her sister struggled all evening with the children and he did not try to help her. He was buried in a book and did not hear, or pretended not to hear anything that was going on.²²⁰ [emphasis added]

This use of “*’eyn-lev*” here demonstrates lack of caring, rather than understanding. Shlonsky’s use of “*’eyn-lev*” to translate “*khladnokrovnyi*” indicates a more Western meaning of the word which may have been unambiguous to readers who knew Russian. For readers who did not know Russian, this may still have carried the ancient connotations, but the meaning of the expression has changed since then and native speakers of Hebrew will expect the expression to mean “heartless” the way it does in European languages. Rather than adopting one new expression, Shlonsky is adapting another. Shlonsky has the men appear more active in their conquest of women, which contrasts with Evgenii’s dandyish laziness and lack of motivation. Instead of creating a neologism which would directly translate the Russian “cold-blooded,” he instead recycles a biblical expression which

²¹⁷ The word “*lev*” is sometimes used in biblical Hebrew to refer to emotion or in expressions indicating a lack thereof, but these are distinct from “*’eyn-lev*”: “*lev-even*” (“heart of stone”) and “*kshah-lev*” (“hard-hearted”), for example.

²¹⁸ “וַיְהִי אֶפְרַיִם, כִּיזֶנֶה פֹתֵהָ אֵין לֵב.”

²¹⁹ “שָׁמְעוּ-נָא זֹאת עִם סֶכֶל וְאֵין לֵב: עֵינַיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יִרְאוּ אֲזִנַּיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ.”

²²⁰

מה התועלת בכל ההשכלה של גיסה, בכל התפתחותו, אם אין לב ואין מסירות הנה אחותה התלבטה כל הערב עם הילדים והוא לא נסה לעזור לה. היה שקוע בספר ולא שמע או עשה את עצמו כאינו שומע את הנעשה מסביב.
 (“Hameshek”)

he then strips of its traditional meaning. Although Shlonsky Judaizes the text of the novel as he translates, he also Westernizes the Hebrew language.

4.7 ONEGIN TRANSLATIONS AND HEBREW LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Avraham Shlonsky saw his translation of *Evgenii Onegin* as something which could only be as good as the state of the Hebrew language, as something which should change when the language changed. During Pushkin's lifetime, two different versions of the novel were published; during Shlonsky's, multiple versions of the Hebrew translation. Although the reasons for the editorial changes were quite different, Shlonsky's translation shares with the original not only the cultural status of a masterpiece, but that of a masterpiece which does not have one definite form. Looking back on his original 1937 Hebrew edition, Shlonsky saw a dated document in need of improvement due to the development of Israeli Hebrew over the intervening decades. In an afterword to the final, 1966 version (quoted in part in the previous section), he declares:

Around thirty years have passed from the day when the first edition of my translation of "Yevgeni Onyegin" of A. S. Pushkin was published (on the completion of 100 years from the passing of the poet). This was a period of dynamic, almost revolutionary, changes, to the Hebrew language—in quantity and in quality, from the foundation—the language-of-life and up to the superstructure—the language of poetry. A whole generation of new poets, that inherited the complete melody of the "Ashkenazi pronunciation," the craftsmanship of generations of poets, that completed in the course of this period the different melody of our poetry, the melody of the "Sephardi pronunciation" and refined its forms and vessels. And thus was made possible, and also made necessary, this renewed diligence [towards] my translations of Pushkin's poetry, that appear now in an edited and revised edition. From the intention to bring this masterpiece's Hebrew garment to the maximum of the objective (of the language herself) and subjective (of the translator) ability as it stands today.²²¹

²²¹ כשלושים שנה עברו מיום שיצאה לאור המהדורה הראשונה של תרגומי ל"ייבגני אונייגין" של א.ס. פושקין (במלאות 100 שנה לפטירת המשורר). היתה זו תקופה של תמורות דינאמיות, כמעט מהפכניות, ללשון העברית – בכמות ובאיכות, למן המסד – שפת-החיים ועד בנין-העל – שפת השירה. דור שלם של משוררים חדשים, שירש את הניגון המושלם של "ההברה האשכנזית", מלאכת-מחשבתם של דורות משוררים, שיכלל במרוצת התקופה הזאת את ניגונה האחר של שירתנו, ניגונה של "ההברה הספרדית" וליטש את צורותיה וכליה. וכך נתאפשרה, וגם נתחייבה, שקידה מחודשת זו על תרגומי שירת פושקין, המופיעים עכשיו במהדורה ערוכה ומתוקנת. מתוך הכוונה להביא את לבושה העברי של יצירת-המופת הזאת אל מאקסימום היכולת האובייקטיבית (של הלשון עצמה) והסובייקטיבית (של המתרגם) כפי שהיא היום.

The new accent and its new poetic melody were considered to be a major achievement of the new Hebrew language and its writers. Shlonsky sees himself as an important part of this development, and thus he also ties his own fate with that of the language and of the translation here, continuing his toils for the Hebrew culture even after becoming something of a relic himself. He presents his translation of Pushkin as a part of the history of the Hebrew language, acknowledging the changes that others have brought to the language and determined to bring his translation along.

The abovementioned revolutionary period in Hebrew language and literature had already begun when Shlonsky wrote his first edition of *Evgenii Onegin*, as is apparent from a comparison between the 1937 translations and Frishman's fragments of 1899. Avraham Shlonsky and Avraham Levinson both wrote in a still-changing Hebrew language which had left behind that of Dovid Frishman in many respects. Most apparent are the changes in vocabulary as well as accent and the corresponding new "melody." In the move to the so-called "Sephardi accent" from the European, Ashkenazi one, words like *SHABbes* not only became *shabBAT*, they also thereby switched prosodically from being trochees (Xx) to being iambs (xX).

Similarly, the move from Europe and the passage of time changed the vocabulary of Hebrew. In Europe, the creation of new lexical material necessary for adapting Hebrew to the modern world was something of a free-for-all: the modernizing language was not standardized by an Academy, a state or a community of fluent speakers. The Jews who settled in Palestine had by the 1930s begun building their community of speakers, however fluent or stuttering, and some public institutions such as the Hebrew University. The Hebrew of the 1930s lies somewhere in between European Hebrew and contemporary Israeli Hebrew.

Some of the contributions of Shlonsky's translation to the Hebrew language have already been identified. Most notably, Yaakov Kenaani's dictionary of Shlonsky's linguistic innovations contains an essay by Dov Sadan about the first edition of the *Onegin* translation. Sadan taxonomizes Shlonsky's innovations into categories such as: adapting verb, noun and adjectival roots to existing Hebrew morphologies never before applied to them (including new dual plural forms²²²); the spelling

²²² Like other Semitic languages, Hebrew has not only singular and plural, but also a dual form, typically one syllable longer than the regular plural.

out of numerals²²³ and letters as words; playful intertextuality with biblical, rabbinic and even new Hebrew sources²²⁴ and *melitsot*, using their original forms and meanings as well as modified ones; Hebrew humor using sacred language to describe the secular; vernacular language and Yiddish idioms;²²⁵ internal rhyme. Sadan claims that a driving force behind Shlonsky's language-play and innovation in this translation is his conformity to the constraints of the *Onegin* stanza. For example, some feminine forms of nouns are created to add a syllable for feminine rhymes or to include another syllable in the meter. Humor serves as another result of some of Shlonsky's wordplay (9–16).

Chapter 5, Stanza II of *Evgenii Onegin* describes some realities which were once very difficult for Hebrew to communicate: the realities of winter. A comparison between Frishman's 1899 translation of this stanza—in the guise of an independent poem—and the two Hebrew versions of 1937, those of Avraham Shlonsky and Avraham Levinson, demonstrates how Hebrew vocabulary and “melody” changed over the three intervening decades. In addition, we can begin to address the prestige of Shlonsky's translation vis-à-vis that of his contemporary. Below are the Russian text with Nabokov's literal translation,²²⁶ and in the next tables, the three Hebrew versions and my literal translations of each. I will discuss them in terms of prosody, fidelity, and vocabulary.

²²³ As in Greek, each letter of the Hebrew alphabet has a numerical value and numbers were traditionally written using these numerals. When Shlonsky spells out the sounds of the numerals rather than writing them as numerals, the sound is completely different. Just as in Latin numerals we could read “IV” as “four,” but “ahy-vee” is pronounced quite differently, Sadan gives the example of spelled-out letters “*yud het*” instead of the numeral ט”ח (18), which would have been pronounced as the number it represents, “*shmonah-esreh*.”

²²⁴ Including the poetry of H. N. Bialik, Sh. Tshernikhovky, and Rachel.

²²⁵ Yiddish contains some vocabulary of Hebrew and Aramaic origin.

²²⁶ Nabokov's translation is typically used for such purposes. Its awkwardness attempts to preserve the feeling of reading a translation from the Russian.

5:II	NABOKOV
<p>Зима!.. Крестьянин, торжествуя На дровнях обновляет путь; Его лошадка, снег почуя, Плетется рысью как-нибудь; Бразды пушистые взрывая, Летит кибитка удалая; Ямщик сидит на облучке В тулупе, в красном кушаке. Вот бегают дворовый мальчик, В салазки жучку посадив, Себя в коня преобразив; Шалун уж заморозил пальчик: Ему и больно и смешно, А мать грозит ему в окно...²²⁷</p>	<p>Winter! The peasant, celebrating, in a flat sledge inaugurates the track; his naggy, having sensed the snow, shambles at something like a trot. Plowing up fluffy furrows, a fleet kibitka flies: the driver sits upon his box in sheepskin coat, red-sashed. Here runs about a household lad, a small "pooch" on a hand sled having seated, having transformed himself into the steed; the scamp already has frozen a finger. He finds it both painful and funny— while mother, from the window, threatens him...</p>

FRISHMAN	LEVINSON	SHLONSKY
<p>הַחֶרֶף... כָּבֵד חוֹבֵק הָאֶפֶר יָדָיִם וּבְעֵגְלַת-הַקָּרַח יִפְלֵס לוֹ אֶרֶח; וְסוֹסוֹ בְּשִׁלְגַּי בְּכִשְׁלוֹן-בְּרַכְיִים יִתְנַהֵל בְּכַבְדּוֹת וַיִּמְשׁוֹף בְּטָרַח. שֵׁם עֵגְלַת-חִפְזוֹן בְּמְרוּצָה עוֹבְרַת, וְחַרְיִצִּים עֲמָקִים בְּאַרְץ חוֹפְרַת; וְלָבוֹשׁ בָּהּ יוֹשֵׁב הָרֶפֶב בְּאַדָּר, וְחֹגְזָרָה אֲדָמָה עַל-מִתְנִיּוֹ לְהִדָּר. שֵׁם רֶץ מִן-הַחֶצֵר בְּכַפֵּר אֶחָד נֶעַר וְהוֹשִׁיב אֶת-כְּלָבוֹ לְתוֹד עֵגְלַת-חֶרֶף וְהָיָה לְסוֹס לָהּ הֶרְתוֹם מוֹל-עֶרֶף; כָּבֵד קִפְאָה מִקָּרָה גַם-אֶצְבָּע הַבַּעַר, וּמְכַאוֹב גַּם-יַחַד הוּא יָדַע עִם-נַחַת... וְאָמוּ בַחֲלוֹן לוֹ אֶצְבָּע שׁוֹלַחַת... (32)</p>	<p>בָּא חֶרֶף... הָאֶפֶר שִׂמַּח בְּקֶרוֹן-מִשָּׂא חִדָּשׁ אֶרְחוּ. סוֹסוֹ, הַשִּׁלְגַּי כִּי יִרְיַח, יְרוּץ, יִדְהַר כְּפִי כַחוּ. שׁוֹר, כְּרִכְרָה קֵלָה דוֹהֶרֶת, רִגְבֵי הַשִּׁלְגַּי מְפוֹרְרֶת; עֵגְלוֹן מְרוֹם דּוֹכֵן יְנִהֵג, לְבוֹשׁ פְּרוּהָ, אֲזוֹר סָמֵק. הֵינָהּ בַחוּץ יְרוּץ שֵׁם נֶעַר, כְּלָבוֹ בְּתוֹד מְגִרְרַת שֵׁם, וְאֵת עֲצָמוֹ כְּסוֹס רֶתֵם; הַקִּפְיָא אֶת-אֶצְבָּעוֹ הַבַּעַר: גַּם צַחוֹק הוּא לוֹ וְגַם מְכַאוֹב, וּבַחֲלוֹן הָאֵם תִּגְזֹף.</p>	<p>בָּא חֶרֶף! בְּמַסַּע מְזַחֶלֶת יִשְׂמַח אֶפֶר חִדָּשׁ אֶרְחוּ; הַרְיַחָה שִׁלְגַּי וּמְרַשְׁלַת זוֹ סוֹסָתוֹ תְרוּץ אֵי-כַה. עֵגְלַת-סִפּוֹן קֵלָה דוֹהֶרֶת וְתֵלֶם צִמְרִירֵי חוֹתְרַת, עֵגְלוֹן יוֹשֵׁב עַל תַּתוֹרָה; עֲטוּף פְּרוּהָ מְחוּגְרָה, תִּיגוֹק הַחֶצְרוֹנִי יִסִּיעַ בְּמִזְחֵלָתוֹ אֶת הַכְּלָבִלְב, בְּהַתְחַפְּשׁוֹ כְּסוֹס-מְרַכָּב; כָּבֵד אֶצְבָּעוֹ צִנָּה הַקִּפְיָא: מְכַאוֹב וּשְׁחוֹק לוֹ; וְהָאֵם עָלְיוֹ מִבַּיִת תֵּאִים. (79)</p>

FRISHMAN	LEVINSON	SHLONSKY
<p>The winter... Already the peasant fondles his hands²²⁸ and in the ice-wagon will pave himself a path; and his horse in the snow with knee-stumbling will move with difficulty and will pull the burden. There wagon-haste passes with running, and digs deep furrows in the earth; and dressed in it sits the rider in a mantle, and a red belt on his loins for beauty. There runs from the yard in the village one lad and will seat his dog within a winter-wagon and will become the horse for her that is harnessed across the neck; already also frozen from cold is the the finger of the brute and pain with pleasure he will know together... and his mother in the window sends him a finger...</p>	<p>Winter is coming... the peasant rejoices in carrying-carriage renews his path. His horse, as he will smell the snow, will run, will gallop according to his strength. Look, there gallops a light cab,²²⁹ crumbling clods of the snow; the coachman from the height of the platform will drive, dressed in fur, girdle crimsoned. Behold²³⁰ outside there will run a lad, his dog within a sled (he) puts, and himself as a horse (he) hitches; The brute has frozen his finger: both laughter it is to him and also pain, and in the window the mother reproaches.</p>	<p>Winter is coming! On a sleigh journey A peasant rejoices in making a new path; Smelling snow and careless This horse of his runs about. A covered-wagon lightly gallops and breaks through woolly²³¹ furrow, A coachman sitting on rim,²³² wrapped in a belted²³³ fur the court(yard)²³⁴ boy will transport on his sledge the doggie.²³⁵ in disguising²³⁶ himself as a riding-horse; already the cold has frozen his finger: it is pain and laughter to him; and the mother shall threaten (upon²³⁷) him.</p>

²²⁷ (Ed. Tomashevski 98–99) I have added a comma in the first line which I think was missing from the FEB text, but which appears in many others and which I think the translators would have read in their Russian copies of the novel.

Frishman, having so many extra syllables to use up in his amphibrachic meter, adds the most information to the original text; nearly every line of “*Horef*” ends with embellishment. For example, in Frishman the boy does not just transform himself into a horse, he harnesses himself. Levinson also introduces a harness, making one wonder if he ever saw Frishman’s translations. In Line 9 they both use the extraneous word “*sham*” [there], even though Levinson has a very close translation for the word “*vot*” in his Biblical “*hineh*” (both are somewhere between “look” and “behold”). The two of them make few syntactic shifts between lines, with the notable exception of Lines 5–6, which are flipped in these two translations. All three translations have about equal numbers of shifts in meaning; for example, the Russian uses different words for “horse,” but the Hebrew translations repeat their choice of “*sus*” (male horse) in Levinson and Frishman and “*susah*” (female horse) in Shlonsky.

Shlonsky has the least extra information- maybe three words- but more omissions than the others. In Shlonsky, the belt is not red or any other color, the boy does not run at all, and the responsibility for the frozen finger is placed on the cold rather than the scamp who is playing outside—in Shlonsky, he is not even a scamp, but rather a babe. Frishman tries to capture the social reality of this boy’s serfdom (“household lad” in Nabokov’s translation), by mentioning that he is from the yard. Like many of the readers in 1937, Frishman’s readers in 1899 would generally have been able to look at the original, if necessary, to make this point further understood; Levinson does not

²²⁸ This is a biblical expression which means “to sit idle.”

²²⁹ To avoid my translating two different words as “carriage.”

²³⁰ “*hineh*” is a direct translation of the Russian “*vot*,” although neither has an English equivalent in this context.

²³¹ This word is an innovation of Shlonsky’s, which he used in his work since 1940, but this is probably the first example. *Milon hidushey Shlonsky* lists these other uses, but not the one in *Onegin*.

²³² This word has neither definite article nor possessive ending (it does not have a dagesh on the *heh*). By the 1966 edition it is “*titoro*.”

²³³ This is another innovation of Shlonsky’s which Yaakov Kenaani dates late (to his jubilee book of 1949–50), but it appears here first.

²³⁴ “*Hetzroni*” is a term that Shlonsky had previously invented to refer to those of noble birth, but in Pushkin’s text the word “*dvorovyi*” (“yard” or “serf”) is used, so he is keeping the metonymy of place for social class but got the class wrong. This was changed in later version.

²³⁵ This word is an innovation of Shlonsky’s, wherein he repeats some of the consonants to make a diminutive. Knaani does not list “*klavlav*” but does include “*klavlavon*” and “*klavlevet*,” placing the earliest use much later, in 1946–7.

²³⁶ Even-Shoshan places this use in 1 Samuel 28:8.

²³⁷ A part of the Hebrew but not useful in the translation. Also, this preposition is not typically found with this verb.

try to convey this nuance. Shlonsky uses a term that he had previously referred to the wealthy, so it was not so effective at conveying serfdom.

The winter theme of this stanza poses real challenges to the Hebrew language which is part of why Frishman chose to translate it in the first place. The specific challenges are lexical: although reasonably well-equipped to discuss a journey through the desert with horse and chariot, this Middle Eastern language's approach to winter sleigh rides was improvised and re-improvised without yet having acquired a fixed vocabulary. While Levinson does not make up new words²³⁸ to adapt Hebrew to the reality of winter, Frishman and Shlonsky do so in two different ways. Frishman favors hyphenation of two words to create a new one: “*‘eglas-hakerah*,” “*khishloyn-birkoyim*,” and “*‘eglas-hahoyref*” [“ice-wagon,” “knee-stumbling,” and “winter-wagon”]. Shlonsky, as has been described by Dov Sadan, makes new words not only to deal with lexical problems, but also with prosodic issues (Sadan in Knaani, 1989). His technique often involves taking a Hebrew root and using it with an unexpected morphology, such as “*tsamriri*” [“wooly”].

Ari Ofengended writes that Shlonsky's invented “words became an integral part of the language, including many which are of a recognizably “modern” character” (2006 339). These neologisms even inspired the construction of a *Milon hidushei shlonsky* [*Dictionary of Shlonsky's Innovations*], but several mistakes in this dictionary downplay the importance of *Evgenii Onegin* in his poetic innovations. Knaani repeatedly identifies words from this text as having had their first appearance years later in Shlonsky's own poetry. Based on the above examples, it seems that many new words found in Shlonsky's poetry were invented for this translation and then imported to his poetry later on, implying that Shlonsky's work on *Onegin* was more important than previously thought with regard to his innovations in the Hebrew language, and potentially upon Israeli Hebrew poetry in general.

This stanza also demonstrates why the translation had detractors, at least in Tchernichovsky, and suggests that Frishman and Levinson had better Russian. Shlonsky makes a serious mistake in this stanza which may be of just the sort that the older poet found objectionable. He seems to have

²³⁸ Except for one, arguably, in Line 2, “*bikron-masa*,” to refer to a freight carriage.

unintentionally mistranslated Line 8, which describes the coachman's garb. The way that Shlonsky punctuates this and surrounding lines indicate that it is the child, not the coachman, who is dressed in a belted fur. There seems to be no ideological reason to change the meaning of this part of the text, and the problem is not corrected in the next edition. By the 1966 edition, however, Shlonsky has changed the entire stanza and corrected the grammatical mistake.

Shlonsky's interpretation of the meter is closest to Pushkin's. Frishman writes in a different meter, while Levinson's interpretation differs significantly from Pushkin's. The Russian text is in iambic tetrameter with the usual features of an *Onegin* stanza, but an iambic tetrameter is capable of variation: the first three stresses are optional, and the fourth obligatory. In this stanza, the first (and last) feet are stressed without exception in all 14 lines, but the variety lies in the second and third feet. In the second foot, 11 of the 14 lines have realized stress, while in the third foot, only 4 lines have a realized stress: in total, 13 stresses are skipped. This variety, this play with the rules of the meter, helps the stanza to sound interesting rather than as a predictable singsong.

As discussed earlier, Frishman does not follow the meter and plays it safe with his amphibrachs and exclusively feminine rhymes; binary meters such as the iamb were not introduced into Ashkenazi Hebrew until Yaakov Fichman (Harshav 2000: 445-544). This is one of the reasons why Frishman did not go ahead and translate the whole novel, and why people wanted Bialik to do it, and perhaps why Bialik did not. But in the 1930s, both translators use this meter and in starkly different ways which helps to explain the fates of these translations.

Out of the whole stanza, Levinson has only 5 unrealized stresses, with 2 each in the first and second feet, and 1 in the third foot. In this stanza, several of the lines have each foot aligned with a disyllabic word, producing lines such as “*veET atzMO kaSUS raTAM.*” One line like this may be innocuous, but since most of the stanza's stresses are realized and this kind of line is found so often here, it produces the dreaded singsong effect I believe to be responsible for Dan Miron's scorn regarding this translation.²³⁹

²³⁹ Related in conversation on December 9, 2010.

By contrast, Shlonsky has many more pyrrhic feet (units within the poem that have unrealized stresses). Of the 14 lines, 10 have a stress in the first foot, 11 in the second, and 8 in the third. Although he does not have as many in the third foot specifically, he skips 13 of the stresses—the same number as Pushkin. This is achieved mainly through the use of many words of three or more syllables, which allow for the variety. The effect is crucial for the translation; without pyrrhic feet, the meter sounds very repetitive, more like a nursery rhyme. With them, a poet can show how the same meter sounds different in each stanza and can even match the rhythm to the mood.

With regard to rhyme, Aminadav Dykman has demonstrated that Shlonsky attempts to match either the sounds of Pushkin's rhyme pairs or their sense. Levinson shares Frishman's rhyme—albeit in the new accent—from “*naar-baar*” further suggesting but not confirming that he has consulted Frishman. Some of the rhymes suggest, but do not confirm, the influence of European Hebrew pronunciation upon the prosody. Levinson has a tendency, which appears in this stanza, to rhyme voiced and unvoiced consonants with one another, for example, “*makov-tiznof*.” Although this is an acceptable type of rhyme within the Russian-Hebrew syllabo-tonic system, it evokes the Ashkenazi accent of Yiddish-Hebrew in which voiced consonants are unvoiced at the end of a line. Shlonsky, however, does the same; for example, in Chapter 4 Stanza 7 (discussed elsewhere in this chapter), both translators rhyme “*sof*” with “*ehov*.” It may be less common now, but this type of rhyme is still found in contemporary Hebrew poetry; for example, Maya Arad, in her novel-in-*Onegin*-stanzas of 2003,²⁴⁰ rhymes “*esev*” with “*kesev*” (114). When consonants remain voiced at the end of a line, a rhyme with an unvoiced consonant is less exact. In the case of Levinson and Shlonsky, the phonetic similarity between the consonants is greater because they probably have an accent which may pronounce these rhymes as “*sof-ehof*” and “*makof-tiznof*.” Frishman's rhyme of “*oyveres-hoyferes*” demonstrates the sophistication that rhyme-play with voiced and unvoiced consonants could achieve when they are not at the end of the word and before the changes in pronunciation. That these were acceptable rhymes also suggests that Levinson and Shlonsky may not have been writing in “Sephardi” Hebrew with a slight “Ashkenazi” accent.

²⁴⁰ *Another Place, a Foreign City* [*Makom aher ve-ir zarah*].

More significant, perhaps, is the completeness of the rhymes. Frishman's are all feminine, not attempting to translate the masculine ones, but along with that timidity comes a set of rhymes which is more difficult to achieve (because masculine rhymes only match one syllable while feminine rhymes must match two). One of his rhymes can be called "grammatical,"²⁴¹ relying on grammatical endings: as "*yodayim-birkayim*" ("hands-knees"), in which the dual plural ending "-*ayim*" is the only part of the words to rhyme. Likewise, Levinson and Shlonsky employ grammatical rhyme although perhaps more self-consciously. Levinson has "*doheret-meforeret*" ("gallops-crumbling" both in the female present tense) which hints at a stronger rhyme with the "o" vowel before the verbal suffix. Shlonsky's grammatical rhyme here is "*doheret-ḥoteret*" ("gallops-breaks through"), which uses a similar technique to that of Levinson. In the original stanza, Pushkin has two rhyming pairs of gerunds ending "-*aia*" and one pair with "-*iv*" for a total of three grammatical rhymes.

Shlonsky pays a great deal of attention to the meter—just what Nabokov warned against—and less to the literal meaning, as described earlier. But at the same time, he is the translator who adapted the Hebrew language to the lexical needs of the novel and matched the meter most closely, introducing new sounds and neologisms. Shlonsky's main goals are the modernizing Hebrew language and his own personal achievement, though Levinson seems particularly interested in conveying the actual details of Pushkin's text. Shlonsky tries to provide the spirit of *Evgenii Onegin*, while Levinson focuses on the letter of it, but that itself proves to be a deception.

4.8 UNDER THE SKY OF WHICH AFRICA?

In a translation such as Shlonsky's or even Frishman's, the reader can expect that a comparison with the Russian original text will yield strong cultural differences, as different national garb in the translation-as-clothing metaphor. But as in Carolyn Shread's discussion of the translator's colonizing footnotes (though its implications may be different in a Russian-Jewish context from what they are in a postcolonial context), Levinson's annotated and scholarly translation can inspire too much credulity in the reader. One comes to expect him to work towards a fairly literal translation

²⁴¹ An example of grammatical rhyme in English: "swinging-singing." Pushkin also uses grammatical rhyme, so my goal here is not to condemn its use in translation.

of Pushkin, and then is caught unawares when there is a real difference between the two texts. For example, when Pushkin mentions Africa in 1:L, Levinson gives an even more thorough footnote about Pushkin's great-grandfather than Grodzenski does, naming Ibragim Gannibal and giving a few lines of biography. One may not expect, then, that the annotated stanza itself, so apparently foreignizing that it even uses a loan word from Russian (*stikhiia*),²⁴² should refer to a very different kind of Afro-Russian exile.

PUSHKIN (LINES 7–14)	LEVINSON
<p>Пора покинуть скучный берег Мне неприязненной стихии, И средь полуденных зыбей, Под небом Африки моей, Вздыхать о сумрачной России, Где я страдал, где я любил, Где сердце я похоронил.</p>	<p>כָּרַךְ עַת עֲזַב הַף מְשַׁעֲמָם שֶׁל הַסְּטִיכִיָּה הַצּוֹרֶרֶת, וּבְאַפְרִיקָה, מוֹלְדֵת-נֹד, בְּחוֹל הַנֶּגֶב צְרוּב הַיְקוֹד, לְחַלֵּם עַל רוּסְיָה הַקּוֹדֶרֶת, נִתְנָה לִי סָבֵל, אֶהְבָּה, וְאֵת לְבִי קִבְרָתִי בָהּ...</p>
<p>'Tis time to leave the dull shore of an element inimical to me, and sigh, 'mid the meridian swell, beneath the sky of my Africa, for somber Russia, where I suffered, where I loved, where I buried my heart. (Tr. Nabokov)</p>	<p>It's time I should leave a dull shore of the enemy element [<i>stikhiia</i>], and in Africa, in the homeland of Nod,²⁴³ in the sand of the Negev of the burning blaze, to dream of gloomy Russia, that gave me suffering, love, and in which I buried my heart...</p>

Like Pushkin, the speaker of the Russian stanza has an African ancestor but grew up in Russia. Always an outsider in Russia he expresses a sense of exile at home and longing to return to a land where he has never been—a sentiment familiar to East European Zionists such as Levinson. Among the many curiosities of this stanza is the introduction of the Negev Desert (now a part of the State of Israel), as if Pushkin were writing a Zionist poem about homecoming to Palestine. (Recall that Levinson had already suggested that Pushkin would have been sympathetic to Zionism.) He connects Jewishness and Pushkin's blackness, finding common cause in this sense of being an outsider in one's Russian birthplace.

Shlonsky does not make this stanza Zionist, but if he had, it would have fit within the overall domesticating performance of his translation. His role in the aesthetic conflicts of his time and place

²⁴² As does Shlonsky.

²⁴³ Literally: "of wandering." This is from Genesis 4:16.

explains the peculiarities of his translation. Although he was a Zionist bard of the New Hebrew, a Futurist who opposed Bialik and Yiddish, his creativity was not independent of Europe. With nostalgia for Yiddish and the old ways diverted to an interest in Russian literature, the poet was also a part of the Russian Diaspora. Corresponding with Soviet intellectuals, reading the latest journals and poets in Russian, and translating a large body of Russian literature into Hebrew, Shlonsky carried out activities much like those of Jewish and non-Jewish Russian émigrés around the world. For the Pushkin jubilee, he tackled the most laborious translation task with his Hebrew version of *Evgenii Onegin*.

As we have seen, Shlonsky's translation is faithful to the complex meter while deviating from the original in several respects, sometimes in low-level details but sometimes with significant shifts in meaning. While Shlonsky Judaizes the meaning of the text at some points, he also Westernizes the Hebrew language and Hebrew poetry. Taken together, these approaches serve not simply to translate Pushkin's original text into Hebrew, but to act upon the Hebrew language and culture. The new meter, neologisms, and cultural ideas are brought into the Hebrew even when they have not appeared in the original. Shlonsky himself saw the translation as an organic entity which would change as the Hebrew language developed over the decades of his life in the twentieth century.

Though this translation would probably have been dismissed by another important figure of the Russian Diaspora, Nabokov, Shlonsky's domesticating translation should not be judged the way an English translation might. Although Shlonsky indicated that he did wish to preserve the novel for future generations of Hebrew-speakers who would be unable to read it in Russian, his fondest audience consisted of people who had enjoyed the novel in Russian long before 1937. This audience did not require a translation in order to have access to the novel, and Shlonsky was well aware of this. This translation uses Pushkin's Russian novel in verse as a vehicle for what Shlonsky and his audience wished to see in Hebrew: new meters, new rhymes, new words, new ideas, new jokes. The Jewish translations of Russian literature complicate some common assumptions about translation.

4.9 CONCLUSIONS

Maurice Friedberg writes that Pushkin “found [translation] useful for the study of poetic technique.” “[H]e was equally critical of literalism and excessively free renditions.” His translations, “which are rather eclectic—some quite literal others rather free) demonstrate that translation was to him a means to an end, an exercise aimed at enriching his own poetic equipment with forms and devices that already existed in French verse” (37). Zionists in Palestine were aware of this way of using translation to enrich and develop their language and culture. They participated in a tradition, stemming from *Haskalah* times, of using it for transformative purposes in Hebrew.

These Hebrew translations of Pushkin continue the *Haskalah* and newer modes of Hebrew cultural and language development, but quite a bit had changed. The old OPE project of getting Jews to be more literate in Pushkin and Russian literature had been so successful that even in Palestine among fellow Zionists, the new Hebrew-speakers celebrated Pushkin’s centennial even as they rejected many Jewish aspects of their past in the Jewish Diaspora. Though Zionist settlers had opposed attempts for Jews to assimilate into other cultures in Europe, when they came to Palestine they exposed the deep connection that had been forged between themselves and those cultures, especially Russian literature.

The two Avrahams discussed in this chapter, both of whom occupied central roles in Zionist Hebrew culture, openly took advantage of Russian cultural models towards the development of Jewish culture and their Hebrew Zionist revolution. At the same time, certain elements of Russian culture were such an intimate part of them that they spent years—even decades—working to bring these into Hebrew culture. Doing so filled several needs beyond the personal. They saw that Pushkin’s development of Russian literature was instructive for the development of Hebrew literature, that the Russian Revolution intentionally and effectively brought about significant changes in Russian culture (and they could pick and choose from Russian models of this), and that if their own revolution was successful, future generations of Jews would miss out on one aspect of the Diaspora past from which they could not bring themselves to part: Pushkin the poet and the Russian literature that he

represented. Thus the main audience of these translations was familiar with the Russian originals but devoted to Hebrew, and the mostly imagined future audience would be native Hebrew speakers.

Levinson tries to bring his reader to Pushkin, explaining as clearly as he can how the novel works and why Jews might be interested in it. The pride that he takes in this translation and his acceptance of it being overshadowed by Shlonsky demonstrate that this was also a personal challenge. Some readers preferred Levinson's more foreignizing translation to Shlonsky's domesticating one, which showed off like a new creation. Shlonsky was a "modernizer of language" (Ofengenden 2006 341) because

like Zionism itself, he marshaled the whole of preceding Jewish tradition and recast it into a new framework. All of these aspects of his work combine to forge a vehicle fit to carry the main issues of Hebrew writing of the 1930s: modernity, identity, and the struggle for self-recognition. (341)

Within those poetics and the ability to become a leader of Hebrew poetry in Palestine, Shlonsky sought to instead convey the spirit of *Onegin* rather than the letter of it, by trying to imagine how the novel would be had Pushkin written it in Shlonsky's Hebrew. Hence the careful attention to the rhythms of the *Onegin* stanza and the construction of neologisms, sometimes at the expense of literal meaning. The readers who loved this translation did so because they knew Pushkin in the original and because they enjoyed Shlonsky's own approach to Hebrew writing. This translation is a celebrity performance of the sort that Naydus' perhaps would have been. It also draws attention to Shlonsky's modernist poetics. Naomi Brenner writes of Shlonsky the poet,

"As Michael Gluzman suggests, Shlonsky employs the poetics of newness advanced by the Russian Futurists for political means—to help create a new society, a new language, a new homeland. But he also uses this "newness" to characterize himself as a fresh, vibrant writer on the literary scene." (383)

Scholars may not agree about the first point, but the second is significant for understanding the joy that this translation of Pushkin brought to many of its readers the feeling that something on the scale of *Onegin* could be done astoundingly well in their new language. It conveyed more celebrity

on Shlonsky as word of it spread around the world, but at the same time, his poetic contribution upset some Jews who preferred Levinson's approach and recently inspired Yoel Netz to try to write a translation which would be less Shlonsky and more Pushkin.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Katsenel'son's Hebrew monograph on Pushkin established a liberal, *maskilic* Jewish perspective on Pushkin. For Katsenel'son, Pushkin provided a fine example of how to make a modern and realist literature in one's national language, an example that Jews should observe. His conception of Pushkin is linked with his conception of Russia's Jews, however, because he saw them in a mutual relationship. Pushkin, more generally, presents his readers with a pan-Russian shared high culture to which all of the empire's minority nations could belong. Jews already knew and loved Pushkin for this, wrote Katsenel'son. While many non-Jewish European writers would be translated into Jewish languages, here in Katsenel'son's claims lies the distinction between Pushkin and other writers that would appeal to East European Jews: Pushkin was the national poet of the empire where most of them lived.

Frishman, too, saw Pushkin as an important example for Jews. Whatever could be said about the pogromists' non-Jewish cultures, literary geniuses such as Pushkin were to be seen as separate from all of that. Pushkin was a bibliophile (a type Jews were to find sympathetic) and a humanist whose ideas Jews needed to internalize in order to develop their own culture. He provided a modern prophetic mode, "Jewish" poems, and textbook examples of nature poems. The dialogue between Pushkin's work and Bialik's made Bialik, the Jewish Pushkin, an ideal translator. Frishman himself, privileging content over form, did not really try to convey how Pushkin's poems really sounded, so he may have also thought that Bialik would do a better job with the meter.

Bialik actually learned a lot from reading Pushkin and followed in some of his footsteps, but

while he did translate a couple of non-Jewish texts, *Onegin* would be too much. Bialik became a Pushkin-like figure within Hebrew literature—but as a renewer of Jewish materials (more in line with Pushkin’s Slavophilic side than with his Westernizer side). Of course, the whole idea of making a modern literature in Hebrew and of becoming its national poet was itself already a sign of cultural contact, but Bialik did not want to endorse Russification or Westernization, much less make the effort that a translation of a verse novel would require. And Bialik himself wrote in ternary or neobiblical meters, not iambs; he would have had to either change the way he wrote poetry, or change the meter of the novel. This would be a lot of effort to further link his own name with that of a famous non-Jewish poet, when instead he could continue the project of *kinus*.

Naydus, who probably grew up reading Pushkin, might have embraced such a connection. He adopted other aspects of Pushkin’s approach, namely the translation of foreign works or the writing of original works that one imagines had a foreign original text, that feel like translations. Not only did he practice his craft by translating Pushkin and other Russian poets such as Bal’mont, but he also—like Pushkin—turned to French poetry. And along with content, he adopted forms from foreign poetry in order to write something that Bialik would never write in (his preferred language of) Hebrew: high-culture poems in the vernacular.²⁴⁴ He also shared with Pushkin the idea of the old woman—Naydus’ grandmother, Pushkin’s nanny—imparting folk stories, which is reflected in his translation of Pushkin’s “*Skazka o mertvoi tsarevne i semi bogatyriakh*” (“Tale of a Dead Princess and Seven Heroes”). Naydus had a modernist poetics that incorporated a classic poet in order to further its modern mission and he considered this important enough to work on when he was sick with premonitions of his early death.

At the same time, the more populist Grodzenski saw in Pushkin an outsider like himself, someone who grew up as a member of an elite but did not fit in with its ideology—a bookish revolutionary who chose to write in the language of the illiterate masses. As Jews modern Jews became more conscious of their surroundings, they needed a Yiddish translation of this master poet of the region in which modern Yiddish literature happened. Like Frishman, Grodzenski expected that embracing

²⁴⁴ Bialik also wrote poetry in Yiddish, but his hopes were for Hebrew.

the foreign, as Pushkin had done, was crucial for the development of a nation's own self-expression and translation was key for this. As Grodzenski's paratexts to "*Poltava*" indicated, he saw in Pushkin both the national side and—even in a work such as "*Poltava*," which was not on the level of *Onegin*—a level of craft that Yiddish readers should learn about, in the interest of promoting art for art's sake. Bringing Pushkin to the Yiddish reader was a way of educating Jews. It also served the purpose of developing Yiddish culture by providing a basis for Yiddish opera.

Levinson also conceived of Pushkin as a revolutionary. Sharing Katsenel'son's interest in Pushkin as a lover of freedom for all peoples, he extrapolates further to suggest that Pushkin would have been sympathetic to Zionism. If Dostoevsky's Judeophobia could be brushed aside as a hatred of the (Diasporic) idea of the Jews rather than the people itself, Pushkin be even more of an ally because he believed in freedom for all peoples. While Levinson opposed Gershenzon's immersion into Russian culture and Pushkin studies, he himself was obsessed with translating *Onegin* and likely saw it as a contribution to the Hebrew cause. A cultural engineer himself, Levinson was especially interested in the mechanism of Pushkin's contribution to his national literature, all the way down to the meter.

Bialik and Mayakovsky were both contemporaries of Shlonsky's that fed his interest in translating quite a lot of Pushkin's work. Mayakovsky set the stage for modernist ambivalence towards a classic poet, and Shlonsky's own oedipal competition with Bialik fed his ambition to masterfully translate a work from which Bialik had shied away. Unlike whatever translation Bialik might have done, this would be in a more fluent, spoken Hebrew of the new accent. Shlonsky was far enough away geographically, temporally, and stylistically from Pushkin that he did not have the anxiety of influence that Bialik did; he needed to distinguish himself from Bialik, not from Pushkin. But as Pushkin was distant from the reality of Shlonsky and his readers, it worried the Hebrew poet that Israeli children would not appreciate this the Russian poet.

Despite Shlonsky's own love for Pushkin, the translation privileged the artistry of the Hebrew outcome as a "masterpiece" over the precise reproduction of Pushkin's meaning. Pushkin had affected the Russian language, and Shlonsky would use this translation to innovate in Hebrew. This approach made his translation controversial: it was much-loved and reissued, word of its wonders

travelled to China and to Soviet critics, but it has also been criticized for being too much a display of Shlonsky and not enough of Pushkin. I suggest that perhaps this made sense for a readership who already knew the Russian original could marvel at Shlonsky's accomplishment not because they could finally read Russian, but because they were excited about what could be accomplished in Hebrew.

For all of these translations, though some of the audience may not have known Russian, the same principle applies. The access to Pushkin that East European Jews had even without the translations makes them a peculiar case. This was especially so for the Hebrew translations, both the real ones of 1937 and the wartime translations that never appeared in print. Had Bialik translated the novel, he might not have been able to come anywhere near as close to the sound of *Onegin* as Shlonsky did, but the text would have been celebrated as a child of both Pushkin and Bialik. Jewish translators of Pushkin, motivated less by the dissemination of familiar poetry than by a Jewish national project, were enabled or even encouraged to leave their individual marks on the text. This approach, however, was understood to express more of the translator's voice and less of Pushkin's, leaving an opening for a new translation.

From 1937 until 2012, the only Jewish translations of *Onegin* to appear were revisions and reprints of Avraham Shlonsky's version. But the world of Hebrew literature had changed a lot since then: Israelis paid more attention to contemporary English literature and less to Russian literature, while a new wave of Russian-speaking immigrants from the former Soviet Union arrived in Israel to be called *rusim* (Russians) by their Hebrew-speaking neighbors. These new immigrants have retained much of their "Russian" heritage and created new Israeli literature in Russian. It was through contemporary English literature that Israeli Californian Maya Arad may have been inspired to write her novel-in-*Onegin*-stanzas, *Another Place, a Foreign City* (*Makom 'aher ve'ir zarah*) by Indian Californian Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate* a novel-in-*Onegin*-stanzas that cites Charles Johnston's English *Onegin* for its inspiration.²⁴⁵ Bringing the grand total of Hebrew translations to 3 in 2012, Arad's father-in-law Yoel Netz explains why he thought it necessary to write a new translation even though Shlonsky's fine translation was still in print: "the audience sees Shlonsky and not Pushkin

²⁴⁵ Arad discusses her path from Seth to Pushkin in Thrope "Expatriate Act"; Seth mentions "Johnston's luminous translation" in Stanza 5.5 of *The Golden Gate*.

on the stage. The words are as if they are the words of Pushkin, however the spirit is the spirit of Shlonsky” (6).²⁴⁶

But this is not the only reason. His son Reviel Netz, in an afterword to the new translation, explains that his father moved to Israel in 1948 after having received a Soviet education and only with the recent influx of immigrants from the former Soviet Union did he realize that his identity was best defined as “Ruso-Israeli” (“*yisra’eli-rusi*”). Since a “citizen of Russian culture” is obliged to do something with Pushkin, and since Yoel Netz is a citizen of both Russian and Israeli culture, he just had to translate it into Hebrew (214–5). The new translation is an expression of this recently-acknowledged Russian-Jewish identity, over a century after Katsenel’son’s monograph.

In addition, the story of the centennials, which this dissertation has begun to tell, has also continued since 1937. In 1999—and beyond, as the 2037 centennial grows closer—the character of the Israeli celebration was different than it had been in 1937. Further research could investigate the relationship that this more recent wave of immigrants from the former Soviet Union has to Pushkin today and compare “Russian Jews” in Israel to those in English- and German-speaking countries.

Onegin did not figure in the many translations of Pushkin that were published in the USSR; a few Yiddish chapters were found in the archive of Ezra Fininberg (1899–1946), and some stanzas of these were published in *Sovetish heymland* in 1974 (89–94). Fininberg also worked independently and with another major translator of Pushkin, Dovid Hofshateyn. *Emes* (“*Truth*”) published most of the Soviet Yiddish translations of Pushkin, which included *Dubrovski*, a tale about an uprising against the aristocracy that was popular during this time; *Belkin’s Tales*, “The Covetous Knight,” and other stories and poetry. Most of these were around the time of the same centennial that was being celebrated in Palestine. In Argentina, the appeal of both Pushkin and Yiddish was still strong enough in 1937 that Menashe Konstantinovski published a Yiddish volume of Pushkin’s poems.

East European Jews have been involved in translating *Onegin* not just into Jewish languages, but

²⁴⁶ Netz evokes the voice of Jacob and the hands of Esau in Gen. 27:22, which I mentioned in the context of Frishman’s translation. Netz in Hebrew:

הקהל רואה על הבמה את שלונסקי ולא את פושקין. המילים, כביכול הן מילתו של פושקין, אולם הרוח - היא רוחו של שלונסקי.

also into Polish. Leo Belmont (1865–1941) translated *Onegin* into Polish in 1902. Adam Ważyk (Ajzyk Wagman; 1905–1982), a Polish Jewish poet with ties to the USSR, published his *Onegin* in 1952. These are not the only examples of *Onegin*'s Polish-language Jewish translators. Further study of Polish-Jewish Pushkinism could explore a missing perspective from the East European Jewish language polysystem. Comparing the Polish-Jewish translators with their contemporaries working in Jewish languages would shed light on this dissertation's unanswered questions about the persistence of Russian culture among Jews.

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