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## DAVID L. GOLD'S ENGLISH, JEWISH AND OTHER ETYMOLOGIES

**Abstract.** Thirty-one etymological studies published in a new volume by David L. Gold are discussed in this article. A general characteristics of David L. Gold's etymological work and methodology is given at the end of the study.

**Keywords:** etymology, word history, Jewish, Germanic, Romance, Slavic, methodology.

David L. Gold: *Studies in etymology and etiology (with emphasis on Germanic, Jewish, Romance and Slavic languages)*, ed. by F. Rodríguez González and A. Lillo Buades, Alicante 2009, 870 pp., ISBN: 978-84-7908-517-9.

This book is an unusual collection of etymological studies. The word *etiology*, as used by Gold, is an equivalent of 'semantic motivation'. Indeed, etymology is understood here, first of all, as "etiology" and history of words (in the first place, that of borrowed words).

The book contains thirty-one studies (thirty in English and one in Yiddish), "most appearing for the first time here, some being revised and expanded versions of articles previously published, none being reprinted without improvements" (p. 15). Unfortunately, we have no word index in this book. Something of a solace is the fact that some titles (e.g., No. 9, 14, 15, 26, 31; see also footnote 2 here) are unusually long and can even, to some extent, replace an abstract (however, the consolation is slightly limited since other titles are in fact short...).

An additional recommendation for the author is the fact that eighty works of his, published between 1979 and 2004, are named in the newest etymological bibliography,<sup>1</sup> and ten titles by Gold are listed in the bibliography of the newest etymological dictionary of English.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anatoly Liberman (with the assistance of Ari Hoptman and Nathan E. Carlson): *A bibliography of English etymology*, London 2010 (cf. my review in *SEC* 16 [2011]: 189-199).

<sup>2</sup> Anatoly Liberman (with the assistance of J. Lawrence Mitchell): *An analytic dictionary of English etymology. An introduction*, Minneapolis – London 2008, XLVI +

**1. The alleged Russian origin of French *bistro* ~ *bistrot* ‘wine merchant; public house’ versus its probable ultimate origin in Vulgar Latin or Gallo-Romance (on the persistence of a folk etymology and folk etiology despite the suggestion of better etymologies) (p. 19-37).**

This article presents fifteen arguments against the popular belief that French *bistro(t)* ‘1. wine merchant; 2. public house’ originates from Russian *bystro* ‘quickly’. Gold’s opinion is that this word should be rather connected with Vulgar Latin *bestiarius* ‘man who fights with wild beasts in the arena’ or maybe some other derivative of Gallo-Romance *beste* ‘beast, animal’ (with the following semantic evolution: ‘shepherd’ > ‘young servant’ > ‘waiter’ > ‘wine merchant’ > ‘bistro’, cf. p. 19, 35, 28sq.).

The reasoning here is twofold. Gold aims at showing why the folk-etymological explanation is wrong and, at the same time, at substantiating the Romance etymology, as suggested in most dictionaries. Gold is a committed discussor: “Playing devil’s advocate with myself, I readily offer counter-arguments to the objections if I can think of any (but also counter-counter-arguments to parry the counter-arguments and thus press my objection nonetheless)” (p. 22, fn. 3). Actually, his sequences of arguments are sometimes even longer, see for instance the “counter-counter-counter-counter-argument” on p. 25sq.

Some of Gold’s arguments are, so to say, unnaturally divided in two items (No. 1 and No. 2, p. 22, are in reality one entity) and some are less effective than others because they are chiefly based on his imagination: “The higher-ranking officers, being gallicized at least in speech [...] might well have preferred it [= wine – M. S.] to other alcoholic beverages, but, as noted above, they would have spoken French, not Russian, to the locals. Soldiers of lower rank, being ungallicized, would have preferred vodka [...]. It is hard to see, then, which frenchless Russians would have ordered wine” (p. 22).

This argument alone can hardly convince a reader, if alone because the Russian word *bystro!* need not have been used exclusively when ordering wine (German soldiers in Poland in the World War 2 used to shout *schnell!* when buying, ordering or demanding anything).

On the other hand, one finds also important arguments here. Such is that concerning the research history of French – the 19th century French language

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359 pp. – None of the titles named in this *Dictionary* appears in the present volume. Oddly enough, not even the article that was planned for it. Liberman has apparently worked with a typescript of D. L. Gold’s study “A hitherto unrecognized non-Jewish family of words going back in one way or another to Hebrew *chaver*: Australian English *cobber*, European Dutch *gabber*, New Zealand English *cobber*, Rotwelsh *Cabber* ~ *Kabber*, San *gaba*, South African *chabba* ~ *gabba* ~ *gubba*”. This article, cited as forthcoming in Gold’s *Studies in etymology and etiology...* must have been removed for some reason.

was investigated by innumerable scholars in innumerable aspects; nevertheless, the word *bistro(t)* is recorded “only from 1884, that is sixty-four years after the Russian occupation of Paris ended” (p. 25). This is doubtless a very important counter-argument.

The structure of the discussion is carefully wrought. The section on “The propagators of the Russian tale” (p. 29-33) is followed by a presentation of Gold’s own considerations, gathered in two sections: “Better explanations” (p. 33-35) and “Further discussion” (p. 35-42). Here, the derivational history of French *bistraud* ‘petit berger chargé de la garde du gros bétail’, *bistro* ‘petit domestique’, etc., as well as the problem of the word-final ⟨t⟩ are analyzed. Also the question of how bistros were called before the servants could have heard the Russian word *bystro!* is touched upon.

Additionally, a phonetic aspect should be emphasized that is not discussed by Gold. It is the first syllable of the Russian word that is stressed, whereas the vowel of the second syllable is strongly reduced: [ˈbustrǎ]. This means that French waiters, servants and merchants could not – exactly because of their lacking command of Russian – know that this word’s last vowel is written with ⟨o⟩. They heard [-ǎ] ~ [-ə] there, and this sound would have been probably rendered with *-a* rather than with *-o* in French. However, no such variant (*\*bistra*) appears to have ever been known.

## 2. The origin of Chicano Spanish *blanquillo* ‘testicle’ (on how emulated dyosemy can defeat the purpose of a euphemism) (p. 49-51).

This study has three parts: 1. Introduction; 2. Mexican Spanish *blanquillo*; 3. Chicano Spanish *blanquillo*. In the Introduction, the case of Israeli Hebrew *betsa* ‘1. egg; 2. ball = testicle’, its plural form *betsim* ‘1. eggs; 2. testicles; 3. courage, guts, nerve’ and *eshech* ‘testicle’ is discussed. At the end, Gold says: “The situation in Polish is similar to the one in Israeli Hebrew. The chief meaning of Polish *jeje* is ‘egg’ and in slang the word also means ‘testicle’ (I do not know whether the plural is also used in the sense of ‘courage, guts, nerve’). I know of no attempt to reserve *jeje* or use only in its literal meaning” (p. 50). This fragment needs some explanations.

First, the Polish word for ‘egg’ is not *jeje*. Rather, it once (in Old Polish) was *jaje* and is now generally *jajo* (plural: *jaja*). This is the official term, used, e.g., in trade correspondence and ornithological descriptions. The meaning of *jajo* is generally ‘egg’; however, the plural form *jaja* means both ‘eggs’ and (vulgarly) ‘testicles’ (of course, it is sometimes possible to use *jajo*, too, with the meaning ‘testicle’ if signaling the singularity is a must). A somewhat embarrassing situation with the question ‘Do you have any eggs?’ in an Israeli grocery

store, as described on p. 50, would be equally embarrassing in Poland if one used the form *jaja*. It was probably for this reason that the word *jajo* ‘egg’ was, at least in spoken Polish, replaced by its diminutive form *jajko*. The process might be understood as an attempt to divorce both meanings and to reserve the diminutive form *jajko* for use only in the meaning ‘egg’ (anyway, *jajko* does not show a diminutive meaning despite the diminutive suffix *-ko*). The situation seemed to become then somewhat clearer:

- (a) *jajo* ‘egg’ (pl. *jaja*) is a formal word;
- (b) *jajko* ‘egg’ (pl. *jajka*) is a colloquial word;
- (c) pl. *jaja* means also ‘1. testicles; 2. courage, guts, nerve’ in vulgar Polish;
- (d) secondarily (and relatively rarely) the singular meaning ‘testicle’ can be expressed by the singular form *jajo* (and this is also valid for the meaning ‘courage’, e.g. *facet nie ma jaj* [pl., lit. ‘the guy has no balls’] ~ *facet nie ma jaja* [sg.; rare; lit. ‘the guy has no ball’] means virtually the same: ‘the guy has no guts’; similarly: *z jajami* ~ *z jajem* ‘[somebody] with guts’).

This can be also shown as follows (C = ‘courage, guts, nerve’; E = ‘egg’; Es = ‘eggs’, T = ‘testicle’; Ts = ‘testicles’):

- (a) *jajo* E → *jaja* Es, Ts, C → *jajo* T
- (b) *jajko* E → *jajka* Es.

The problem is, however, that the diminutive suffix is still being perceived as generally diminutive. Therefore, persons who wish not to be seen as vulgar, even if speaking informally, tend to moderate the vulgar tone of *jaja* Ts and *jajo* T by using the diminutive form *jajko* E and pl. *jajka* Es also in the meaning of T and Ts; this, however, mainly occurs in some idiomatic expressions, as e.g. in *ale jaja/jajo/jajka/jajko!* ≈ ‘what bullshit!’. Thus the line (b) above should be changed in the following way:

- (b") *jajko* E (→ T) → *jajka* Es (→ Ts).

David L. Gold’s point is that “[a]t least in informal Mexican and Paraguayan Spanish *huevo* ‘egg’ has acquired the additional meaning of ‘testicle’” (p. 50), the semantic ambiguity was then felt as intolerable and a new word *blanquillo* (lit. ‘little white one’) was introduced to express the meaning of ‘egg’, so that *huevo* has only retained its etymologically secondary meaning ‘testicle’:

- (e) *huevo* E → E, T → T
- (f) *blanquillo* E.

However, the Chicano Spanish word *blanquillo* emulated the middle phase in (e) and, thus, *blanquillo*, too, received a new meaning: 'testicle'. As Gold puts it (p. 51): "With that change, the purpose for which *blanquillo* was coined – to avoid having one word meaning both 'egg' and 'testicle' – was defeated". The presentation in (f) should be in that event changed into:

(f) *blanquillo* E (→ T).

Approximately the same can be observed in Polish, too. The diminutive form *jajko* was introduced to avoid the ambiguity of *jajo*, see (a') above. However, the stylistic tendency triggered the change in (b"), the result (albeit not necessarily all details) being the same as in Chicano Spanish, cf. (b") with (f).

### 3. The British English origin of informal Israeli Hebrew *braso* (p. 53-55).

Gold's aim here is to show that the Israeli Hebrew slangism *braso* '1. military police; 2. military police officer' derives from a British English word *braso* '1. 2. id.' that, in its own turn, reflects the English proprietary name of a certain brand of polish:<sup>3</sup> *Brasso* (used, e.g., for brass buttons at uniforms) which, incidentally, is used in Israeli Hebrew, too. In the meantime, the meaning of 'military police (officer)' became obsolete in Hebrew, unlike the proprietary name that is still in use both in English and Hebrew.

This article is a nice etymological study and, at the same time, a good example of an obsolete meaning that usually cannot be found in a retrospective etymological dictionary (and most etymological dictionaries *are* retrospective) – a clear argument against those who doubt about the sense of publishing prospective etymological dictionaries.

### 4. American English slang *copacetic* 'fine, all right' has no Hebrew, Yiddish or other Jewish connection (p. 57-76).

Various etymologies have been suggested for the American English slangism *copacetic*. None has been generally accepted. Gold cannot solve the mystery either, but he can at least show that neither Hebrew nor Yiddish could have been the source. In fact, this is quite a normal situation in etymological research but this article contains also a somewhat more general conclusion: "The only value of the yarn about the Hebrew or Yiddish origin of *copacetic* is therefore shibbolethic: if you hear it, you can be sure that the storyteller is a linguistic

<sup>3</sup> Not "a certain brand of Polish", as a printing gremlin spelled on p. 54.

dilettante” (p. 74). Indeed, the conclusion brings solace to every etymologist who has, from time to time, to discuss in public (aunt Ann’s birthday, etc.) the origin of various words, risking yet another encounter with resolute advocates of folk-etymologies. One cannot but regret that this sentence of Gold’s is not placed as words of wisdom at the very end of the article.

### 5. The American English slangism *fink* probably has no Jewish connection (p. 77-85).

It is important to know that this article “is a revised and expanded version” of a 1998 article, “which is in turn a revision and expansion of remarks” (p. 77, fn. 1) that were first published in 1983. Thus, it may be viewed as an emotional reaction against a 1980 article by Renate L. & Steven M. Benjamin on the “Origin of American English *fink*” (p. 80). Apart from a discussion of details, Gold formulates also a somewhat more general idea here: “If my reaction to the Benjamins’ musings about Yiddish are angry, the tone is justified: Yiddish having long been the terra incognita of Germanic studies (it still is), certain students of German outrageously suppose that whatever is German must be Yiddish too or that a knowledge of German qualifies them to be students of Yiddish also” (p. 81sq.). This is a great problem, indeed. American etymologists feel excited when citing a Yiddish word, while Slavonic etymologists feel proud and happy, when citing a Hungarian or Turkish word – exotic words are attractive enough to be adduced again and again, even if the authors are not ready to learn any exotic language.<sup>4</sup>

What concerns Gold’s counter-arguments against the possibility of deriving the American slang word *fink* from the Ashkenazic Jewish family name *Fink*, occurring in a joke (p. 78) as the name of an “untrustworthy tailor”, one remark should be made: Even if the general line of reasoning (and also, by the same token, the final negative conclusion) is probably correct, argument 3 (p. 79) appears to me somewhat less certain. It goes as follows: “[...] the presence of the rise-fall intonation in the joke leads us to conclude that it was made up in Eastern Ashkenazic English-speaking circles and has been told only in those circles”. Now, it is virtually a rule in Polish to retell original Jewish jokes with what is called “Jewish intonation” in Poland (of course, as far as a Pole can imitate it; however, generally even those who cannot nevertheless do try). That is why I am slightly skeptical about the claim that only Eastern Ashkenazic circles could retell the joke with the rise-fall intonation in America.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. also my remarks on Siberian data used for the etymology of *mammoth* (in: *Folia Orientalia* 36 [2000]: 304sq.) and those on the general state of Slavonic philologists’ Turkological ignorance (in: *Studia Turcologica Cracoviensia* 10 [2005]: 438, fn. 6).

## 6. Definite and possible English reflexes of Spanish *garbanzo* 'chickpea' (p. 87-90).

The simplest way to explain the American English slang word *garbonzas* 'woman's breasts' is to say it is a plural form of *garbonza* 'woman's breast' that is, in its own turn, a garbled guise of English *garbanzo* 'chickpea' < Spanish *garbanzo* id. Gold tries to explain the slangism as a blend of *garbanzo* 'chickpea' and American English slang *gazonga(s)* 'woman's breast(s)' < *bazonga(s)* id., *bazooka(s)* id. < *bazooka* [weapon] (p. 89). Actually, I fail to see good arguments in favour of introducing this (rather complex) blend. The semantic change of 'peas' > 'breasts' does not seem to need additional support. The editor of *Verba* who first published this study of Gold's in 2000 will have probably been of the same opinion because he has added a footnote with the following examples: Catalan (informal) *cigró* 'pea', pl. *cigróns* '1. peas; 2. testicles' and the diminutive form *cigronets* 'small breasts'.

Besides, Gold points out that "the use of *garbanzo* in the formation of a word designating an erogenous part of the body has a precedent in Juvenal, who uses Latin *cicer* 'chickpea' to designate the testicles or perhaps the penis (Latinists are not sure which) [...]" (p. 89) – here, however, the Latin word *cicer* has just undergone a simple semantic change and the Latin model (word A 'x' > 'y') does not resemble much what Gold suggests (word A<sub>1</sub> 'x' contaminates with word B 'y' → word A<sub>2</sub> 'y').

## 7. Originally American English *glitz*, *glitz up*, and *glitzy* probably have no Yiddish connection (p. 91-103).

Both the spelling and the sound of these words suggest a German etymon (e.g., the German verb *glitzern* 'glitter'). However, the earliest known attestation of this word family in English is the verb *glitz up* 'make glitzy', used in a 1956 newspaper article. In those times, the German influence on American English was fairly unlikely. Therefore an idea came up that Yiddish was an intermediary between German and English. Historically speaking, this is a possible solution. Only one thing prevents Gold from accepting this explanation: the sad fact that no such word exists in Yiddish.

In what follows, Gold first suggests a solution and then dismisses it. Three Yiddish words refer "to some kind of illumination" (p. 95) and, at the same time, begin with *gli-* and have a *-ts-*: the verb *glintsern* and two nouns: *glimts* and *glimtser*. The change of Yiddish *-mts* into English *-ts* would be easily possible "because word-final /mc/ might be hard for English-speakers to pronounce" (l.c.). This appears quite a reasonable solution. Also *glimtser* should be taken

into account since the loss of the *auslaut* sounds could have resulted from reinterpretation of *-er* as a comparative suffix in English. Gold's counter-argument against his own solution is that none of these words has ever been really popular in Yiddish and "the only ones who knew any of them [in the United States – M. S.] were a few elderly people far, far removed from the trendy English-speaking circles in which the earliest of the three words must have arisen" (p. 96). This sociolinguistic objection cannot be flatly refused, to be sure. Nevertheless, I am probably more sympathetic to Gold's suggestion than he is himself. For one, I would not, unlike Gold, assess an English etymology of the kind of a blend of *gl[itter]* and *[r]itz* (p. 91) to be more realistic than the borrowing of English *glitz* < Yiddish *glimts*.

**8. Towards a dossier on the still unclear immediate etymon(s) of American English slang *hooker* 'whore' (with remarks on the origin of American English *Barnegat*, *Dixie*, *fly* ~ *vlei* ~ *vley* ~ *vlaie* ~ *vly*, *Gramercy Park*, *Hell Gate*, *jazz*, *Slughter*, and *Spuyten Duyvil*) (p. 105-162).**

An etymological study that is 58 pages long and does not solve the problem at its heart is a rather rare thing. Here, as a matter of fact, a few more or less independent studies are for some reason collected under one (long) title. I wonder if this really was a good idea, the more so as the part entitled "Appendix 1: On the etymology of the New York City place names *Gramercy Park*, *Hell Gate*, and *Spuyten Duyvil*, the New Jersey place name *Barnegat*, and regional American English *fly* ~ *vlei* ~ *vley* ~ *vlaie* ~ *vly*" (p. 122-147) was written by David L. Gold and Rob Rentenaar, a fact that is now virtually invisible, unless the reader has read the first paragraph on p. 122.

Nonetheless, the main part of this article is that devoted to the origin of the word *hooker* 'whore'. Even if the author cannot offer any ready etymology, his discussion of various etymologies suggested so far orders the picture and shows new vistas. Additionally, a chronological search was made and its result is a new (and very precise) date of the earliest known attestation of the word *hooker*: 25 September 1835. Thus, this article resembles a part of Anatoly Liberman's dictionary,<sup>5</sup> rather than a typical etymological study whose author usually seeks for a solution, possibly an ultimate one. On the other hand, it certainly is a dream of any etymologist interested in the life of words to find, for every word, a preparatory study like this.

<sup>5</sup> Anatoly Liberman (et al.): *An analytic dictionary of English etymology...*

**9. American English *jitney* ‘five-cent coin; sum of five cents’ has no apparent Jewish or Russian connection and may come from (Black?) Louisiana French *jetnée* (on the increasing difficulty of harvesting all the grain) (p. 163-192).**

The American English word *jitney* has, as a matter of fact, two meanings: ‘1. minibus-taxi; 2. a five-cent piece’. A reader who is not aware of this fact might wonder why the author is speaking of *jitney* ‘five-cent coin’ in the title and *jitney* ‘taxi or bus plying a fixed route’ in the text of the article.

Some names adduced here as equivalents in foreign languages are derivatives with meaning 1 semantically centring around names of coins or the fare paid for a ride. This seems to fit the situation in English. Nevertheless, Gold concludes this part of his article as follows: “None of the words cited so far helps us with *jitney*. Unfortunately I have not been able to find relevant words in other languages” (p. 166) and goes over to a presentation of historical attestations of the English word. After having discussed (and dismissed) possible Yiddish and Russian etymons Gold eventually suggests that English *jitney* goes back to (Black?) Louisiana French *jetnée* < standard French *jeton* ‘token, counter’ with the following semantic evolution: ‘token, counter’ >> ‘five-cent coin’ > ‘five cents’ > ‘vehicle for which the fare is five cents’ (p. 186).

Thus, names for ‘minibus-taxi’ connected with names of coins or fares (like Swahili *mateni matatu* ‘three ten-cent coins’ > ‘minibus-taxi’, Spanish [Mexico] *pesero*, lit. ‘*peso* taxi’; cf. English *dollar vans* in New York City) did after all prove to constitute a good background and, by the same token (or *jeton*, so to speak), to help us with an explanation of the origin of the American English word *jitney*.

**10. Etymology and etiology in the study of eponymous lexemes: The case of English *Molotov cocktail* and Finnish *Molotovin koktaili* (p. 193-235).**

It comes as something of a surprise to see that Gold was able to fill more than forty pages about an expression as transparent as *Molotov cocktail*. In point of fact, this was only possible because he presented numerous facts from outside linguistics, underpinned by various citations that elucidated the history of this weapon, rather than that of its name. It is very interesting to learn that bottles of vitriol were first used in New York City in 1863 but we do not know “whether [they] were given a special name” (p. 210).

It is, thus, beyond doubt that the expression *Molotov cocktail* was coined much later, namely in early 1940, during the Winter War in Finland. Oddly enough, “the English term [...] is first attested for 26 January 1940 and the

Finnish term [...] for 4 August 1941” (p. 198). The explanation of this discrepancy and the presentation of arguments in favour of the Finnish origin of this expression are the etymologically most important parts of this study.

### 11. Nine criteria for assessing the likelihood of Yiddish influence on English (with examples) (p. 237-255).

This study consists of two parts (not clearly divided from each other). First, the possibility of a Yiddish etymology of the American English negative *nit* ‘absolutely not’ is discussed (p. 237-246); then, other possible Yiddish etymons and generally, the problem of the Yiddish influence on English is considered (p. 247-254 + references: 254sq.).

From among examples presented in part two at least one is of somewhat more general value: Engl. *money-shmoney* (p. 251) is interesting on two counts: because it is not borrowed as such from Yiddish but, rather, the whole expression is an imitation of a Yiddish construction “X + shmX”,<sup>6</sup> and, besides, because this Yiddish “*shm*-device” has its own background that seems to connect some East European and Turkic languages. I cannot tell whether Gold’s term “pejorative prefix *shm*-” actually hits the (semantic) nail on the head. For one, its Polish equivalent “X + śmX”<sup>7</sup> expresses rather the meaning of ‘and so on, and such like, X and other things of this kind’. However, it is true that these expressions are more often than not used in pejorative contexts.

The question is how Polish *śm*- and another prefix of similar meaning, viz. *m*-, compare. The examples of the use of *m*- are Polish *kogel-mogel* ‘a confection made of egg yolk and sugar’ (with *kogel* possibly reflecting German *Kugel* ‘ball, sphere’, and thus originally meaning in Polish ≈ ‘yolk ball’) and *czary-mary* ‘hocus-pocus, mumbo-jumbo’ (< *czary* ‘magics, sorceries’; the fact that *m-ary* is phonetically identical with Polish *mary* I ‘ghosts’ and *mary* II ‘bier’ is just a coincidence, albeit, it is true, semantically fitting the expression very well).

The same construction can be also found in Russian, e.g. *матары-матары* < *матары* ‘Tatars’, *нация-мация* < *нация* ‘nation’.<sup>8</sup> The general opinion is that the “X + mX” reduplication originates from Turkic influence. Is Jewish *shm*- a further emotional enhancement of this originally Turkic construction?

<sup>6</sup> A rich collection of Yiddish “X + shmX” examples can be found in the article No. 26 here, esp. pp. 613-619.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. colloquial Polish (for instance, in the Polish edition of some Donald Duck comics) *wstążki-śmążki* < *wstążki* ‘ribbons’, *fabryki-śmabryki* < *fabryki* ‘factories’, and the generally used *taki-śmaki* ‘so-and-so’ < *taki* ‘so, such a’, *tak-śmak* ‘this or some other way’ < *tak* ‘so, this way, in this manner’.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Jürgen Plähn: Хуйня-муйня и тому подобное. – *Russian Linguistics* 11 [1987]: 37-41.

Was the evolution like this: Turkic *mX* → East Slavonic *mX* → Polish *mX* → Yiddish \**mX*- > *shmX*- → Polish *śmX*-?

Let us now come back to English *nit*. Its presentation in the form of eight criteria for establishing to what extent a given foreign word can be viewed as the source of a loanword has also some practical value – it can be used for other word pairs, too. Nevertheless, some details should be commented upon.

The difference between the third and the fourth criterion is very fine (I daresay, somewhat artificial). In addition, “an eighth criterion is another refinement of the third one” (p. 244). Gold’s scheme would certainly have been more transparent and more coherent if it were shorter – five criteria will be perfectly adequate.

The fifth criterion (p. 240) says that “the influence of one lect on another must be extensive [...] before particles may be borrowed”. This is in principle true. However, the author ignores linguistic jokes. One can easily hear a Polish student jokingly using English *yes*, French *oui* or Italian *si* in lieu of Polish *tak* ‘yes’ in an everyday conversation today. English *sorry*, too, is “often substituting for the Polish word *przepraszam* in the jargon of schoolgoers”.<sup>9</sup> In like manner Yiddish *nit* could have been first used as a joke which quite well fits Gold’s characterization of *nit* as “an ephemeral sporadicism” (p. 237). This is admittedly hard to prove but it must not be a priori excluded on a theoretical basis.

The seventh criterion (p. 241) says among others that “Yiddish items first enter the English of Yiddish-speakers and/or their immediate descendents (= Ashkenazic English); only later might they pass from Ashkenazic English into other varieties of Jewish English and/or non-Jewish English”. No doubt, this observation is methodologically very important but Gold’s final inference is rather amazing: “English *nit* does not meet the seventh criterion, for it has never been more frequent in Ashkenazic English than in other varieties of the language” (p. 243). Why should it? The problem is not how often but rather whether or not was *nit* used in Ashkenazic English. If it were not, the word could not have been viewed as a Yiddish loan – but it was. This is why I cannot call this conclusion of Gold’s convincing.

Nonetheless, Gold’s general opinion is certainly correct: English *nit* was not borrowed from Yiddish. It was, instead, “extracted from the sporadic American English slang interjection *aber nit!*” (p. 245) < dialectal German \**aber nit* (with *aber* ‘but’ + *nit* = standard German *nicht* ‘not’), functionally and semantically = standard German *aber nein!* ‘absolutely not!, by no means!’ (p. 246, fn. 17). This explanation is very well substantiated on p. 246 where even the stylistic value is pointed out: “Since English *nit* is ‘a decided negative, much

<sup>9</sup> Page 46 in: Elżbieta Mańczak-Wohlfeld: The influence of English on the language of Polish teenagers. – *Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia* 1 (1996): 45-48.

stronger than *no*' [...], it may well come from an emphatic expression. *Aber nit!* is indeed emphatic" (p. 246).

**12. English *paparazzo* < Italian *paparazzo* = communization of the label name *paparazzo* (in Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita*) < ? (p. 257-266).**

Apart from sporadic and rather weird "misetyologies" (as Gold calls them) as Engl. *paparazzo* < Italian < French *paperassier* 'scribbler, rummage in old papers' < *paperasse* 'old/waste paper' < *papier* 'paper' (see p. 264), the word *paparazzo* is generally derived from the name *Paparazzo*, as borne by a photographer in Federico Fellini's film *La dolce vita*. Gold, too, accepts this explanation. His aim is, thus, not to find an unknown etymology but to elucidate one detail: was there between the Italian personal name and the English common name an intermediary stage in form of an Italian common name?

Gold shows that the Italian plural form *paparazzi* was many times used as singular in English-language newspapers which points to the existence of an Italian common noun *paparazzo*, pl. *paparazzi*. Gold is certainly right when saying "[...] if English *paparazzo* were based directly on the film character's name, English *paparazzo* would be frequent [which actually is not the case – M. S.] and the plural of the English word would probably be *paparazzos*, that is, regularly formed" (p. 163).

**13. New York City English *parky* 'park-keeper' is probably a spontaneous coinage rather than a borrowing from British English (p. 267-269).**

The word *parky*, known primarily in northern England and Scotland as well as in America, "could have been coined in New York City independently of the British English word. Or, the American word could be of British origin" (p. 268sq.).

In case of a word that is morphologically perfectly transparent and both possibilities are approximately equally imaginable, a reasonable decision might seem rather unachievable. Gold cannot offer an ultimate solution, to be sure, but his way of reasoning shed at least some light on the problem: Since "the British word is recorded considerably earlier than the New York City one" and lexical borrowings are made rather through mass media than through direct contact with Scottish immigrants in recent years (p. 269) the word *parky* "is likeliest to be an independent local coinage" (l.c.).

**14. When chauvinism interferes in etymological research: A few observations on the supposed Vulgar Latin derivation of Rumanian *pastramă* ~ *păstramă*, a noun of immediate Turkish origin (with preliminary remarks on related words in Albanian, Arabic, Armenian, English, French, Greek, Hebrew, Judezmo, Polish, Russian, Serbocroatian, Spanish, Turkish, Ukrainian, and Yiddish) (p. 271-375).**

Even if this author calls his article “only a preliminary statement” (p. 313), it is over one hundred pages long and it is virtually impossible to discuss every aspect here. Thus, only a handful of remarks can be presented below.

On p. 299: “*ou* is pronounced /u/”. – It should be, of course, [u], not /u/. It is indeed amazing (and not really understandable) to see how easily and readily English native speakers resort to slashes, even if they do not mean phonemes at all. In this volume Gold uses also [ ], e.g. p. 441, fn. 31: Spanish “/a'ora/ realized as [ˈawra], /pe'riodo/ realized as [perˈjodo]”, and so on, but then, on p. 702, one finds again: “yet the English word is now pronounced with /z/” (why not [z]?), and on p. 717 we have the following: “Polish *pikanteria* (/pikanˈterja/, feminine)”, that is, with the phonetic pronunciation written in slashes again. Examples of this usage are habitual, those of differentiation between phonemic // and phonetic [ ] notations are extremely rare.

Aleksander Brückner’s Turkish etymons *basterma* ~ *pasterma* (p. 302sq.) should doubtless be read with -i-, i.e. *bastırma* ~ *pastırma*, as Gold rightly supposes because the letter ⟨e⟩ was quite a usual device (esp. in French-language sources) to render the high velar oral vowel [u] that is noted with ⟨ı⟩ in today’s Turkish orthography, introduced in 1928.<sup>10</sup>

Nowadays, Polish reflexes of this word can be presented in a more exact way. The oldest known record is *bastrama* of 1633; in 1874 a variant *pastırma*, too, is attested.<sup>11</sup> In recent years, the *pastrami* sausage has been being sold under

<sup>10</sup> The notation with ⟨e⟩ in Pierre-François Viguier’s dictionary (*Éléments de la langue turque, ou tables analytiques de la langue turque usuelle, avec leur développement, [...] par M.[= Monsieur] Viguier, Préfet Apostolique des Etablissements de la Congrégation de la Mission dans le Levant, Constantinople 1790*) was incorrectly interpreted as ä by Vilhelm Grønbech in his *Forstudier til tyrkisk lydhistorie* (København 1902): “according to Vigueries [!] *teyyoun* it should be ä” [instead of *ty(y)un* = Northern Oyrot *тың* ‘squirrel’ – M. S.] (page 48 in the English edition: *Preliminary studies in Turkic historical phonology*, transl. by John R. Krueger, Bloomington 1979). Correctly, by contrast, in Mertol Tulum’s article: ⟨babase⟩ = *babası* [‘his father’], ⟨tanemak⟩ = *tanımak* [‘be acquainted, know’], and so on (page 349 in: Mertol Tulum: *Meninski’ye göre XVII. yüzyıl İstanbul Türkçesi’nde /ı/ ünlüsü*. – *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları* 17 [2007]: 345-357).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Stanisław Stachowski: *Słownik historyczny turcyzmów w języku polskim*, Kraków 2007.

the name *pastrami* in Poland (or maybe only in Cracow?). It is mostly associated by Polish shoppers with Italian and/or Greek cuisine.

According to p. 308, “Turkish has *bastırma* (now standard) and *pastırma* (now nonstandard)”, no sources cited. I do not myself remember ever hearing *bastırma* used as a food name in literary Turkish (the word is a noun meaning ‘(sup)pressing, (sup)pression, pressure’); further, the descriptive dictionary *Türkçe Sözlük* (Ankara 1988) adduces only *pastırma* as a food name.

If Rumanian *pastramă* would have been borrowed into Turkish, its reflex would have been *\*pastrama*, rather than *\*pastarama* because the epenthetic vowel is usually narrow in Turkish.<sup>12</sup> However, the existence of such a word is far from being certain. First, the dissolved consonant cluster in the Turkish examples Gold relies on were all in word-initial position, whereas word-medial clusters are much better tolerated in Turkish, esp. on syllable boundaries which is also the case here. Thus, the possibility that the *-str-* cluster would have remained unchanged is not at all unthinkable.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, if the word-medial syllable of a three- or four-syllable Turkish word has a narrow vowel, it more often than not tends to syncope (e.g. Turkish verb *ayır-* ‘separate, divorce’ > *\*ayır-ıl-* (passive voice) > *ayırıl-* ‘be separated, divorced’), thus: Rumanian *pastramă* > Turkish *\*pastrama* > *past'rama* (with a reduced *-i-*) ~ *pastrama*, i.e. the three-consonant cluster would have been (almost or entirely) reconstructed.

Three arguments are given in favour of the Turkish origin of this word (p. 319sq.): [a] “Turkish *pastırma* is a nonstandard variant of Turkish *bastırma* ‘pressed meat [...]’” < *bastır-* ‘cause to be pressed’ (< *bas-* ‘press (down), squeeze’) + deverbial noun suffix *-ma*; [b] the Turkish etymon makes possible an easy explanation of the various phonetic variants present in this word family, with the exception of Polish form *bastram(y)* with its *-a-* in the word-medial

<sup>12</sup> Incidentally, this fact was the basis for defining the Hungarian word *király* ‘king’ as a word borrowed not directly from Slavonic (*\*kralb* id.) but through the mediation of a Turkic form *\*kıral* because all other words, borrowed into Hungarian directly from Slavonic have a low vowel *-a-*, *-e-* with the epenthetic function, cf. Евгений А. Хелимский [= Eugene Helimski]: *Király и olasz: К истории ранних славяно-тюрко-венгерских отношений*. – [in a collected volume:] *Славяне и их соседи: Место взаимных влияний в процессе общественного и культурного развития. Эпоха феодализма*, Москва 1988: 53-55 (reprinted in: Евгений А. Хелимский: *Компаративистика, уралистика. Лекции и статьи*, Москва 2000: 433-435).

<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, no perfect parallel can be given here because only one Turkish suffix *-rak* (comparative) begins with *-r-*, and it is actually unproductive and virtually lexicalized today. Nonetheless, if one would like to build an old-fashioned comparative of *dürüst* ‘honest, correct, accurate’ it would certainly be *dürüstrek* (not *\*dürüstürek* and still less *\*dürüsterek*); cf. also really existing forms with suffixes beginning with *-l-*, like *dürüstlük* ‘correctness, accuracy, soundness’; *turistler* ‘tourists’, and much else.

syllable; [c] Turkish also has derivatives with agentive suffix *-acı*, i.e. *bastır-macı* ~ *pastırmacı* ‘maker and seller of pastrami’ (p. 320).

Let us try to comment on these arguments, beginning with the last one.

An agentive suffix *-acı* does not exist in Turkish at all. There is only a denominal suffix *-cı* and a deverbal one *-ıcı*, both with the agentive function. This is, however, only a small remark, not really important in our context. A far more important question is how the existence of derivatives should point to the Turkish origin of the basic word. Turkish has also *banka-cı* ‘banker’, *posta-cı* ‘post office clerk’, *politika-cı* ‘politician’, and much else. It would not be wise to maintain on this basis that *banka* ‘bank’, *posta* ‘post’ and *politika* ‘politics, policy’ are originally Turkish or Turkic.

Argument [b] came only up because of the author’s reasoning on p. 303: “The fact that Polish and Turkish were in contact only from around 1550 to around 1750, that is, when Poland and the Ottoman Empire shared a border, is consonant with the fact that the Polish word is attested only for the seventeenth century. We thus have no reason to doubt that the Polish word is of immediate Turkish origin.” This is a very risky inference, indeed.

First, why should Polish and Turkish have been in contact “only from around 1550”? Apart from military and diplomatic contacts (e.g. the battle of Varna in 1444 or Mikołaj Firlej’s diplomatic mission to Istanbul in 1489) at least a source like the so-called *Pamiętniki janczara czyli Kronika turecka* written by Konstanty z Ostrowicy between 1496 and 1501,<sup>14</sup> must be taken seriously into account by a philologist.

Secondly, the Polish word is not attested only for the seventeenth century, cf. the form cited above: *pasturma*, attested in an 1874 Polish source, the *-u-* of which admittedly pointing to a Middle Ottoman (≈ 1501-1800) etymon. But even if all records originated exclusively from seventeenth-century sources, this fact alone would not suffice to say that this word was “of immediate Turkish origin”. We still do not have a good knowledge of the history and the conduits of transmission of Oriental words in the Carpathian zone. A food made of salted dried meat was as good for Carpathian herdsmen who had no refrigerators on their mountain wanderings with sheep as was, e.g., the *bryndza* cheese (Polish *bryndza* ‘sheep milk cheese’ < Rumanian *brânză* ‘milk’). At any rate, one should reckon with the possibility that Polish *bastrama* was imported along (Balkan and) Carpathian routes and not at all directly from Ottoman-Turkish.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Stanisław Stachowski: *Glosariusz turecko-polski*, Kraków 2005: 11, 20.

<sup>15</sup> For examples of Oriental words found in Balkan and Carpathian languages see now: Corinna Leschber: Lehnwege einiger Orientalismen und Wörter eurasischer Herkunft im Rumänischen und den sonstigen Balkansprachen. – *Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia* 16 [2011]: 33-61.

Now, the most important argument in favour of the Turkish etymology is the argument [a]. It may even look convincing at first glance. And yet some doubts arise. The most characteristic feature of *pastırma* is its salty taste. Why should its name derive from pressing, and not from its typical taste? All the more so as *pastırma* is not actually pressed at all, its main component being fine, high-quality sirloin beef, dried, smoked and seasoned with spices. Further: the causative *bastır-* means ‘cause to press’, not ‘cause to be pressed’ which is a great difference because sirloin could not possibly press anything itself. Incidentally, the sense of the causative is not quite clear here (why should a name of spiced sirloin derive from *causing* to be pressed or even to press?). In reality, Turkish causatives sometimes express high intensity of an action, as is the case also with *bastır-* ‘1. cause to press; 2. press intensively > 3. suppress (an uprising)’. In addition, the basic word *bas-* can be translated with ‘press’ or ‘press down’, but not ‘squeeze’ (which is *ez-* in Turkish).

Thus, virtually no argument for the Turkish origin of the word *pastrami* ~ *pastırma*, and so on, can be readily accepted. Yet another doubt makes this explanation even less possible:

The *b- > p-* change can be relatively easily explained by a secondary influence of voiceless consonants *-st-* further on in the word.<sup>16</sup> The fact, however, that the tendency only affected the nominal derivative but never its (much oftener used) verbal base gives food for thought.

This is why I am rather inclined to interpret Turkish *pastırma* as a partially disguised reflex of Greek *βάστωμα* ‘corned meat or fish’, with a secondary devoicing (*b – st > p – st*), that is: Greek *bástōma* > Turkish *\*bastama* ~ *\*bastima* (the *a ~ i* alternation in word-medial syllables being a frequent phenomenon) ~ *\*pastama* ~ *\*pastima*, folk-etymologically associated and thus blended with the Turkish *bastırma* ‘pressing’ > *bastırma* ~ *pastırma*, a food name.

Nevertheless Gold’s main thesis (the Rumanian word *pastramă* is a Turkish loan) remains intact and is by all means correct, even if some details should be changed.

<sup>16</sup> This tendency which has also affected other word-initial stops is well known in Ottoman-Turkish linguistic history, cf. modern Turkish *tut-* ‘hold, catch’ < (14th-18th c.) *dut-* id., and so on (p. 255 in: Gerhard Doerfer: Ein altosmanisches Lautgesetz im Kurdischen. – *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 62 [1969]: 250-263).

A special case are the English reflexes of (Persian *pād(e)šāh* ‘sultan’) > Ottoman-Turkish *padişah* id. > *badiša* (1546) ~ *padşah* [-tš-] (1668) > *\*badşa* ~ *\*patşa* > *\*başa* ≈ ‘governor’ (> former English *bashaw* id.) ~ modern Turkish *paşa* ≈ ‘governor’ (> modern English *pasha* id.). For the Ottoman forms and earlier etymologies see page 119 in: Marek Stachowski: Garść etymologii orientalnych w historii języka ukraińskiego. – *Studia Slavica Hungarica* 53/1 [2008]: 117-122.

15. **An immediate or non-immediate Jewish connection for Dutch *poeha* and variants (> Afrikaans *bohaai* > South African English *bohaai*), French *brouhaha* (> English *brouhaha*), French *Brou*, *brou*, *ha*, *ha*, *Brou*, *ha*, *ha*, High German *Buhai* and variants, Low German *Buhê* and variants, or modern West Frisian *bahey* and variants has not been proven (with remarks on the Jewish Italian or Liturgical Hebrew origin of Arezzo dialectal *barruccaba* and the Liturgical Hebrew origin of Italian *badanai*)** (p. 377-407).

Although Dutch *poeha* ‘fuss; swank’ is the first word adduced in the title, the study begins with considerations about French *brouhaha* ‘babel, hullabaloo’. Generally speaking, this article is devoted to the etymology of various words connecting the content of ‘babel’ ~ ‘fuss’ with the opinion of Jews being very noisy. At the end of the article (p. 403sq.), one finds some additional expressions from Afrikaans, Bulgarian, Dutch, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian and Turkish like “Jewish synagog”, denoting ‘a noisy/disorderly place’. I think the emotional reaction of Gold and his discussion against such expressions that are, after all, a linguistic fact even if he assesses them as derogatory is easily understandable, yet out of place in an etymological article.

16. **Mexican Spanish *sarape* ~ *zarape* (> American English *sarape* ~ *serape* ~ *zarape* and French *sarapé* ~ *sérapé*), a word possibly from Tarascan /ʼC<sup>h</sup>arakwa/, probably has no Jewish or Iranian connection** (p. 409-539).

This is another long study with an informative title. Gold’s aim here is a discussion of Beverly G. Hill’s opinion on *sarape*, published in her 1988 article. Whereas Hill tried to find an etymon of the Spanish word in one of the languages of the Old World, Gold is rather inclined to accept a native American (Nahuatl?, Tarascan?) origin.

17. **Is slang American English *schnook* ~ *shnook* ‘pitifully meek person’ from informal High German *Schnuck*’ ‘a kind of small sheep’, Northeastern Yiddish *shnuk* ‘[elephant’s] trunk; snout [of other animals]’, or Plattdeutsch *Schnüek* ‘snail’?** (p. 541-554).

For the American English *s(c)hnook* usually one of the etymologies presented in the title of this article is suggested. For Yiddish *shnuk*, Gold says: “it is hard to see how we can get from the meaning of the Yiddish word to that of

the English one” (p. 544sq.), and this sounds quite reasonable. The High German meaning ‘small sheep’ seems to fit the English meaning ‘meek person’ best. It is not really clear to me why Gold has assessed the change of the Plattdeutsch meaning ‘snail’ into ‘meek person’ as a derivation that “would not be problematic” (p. 546) because snails are generally associated with being slow, rather than meek. In my opinion, the Plattdeutsch possibility is not very likely, whereas the High German word is the best candidate for an etymon of the American English word.

Even if the Yiddish meaning seems so different that it should not be taken seriously, I would still like to say a good word for it. I do not mean I can offer a ready and better solution. Nevertheless, one additional possibility should be examined before the Yiddish word is ultimately dismissed as semantically improbable. The Polish word *trąba* generally means ‘1. trumpet; 2. elephant’s trunk’ but it is colloquially also used with the meaning: ‘3. bungler, simpleton, dupe, sucker (easily deceived or tricked); clumsy, meek and shy (of children)’. I cannot say what semantic mechanism made possible such a change but the simultaneous presence of meanings 1, 2 and 3 in one word in Polish is beyond any doubt. If then, under Polish influence, the Yiddish word had adopted, or maybe rather evolved, meaning 3, it could have been a source of the American English word that was primarily used for “one who is easily sold and who can be made to overpay for merchandise” (p. 542). The problem is whether meaning 3 has been attested in colloquial Yiddish. If not, this conjecture loses its value. Gold is right when he concludes: “The origin of American English *schnook* ~ *shnook* is still unclear” (p. 553).

#### 18. Whence American English *scrod* and Grimsby English *scrob*? (p. 555-558).

The article is unevenly divided: three pages are devoted to *scrod* ‘a young codfish’ and three lines on the fourth page to *scrob* ‘Danish fisherman’. This author cannot explain the source of *scrod*. Since “Boston, ‘the home of the bean and the cod’, has an effigy of the ‘sacred cod’, from which the city derived much of its wealth, hanging in the State House” (p. 557), Gold concludes: “Might not *scrod* be a shortening of *sacred cod*?” (l.c.). This does not look very convincing. The more so as this interpretation leaves the semantic feature [+ young] in *scrod* unexplained.

As for *scrob*, Gold says no more than this: “[...] *scrob* (plural *scrobs*) is fishermen’s slang in Grimsby, England, for ‘Danish fisherman’. What is the origin of that word and might it shed light on American English *scrod*?” (p. 558).

In a footnote accompanying this last question Gold is very unhappy with an opinion of a friend of his who told him that “the present ‘speculative’ note is undeserving of being published.” Gold answer is: “[...] I now eagerly look forward to seeing Zoilus Redivivus give us the definitive etymology of *scrod* and *scrob*” (l.c., fn. 3). This must be an important problem for Gold because he mentions it already in his Introduction where he cites (p. 16) Horace, Samuel Johnson, John Locke, Günther Grass, Albert Einstein, James Thurber, Herman Melville, George Orwell, Anatoly Liberman, Randall Jarrell, as well as a Yiddish (“a well-put question is half an answer”) and an English saying (“half a loaf is better than none”) in order to silence his “criticasters” (p. 16), as he calls them. Principally, Gold is right – no doubt, half a loaf *is* better than none. However, the problem whether the phrase “What is the origin of that word and might it shed light on American English *scrod*?” actually *is* “a well-put question” and “half an answer” remains every reader’s guess.

**19. Does American English *shack* ‘shanty’ come from one or more Uto-Aztecan languages of the American Plains? (p. 559-561).**

The easiest way of explaining the origin of American English *shack* ‘shanty’ is to trace it back to Mexican Spanish *jacal* [x-] ‘hut’ < [š-] < Nahuatl *xacalli* ‘adobe hut’ (p. 560). However, the former Spanish [š] (not /š/, against this author who even says: “the first phoneme [!] of the word was /š/ (which later became /x/)”, p. 559) had become [x] before the word was borrowed into English, so that Mexican Spanish could not have possibly been the direct source of the English word. Nahuatl could not either because “Nahuatl and English have never been in significant contact” (p. 560).

Gold suggests that some other language of the Uto-Aztecan family Nahuatl belongs to could have been the donor. This is certainly a good idea. Unfortunately, he cannot name any specific language matching his scenario. Even so, this approach seems worth further close examination.

**20. The etymology of English *spiel* and *spieler* and Scots English *bonspiel* (p. 563-570).**

Most dictionaries classify English *spiel* ‘a speech intended for the purpose of persuading or selling’ as a loanword from German. Only three take into account Yiddish, too. Gold presents various arguments for the German and against the Yiddish etymology, the most important being probably the chronological ones. The oldest known record of the verb *spiel* ‘gamble’ is dated 1859 – “Yid-

dish influence on pre-1859 American [...] English is out of the question” (p. 565).

Additionally, some Dutch words borrowed into Scots English are discussed in a sort of appendix, i.e. part 6, coming after part 5 “Summary” (p. 568sq.).

## 21. English *Star Chamber* has no Jewish connection (p 571-573).

In this study no mysterious etymology is discussed. Rather, on the basis of a folk etymology the most important features of scholarly etymological research are presented. The folk etymology goes as follows: “According to an explanation still circulating among anglophone Jews, the first component of English *Star Chamber* [...] goes back to Hebrew *shetar* ‘[commercial] bill, promissory note [...]’. The supposition [...] is that Jews in medieval England presented to that court their promissory notes for collection and hence it came to be called after such notes” (p. 571).

The following criteria are presented against this explanation: [1] the oldest phonetic variant (*Sterred* [i.e., *Starred*] *chambre* [i.e., *Chamber*]); [2] the oldest semantic motivation (the ceiling was decked with images of stars); [3] the oldest usage (a name of an apartment of the Royal Palace at Westminster); [4] the sociocultural context (judeophobia in medieval England); [5] the historical context (the existence of the Court fell “within the 365-year period during which Jews were not allowed to live in the British Isles”, p. 572); [6] the philological context (“[...] no primary document [...] mentions both Jews and the *Star Chamber*”, p. 573).

Gold is speaking about “three separate proofs” (p. 573) because he treats [1] and [3], as well as [4] and [5] as one argument, and presents [6] as “a piece of negative evidence” (l.c.). Notwithstanding his own treatment, I preferred to list his arguments as six different items because this study can be very well used for didactic purpose and then a more detailed presentation of the embarrassing questions that are often ignored by “armchair and cocktail-party etymologists” (p. 572) should be of practical value.

## 22. Who can decipher (Yiddish?) \**“bashtem”* and (Yiddish?) \**“ghop bagi”*? (p. 575-581).

Gold’s problem here are not really etymologies as such but rather identification of two words – one of them is written *bestemm* in a Jewish journal article, the other one is the name of a game, spelled *ghop bagi*. Gold cannot

identify and explain them, so that his article is in point of fact a call for help and cooperation.

The article offers also data concerning some other game names, e.g. *shtrulkes*, *zaplkes*, etc. Especially, the game called *shtrulkes* or *strulkes* is discussed at length and this author says eventually: “Specifically, Polish is probably the source of the Yiddish word. Does that language have \**strulki* or \**strólki*?” (p. 579).

An answer to this question is not very hard: yes, it does. But the problem of etymology of Polish *s(z)trulki* has turned out to be much more complex, so I decided to publish a separate article on the origin of the noun *s(z)trulki* in a Polish linguistic journal.<sup>17</sup> Without adducing the entire word material (which would take up too much room in a review article) I can only say that this word, along with its various phonetic variants as *sztule* ~ *sztole* ~ *sztulki* ~ *sztrule*, eventually ascends to German *Stolle(n)* ‘horseshoe stud/screw’ (which was first used as gaming piece), possibly contaminated with German *Stuhl* ‘chair’, used as a technical term for ‘girder, support, underlayment, bottom layer’.

**23. The (solely Southeastern?) Yiddish cloth name *taniklot* and the rare American English baking term *poolish* ‘leaven, starter, starter dough’ (p. 583-585).**

This is another text in which no etymology at all is suggested, and this author feels compelled to limit himself to a more detailed presentation of the words named in the title as well as to an appeal to join him in further research.

**24. An instance of convergence: Frisian *witte* and Yiddish *mideye* (p. 587-589).**

This is a very nice study (first published in 1998) in which Yiddish *mideye* ‘extremely, absolutely’ is elegantly derived from Hebrew *mi yoydeya* ‘who knows?’, used in some exclamations, in like manner as, some years earlier, Frisian *witte* ‘very’ was explained as a derivative from *wa wit hoe* ‘who knows how?’.

Both etymologies are quite parallel. Nevertheless, I would like to discuss one aspect here. Gold’s opinion is that in both cases “weakening of internal word boundaries has led to phonological reduction” (p. 588). The problem, however, rather is *why* the internal boundaries were weakened. “The only major difference between the two usages is that the Frisian one is based on Frisian words whereas the Yiddish one is taken from another language” (l.c.). Thus,

<sup>17</sup> Marek Stachowski: Skąd poszły *strulki* i *hancle*? – *LingVaria* 7/1 (2012): 133-137.

weakening of word boundaries in the Hebrew phrase used by “Yiddish-speakers who do not know Hebrew” (l.c.) is well understandable. But the Frisian phrase is used by Frisians who do know Frisian. They must have had another reason than a missing command of the input language. This reason was, in my opinion, high frequency of usage of the exclamation *wa wit hoe*. The phenomenon of shortening words as a result of high frequency of usage is very well known.<sup>18</sup> Thus, there are two major differences between the Yiddish and the Frisian case, first being the one cited above, the other one being the difference of reasons of reduction: high frequency of usage in Frisian on the one hand and, on the other, unknown language (most possibly likewise combined with high frequency of usage) in Yiddish.

- 25. A few English words sometimes misattributed to Yiddish (*finagle, finical, finick, toco, trantle, and trantum*); a Yiddish-origin English word misetymologized for at least sixty-six years (*bopkes*); a misetymologized Yiddish pen name (*Shmul Niger*); and a misetymologized Eastern Yiddish word (*yavne-veyasne!*) (p. 591-608).**

Whereas the first six words in this article are sometimes treated as Yiddish loanwords into English which they are not, the other three words constitute two typologically different groups: *bopkes* and *yavne-veyasne* are, roughly speaking, Polish loans, and the pen name *Niger* – misinterpreted by Gold’s predecessors – is a quasi-latinization of a surname spelled <Charney> in English which was a rendering of the Eastern Ashkenazic family name *Tsharni*, going back to Polish *czarny* ‘black’.

- 26. Etymological and sociolinguistic notes of Czech and Jewish or possible Jewish interest (on Czech *fizl, frajle, hajzl, hira, ke’as, mecheche, Nabuchodonozor ~ Nabukadnezar, pajzl, pejzy, šmelina, šmelinář, šmok*; Yiddish *di alt-naye shul, peyem ~ peym*; Olomouc in Yiddish lexemes; Franz Kafka’s early linguistic history; and the investigation of Yiddish in Bohemia and Moravia) (p. 609-637).**

Here, again, various topics have been gathered in one article. However, this time a clear “common thread” can be observed: Yiddish-Czech linguistic contact. Gold tells us in the introductory section that he has been “in epistolary con-

<sup>18</sup> Cf. numerous studies by Witold Mańczak (e.g. his: *Développement phonétique irrégulier dû à la fréquence et dictionnaires étymologiques*. – *Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia* 12 [2007]: 99-105).

tact” with Ladislav Zgusta “for about fifteen years” and “[t]he present article is distilled” (p. 609) from these letters.

Apart from words that could be etymologically explained here, there are also some mysterious cases. One of them is the fact that two Hebrew names with a word initial ayin are differently rendered in the Czech Bible: *Hira syn Ikeš* where either \**Hira syn Hikeš* or \**Íra syn Ikeš* should be expected. Unfortunately, no solution is offered in this article.

The idea that Czech *keřas* ‘black-marketeer’ is possibly a corrupted reflex of Polish *kutas* ‘1. tassel > 2. vulg. penis > 3. vulg. arrogant jerk, swine, prick’<sup>19</sup> does not look really convincing (what about the phonetics?). If this, however, were the case, the word would have had a very interesting semantic history: Czech *keřas* ‘black-marketeer’ < Polish *kutas* ‘prick, jerk < penis < tassel’ < Ottoman-Turkish *kutaz* ~ *kutas* ‘tassel at a horse’s headgear’ ~ ‘ein an dem Halse des Pferdes gehängter Schmuck, Kopfschmuck’<sup>20</sup> < \*‘amulet’ < Old Turkic *kut* ‘1. divine favour, benevolent spirit; 2. good fortune, happiness’. Indeed, this is a very sad semantic degeneration...

As far as Czech *šmelinář* ‘black-marketeer’ is concerned Gold suggests that it is a secondary *šm-* derivative (for other examples cf. No. 11 above) of *šmeliná* [sic!]<sup>21</sup> ‘suspicious, clandestine enterprise; black market business’ < [Czech \**šmaliná* <] Yiddish \**maline-shmaline* < *maline* ‘hide-out’ (p. 613, 619) but he immediately poses a question: “[...] since Yiddish was almost extinct in Bohemia and Moravia by World War 2 [...], how could a Yiddish word enter Czech at that time?” (p. 619). This objection is doubtless justified. We can even go a step further: the semantic and the phonetic side of this etymology are also not really flawless (or are these two steps?). It is of course easy to say that Yiddish *-e* > Czech *-a* because this word had to be incorporated into a Czech feminine declension. That is true but the change of Yiddish *-a-* > Czech *-e-* is less clear, particularly as no \**šmaliná* – or \**maliná*(-*šmaliná*), for that matter – is in actual fact recorded in Czech. In other words, two explanations seem to be possible:

[a] Yiddish *maline* ‘hide-out’ > Yiddish \**maline-shmaline* > Czech *šmeliná* (as Gold puts it on p. 619). – Some objections: [a] the construct \**maline-shmaline* is not known in Yiddish (otherwise Gold would not have put the

<sup>19</sup> It is a curious coincidence that another word for ‘prick’, namely Yiddish *shmok* (< Polish *smok* ‘dragon’, not ‘snake’, as translated on p. 622) is discussed further on in this article, see pp. 622-624.

<sup>20</sup> Wilhelm Radloff: *Versuch eines Wörterbuches der Türk-Dialecte*, vol. 2/1, St. Petersburg 1899, col. 992.

<sup>21</sup> The correct form is *šmelina* (and thus also \**šmalina*) as adduced in the title of this article. In its text, however, the Czech word is consistently cited as *šmeliná*, which is retained unchanged in this review.

asterisk in front of it or called it a nonce formation); [β] there seems to be no trace of either \**maliná* or \**šmaliná* in Czech; [γ] the meaning of the Czech word *šmeliná* ‘suspicious, clandestine enterprise; black market business’ (p. 613) is admittedly not miles away from a ‘hide-out’ but the semantic mechanisms and processes are not really self-evident and should be explained.

- [b] Yiddish *maline* ‘hide-out’ > Czech \**maliná* > \**maliná-šmaliná* > \**šmaliná* > *šmeliná*. – The objections are principally the same as in [a].

That is why yet another channel of borrowing comes to mind, a somewhat longer one. A missing link between the Yiddish and the Czech word could possibly be a Polish reflex of the Yiddish word, namely: Polish *melina* ‘1. hide-out of criminals > 2. storeroom for stolen things’. The way from Yiddish via Polish to Czech seems to be a better solution. For one, Yiddish was not extinct in Poland by World War 2. Even if the word *szmelina* seems to be missing in most Polish dictionaries, it can be found in the Internet as a word used by young people with two meanings: ‘1. bad room/flat/dwelling place; 2. junk, useless implement’. Since the notion of a *melina* is generally associated with low quality of both rooms and products, it could have been easily blended with Polish *szmelc* ‘junk, rubbish, useless thing(s)’, and thus a new word *szmelina* came into being.

For Czech *pajzl* ‘bad tavern’ < Austrian German *Beisel* ‘tavern’ [< ‘small house’ – M. S.] < Yiddish *bayis* ‘house’ < Hebrew *bajit* ‘house’ (p. 621)<sup>22</sup> another reflex of the Austrian word should be added: Polish *bajzel* ‘1. brothel > 2. shambles’;<sup>23</sup> incidentally, cf. English *shambles* ‘disgraceful state of confusion’ (20th cent.) < ‘slaughter-house’ (16th cent.) < ‘butcher’s shop’ (15th cent.).<sup>24</sup>

In the next section of this article, Gold argues that “Kafka’s earliest language was [...] presumably Ashkenazic German (= German with Yiddish vestiges, that is, German on a Yiddish substratum)” (p. 631), rather than Standard Yiddish.

The end part of this article (p. 632-637) is of special interest to those who would like to learn more about Yiddish-Slavonic linguistic contacts.

<sup>22</sup> For the similar semantic evolution in Old French *bordel* ‘house’ > modern French ‘brothel’ see page 153 in: Marek Stachowski: Polnisch *Burdel* als Ortsname und sein karpatensprachlicher Hintergrund – eine Einladung zur Diskussion. – *Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia* 13 [2008]: 149-154.

<sup>23</sup> Page 151 in: Marek Stachowski: Polnisch *Burdel*...

<sup>24</sup> Page XIV in: John Considine: Historical lexicology. – John Considine (ed.): *Web of Words: New studies in historical lexicology*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2010: VII-XXI.

**27. On the probable Kenaanic origin of Eastern Yiddish *zeyde* ‘grandfather’ and *bobe* ‘grandmother’ (p. 639-668).**

Although only two kinship terms are named in the title of this article, the author discusses also some other terms. Gold’s conjecture may be true that the Czech hypocoristic nominative *děda* ‘grandpa’ or its vocative *dědo* (p. 651) or, maybe, also *děde*, the vocative of the stylistically neutral nominative *děd* ‘grandfather’ (p. 667) probably are relevant in the discussion of Yiddish *zeyde* id. In this context I would like to draw the reader’s attention to the fact that masculine vocative forms, esp. those of kin terms, titles (or other “appeal words”) and some first names are habitually used as nominatives in Cracow and, generally, in Southern Poland, e.g., *wujku ma...* ‘the uncle has...’ < *wujek* ‘uncle’. In lieu of *wujku* also *teściu* (< *teść* ‘father-in-law’), *Heniu* (< *Henio*, hypocor. < *Henryk* ‘Henry’), and so on, can stand. The tendency is fairly active and seems to spread on other groups of words (however, always only masculine personal nouns). The suffix *-u* has become to some degree generalized and can be attached to nominatively used vocatives even if the proper vocative of the given nominative is built with another suffix; this is the case with the noun *szeף* ‘chief’ → *szeף-ie* (regular voc.) ~ *szeף-u* (voc. used as a nom.), e.g. *szeףu mówi, że...* ‘the chief is saying that...’. It would be most interesting to know whether this process was (is?) an areal feature, rather than just a sporadic sign of a regional evolution. Needless to say, this wish concerns also other linguistic processes: to what extent did Yiddish participate in developing areal features (not only those of lexical systems) in Eastern Europe? Even if *zeyde* and *bobe* actually “can be only from Kenaanic” (p. 668)...

**28. *Zinfandel*: an American English grape and wine name of immediate Hungarian, Moravian Czech, and/or Slovak origin (on how the origin of a significans need not be parallel to the origin of the corresponding significandum) (p. 669-708).**

Apart from a short history of this article (p. 669sq.), it contains the following sections: § 2 – Sources in English (p. 671-685); § 3 – Sources in German (p. 685-698); § 4 – Collation of the English and German-language material (p. 698-699); § 5 – Conclusions (p. 699-706). The ultimate source suggested by Gold looks perfectly convincing: modern Engl. *zinfandel* (< earlier English *zinfardel*) << Austrian German *Zierfahndel*, lit. *Zier* ‘ornament’ + *Fahndel* ‘little flag’, “the grape in question being so called because its tendrils are multicolored” (p. 704). Less clear is the borrowing channel of the word into English. Unlike Gold, I can hardly accept the idea that the German word was first borrowed into

Moravian Czech (*cinifádl*, etc.), Slovak (*cirifandel*) and Hungarian (*cirfandle*, *cirifandel*, etc.) and then, in a more or less distorted form, reborrowed by a German-speaker, who must have spelt the Czech, Slovak or Hungarian *c-* as German ⟨z⟩, “which anglophones reinterpreted as standing for /z/” (p. 703). The thought of non-German origin of this English noun was possibly suggested by the fact that “the first known written use of our problematic English word refers to Hungary («Black Zinfandel, of Hungary») [...]” (p. 701). At the same time, Gold will probably have been right when hinting at a possibility that English *zinfandel* is “the earliest known spelling of the word but perhaps not the earliest spelling” (p. 704).

Gold’s explanation appears to me somewhat farfetched because of the complex story of *c* and ⟨z⟩. Besides, English *zinfandel* shows the *n – r* sequence of consonants. None of the Hungarian phonetic variants (*cirfandle*, *cirifandel*, *czirifandli*, *tzirifándli*, *tzilifant*, *cilifánt*, see p. 700) displays the same sequence. Apparently, the hint “of Hungary” should concern only the land of production, not the origin of the wine name – incidentally, it is exactly the difference that is rightly emphasized by Gold in this article.

I would rather derive English *zinfandel* directly from German *Zierfahndel*, admittedly, with two additional processes: [a] metathesis of German *r – n* > English *n – r*; [b] rendering of German ⟨z⟩ [ts] as ⟨z⟩ [z] in English, just as is the case with German *Zürich* > English *Zurich*. Both processes are easily imaginable. Such is also the subsequent assimilation of *n – r* > *n – n* in English (i.e., *zinfandel* > *zinfandel*).

**29. Nokh a pur dugmes fun der yidisher hashpoe af ivrit** [= ‘A few more examples of Yiddish influence on Hebrew’] (p. 709-715).

This is the only article written in Yiddish in this volume, and, thus, I do not feel competent to comment on it. A typographical peculiarity of this text is that it is published in the Latin script according to the Standardized Yiddish Romanization system, and – as is the case in the Hebrew alphabet – no capital letters are used at the beginning of sentences (on the other hand, they are used in titles and proper names, e.g., *Khsidic*, p. 711).

**30. Some more Israeli Hebrew items of German origin** (p. 717-721).

This is a continuation of Gold’s article on Hebrew items of German origin, published in *Jewish Linguistic Studies* 2 (1990): 215-217. Unfortunately, the basic three-page article is not reprinted in the present volume.

Two kinds of supplements are presented here: [a] Four corrections concerning *heksenshus* 'lumbago', *pikanterya* 'piquancy, juicy detail', *shtawb-zawger* 'vacuum cleaner' and *torf* 'peat'; [b] Thirteen new items, some of which are just loan words (e.g., *delikates* 'delicacy', p. 718), some other being calques (e.g., *kadachat-netsia*, a translation of *Reisefieber*, p. 719). In addition, Hebrew *flugelhoren* is discussed that cannot be possibly a direct loan from German *Flügelhorn* because this word would have yielded a \**flugelhoren* in Hebrew. The transmitter of the German word into Hebrew was English *flugelhorn*.

Gold is certainly right when attaching much importance to what could be called fine details by etymological outsiders, as in the case with Hebrew *flugelhoren* above. Analogically, Hebrew *delikates* 'delicacy' seems, at first sight, to go back to Polish *delikates* id., rather than to German *Delikatesse*, even if it is colloquially pronounced *Delikatess*'. And yet Gold rightly accepts the German colloquial pronunciation as the etymon of Hebrew *delikates* because both words are finally stressed whereas Polish *delikates* is not: [deli'kates], and "[t]he outright loans [...] retain the stress of their etymons" (p. 718).

The situation with Hebrew *pikanterya* 'piquancy' is not really parallel (although Gold names this word, p. 721, along with *flugelhoren*) because two features distinguish this word from German *Pikanterie* id. First, the penultimate stress which "suggests that the word is probably not from German but from Polish *pikanteria* (/pikan'terja/, feminine), which is from German *Pikanterie*" (p. 717). It is somewhat amazing that the different auslaut syllable was overlooked in this (otherwise correct) argumentation. Of course, a Hebrew reflex of the German word *Pikanterie* would be expected to be finally stressed. But also the difference between German [-ri:] and Polish and Hebrew [-rja] should be taken into account. I fail to see any argument against the Polish origin of Hebrew *pikanterya* 'piquancy, juicy detail'.

**31. Jewish Dickensiana, Part One: Despite popular belief, the name *Fagin* in Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* has no Jewish connection (with appendixes on some laws concerning personal names and on Dickens's authentic Yiddish name) (p. 723-857).**

This article is so full of facts and erudition that it can hardly be summarized in a concise review. First of all, the symbolic notation of "the name of Fagin the archvillain of Dickens's novel *Oliver Twist*" (p. 723) should be explained: in this usage the name is spelled ⟨Fagin<sub>1</sub>⟩ in the text of the article (should a 135-page study be called an article?), whereas ⟨Fagin<sub>2</sub>⟩ "stands for *Fagin* as one of the spellings which the East Ashkenazic demetronymical family name *Feygin* has taken in English" (l.c.). According to a popular belief, *Fagin<sub>1</sub>*

< *Fagin*<sub>2</sub> which, however, cannot be accepted because no scholarly proof can be given. Gold aims at showing that “**1.** The East Ashkenazic demetronymical family name *Feygin* (hence *Fagin*<sub>2</sub> also) probably did not exist at any time before May 1837; **2.** Even if it did exist before that time, probably no one bearing it was then living in the British Isles; **3.** Even if it did exist and was brought to the British Isles before that time, Dickens probably did not know of it; **4.** Consequently, *Fagin*<sub>1</sub> does not, despite popular belief, derive from *Fagin*<sub>2</sub>; **5.** *Fagin*<sub>1</sub> has no Jewish connection of any kind” (p. 725). Now, Gold very well knows that only [1] is a good argument (if it is true); by contrast, [4] and [5] are practically the same and they are conclusions rather than arguments; [2] and [3] are just conjectures. All in all, only [1] can be used as an argument, and Gold is aware of the fact that it is hard to prove, so he adds immediately one item more: “**6.** *Fagin*<sub>1</sub> is an opaque talking name” (p. 725). All things considered, even if not absolutely every statement in this study is equally certain, there can be no doubt about one thing: the idea of the Jewish origin of the name *Fagin* is even less certain than the evidence of these statements.

Two appendices are added at the end of this article: “Appendix 1 – Some laws concerning personal names” (p. 837-840) and “Appendix 2 – English *Charles Dickens* = Yiddish *Tshales Dikndz*” (p. 841-842).

A long bibliography (p. 843-857) is preceded by a short introduction, quite practically oriented. Having the next researchers in mind, Gold says: “To save them time and effort, let it be said that [here 28 titles are enumerated – M. S.] contain nothing relevant” (p. 844).

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*Summaries* (p. 859-870) are written in English, with one exception only: the summary of No. 31 (*Jewish Dickensiana*) is in English, Yiddish and German.

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Now, after we have reached page 870, the last one in the volume, it is time to think about most general features of David L. Gold’s writings. Four should be named:

Gold works philologically. He does not shy away from original sources. Precise chronology can be found in virtually every study, sources and dates are given remarkably frequently, citations are adduced fairly extensively.

Secondly, Gold is not interested in proto-languages. His main domain is word history, rather than reconstruction of proto-words and proto-forms.

Thirdly, Gold spares no effort in examining external, i.e. non-linguistic circumstances in which a word could have been coined or changed, borrowed or blended. If “etymology is unthinkable without the broadest exposure to the wide world”,<sup>25</sup> Gold is doubtless ready to connect his linguistic knowledge with his exposure to the wide world.

Fourth, Gold more often than not appeals to fellow etymologists. He poses questions and presents problems. But sometimes he is not in a position to give an answer by himself. Then, he does not just leave off, saying that a further analysis would exceed the bounds of his sketch. Quite the contrary, he asks his readers for help and continuation of research. This is a practical application of what I tried to express by the slogan “Etymologists of the world, unite!”<sup>26</sup> – and a joyful one because Gold’s studies were written earlier and my slogan was published before I could see Gold’s volume and in quite an independent context. Generally speaking, cooperation and a sense of community are the Achilles’ heel of etymologists. Gold seems to be aware of that and to encourage his fellows to cooperate and contribute to our togetherness.

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<sup>25</sup> Page 108 in: Anatoly Liberman: The etymology of the word *wife*. – Michael Adams, Anne Curzan (eds): *Contours of English and English language studies*, Ann Arbor 2011: 108-134.

<sup>26</sup> Page 194 in: Marek Stachowski: Liberman and Levickij: Towards comparative etymological lexicography of English and Germanic. – *SEC* 16 (2011): 189-199.