RAFI TSIRKIN-SADAN

Hebrew Verse and the End of St. Petersburg: A Close Reading of Ḥayyim Lenski's *Ha-yom yarad* (The Day Came Down, ca. 1930)

During his short literary career, Ḥayyim Lenski devoted many poems to the city of Leningrad: ten sonnets and two longer poems titled *Delator* (Informer, 1930) and *Galba* (1933). The extensive representation of Leningrad/St. Petersburg in Lenski's poems was unprecedented in the Eastern European chapter of Hebrew literature, which was usually anchored in towns or cities within the Pale of Settlement. Moreover, Lenski's Leningrad cycle relates directly to the Petersburg text (Vladimir Toporov) of Russian literature rather than central issues of Hebrew or Yiddish literatures of that time.

This paper focuses on the seventh sonnet of Lenski's Leningrad cycle, *Ha-yom yarad* (The Day Came Down), written approximately in 1930 and first published in 1939.[1] The sonnet was translated into English by the Israeli poet and translator T. Carmi (Carmi Charney).[2] As is the case with most translated poetry, Carmi's translation lacks some of the original prosodic and semantic nuances. The word "river" does not convey the full meaning of the Hebrew word *"ye'or,"* which usually refers to the Nile or the Tigris but in Lenski's sonnet to the Neva River in St. Petersburg. Moreover, his sonnet evokes biblical associations of exile and national humiliation. The translation of the names of St. Petersburg monuments, such as the Admiralty (the headquarters of the Russian Imperial Navy), from Hebrew into English is not accurate. Where the English version merely describes "the roof of the Admiralty," the original details the sharp tip of the building whose spire rises seventy meters high. The ship at the tip of this spire is one of St. Petersburg's famous symbols (**fig. 1**).

1 Ḥayim Lenski, Shire Ḥayim Lenski [Poems by Ḥayyim Lenski], Tel Aviv 1939, 33.
2 Ḥayim Lenski, The Day Came Down, in: T. Carmi (ed.), The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse, Harmondsworth 1981, 543.

In Their Surroundings, 157–170 | doi.org/10.13109/9783666306112.157

היום ירד

הַיּוֹם יָרַד בְּמַדְרֵגוֹת הָאֶבֶן
לִתְכּוֹל מֵימֵי הַיְאוֹר לִרְחֹץ. וּבְטֶרֶם
כִּלָּה לִטְבֹּל צָלַל פִּי תְהוֹם וְתֶלֶם
גַּלִּים עָבַר בְּתַהֲלוּכַת אֵבֶל.

יֶרֶדָה דְמָמָה שְׁלֵמָה וַחֲצִי אֹפֶל.
וַעֲגָלָה מוּפָזֶת וּמַזְהֶרֶת
שָׁקְעָה כְּפַת אִיסַאֲקִי בַּזֶּרֶם
כְּפַעֲמוֹן אָמוּדָאִים מְשֻׁלְשֶׁלֶת חֶבֶל.

וּכְמוֹ כַדּוּם זָהָב מְגֻשָּׁשׁ בַּמַּיִם
חוּד גַּג הָאַדְמִירָלְיָה. בִּעְבוּעַ, —
שׁוֹטֵף הַיְאוֹר בְּזֹהַר בֵּין עַרְבַּיִם.

הוּעָל הַמֵּת. הִנֵּהוּ הַטָּבוּעַ, —
אָרֹךְ, לְבֶן פָּנִים וּכְחוּל שְׂפָתַיִם
"הַלַּיְלָה הַלָּבָן" כֹּה יִקָּרֵאוּהוּ.[3]

The Day Came Down

The day came down the stone steps to bathe in the blue waters of the river, but it had scarcely immersed itself when it plunged into the depths. And a furrow of waves passed by in funeral procession.

Then complete silence and half-darkness descended; and round, gilded, glowing—the dome of St Isaac sank into the stream like a diving-bell lowered by a cable.

And like a ball of gold, the roof of the Admiralty, spires and all, gropes through the water. A gurgle. The river flows in the twilight glow.

Now the corpse has been hauled up, here is the one who drowned: long, white-faced and blue-lipped. "The White Night"—that is how he's known.[4]

3 Lenski, Shire Ḥayim Lenski, 33.
4 Lenski, The Day Came Down, 543.

The sharp tip of the Admiralty building also appears in Osip Mandel'shtam's poem *Admiralteystvo* (The Admiralty Tower, 1913) which serves as a major intertext of Lenski's sonnet. *Ha-yom yarad* also corresponds with other seminal representations of St. Petersburg in Russian literature, first and foremost Aleksandr Pushkin's *Mednyy vsadnik. Peterburgskaya povest'* (The Bronze Horseman. A Petersburg Tale, 1833). The flood mentioned in Lenski's poem recalls the flood in Pushkin's classical poem, which many scholars consider the first chapter in the long tradition of the Petersburg text, evoking images, monuments, and streets of Russia's imperial capital.[5] Both floods have a factual basis, referring to the two big floods in St. Petersburg's history: Lenski's to the 1924 flood, Pushkin's to the 1824 one. Much happened in St. Petersburg between the two floods. The city is not the same after the first disaster: It is no longer the capital of an empire but the seat of a new regime, and it has a different name—Leningrad.

Fig. 1: The Admiralty in St. Petersburg in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Naturally, St. Petersburg's literary image has seen numerous transformations over the course of its turbulent history. Nikolay Gogol', Fëdor Dostoevskiy, Aleksandr Blok, Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandel'shtam—the list of authors who contributed to the Petersburg text, capturing the demo-

5 Nikolay Antsyferov, Nepostizhimyy gorod [The Incomprehensible City], Leningrad 1991; Yuriy Lotman, Simvolika Peterburga i problemy semiotiki goroda [The Symbolics of St. Petersburg and Problems of the City's Semiotics], in: idem, Istoriya i tipologiya russkoy kul'tury [History and Typology of Russian Culture], St. Peterburg 2002, 208–220; Vladimir Toporov, Peterburgskiy tekst russkoy literatury. Izbrannye trudy [The Petersburg Text of Russian Literature. Selected Works], Moscow 2003.

graphic, economic, and political changes in the city and in Russia, is long. The sonnet *Ha-yom yarad* by Ḥayyim Lenski belongs to the dark chapter of the Petersburg text following the October Revolution. The last line of its first stanza describes the sunset in the city as "a furrow of waves passed by in funeral procession." Alongside allusions to ancient Jewish history, *Ha-yom yarad* also conjures an apocalyptic vision of the city's destruction reflecting the postrevolutionary phase of Russian history.

Therefore, *Ha-yom yarad* must be read within the overlapping contexts of both modern Hebrew poetry and Petersburg text of Russian literature. At first glance, the reference in Hebrew to the Petersburg text seems to create a contact zone and shared space between Russian and Hebrew literatures. However, Lenski entirely destroys that space: The word *"ye'or"* alone connotes the enslavement of the People of Israel in Egypt and the Babylon Exile and thus creates an overall negative undertone. At this point, one may ask: Does the "northern *ye'or*," that is, the Neva which crosses St. Petersburg, also represent a place of exile to the poet? If so, exile from where? Exile from the Land of Israel? Exile from his birthplace?

Much like the Russian authors born outside the city, such as Nikolay Gogol', Lenski portrays St. Petersburg as a menace. He did not identify with the city's revolutionary present either: In his Leningrad cycle, the communist revolution has failed to build a new and just world. In Lenski's imagination, ordinary people, in particular new immigrants from the province, suffer much more under Communist than under Tsarist rule. The sixth sonnet of the cycle describes the hardships of production workers in Leningrad. It is clearly based on Lenski's personal experience during the relatively liberal period preceding Stalinism. In many ways, his view challenges Yuri Slezkine's narrative of the revolution as a golden age of Russian Jewry.[6]

Moreover, Lenski's sense of estrangement from the city, which is palpable throughout his oeuvre, culminates in a radical metaphorical act of dismantling the Russian imperial subject itself. Lenski utilizes a rhetoric which borrows from the theory of the carnivalesque as defined by Mikhail Bakhtin in his seminal *Rabelais and His World*.[7] The use of carnival language, such as profanity and parody, in Lenski's Leningrad poems is aimed both at imperial monuments in the urban space and representations of the imperial capital in the Russian literary canon. He reverses the traditional function of the sonnet, which is to praise and romanticize an object of affection (see Petrarca, Shakespeare, or Pushkin), and expresses hatred

6 Yuri Slezkine, The Jewish Century, Princeton, N. J., 2004.

7 Mikhail Bakhtin, Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaya kul'tura srednevekov'ya i Renessansa [The Works of François Rabelais and Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance], Orange, Conn., 1986.

and rage against the city, even hope for the destruction of the Russian Empire as a whole.

In the second and third stanzas of *Ha-yom yarad*, the disappearance of imperial monuments—the St. Isaac's Cathedral and the Admiralty—in the floods of the river serves as synecdoche for the doom of the Russian Empire. Arguably, the whole city functions as such. St. Petersburg must disappear together with the empire. The anarchist tendency is even clearer in other sonnets in the cycle. For example, the fifth sonnet summons Gulliver to destroy the city, and only the latter's seasonal cold prevents him from doing so. The connection between the capital and the empire begs the question of Lenski's attitude towards the imperial theme in Russian literature in general.

As Harsha Ram points out in his *The Imperial Sublime. A Russian Poetics of Empire*, modern Russian literature emerged at the same time as the Russian Empire.[8] Moreover, the beginning of the imperial chapter in Russia's history coincided with the state's growing affinity for the classical tradition in art. The abundance of classical-style monuments in St. Petersburg, built to the glory of the Romanovs, certainly inspired Lenski's poetic accounts of Russia's imperial might. In other words, in order to understand Lenski's literary position, we have to examine the relationship between the Russian poetics of empire and the Petersburg text.

Russian Poetics of the Empire

Enchantment with the empire characterizes the works of many Russian poets and writers of the eighteenth century. They applauded the diplomatic and military achievements of the Russian state and used them to expand their poetic repertoire. The great nineteenth-century literary critic Vissarion Belinskiy wrote that Mikhail Lomonosov's 1739 ode to the conquest of the city of Khotin on the Black Sea coast was the first Russian poem written with the right prosody. Lomonosov had also penned an ode to the unveiling of a statue of Peter the Great. In fact, odes praising Peter the Great and the achievements of his successors became a dominant genre in Russian poetry in that period.

According to Harsha Ram, eighteenth-century Russian odes that followed classicist conventions made a significant contribution to the construction of the Russian imperial subject.[9] St. Petersburg functions in eighteenth-century and even early nineteenth-century poetry as an epitome of

8 Harsha Ram, The Imperial Sublime. A Russian Poetics of Empire, Madison, Wis., 2003.
9 Ram, The Imperial Sublime, 63–120.

Fig. 2: The statue of Peter the Great with the St. Isaac's Cathedral in the background, 1905.

the empire, as the very essence of the "imperial sublime." Yet, St. Petersburg's glorious image began to crack in the 1820s and 1830s with the Romantic turn of Russian literature. Now, St. Petersburg was portrayed as a city of "tragic imperialism" that was cut off from the rest of Russia.[10]

Pushkin's *Mednyy vsadnik* clearly illustrates this turn. It opens with an ode to Peter the Great, whose statue serves as the city's genius loci and symbol of the Russian imperial project (fig. 2). Pushkin writes, "'Here cut'—so Nature gives command—'Your window through on Europe […]'."[11] While this line praises the emperor for overcoming the forces of nature, including the Russian people's resistance to European civilization,

10 Antsyferov, Nepostizhimyy gorod.

11 Aleksandr Pushkin, The Bronze Horseman, transl. by Oliver Elton, in: The Poems, Prose and Plays by Alexander Pushkin, ed. by Avrahm Yarmolinsky, New York 1936, 95–110, here 95.

the rest of the poem casts a negative light on St. Petersburg and hence Peter the Great's legacy as a whole. The city appears as a source of suffering for its residents. The miserable life of Evgeniy, the protagonist of the poem, has nothing to do with imperial glory: "So, home Evgeny came, and tossed / His cloak aside; undressed; and sinking / Sleepless upon his bed, was lost / In sundry meditations—thinking / Of what?—How poor he was […]."[12] After his fiancée's death in the flood, poor Evgeniy loses his sanity and imagines Peter the Great's statue chasing him around the city.

It is as if the poet asks: Who is crazy here? The poor clerk, who wants nothing but a normal life, a simple dream crushed by the empire, or Peter the Great, who built his capital at an impossible location, sacrificing thousands of people in the process? Pushkin was an imperial patriot despite his republican views. In many of his poems, he praises the Russian Imperial Army and the territorial expansion. At the same time, he was also aware of the rift between the state and the people, as *Mednyy vsadnik* shows, which dramatically redefines the relation between poet and imperial rule. The poet persona he creates is not only an imperial ideologist but also a prophet who speaks on behalf of history and people. The emperor could not ignore this challenge: Pushkin was banished from the metropolis. The dynamics created after the prophetic turn in Russian poetry were repeated time and again in the history of Russian literature. There was hardly a Russian poet who did not eventually feel the wrath of the state and was exiled from St. Petersburg for a while.

These dynamics also reflected on the image of St. Petersburg, which stopped functioning as the epitome of "imperial sublime." The city's negative image was reinforced in Russian Romantic and Realist prose, especially by Gogol' and Dostoevskiy. Later, at the turn of the twentieth century, Symbolist poets continued to describe the city in a similarly negative vein. However, all these negative images did not result in the weakening of the Russian imperial subject, which served as the driving force of the city since its foundation. After the October Revolution, followed by the violation of many monuments, Symbolist poets who had cursed the city before became its greatest proponents.

The Acmeists, headed by Osip Mandel'shtam, never shared that hatred toward St. Petersburg. Quite the opposite. The Acmeists emphasized the Apollonian element of culture and adored the art of architecture. They often drew a connection between poetry and architecture. *Kamen'* (The Stone), the title of Mandel'shtam's first collection of poems, published in 1913, refers to the dominant element in the city's landscape. Mandel'shtam

12 Pushkin, The Bronze Horseman, 98.

dedicated many poems to St. Petersburg before and after the revolution. For this paper, his poem *Admiralteystvo*, completed in 1913, is of particular importance:

The Admiralty

> The Admiralty Tower
>
> The northern capital, a poplar tree droops, dusty,
> a transparent clock-dial tangled in leaves,
> and through dark foliage a frigate, an acropolis
> shines in the distance, brother to water, brother to sky.
>
> An air-boat, a mast no one can touch,
> a measure for Peter's heirs,
> and his lesson: a demigod's whim is not beauty,
> but the predatory eye of a carpenter, is.
>
> Four elements united, rule us, are friendly,
> but free man made the fifth.
> This chaste-constructed ark: isn't the
> superiority of space denied?
>
> Capricious jellyfish cling, angry;
> anchors rot, abandoned like ploughs—
> and there, the three dimensions burst their bonds
> and universal oceans open.[13]

Only a poet raised in St. Petersburg could write like this. The two images in the first stanza are particularly interesting: first, the "transparent clock-dial" in the Admiralty tower, which possibly hints at the end of time; and second, the image of the Admiralty building as an acropolis and frigate connecting classical architecture with the empire. The juxtaposing of these two images suggests the stopping of time and the end of history, and as such the destruction of the empire. The poem is a prophecy of destruction. Yet, it could also be interpreted as a eulogy to the founder of the Russian imperial project. *Admiralteystvo* explicitly laments Peter the Great's imperial project, which overcame the forces of nature and the laws of physics. His success encouraged other rulers and architects to construct

13 Osip Mandelstam, The Admiralty Tower, in: Complete Poetry of Osip Emilevich Mandelstam, transl. by Burton Raffel and Alla Burago with an introduction and notes by Sidney Monas, Albany, N. Y., 1973, 58 f.

Fig. 3: Postcard of St. Petersburg with a view of the Neva River and the Admiralty, ca. 1900.

magnificent monuments, manifestations of free artistic spirit, such as the Admiralty building (fig. 3).

Peter the Great appears in the poem as a creative role model. The passion for construction which motivates him overcomes the elements of air, earth, water, and fire. Thanks to his passion, which is also the passion for spatial conquest, Peter the Great manages to build the ark (at the end of the third stanza). The ark in *Admiralteystvo* is not merely a ship but a vessel of memory and cultural property to be filled with works of art and literature, that is, everything that belongs to the poet's world. In Mandel'shtam's imagination, the emperor and poet seem to complement each other, even though the former needs the latter more, for the artist must bestow meaning onto the sovereign's deeds and achievements. The poet, on the other hand, cannot avoid participating in the imperial project. The last lines, "and there, the three dimensions burst their bonds / and universal oceans open," clearly links the passion for construction and the quest for universal dominion. His vision seems greatly inspired by empire-building theory, although an empire serves here first and foremost as a major catalyst of civilization.

Ḥayyim Lenski's *Ha-yom yarad* and the End of St. Petersburg

In contrast to Mandel'shtam, Lenski drew heavily on destruction theory. He must have taken Mikhail Bakunin's famous statement, "the passion for destruction is a creative passion," to heart. The first stage of the empire's destruction is the imaginary obliteration of the city. In almost all poems of his Leningrad cycle, Lenski evokes the raging waters of the Neva River destroying the urban space. In some poems, the declaration of the event is followed by an exclamation mark. Yet, in the sonnet *Ha-yom yarad*, where the same scenario unfolds, the observer's tone is not malicious but a little grim. After all, the apocalypse, though an imaginary one, is a terrifying event. The opening lines suggest that time has stopped: "The day came down the stone steps to / bathe in the blue waters of the river." This end of history could be dated to a day in October 1917, although, in the poem, St. Petersburg is destroyed by weather and natural disaster rather than as a result of historical developments. As mentioned before, Mandel'shtam's poem creates a similar vision of timelessness. But in Lenski's poem, it is linked to the image of a mythical flood which swallows up the imperial monuments conceived by Peter the Great. Lenski does not even hint at Peter the Great's passion for construction and he refrains from portraying the tsar as victor over the powers of chaos. In his vision, St. Petersburg disappears entirely into the abyss. The first to sink is St. Isaac's Cathedral, built between 1818 and 1858 in honor of Nicholas I. It is followed by the Admiralty building, the very monument which inspired Mandel'shtam's image of "imperial sublime." Despite their different views of St. Petersburg, it cannot be concluded that Lenski rejects Mandel'shtam's poetics completely. In fact, he borrows a lot from Mandel'shtam, in particular the usage of concrete images. In this sense, it would be no exaggeration to say that he turns Mandel'shtam's art of the poem against his vision of empire and poetry.

Ha-yom yarad ends with a disturbing surreal vision: "Now the corpse has been hauled up, / here is the one who drowned: long / white-faced and blue-lipped. 'The / White Night'—that is how he's known." The space that St. Petersburg once occupied is now sunk in chaos. With the entire city submerged under water, the corpse pulled from the water is bobbing on the waves. It is referred to as "the White Night," alluding to Dostoevskiy's famous novella *Belye nochi* (White Nights), and could be interpreted as the dead body of the Petersburg text or Russian literature at large. Hebrew literature, on the other hand, seems very much alive, since the only survivor of the flood is the Hebrew-speaking observer who is writing the history of the last days of St. Petersburg.

Speaking of the observer, there is no indication as to where he might stand to witness the city's doom—the place is destroyed, even time has stopped—giving him the appearance of a transcendent persona out of space and time. He watches history unfold from a position that surrounds him, and the poet himself, with a prophetic aura. The choice of Hebrew for his account, however, does not necessarily imply the embracement of the prophetic mode of modern Hebrew poetry.[14] While Lenski's poems were undeniably written in the language of the biblical prophets, whose words provided a thematic basis to Russian poets as well—above all, the call for justice and protection of the weak—there is good reason to believe that Lenski's "prophetic aura" builds on Russian literary tradition. It is clear that he did not adopt the Russian prophetic mode as it is. He confronted this mode with its own fundamental assumptions, thereby pushing it toward radicalization. Lenski supports Pushkin's call to stand by the victims of the imperial project (such as the poor clerk in *Mednyy vsadnik*) but, unlike him, he cannot condone the system and acknowledge its greatness regardless. With this refusal, he escalates the confrontation between poet and imperial rule. Lenski's attempt to radicalize the Russian prophetic mode thus reconnects him to the biblical roots of the prophetic tradition in Western culture. Lenski did not strictly associate the prophetic tradition with Jerusalem and the Land of Israel. In his mind, it could be sustained anywhere, even in the Russian imperial periphery in Eastern Europe.

From St. Petersburg to the Woods of Belovezh: Lenski's Vision of Peaceful Coexistence

In the third sonnet of his Leningrad cycle, Lenski depicts a Russian emperor, probably Peter the Great, falling off his mare, which rears up at the sight of a wild bison from the Białowieża (Belovezh) Forest stretching across Lithuania, Poland, and Belarus (fig. 4). It is a parody of Peter the Great's representations in arts and literature. The sonnet also insinuates some kind of erotic desire between the Russian mare and the Belovezh wild bison. It seems that, in order to act on their mutual attraction, they must get rid of the emperor first. In this sonnet, Lenski dismantles Russian dominance—with St. Petersburg as its center—over Eastern Europe. He also reinterprets the region as a contact zone between the different ethnic groups based on equality and peace. Lenski's idyll has no room for imperial power. The bison, which represents the Eastern European imperial periphery, has no

14 Dan Miron, H. N. Bialik and the Prophetic Mode in Modern Hebrew Poetry, Syracuse, N. Y., 2000.

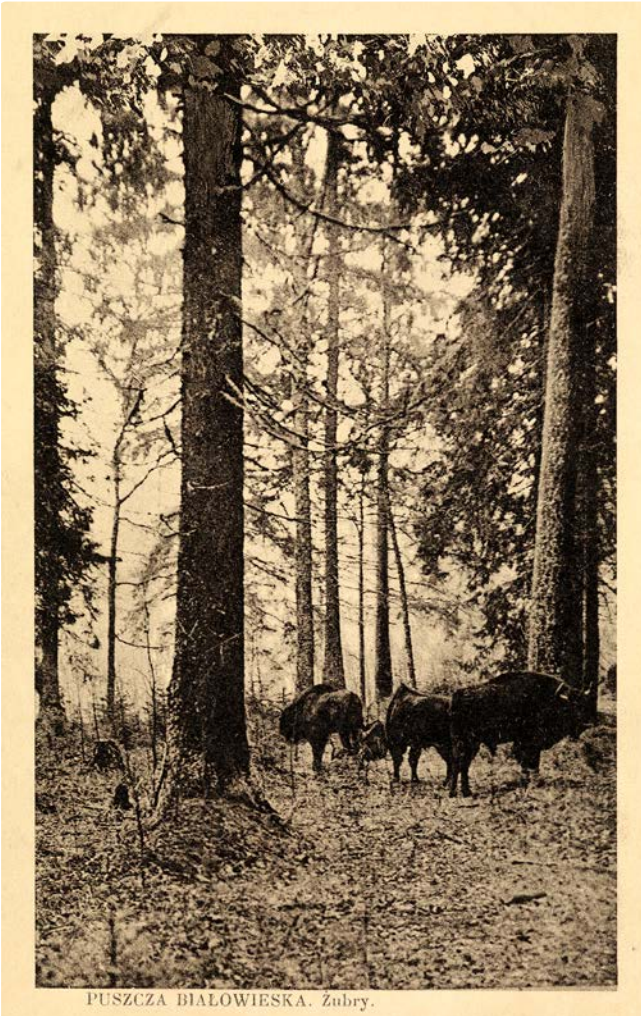

Fig. 4: European bison in the Białowieża (Belovezh) Forest in the 1930s.

Jewish or any other identity: It is a Jewish, Lithuanian, Polish, and Belarusian hybrid, wild and potent. Lenski, who was born and raised nearby the Belovezh Forest, could have found himself in prison for this poem alone. NKVD officials, many of whom literate in Hebrew, could have also interpreted it as an expression of Polish patriotism.

Lenski was not a Polish patriot. Where he chose his birthplace, amidst the forests of Poland, Lithuania, and Belarus, as setting for his poems, he spoke for all of the region's population: Jews, Belarusians, Lithuanians, and Poles. At first glance, his literary position seems exceptional. But Jewish literature in Eastern Europe has many examples of local patriotism, even alongside radical nationalist views. Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky comes to mind, the founder of the Revisionist movement, who was also a great local patriot of Odessa.[15] Shaul Tchernichovsky has always regarded his own poetry as connected to his birthplace Mikhailovka.[16] It is possible that, by demonstrating local patriotism, Lenski sought to add something he felt was missing or oppressed, first by Tsarist rule and later by Stalin, in the representation of Eastern European experience in the Western parts of the Russian Empire.

15 Dmitry Shumsky, An Odessan Nationality? Local Patriotism and Jewish Nationalism in the Case of Vladimir Jabotinsky, in: The Russian Review 79 (2020), no. 1, 64–82.

16 Ido Bassok, Le-yofi ve-nisgav libo er. Shaul Tshernihovski—ḥayim [Of Beauty and Sublime Aware. Sha'ul Tchernichovsky—a Life], Jerusalem 2017.

As Terry Martin shows, while the early Bolshevik authorities granted a great measure of cultural autonomy to the peoples of the former Tsarist empire, Stalin's rise to power signified the return to the prerevolutionary policy of Russification.[17] As argued above, Lenski did not distinguish between the Romanovs and the Bolsheviks. In his second sonnet of the Leningrad cycle, he writes, "The October storm is over, the city was renamed / but the world keeps on turning." Nothing has changed. The oppressive imperial regime continues under a different name. There is no reason for the local to leave his homeland and lead a miserable life in the big city. The idyll exists in the periphery. Contrary to Russian-born Hebrew poets and writers, such as Tchernichovsky and Jabotinsky, Lenski's disappointment in Russia did not lead him to embrace Zionist ideology. It is doubtful whether Lenski's poetry contains any ideological aspects that could be categorized as diasporic nationalism. As we have seen, even his usage of the Hebrew language bears a universal meaning. Therefore, his anti-imperialist rhetoric is first and foremost an expression of the supra-ethnic patriotism in the Western provinces of the Russian Empire.

For an expanded Hebrew version of this essay, see The Curse of the Forbidden City. Haim Lensky's St. Petersburg Sonatas and the Images of St. Petersburg in Russian and Hebrew Literature, in: Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature 30 (2019), 121–142 (Heb.).

Literature

Vered Ariel-Nahari, Haim Lenski. Seemingly Romantic, Essentially Modernist, in: Alina Molisak / Shoshana Ronen (eds.), The Trilingual Literature of Polish Jews from Different Perspectives. In Memory of I. L. Peretz, Newcastle upon Tyne 2017, 88–97.

Hamutal Bar-Yosef, Was Haim Lenski a "Shlimazel"?, in: Jews and Jewish Topics in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe 15 (1991), no. 2, 48–54.

Vladimir Toporov, Vladimir. Peterburgskiy tekst russkoy literatury. Izbrannye trudy [The Petersburg Text of Russian Literature. Selected Works], Moscow 2003.

Yehoshua A. Gilboa, A Language Silenced. The Suppression of Hebrew Literature and Culture in the Soviet Union, New York 1982.

17 Terry Martin, The Affirmative Action Empire. Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939, Ithaca, N. Y. / London 2001.

Author

Rafi Tsirkin-Sadan studied Hebrew literature and Russian studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he completed his PhD in 2010. Between 2010 and 2018, he served as postdoctoral fellow at Columbia University in New York, the German-Israeli Foundation for Scientific Research and Development, and other Israeli institutions. In 2018, he joined the Department of Literature, Language and Arts at the Open University of Israel as a senior lecturer. *Selected Publications*: Zwischen Ablehnung und Anerkennung. Simon Dubnow als Literaturkritiker, in: Jahrbuch des Dubnow-Instituts / Dubnow Institute Yearbook 18 (2019) (forthcoming 2022); Genre and Politics. The Concept of Empire in Joseph Brodsky's Work, in: Partial Answers. Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas 19 (2021), no. 1, 119–143; Empire, Nationalism, and East-West Dichotomy in the Novel "Samson" by Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, in: Theory and Criticism 48 (2017), 81–104 (Heb.); Wandering Heroes, Committed Writers. Nihilists and Nihilism in Russian Literature, 1862–1866, Jerusalem 2015 (Heb.).