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Trapped in Time – Early Modern Court Jew, Early Maskil or Outsider? Yehuda Leyb Nevakhovich and his Historiographical Treatise

Summary: Yehuda Leyb Nevakhovich (1776-1831) seems to be almost forgotten in current research on Jewish literature and culture in Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, among his contemporaries, he enjoyed a remarkable success in the realm of cultural production, and to some extent in the realm of imperial Russian society. Entangled between Hebrew, Russian, and European literatures, the scope of Nevakhovich's writing encompasses occasional poetry, emancipation treatises, and historical dramas. His understanding of literature was wide, interlacing the fields of literature, history and historiography. In his historiographical treatise "Remarks on a Review" (1806), the review being written by a German historian, Nevakhovich reflects on the state of Russian historiography and discusses the position of historiography and its meaning for the formation of a national discourse. He presents a polemic in favour of Russian scholarship that in its verve and gesture does not rank behind his emancipation treatise "Lamentation of the Daughter of Yehuda" (1803). With this treatise, he leaves the circle of Jewish intellectuals working in Hebrew. He now sees his place of speech primarily as one that is anchored in Russian imperial culture and attempts to install himself at this European interface as mediator. In his cosmopolitan mind set Nevakhovich was not acknowledged by later generations of Jewish thinkers and did not leave notable traces in the Jewish literature being created since the middle of the 19th century in Eastern Europe.

Keywords: Yehuda Leyb Nevakhovich, Haskalah, historiographical treatise, literature and society, Russian Empire, 19th century

UWIĘZIANY W CZASIE – ŻYD DWORSKI Z WCZESNEJ EPOKI NOWOŻYTNEJ, WCZESNY MASKIL CZY OUTSIDER?
YEHUDA LEYB NEVAKHOVICH I JEGO HISTORIOGRAFICZNE DZIEŁO

Streszczenie: Yehuda Leyb Nevakhovich (1776-1831) wydaje się niemal zapomniany w obecnych badaniach nad literaturą i kulturą żydowską w Europie Wschodniej. Niemniej jednak wśród swoich współczesnych odniósł niezwykle sukces w sferze produkcji kulturalnej, a do pewnego stopnia także w sferze imperialnego społeczeństwa rosyjskiego. Zaplątany między literaturą hebrajską, rosyjską i europejską, zakres pisarstwa Nevakhovicha obejmuje poezję okazjonalną, traktaty emancypacyjne i dramaty historyczne. Jego rozumienie literatury było szerokie, przeplatało się z dziedzinami literatury, historii i historiografii. W swoim traktacie historiograficznym «Remarks on a Review» (1806), napisanym przez niemieckiego historyka, Nevakhovich zastanawia się nad stanem rosyjskiej historiografii, omawia jej pozycję oraz znaczenie dla kształtowania się dyskursu narodowego. Przedstawia polemikę na rzecz rosyjskiej nauki, która pod względem energetyki i gestów nie ustępuje jego traktatowi emancypacyjnemu «Lament córki Jehudy» (1803). Wraz z tym traktatem opuszcza krąg żydowskich intelektualistów pracujących w języku hebrajskim. Teraz postrzega swoje miejsce wypowiedzi przede wszystkim jako zakotwiczone w rosyjskiej kulturze imperialnej i próbuje zainstalować się na tym europejskim polu jako mediator. W swoim kosmopolitycznym myśleniu Nevakhovich nie został uznany przez późniejsze pokolenia żydowskich myślicieli i nie pozostawił znaczących śladów w literaturze żydowskiej tworzonej od połowy XIX wieku w Europie Wschodniej.

Слова ключowe: Yehuda Leyb Nevakhovich, Haskalah, traktat historiograficzny, literatura i społeczeństwo, Imperium Rosyjskie, XIX wiek, połowa XIX wieku w Europie Wschodniej

УЗНИК ВРЕМЕНИ – ДВОРЦОВЫЙ ЕВРЕЙ РАННЕГО НОВОГО ВРЕМЕНИ, РАННИЙ МАСКИЛ ИЛИ АУТСАЙДЕР?
ИЕГУДА ЛЕЙБ НЕВАХОВИЧ И ЕГО ИСТОРИОГРАФИЧЕСКИЙ ТРУД

Резюме: Иегуда Лейб Невахович (1776–1831) кажется почти забытым в современных исследованиях еврейской литературы и культуры в Восточной Европе. Тем не менее, среди своих современников он пользовался заметным успехом в сфере культурного производства и, в некоторой степени, в имперском российском обществе. Запутавшись между еврейской, русской и европейской литературами, Невахович писал стихи, трактаты об эмансипации и исторические драмы. Его понимание литературы было многогранным, в нем переплетались области литературы, истории и историографии. В историографическом трактате «Примечания на рецензию» (1806), ставшем ответом на рецензию немецкого историка, Невахович размышляет о состоянии русской историографии, рассуждает о положении историографии и ее значении для формирования национального дискурса. Он ведет полемику в пользу русской учености, которая по своей энергичности и жестам не уступает его трактату об эмансипации «Вопль дочери иудейской» (1803). С этим трактатом он покидает круг еврейских интеллектуалов, работавших на иврите. Теперь он видит место своей речи прежде всего в русской имперской культуре и пытается установить себя на этом европейском стыке в качестве посредника. В своем космополитическом мышлении Невахович не был признан последующими поколениями еврейских мыслителей и не оставил заметного следа в еврейской литературе, создававшейся с середины XIX века в Восточной Европе.

Ключевые слова: Иегуда Лейб Невахович, Хаскала, историографический трактат, литература и общество, Российская империя, XIX век, середина XIX века в Восточной Европе

I Introduction

Yehuda Leyb Nevakhovich seems to be almost forgotten or at least marginalised in current research on Jewish literature and culture in Eastern Europe, more specifically in the Russian Empire. Nevertheless, among his contemporaries – Jewish and non-Jewish alike – he enjoyed a remarkable success in the realm of cultural production, and to some extent in the realm of imperial Russian society.

Born in 1776 in Letichev in Podolia, he became the teacher of Abraham Peretz in Shklov, in that time an economic hub and a centre for Jewish culture where *mitnagdim* were as active as *maskilim* and *Hasidim*.¹ With his former student Peretz, he moved to the imperial capital St. Petersburg where he acted as a merchant and intellectual with access to the higher echelons of Russian society. Having converted to Lutheran faith due to his second marriage, he died in St. Petersburg in 1831.

Belonging to the “small colony” of Jews of St. Petersburg, according to the literary historian, Israel Zinberg,² including e.g. the merchants Abraham Peretz and Nathan Notkin, he became

¹ D. Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews*, New York University Press, New York 1995, esp. pp. 91 – 100.

² I. Zinberg, *A history of Jewish literature*, trans. B. Martin, Hebrew Union College Press, Cincinnati/ New York 1976, vol. VIII, p. 219.

active in the capital – besides his economic obligations – as a writer, playwright, and a political actor. The “small colony”, still very much in the habitus of the corporative structures of the Polish-Lithuanian Union, performed a mediating function between the state, society, and Jewish interests, acting in accordance with the pre-modern “shtadlanut” principle. Zinberg commented on its ambivalent position:

Rich and enterprising, they had acquaintanceship with the most prominent strata of Christian society. Raised on the literature of the Berlin enlighteners and coming into daily contact with the Russian nobility and prominent officials, the European-educated merchants also felt as painfully as their brethren in Berlin not only the social-legal oppression of the Jewish people but also the contempt and cold hostility with which Christian society regarded the very name Jew.³

Nevakhovich found himself, thus, with clear echoes in his works, at various cross points and intersections of historical and cultural developments. Geopolitically, he had to address the consequences of the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the ensuing attempts to integrate Europe’s largest Jewish population into the Russian Empire, culturally he had to mediate between the concept of Early Modern times of the shtadlanut principle and the modern imperial approach of representation. Finally, he had to navigate the ambivalences of the Haskalah in a Jewish perspective,⁴ i.e. the societal transition process from “subject” to “citizen”. This, of course, raised questions of loyalty, of Jewish (in)visibility, of Jewish self-awareness, of the constitution of Jewish literature and, likewise, of Jewish presence in Russian literature and culture.

Entangled between Hebrew, Russian, and European literatures (at that time not Yiddish, which was still considered a vernacular for lower educated Jewish circles), the scope of Nevakhovich’s writing encompasses occasional poetry, emancipation treatises, and historical dramas. His understanding of literature was wide; indulging in historical poetry and drama, or in reflections on the Jewish condition, he pursued a concept of literature that other than today’s distinction between literature and historiography attempted to see them together. In other words, intellectuals assumed at times the position of a writer or a historian, as did the Russian thinker Nikolai M. Karamzin.

³ Ibid., p. 220.

⁴ On the Haskalah in the Russian Empire, see e.g. O. Litvak, *Haskalah*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick 2012, where she outlines the intricate relations and interactions between history, historiography, and literature.

In his emancipation treatise “Lamentation of the Daughter of Yehuda” (“Vopl’ dshcheri iudeiskoi”) from 1803 Nevakhovich addresses – only eight years after the third and final partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – issues concerning the Jewish condition in the Russian Empire. Still despised and marginalised by the Russian establishment and society, he presents to the Russian public an apology of the Jewish population in a historical and philosophical perspective, wrapped in a literary exegesis. The historian, Josef Meisl, remarks in 1919: “As the first apologetic writing on the Jewish question in Russian and a wake-up call to his brethren, it deserves special attention.”⁵

In his historiographical treatise, which will be at the centre of the following discussion, Nevakhovich reflects on the state of Russian historiography, taking up on moments of marginalisation, and discussing the position of historiography, and its meaning for the formation of a national discourse.

The inscription on his gravestone hints at his cosmopolitan mind frame that guided his work and thinking in a European, comparative tune. Due to time shifts in Jewish thought, philosophically, historically, and literarily, he fell into an intellectual time gap, being still there and not yet here:

Here rests in God the titular councillor and knight Leo v. Newachowitz [...]
There the dwellings, the worlds, the expanses – they will shine in full youth, after the passing of a thousand years; the passing of time will not take away their radiant light. Authored by Herder, from the writings of the deceased.⁶

II Engaging in History, Politics, and Literature – A Historiographical Treatise

Three years after the publication of his emancipation treatise, Nevakhovich published a historiographical treatise entitled “Remarks on a review concerning the attempt at a Russian history by Mr. Elagin” (“Primechaniia na retsenziu kasatel’no opyta Rossiiskoi istorii g. Elagina”). Before the treatise was published as a separate book edition by the St. Petersburg printing house Drekhslers

⁵ J. Meisl, *Haskalah*, Schwetschke, Berlin 1919, p. 54 [“Als die erste apologetische Schrift über die Judenfrage in russischer Sprache und Weckruf an die Volksgenossen verdient sie ganz besondere Beachtung.”].

⁶ Ju. Gessen, *Evrei v Rossii*, Tipo-litografija A. G. Rozena, S.-Peterburg 1906, p. 138 [„Hier ruhet in Gott der Titularraht und Ritter Leo v. Newachowitz [...] Tam obiteli, miry, prostranstva – oni blistaiut v polnoi iunosti, posle istecheniia tysiasheletii; peremena vremen ne lishaet ikh luhezarnago svetu [...]]. Soch. Gerdera, iz trudov pokoinago.“].

in 1806, it was printed in the literary monthly “Lyceum” (“Litsei”) in the same year, albeit without mentioning the author.

In the treatise, Nevakhovich addresses questions of historiography, but, above all, the relationship between Russian and German historiography on Russian history. Its mere length of 51 pages – the review in question on Elagin was around five pages long – and the questions, themes, and polemics that Nevakhovich addressed in it went far beyond the scope of a standard review. The places of its publication, in turn, emphasised the prominence and topicality of what was presented for Russian intellectual life.

The starting point for the treatise was a German-language review of the magnum opus by the Russian historian, poet, and freemason Ivan Perfil'evich Elagin, which appeared anonymously in the German “Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung” in 1804.⁷ Elagin’s “Attempt at a Narrative of Russia” (“Opyt povestvovaniia o Rossii”) had in his turn been published by the printing house of the Moscow University in 1803. With this treatise, Nevakhovich entered hence an arena that was characterised, on the one hand, by mediation processes between German and Russian scholarship, especially historiography, and, on the other, by the interactions between the German scholars working at the St. Petersburg Academy or Moscow University and the emerging Russian scholarly community, and which, thus, touched on the Russian national understanding.

In addition to Nevakhovich and Elagin’s anonymous reviewer, other actors were involved in this dispute: Elagin himself, who provided the impetus with his writing, the historian August Ludwig Schlözer, to whom all three: Elagin, his German reviewer and Nevakhovich attached pivotal points of their argument, the publication organs of the respective texts⁸ as well as ultimately the object of the dispute itself – the historiographical scholarship. Under discussion was the way in which Russian history should be researched and written, and, thus, what image of the “Russian people” should be drawn. Nevakhovich’s discussion of a discussion, in other words, assumed the position of a discourse on history, and unfolded as a programmatic writing in which Ne-

⁷ Anonymus, Opyt powestvovaniia o Rossii. *Sotschinenie Iwana Jelagina, natschatom na 65m godu ot jego roschenija, leta ot R.Ch. 1790, dwora jego Imperatorskago Weltschestwa Ober-hofmeistera; d.i. Versuch einer Geschichte von Rußland, verfasst von Iwan Jelagin, Oberhofmeister des Hofes Sr. Kaiserl. Majestät, von ihm angefangen im 65sten Jahre seines Alters, im J. Ch. 1790, “Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung” 1804, vol. 1, no. 56, pp. 443-448.*

⁸ In the journal “Litsei” where Nevakhovich’s treatise first appeared published well-known writers such as K.N. Batyushkov, N.I. Gnedich, or A.A. Pisarev. The “Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung” which published the anonymous review on Elagin was until the mid-19th c. probably the most influential review organ for all fields of knowledge in the German-speaking world.

vakhovich pursued a meta-discourse on Russia's position in the European cultural fabric.

Nevakhovich's "Remarks on a review" consists of three parts: a preliminary remark, the actual review, and a concluding remark. In the preliminary remark, he first defines his critical starting point. He attributes his comments on the review to his motivation to "say something about the unfavourable opinion of foreigners about the Russians."⁹ He divides his concern into two perspectives:

However unforgivable it is for those foreigners who allow themselves to condemn Russians without due reflection, and who base their judgement solely on superficial knowledge, it is also very sad that Russians have so far *allowed* foreigners to think of them in such a wrong and condemnatory way.¹⁰

Not only does he construct here a dichotomy between a foreign and a Russian view, but this argumentative strategy is also similar to that of his emancipation treatise, which thematises the encounter and relationship between Jews and Russians. In this treatise, however, Nevakhovich positions himself on the side of the Russian historians. He now defines his own, which was previously Jewish, in a Russian context. The second vector that guided him in writing the treatise is a form of rehabilitation of the historian Schlözer mentioned in the German review:

I consider it my duty to inform the gentle reader in advance that, while revealing the injustice of the accusations levelled by the reviewer against Mr. Elagin, I do not forget to pay due respect to Mr. Schlözer, the famous man of our time, whose outstanding talents and long life devoted to prudent efforts on behalf of the human race and, above all, to attempts at Russian historiography, have earned him the right to universal respect.¹¹

The abruptness with which Schlözer is introduced in the treatise and the necessity felt by Nevakhovich to honour him in his merits signal the actual concern of the treatise beyond Schlözer's central

⁹ Nevakhovich, *Primechaniia na retsenziuu*, Tipografiia F. Drekhslera, S.-Peterburg 1806, p. 3 [„Davno uzhe ia zhelal skazat' nechto kasatel'no nevygodnago mneniia chuzhezemtsov o Rossiianakh.“].

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4 [„Skol' s odnoi storony ne prostitel'no tem chuzhezemtсам, kotorye pozvoliaut sebe bez dolzhnago razmyshleniia osuzhdat' Rossiian i osnovyvat' sud svoi na odnikh poverkhnostnykh svedeniakh, stol' s drugoi storony priskorbno, chto Rossiiane dosele *dopuskali* eshche inozemtсам dumat' o nikh tak prevrashchno i predosuditel'no.“; emphasis L.N.].

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6-7 [„Ja dolgom schitaiu preduvedomit' blagosklonnago chitatelia, chto, obnaruzhivaia nespravedlivost' vozvedennykh G. Retsezentom obvinenii na G. Elagina, ne zabyvaiu odnakozhe dolzhnago vysokopochitaniiia k G. Shletseru, semu znamenitomu muzhu nashego vremeni, kotorago otlichnyiia darovaniia i dolgoletnaia zhizn', preprovozhdennaia v neusypanykh trudakh dlia chelovecheskago roda i glavneishe v ispytaniiaakh Rossiiskago bytopisaniia, priobreli emu pravo na vseobshchee uvazhenie.“].

position in Russian intellectual life – the shaping of Russian historiography by *Russian* scholars.

August Ludwig Schlözer had come to St Petersburg in 1761.¹² He initially worked as a tutor to the imperial historiographer Gerhard Friedrich Müller, a German scholar who had been appointed as an adjunct at the newly founded St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences in 1725. Despite difficulties, Schlözer established himself as a historian and was appointed full professor at the Academy in 1765 by Catherine II herself, specialising in ancient Russian History.¹³ Schlözer, who considered the works of foreign scholars, such as Voltaire's, on the history of Russia to be inadequate, also found himself in a dispute with the Russian polymath Mikhail V. Lomonosov that was to have repercussions for subsequent generations of historians. While Schlözer, like Müller, traced the origins of the Russians back to the Normans and Varangians, Lomonosov took a different stance on this question concerning Russian national consciousness, and referred to an earlier ancestry. Apart from this dispute, Schlözer contributed significantly to the professionalisation of historical scholarship with his studies on the medieval history of Russia, both in St. Petersburg and later in Göttingen, where he was appointed full professor in 1769 – through his source-critical and philological-historical method, through his approach to a universal history and, not least, through his shaping of Russian-German academic relations.¹⁴ For his services to Russian historiography, he was elevated to the Russian hereditary nobility by Alexander I with the award of the Order of Vladimir in 1803.

Nevakhovich's reference to Schlözer proves to be essential because Schlözer highlighted in his work points Nevakhovich addresses in his treatise – source-critical study, deficits in previous historiography, the relationship between Russian and foreign historiography on Russia. The anonymous reviewer of Elagin's treatise therefore chose the demand for "impartiality" as an introduction to his criticism:

Only a few Russian historians have been able to rise to the height on which the true historian must actually stand if he is to be worthy of his name, namely to the height of impartiality, where every consideration, every prejudice, where favour or hatred, and even fatherland, religion and people disappear from sight, and the gaze is directed at nothing but the truth.¹⁵

¹² On Schlözer and his work see e.g. Donnert, *Von Tatiščev bis Schlözer*, Böhlau, Köln/Weimar/Wien 2008; Lehmann-Carli, *A. L. Schlözer als Rußland-Historiker*, Böhlau, Köln/Weimar/Wien 1997; Ziegenggeist, *Aspekte der deutschen Rezeption russischer Literatur in der Aufklärung*, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin 1986.

¹³ Peters, *Altes Reich und Europa*, Lit-Verlag, Münster 2003, pp. 75-76.

¹⁴ See e.g. Shletser, *Pravda russkaia* (1767); Shletser, *Predstavlenie vseobščei istorii* (1791); Shletser, *Nestor. Russkie letopisi na drevneslavianskom iazyke* (1809-1819).

¹⁵ Anonymus, *Opyt powestwowanija o Rossii*, "Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung" 1804, vol. 1, no. 56, p. 443 [„Nur

Nevakhovich counters this objection in principle: love of the fatherland – an extraordinary formulation for a Jewish thinker at the beginning of the 19th century in Russia – is entirely compatible with “impartiality” (“bezpristrastnost’”) and the historian should neither “cover up” (“prikryvat’”) nor “conceal” (“utaivat’”) the “mistakes” (“poroki”) of his fatherland.

However, before Nevakhovich polemically discusses the review of Elagin’s study; he comments on his own approach: “Since I cannot demand much trust in myself, I hasten to share this review in Russian in its entirety, interrupting it only in places with my remarks.”¹⁶ Nevakhovich applies the method of textual criticism. He introduces the Russian reading public to the German review in a complete Russian translation he has produced, which he comments on by including a few longer quotations from Elagin. The gesture of humility (“since I cannot demand much trust in myself”) can be read as part of his strategy to succeed in Russian intellectual life. He demonstrates his own familiarity with the subject matter through his knowledge of the “Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung”, the works of Schlözer, Elagin and Karamzin, as well as through the references scattered throughout the treatise to the periodical “Moskovskie uchenye vedomosti” (“Moscow Scholarly News”) or the thesis of the unnamed Catherine II. “Zapiski kasatel’no Rossiiskoi Istorii” (“Notes Regarding Russian History”),¹⁷ thus referring to the most esteemed authorities in the empire.

Although Nevakhovich chooses the methodology of historiography as the starting point for his observations, his actual scholarly as well as socio-political interest quickly becomes apparent: it is the question of the interpretive sovereignty over Russian history, which was directly connected to the question of national self-understanding and self-imagination. This question, in turn, was explosive since historiography on Russia, as practised at the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg or at Moscow University, was primarily carried out by scholars from Germany from the 18th century and into the 19th century.

wenige russische Geschichtsschreiber haben sich noch auf die Höhe zu erheben gewußt, auf welcher der wahre Geschichtsschreiber doch eigentlich stehen muß, wenn er seines Namens würdig sein soll, auf die Höhe der Unparteilichkeit nämlich, wo jede Rücksicht, jedes Vorurtheil, wo Gunst oder Haß, und selbst Vaterland, Religion und Volk aus den Augen schwinden, und der Blick auf nichts gerichtet ist, als auf die Wahrheit.“].

¹⁶ Nevakhovich, *Primechaniia na retsenziuu*, Tipografia F. Drekhslera, S.-Peterburg 1806, p. 8 [„Ne trebuia k sebe mnogo doverennosti, pospeshaiu soobshchit’ na Rossiiskom iazyke siiu Retenziuu v polnom eia sushchestve, preryvaia onuiu tol’ko po mestam moimi primechaniiami.“].

¹⁷ Catherine II, like Peter I, took an active interest in various areas of intellectual life such as literature and historiography and produced authoritative writings such as the “Notes on Russian History”, which first appeared in the journal “Sobesednik” (“Interlocutor”) between 1783 and 1784, before being published as a single edition in six volumes from 1787 to 1794.

For Russian aristocrats – apart from exceptions such as Karamzin – it was still not befitting their social status at the turn of the century to work as academics and contribute to the professionalisation of this field. Nevertheless, it was historiography in particular that served to legitimise the respective ruler to a considerable extent. In the European context around the middle of the 19th century, it developed into the leading discipline among the philosophical sciences, i.e. a discipline that not only influenced neighbouring disciplines with its analytical and interpretative methods, but also steered the discussion about national understanding and the position in the European power structure in a general social context.

Nevakhovich outlines his argument from a position that accuses German historians of being backward and biased towards Russian historians:

And so, the Russian historians find themselves lower than *all peoples on earth*, lower than the Turks, lower than the Tatars, the Kyrgyz, etc.! To prove here that the Russians, with Nestor and other sources of their history, are not inferior to anyone, even in Europe, would be completely superfluous.¹⁸

Nevakhovich's main objection manifests itself leitmotivically in the lack of understanding that foreign scholars would show towards the Russian language and Russian culture. He polemicalises:

According to these words and the expression *among all peoples on earth* used above, one must think that the author of the review understands the languages of all peoples on earth and has read all historians, including Russian ones. In what follows, however, we will see that he does not know the Russian language very well and that he has not even read Mr Elagin, whom he is reviewing, properly.¹⁹

He uses the medium of language to define formations of historical knowledge, of empathy, of participation in the formation of public opinion on Russian history. He develops this argument, not without pointing out to the Russian readership, his own competences in terms of language and philosophy and indicating the reviewer's mistranslations. It is precisely this foreign ignorance,

¹⁸ Nevakhovich, *Primechaniia na retsenziuu*, Tipografia F. Drekhslera, S.-Peterburg 1806, p. 10 [„I tak uzhe Rossiiskie Deepisateli postavleny nizhe vsekh narodov na zemle, nizhe Turetskikh, nizhe Tatarskikh, Kirgizskikh, i pr.! Éto slishkom mnogo skazano. Dokazyvat' zdes', chto Rossiiane Nesterom i drugimi istochnikami svoei Istorii ne ustupajut ni komu dazhe v Evrope, bylo by delo sovershenno izlishnee.“; emphasis L.N.].

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.12 - 13 [„Po sim slovam i po vysheupotreblennomu vyrazheniiu *mezhdz vsemi narodami na zemle nadobno dumat'*, chto Sochinitel' Retsenzii razumeet iazyki vsekh zemnykh plemen i prochital vsekh Istoriikov, v tom chisle i Russkikh. No v posledstvii uvidim, chto on Rossiiskoi jazyk ne ochen' khorosho znaet, i chto ne chital dazhe poriadочно G. Elagina, kotorago razsmatrivaet.“; emphasis L.N.].

which Nevakhovich assumes, that leads to the core passage of his treatise, which, according to its content, represents an apology of the “Russian people” and Russian historiography.

Foreigners do not see Russians, so to speak, or they see them badly; Russians see themselves and see themselves well. Foreigners who do not know the Russian language do not and cannot know the spirit of the Russian people in its true essence.²⁰

In his defence of Russian scholars, Nevakhovich attributes, moreover, besides prejudice also a gesture of superiority originating in enlightenment to foreign scholars.

It is not only superstition that gives birth to such evil, but also so-called enlightenment. It is extremely regrettable that enlightened people despise the unenlightened just as much as the superstitious hate the non-superstitious.²¹

According to Nevakhovich, the Enlightenment came to Russia relatively late in comparison to other European countries, but the Russians were open and curious about the European fields of knowledge that were opening to them. Europeans, on the other hand, had only a vague idea of Russia: “But the Russians always had a brave spirit, a deep and wide language. The Europeans could know nothing about them; they only knew something faint.”²² Even if they came to the country to study it, they would only look for facts and facets that support their preconceived opinion. Nevakhovich only slightly relativises this general finding when he refers to the exceptions of “the small number of great minds or Russified people”²³.

More interesting than this statement as such is what he actually or implicitly says at this point. When Nevakhovich’s emancipation treatise and historiographical treatise are juxtaposed, the position of the Jews in the emancipation treatise and the Russians in the historiographical treatise are strikingly similar. From Nevakhovich’s point of view, both are in a position of inferiority and require justification, defence, and legitimisation. The Jews

²⁰ Nevakhovich, *Primechaniia na retsenziuu*, Tipografia F. Drekhslera, S.-Peterburg 1806, p. 33 [„Inostrantsy, tak skazat’, ne vidiat Rossiian, ili khudo ikh vidiat; Rossiiane vidiat sebia, i khorosho vidiat. Inostrantsy, ne znaia Rossiiskago iazyka, ne znaiut i ne mogut znat’ dukha Rossiiskago naroda v nastoiashchem ego sushchestve.“].

²¹ Ibid., pp. 35 - 36 [„Ne odno sueverie rozhdaet sie zlo; no i tak nazyvaemoe prosveshchenie. K krainemu sozhaleniiu prosveshchennye liudi stol’ko zhe preziraiut neprosveshchennykh, skol’ko suevernye ne navidiat nesuevernykh.“].

²² Ibid., p. 36 [„No Rossiiane vseгда imeli muzhstvennyi dukh, iazyk glubokii i obshirnyi. Evropejtsy nichego ne mogli znat’ ob nikh; a znali chto nibud’ temnoe.“].

²³ Ibid., p. 38 [„malago chisla velikikh umov, ili obrusevshikh“].

in relation to the Russian state and society, the Russians in relation to Europe. Whether Nevakhovich intended this ambivalent reading, given that the texts were aimed at largely different reading audiences, remains open. In any case, he wrote both the emancipation treatise and the historiographical treatise against the background of his experiences in the Petersburg committee²⁴ and used similar rhetorical patterns. In this way, his conclusion can be read in a double sense:

As long as foreigners do not seriously study the Russian word and achieve sufficient success in it, as long as they do not familiarise themselves with Russian literature, as long as they do not get to know the Russian people in all its conditions and circumstances; until then their understanding of it will remain superficial, until then they will have no right to a decisive judgement on everything that concerns it.²⁵

Only a sound knowledge of the language, of the cultural history of a people and the history of its writings would make it possible to judge it properly and authoritatively. It is precisely these competences that Nevakhovich denies the anonymous German reviewer of Elagin's work. Even though Nevakhovich admits that Elagin sometimes comments quite harshly on other differently minded historiographers in his writing, he postulates that the German reviewer's actual intention was not to criticise the method or content of Elagin's conception of history, but rather to defend the German scholars who had so far had a major influence on Russian historiography.

This is not about Russian history, but about the accusation of the aforementioned German scholars. I dare not confirm this accusation, and no one else in my place would dare to do so; yet I cannot deny it either, the more so as Mr. Reviewer has not said a word in favour of the accused.²⁶

²⁴ Set up by Alexander I it was commissioned to clarify the socio-economical condition of the Jewish population. Members were politicians such as G. Derzhavin, A. Chartoryskii, and representatives of the Jewish elite such as Notkin and Nevakhovich. See Gessen, *Evrei v Rossii*, Tipo-litografiia A. G. Rozena, S.-Peterburg 1906, pp. 74-76.

²⁵ Nevakhovich, *Primechaniia na retsenziu*, Tipografiia F. Drekhslera, S.-Peterburg 1806, p. 38 [„Dokole inostrantsy ne budut zanimat'sia sovershennym izucheniem Rossiiskago slova i priobretat' v tom dovol'noi uspekhi, dokole ne poznakomiatsia s Rossiiskoiu slovesnostiiu, dokole ne uznaiut Rossiiskago naroda vo vsekh ego sostoiianiakh i otnosheniakh; do tole poniatia ikh o nem ne budut osnovatel'ny, do tole ni o chem do nego kasaiushchemsia ne budut imet' prava na reshitel'nyia suzheniia.“].

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47 [„Zdes' ne do Rossiiskoj Istorii kasaetsia delo, a do obvineniia pomianutykh gospod Nemetskikh uchenykh. Ia ne smeiu utverzhdat' takogo obvineniia, i ni kto drugoi na moem meste ne osmelitsia sego zdelat'; no tak zhe ne mogu i otritsat' onago, tem bolee, chto G. Retsenzent v pol'zu obviniaemykh ne skazal ni slova.“].

Embedded in a heated debate on the interpretive sovereignty over Russian history, it is hardly surprising that Nevakhovich recommends Elagin's work in his concluding remarks and sides with those who call for a change in the national composition of scholars in Russian historiography, preferring Russians, and marking thus its nationalisation.

III Conclusion

As in his emancipation treatise, Nevakhovich uses stylistic and rhetorical means to navigate the reader through the complexity of the subject matter presented in his historiographical treatise. Irony, the direct address of the reader, polemical argument do not only characterise the treatise as a review in the proper sense, but also emphasise its overriding interest in science policy and nation building – it is the review of a review in the service of epistemic legitimation and programmatic agenda. Nevakhovich proves himself in his treatise to be an expert on contemporary historiography in the Russian Empire and in Europe as well as a stylist who is equally at home in the Russian and German languages.²⁷

Nevakhovich's discussion of the review and the anonymous reviewer refers to three plains he interweaves: content-wise he thematises the constitution, function, and impact of historiography, on a symbolical level he raises the question of interpretive sovereignty over Russian history, both culminating ultimately in the question of his personal engagement.

In his "Remarks on a Review", Nevakhovich presents a polemic in favour of Russia and Russian scholars that in its verve and gesture does not rank behind his "Lamentation of the Daughter of Yehuda". With this treatise, he nevertheless leaves the circle of Jewish intellectuals working in Hebrew. He now sees his place of speech primarily as one that is anchored in Russian imperial culture and attempts to succeed as a Russian intellectual *avant la lettre*, not only to become part of German-Russian academic relations, but rather to install himself at this linguistic and cultural

²⁷ For example, he accuses the German reviewer of the "Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung" of having missed the stylistic appropriateness of a review in his choice of words. The following comment can be found in a footnote: "Geshwatz [Original German, O.T., "Blabbed"] – It is not proper to use harsh words in reviews, especially when accusing someone else of injustice towards those who think differently. Well, that's how the impartial testers of history proceed!" Nevakhovich, *Primechaniia na retsenziiu*, Tipografia F. Drekhslera, S.-Peterburg 1806, p. 12 ["Geshwatz – upotrebliat' v retsenziakh grubyya slova ves'ma ne prilichno, a osoblivo tomu, kotoryi drugogo obviniaet v nespravedlivosti protiv inomysliashchikh. Tak – to postupaiut bezpristrastnye Ispytateli Istorii!"].

interface in the powerful position of a mediator and interpreter.

Nevakhovich moves between times, genres, and loyalties. In his cosmopolitan mind set, Nevakhovich was not really acknowledged by later generations of Jewish thinkers and did not leave notable traces in the Jewish literature being created since the middle of the 19th century in Eastern Europe. Or, as Yehuda Slutsky notes:

Although Nevakhovich's works appear episodic and without continuity in the literature (both Hebrew and Russian) of the Haskalah, they did, nevertheless, herald the arrival of a new period in the spiritual life of Russian Jewry.²⁸

Nevakhovich, thus, was presumably the first Jewish writer writing in Russian, producing a self-conscious work of Jewish expression. Though it was a powerful symbol of Jewish presence in the Russian imperial setting, it did not meet the emancipatory intellectual needs, and the self-understanding of future Jewish intellectuals.

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