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Vered Tohar https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2180-369X

Ethno-Symbolism in Aron Lyuboshitsky's Hebrew Literary Works for Jewish Youth

Abstract: The article focuses on three poems authored by Aron Lyuboshitsky (1874–1942?), a Hebrew teacher, author, poet, editor, and translator, who lived and worked in Warsaw and Łódź, and his contribution to building a Jewish national identity through his literary works for children and youth. The prism through which the article views Lyuboshitsky's activities is that of ethno-symbolism, a concept drawn from the field of cultural studies. For an ethno-symbolic analysis of his works, three key criteria were considered: (1) linking the present to the past; (2) using cultural symbols; and (3) actively promoting the formation of a shared ethnocultural identity. Lyuboshitsky's literary-cultural and didactic oeuvre was devoted to reawakening the Jewish nation by appealing to the younger generation. He interconnected the Hebrew language, Hebrew literature, the Jewish people, and the Holy Land.

Keywords: Aron Lyuboshitsky, Hebrew literature, Jewish children and youth literature, Poland, ethno-symbolism.

Słowa kluczowe: Aron Luboszycki, literatura hebrajska, żydowska literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży, Polska, etnosymbolizm.

In the following pages, I deal with the work of Aron Lyuboshitsky (1874–1942?)[1], Hebrew teacher, author, poet, editor, and translator, who lived and worked in Warsaw and Łódź, and his contribution to building a Jewish nationality through his literary works for children and youth. The prism

[1] Lyuboshitsky's date of death is uncertain; according to some sources he died in 1943.

through which I view his work is that of ethno-symbolism, a concept drawn from the field of cultural studies, which offers a new interpretive aspect.[2]

From the beginning of the twentieth century until World War II, Poland, and especially Warsaw, were prolific and prosperous centers of Hebrew and Yiddish literature and culture, also for children. In fact, it was a real competitor of the Hebrew center in the Land of Israel. World War II brought an end to that cultural world, leaving the Land of Israel as the primary home of Hebrew and Jewish culture and literature. Some of the most prominent figures in the field of Hebrew culture and literature, foremost among them Israel Chaim Tawiow, Samuel Leib Gordon, and Zalman Shneour, published in Warsaw before WWII.[3] In the pages that follow, I also discuss the "Tsentral" Publishing House (Warsaw), which printed and marketed books for children and youth, as well as for adults throughout the Jewish Diaspora, and other important publishers in Warsaw, such as "Tushiyah," children's newspapers (e.g., *'Olam Katan* [Small World]), and Yiddish writers, including Sholem Asch, Borukh Olitsky, Esther Zusman and Itzhak Katznelson, among others.[4]

Children's Hebrew literature

Aron Lyuboshitsky, who belonged to the generation of writers known as the 'authors of Hebrew revival literature,' plied his craft in the framework of a burgeoning Hebrew culture in Poland, creating works for a young readership that had mastered the language at Hebrew educational institutions. Writing and publishing in many literary arenas, he wrote children's poems, that he published in 1903 as: *Shir va-zemer: shirim ve-tavim li-veney ha-ne'urim* [Poem and Song: Lyrics and Music for the Young]. Then, in 1905, he authored *Yaldut: shirey mishak* [Childhood: Songs for Play]. He also edited the children's magazines *Kokhav* [Star] and *Ben Kokhav* [Junior Star],[5] and published essays on child development. In addition, Lyuboshitsky

[2] In this article, I use an anglicized version of the original Polish spelling of his surname: Lyuboszycki. For more biographical information, see Uriel Ofek, *'Olam tsa'ir: entsyklopediyah le-sifrut yeladim* (Ramat-Gan, 1970), 380–381.

[3] Warsaw was also an important center of Yiddish culture and literature, but the focus here is on Hebrew culture.

[4] Adina Bar-El, *Beyn ha-etsim ha-yerakrakim: 'itoney yeladim be-Yidish u-ve-'Ivrit be-Polin, 1918–1938* (Jerusalem, 2006).

[5] *Kokhav* was published in the years 1923–1928 and *Ben Kokhav* in 1924–1925. For scans of some of the volumes, see at the website of the National Library of Israel: http://jpress.org.il/Olive/APA/Yeladim/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=YBC#panel=br

translated into Hebrew and adapted some masterpieces for children from world literature, such as certain chapters from *Cuore* [*Heart*] by Edmondo De Amicis (1898). Although, in 1900, he had published an autobiographical essay for adults called *Mi-merirut ha-hayim* [From the Bitterness of Life], he invested most of his talent and energy in original writing for children and teenagers in Hebrew.[6]

Lyuboshitsky is thought to have been the first author to produce national Hebrew literature for children. 'National literature,' as a modern concept, is found in literature intended for adults, youth, and children, as well. In particular, most of the literary efforts made by Hebrew authors at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth were devoted to compiling national literature for Jewish children, teaching Jewish history, and developing Hebrew language and literature by means of works written in Hebrew and published in children's books and newspapers. The modern Hebrew literature for adults and children created in Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century played a central role in the effort to transform a Zionist culture into a modern Jewish movement for national liberation.[7]

Uriel Ofek, the most important historiographer of early Hebrew children's literature, highlighted Lyuboshitsky's role in Zionist writing for Jewish children. Ofek noted that, while the poets of the Hebrew literary revival period (Bialik foremost among them) created national poetry for adults, Lyuboshitsky wrote in a similar vein for the children and his work was the first and most significant contribution to children's Hebrew literature in his generation.[8] Note that Lyuboshitsky is considered the first poet who wrote Zionist poems for young adults, although his part in creating the national identity of his young readers is unknown, and he remains a forgotten poet. Bear in mind that almost all the Jewish culture that flourished in Warsaw between WWI and WWII was destroyed.

owse [retrieved: 23 Feb. 2022]. On Hebrew periodicals for children, cf. Bar-El, *Beyn ha-etsim ha-yerakrakim*.

[6] For an example of his educational works, see Zeev Gries, "'Ivri, daber u-kra 'Ivrit! halutsey ha-sefer ha-'Ivri li-yeladim beyn shtey milhamot 'olam," *'Et-Mol* 246 (2014), 16–19.

[7] Hannan Hever, *Ha-sipur ve-ha-le'om: kri'ot bikortiyot be-kanon ha-siporet ha-'Ivrit* (Tel Aviv, 2007), 9–11. See also Benjamin Harshav, *Lashon be-'itot mahapekhah* (Jerusalem, 2008), 48–54.

[8] See Uriel Ofek, "Le-ma'an ehay ha-ketanim: 'esrim shanah le-mot Aharon Lyuboshitsky," *Moznayim* 17 (1962), 1:61–63. Other Hebrew children's authors, who were murdered during WWII, included: Pesach Kaplan, Menachem Mendel Horowitz, Raphael Gutman, Yakir Warshavsky and others. All of these authors worked within the dynamic and diverse Hebrew literary system for children, which continued to function in the ghettos.

National literature for children

Lyuboshitsky's national literature for children embraces several genres: epic poetry about national heroes, nationalistic lullabies, and national history in prose. As a teacher, educator, and the principal of a Hebrew school in Warsaw, he created a blend of children's literature and tools for Jewish education, encouraging the development of a national identity and the transmission of Jewish national values. Since teaching played a central part in his life, it is easy to understand why he would express his nationalistic ideas in writing for children, acting out of his belief in a national identity and using ethno-symbolism to strengthen national consciousness from an early age.

Like many Polish Jews, Lyuboshitsky died in the Warsaw ghetto in 1942 and, although he never lived in the Land of Israel, his Hebrew was excellent and his works were well received even by readers outside Poland; in fact, they were widely accepted and incorporated into Hebrew textbooks and anthologies for children and youth both in Poland and abroad. His Hebrew poems were well known and some of his works have been reprinted in Israel and are accessible on websites designed for the preservation of early Hebrew culture.[9] In this context, it is important to emphasize that, though his Hebrew poems were popular, the poet himself, as a biographical figure, was virtually anonymous. Those of his works that were written and published in Hebrew for Polish-Jewish children were republished in Israel after WWII, indicating not only the historic flow of literary pieces from Europe to Israel, but also that the national ethos shaped by Lyuboshitsky in his work remained relevant even when the target audience changed. It also suggests the exceptional quality of his Hebrew, despite the fact that he was born, lived, and died in Poland.

In the present article, the nationalistic trends in his work are illustrated by means of three poems: *Eley Tsiyon ve-nodedeha* [To Zion and Her Wanderers],[10] *Ho, Erets moledet!* [Oh, Homeland!],[11] and *Shkhav, heradem,*

[9] The two most prominent examples of such websites are the Israeli version of Project Gutenberg: the *Ben-Yehuda* Project, https://benyehuda.org [retrieved: 23 Feb. 2022], and the *Zemereshet* Project devoted to the preservation of early Hebrew songs, https://www.zemereshet.co.il [retrieved: 23 Feb. 2022].

[10] Published in the *Lu'ah shanah shel Erets-Yisra'el*, 1904, pp. 155–156.

[11] First published in the anthology of Hebrew songs: Aron Lyuboshitsky, *Shir va-zemer: shirim ve-tavim li-veney ha-ne'urim* (Warsaw, 1903).

ben li yakir [Lay Down, Go to Sleep, My Dear Son],[12] which all can be read as nationalistic literature for young adults as Lyuboshitsky perceived it.[13]

A few words about the special characteristics of Hebrew children's literature, especially what was written and published in Poland, are needed for an understanding of the cultural context in which Lyuboshitsky worked. Children's literature is a relatively modern phenomenon, but its roots are found in the ancient world. Its target audience is new, since there had been no demand for it until after the creation of the cultural concept of 'childhood'; nonetheless, many of the motifs and themes found in this literature have been in existence for centuries and have merely been adapted to suit the new target audience.

The genres included in children's literature are poetry, drama, and prose and the various subjects contain travel and adventure, family relations, nature, finding one's identity, expressions of emotion, and more. Despite the different formats, many of the issues addressed in adult literature also appear in literature for children, but modified for brevity, simplicity of expression (but, of course, not conceptual simplicity), filtered to remove inappropriate contents, and presented in an appropriate tone.[14] The history of Hebrew children's literature is much more convoluted and complicated than that of children's literature in other languages, because its development ran parallel with the Hebrew Enlightenment Movement, which initially led to a corpus that was almost devoid of readers. In the beginning, there was more supply in field than demand and it took several decades before a full and functioning literary readership became a reality.[15]

The history of Hebrew children's literature was also seriously impacted by World War II and the Holocaust, which destroyed the flourishing

[12] Initially published in the booklet: *Kinor Tsiyon: mivhar shirey Tsiyon* (Warsaw, 1900), as well as his prose compilation: Aron Lyuboshitsky, *Sefer ha-yashar li-veney ha-ne'urim* (Warsaw, 1923).

[13] See Vered Tohar, "'Sefer ha-yashar' me-'et Aharon Lyuboshitsky: hibur 'Ivri kadum she-'asah 'aliyah le-Erets-Yisra'el," *Iyunim bi-tekumat Yisra'el* 29 (2018), 210–231. I show in the article how Lyuboshitsky chose biblical plots and adopted them for young readers. I demonstrate his poetics by four degrees of adjustment: (1) modifying the biblical text, (2) changing the biblical text, (3) omitting problematic details, and (4) adding fictional details. The national flavor with which he seasons the adopted tales is also discussed. The above adjustments are illustrated for three biblical tales: Abraham's hospitality, the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, and the death of Moses.

[14] Peter Hunt, *Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature* (Oxford, 1991); Perry Nodelman, *The Pleasures of Children's Literature* (White Plains, 1996).

[15] Zohar Shavit, "Hebrew and Israeli Children's Literature," in Peter Hunt (ed.), *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* (London, 1996), 774–780.

enterprises of writing, printing, and distributing children's books and magazines in Europe, especially in Eastern Europe, that had come into being between the two World Wars and were eventually relocated in Israel. Children's literature in Yiddish virtually disappeared in Europe for the same reasons but continues to exist in a limited way in the United States, especially on the East Coast.[16]

Ethno-symbolism *vs.* Lyuboshitsky's work

As such, two questions arise: How important was Lyuboshitsky's work for children within the Jewish-Polish context? How did his being an educator and poet affect the nationalistic nuance of his work? I read Lyuboshitsky's work through the prism of 'ethno-symbolism,' a term coined by sociologist Anthony D. Smith to express the role of art, including literature, in the establishment of a symbolic national consciousness among members of an ethnic group. According to Smith, 'ethnic consciousness' is based on shared ancient myths, shared historical memory, shared culture, connection to a territory, and a sense of social solidarity.[17]

'Ethno-symbolism' has the power to unite the cultural and spiritual symbols of an existing ethnic group, serving as valuable and power tools for nation-building and the formulation of a national identity, while restoring the collective historical past. 'Ethno-symbolism,' which is a pre-modern cultural phenomenon, can incorporate not only shared historical elements, but also elements of the same ethnic group's modern nationalism.[18]

Ethno-symbolism is a powerful tool for shaping nationalistic literature; it has, in fact, been used by ethnic groups for their self-definition even before the advent of modern nationalism. 'Nationalistic literature,' the general name for a body of works that reflect the spirit of a People, its national identity, and its shared cultural beliefs and principles, emerged as a concept in the eighteenth century, an outcome of Romanticism, which gave birth to the roots of European nationalism.

[16] Hagit Cohen, *Nifla'ot ba-'olam he-hadash: sefarim u-kor'im be-Yidish be-artsot ha-Brit, 1890–1940* (Ra'anana, 2016), 56–59, 135–148.

[17] Anthony D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge, 1995), 57.

[18] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991), 4–7.

The essence of nationalistic literature is that it is written in the language of its nation, thus connecting the language, the People, and the territory.[19] The uniqueness of Jewish nationalistic literature in Poland (and in the rest of Eastern Europe) was that it was written in Hebrew, the language of the biblical Hebrew Nation, and reflected Zionist values, that is, it aspired to connect Jews to their Holy Land, the Land of Israel, which had been out of reach for over 2000 years.

From the perspective of ethno-symbolism, one must ask: In what ways did Lyuboshitsky shape the myths that populated his works? Did he succeed in creating a modern symbolic national ethos, adapted for children and youth? Was he able to arouse a modern national consciousness in his young readers? For an ethno-symbolic analysis of Lyuboshitsky's works, three key criteria must be considered:

(1) linking the present to the past;

(2) using cultural symbols; and

(3) actively promoting the formation of a shared ethnocultural identity.

These aspects illuminate Lyuboshitsky's work from an interpretive angle that associates the way he used ethno-symbolism to strengthen his readers' national consciousness and the fact that he addressed children and youth in the Hebrew language. Nationalistic literature tends to rely on heroic plots, leadership legends, and descriptions of the group's ancient and glorious history and features the ethnic symbols that Smith describes. These symbols return to the primeval group memory and thereby engender modern nationalism. They emphasize the aspect of continuity in the group's existence and the important role of memories, values, and myths, as well as symbols as its common denominators. It is in this context, that I focus on three of Lyuboshitsky's poems.[20]

To Zion and Her Wanderers

The first, *To Zion and Her Wanderers*, is a lament on the death of Theodor (Binyamin Ze'ev) Herzl, the father of modern Zionism, that appeared in *Lu'ah shanah shel Erets-Yisra'el, 1904* [1904 Yearly Calendar of the Land of Israel], pp. 155–156. It is a classic national lament, one that turns the leader—a lion defending its territory—into a mythical hero, who sacrifices

[19] Anthony D. Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (Abingdon, 2009).

[20] See full texts of the poems in the Appendices.

himself for his People. The Nation was left as an orphan or as a bereaved mother, after the leader departed.

The first stanza of the poem talks about the homeland by way of two tragic figures of thwarted motherhood. The first figure is of a young widow, whose husband died before he had given her children, and the second is a bereaved mother, who has lost all her sons. Both reflect a grieving woman, left without living offspring to continue the lineage.

The second stanza relates to the theme of the poem, Herzl's death, and refers to Genesis 49:27: "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf in the morning / he devours the prey in the evening / he divides the plunder," which was part of Jacob, the Patriarch's blessing to his son Benjamin. Referring to Herzl by his first name in Hebrew, Binyamin, in the spirit of the poem, Lyuboshitsky describes him as 'a beast of prey' fighting bravely against its enemies, the enemies of the Jewish People. Binyamin is "monk of the People," meaning one who dedicated himself to the People's benefit. The Hebrew word for 'monk' [*nazir*] is phonetically and morphologically close to those of the Hebrew word for 'tiara' or 'diadem' or [*neyzer*] and, here, Herzl is the crown, a metonymy for the king. He raised the national flag, reviving the People, who had been frozen, lifeless.

In the third stanza, the poet changes the image of the wolf to one of a lion—essentially a strong leader with a loving heart, brave, and daring.

The last stanza is an elegy. After describing the virtues of this leader, the poet speaks to the Land of Israel, saying that the earth should weep because its sun has set. The leader, who was like a second Bar Kokhba, has died.[21] Herzl's death, in the village of Adlah, is likened to the destruction of a 'Third Jerusalem Temple.' The poem ends in a strong voice, full of pathos, lamenting the Land as a forsaken mother and a broken sword.

With pathos, expressions of sadness, cries of mourning, the images of animals, and the reference to Bar Kokhba, the mythological leader that Zionism adopted as a symbol, the poet paints Herzl as a great legendary hero, and constructs a national mythology based on a glorious history, echoing the Hebrew Bible. The images of the wolf and the lion, as well as the references to the Land in mourning, all resonate with biblical verses. Here, Herzl is portrayed as a leader uniting the People in the present and creating a bond between the present and the past of the

[21] In the early second century CE, Bar Kokhba was the leader of the revolt against the Roman conquerors that occurred after the destruction of the Second Jerusalem Temple, fought by the last remnant of Israelite resistance in the Land of Israel.

Jewish People. In line with Smith's theory, this poem includes symbols that evoke dignity and respect in the readers' minds and connects the past to the present through Herzl's iconic figure.

Oh, Homeland!

The second poem, *Oh, Homeland!*, is an oath of allegiance to the Land and carries the ethos of a willingness to die for it, including battlefield images of wounds and weapons. It is an epic war poem that articulates courage and a readiness for self-sacrifice. Although it is a wish, and not a description of reality, since both the poet and his audience belong to a minority on foreign soil, nevertheless, the Zionist is a warrior for his Land. Words associated with war and the verbs describing battle, which are written in the first-person plural, shape a model of nationality.

In the first stanza, there is an oath to guard the homeland. The poet addresses the homeland as a living mother, as if carrying the blood of the Nation. This image personifies the Land, as a figure with the living body of a mother, whose blood nurtures the body of the Nation, without which only a corpse remains. Therefore, the homeland holds the life's-blood of the Nation. While this stanza establishes the connection between the Land of Israel and the blood, it also emphasizes the contrast between life and death. The option for national life is only possible when there is a homeland.

The second stanza describes an epic war scene, defending the homeland against a bitter enemy, and the blood of the Nation from the first stanza becomes the bleeding of battle wounds. It includes a warriors' oath of allegiance, vowing to give their lives (if need be) when facing the enemy, although the precise identity of the enemy is not clear.

The third stanza expands on the image of battle. The warriors are willing to die, to guard the flag, because the flag flying is the sign that the Nation lives.

Lay Down, Go to Sleep, My Dear Son

To Zion and Her Wanderers and *Oh, Homeland!* share a world of content—earth, blood, war, and resurrection—as well as a style rife with sublime pathos. *Oh, Homeland!* speaks of an intimate, almost erotic closeness to

the Land of Israel, its speakers vowing not to abandon the Land and to protect it to the death, if need be. It highlights an imaginary connection to the national homeland, a substitute for a reality that is beyond the reach of its young readers. This poem also resonates with Smith's theory, emphasizing the preordained and inseparable land–human–blood connection. *Lay Down* is a lullaby replete with nationalistic emotions. The lyrics recount the history of the Jewish People, beginning with the glorious past and reaching to the hopes of the present, to return to the glory of that past. Lyuboshitsky attributes the departure of the Jewish People from their homeland to divine punishment for forsaking God and writes that they have been wandering the world and vulnerable to attack ever since. The poem ends with the day when the Jewish People unite and miraculously return to the place from where they were expelled millennia before. This poem has a narrative format, describing a heavenly existence, sinning, being expelled, suffering, and then, ultimately, being granted salvation on Earth.

The first stanza opens by telling the sleeping child to lay down and listen to a story about an 'old city,' before falling asleep. The second stanza describes those who lived in that 'old city,' the ancestors, who at that time were a united People and lived a happy life. The third stanza details this utopia, in which the ancestors lived a good life, enjoying economic well-being, eating from the cornucopia produced by the Holy Land, as opposed to the difficult lives of the readers themselves.

The fourth stanza marks a turning point in the history of the ancestors, as owing to the abundance of goodness, they become complacent and abandon their belief in God, so their lives begin to change for the worse. This is their original sin, for which their descendants in the present are still being punished. The fifth stanza describes God's response, which was not long in coming. God is angry and expels them from 'the city,' a fate that is akin to expulsion from Heaven. Afterward, the situation in that Land deteriorates and foreigners move in, while the ancestors begin to wander in a world full of enemies, hoping that one day their situation will change for the better.

The rest of the poem talks about God's promise and a prophecy of consolation regarding the future, which includes the promise of a return to the 'old city' and of a renewal of the Nation's power. It also speaks of the birth of a leader, who will be like a lion and will, in fact, be the Messiah, the savior of the Nation, and will reunite the scattered People.

The appearance of the lion—the leader—the Messiah—will bring all the Jews back to their original homeland, from where they were expelled thousands of years before, so they may return to 'the city' and, once again, be blessed by God. This prophecy for the future is a threefold reunion of the Jewish People: with 'their mother,' the nurturing Holy Land, and God.

On one hand, the poem declares that 'the exile' is the punishment for the ingratitude for the bounty that the ancestors enjoyed, but, on the other hand, that after millennia of suffering, a leader will arise, who will ingather the exiles and return the People to their original, preordained homeland. *Oh, Homeland!* is built on the Zionist narrative, that moves from exile in the Diaspora to redemption in the Land of Israel but is characterized by religious motifs that are expressed in the images of an angry, punishing, but also forgiving God, and of a brave lion-like leader, a messianic figure—God's messenger—who will bring redemption. The relative length of the poem and the fact that Lyuboshitsky is a historiographical storyteller makes it a sort of national epic cradled within a lullaby.

Principal ideas of the poems

These three poems are characterized by the extensive use of Smith's ethno-symbolism. Lyuboshitsky used national symbols: the Land, the ancestors, and the Messiah, even including the historical figure of Herzl, painted as a national hero on the scale of biblical heroes—all of which extol the glorious historical past and express the fervent wish to return past glory to the present, while reflecting actual, as well as mythological history. All three poems highlight the common origin, the collective historical memory, the connection to a specific country, the sense of Jewish solidarity, and the necessity to come together in order to achieve that shared ethnocultural goal.

Each of these poems highlights one of three principal ideas, followed by certain prerequisite demands or requirements. In *To Zion and Her Wanderers*, the main theme is about the national hero as savior, followed by the demand for such a hero, who will unite the People. *Oh, Homeland!* speaks of the national homeland, the "Promised Land," requiring its protection, even on pain of death. *Lay Down* reflects eventual redemption and insists that Jews must be familiar with the Jewish history and embrace their glorious collective past. Again, the three elements—the right leader, the right place, and the right memory—are expressed in the Jewish national

language, the holy Hebrew language, which is the midst of being revived by the Zionist Movement in Lyuboshitsky's lifetime.

Thus, going back to the above criteria and Smith's theory, one can see how relating to the present via the past by using collective symbols to actively promote shared ethnocultural associations may all be accomplished by means of the concepts of 'leader,' 'homeland,' and 'memory.' An almost direct connection may be created between the present and the past using the historical story. Jewish symbols are manifested by the figures of the lion and the Messiah, while the creation of associations is through the call to action to protect the homeland. All these notions engender a dominant ethno-symbolistic discourse that impacted young readers on several levels simultaneously, as designed by Lyuboshitsky, to give them an ideological goal or an object of aspiration, as well as a sense of pride in their nationality and a sense of being part of a group with a common destiny.

Sefer ha-yashar li-veney ha-ne'urim

Apart from his national poetry for young people, one of Lyuboshitsky's major contributions to Hebrew children's culture and nationalistic prose for children and youth was his adaptation of the important Hebrew premodern prose essay: *Sefer ha-yashar* [The Book of the Upright], originally published in Venice in 1625. Lyuboshitsky's 1923 Hebrew adaptation, *Sefer ha-yashar li-veney ha-ne'urim* [The Book of the Upright for the Young], should also be read through the prism of ethno-symbolism.

Sefer ha-yashar is a historiographical compilation that describes the biblical history of the People of Israel from the creation of the world to the conquest of the Land of Israel and the death of Joshua. It is unique in that it is not only faithful to the wording of the Bible but also incorporates other narrative traditions depicting characters and events that do not appear in the books from Genesis to the Book of Joshua. The narrative development of the metaplot and subplots, which create elegant marginal notes to the great national story, makes the text a wide-ranging epic on the scale of a modern novel—except for the fact that the principal protagonists are Israel and the God of Israel.[22]

[22] Among the relatively modern editions of the texts is Lazarus Goldschmidt's illustrated edition, *Sepher ha-jaschar* (Berlin, 1923); for a critical edition, see Joseph Dan, *Sefer ha-yashar* (Jerusalem, 1986); id., *Ha-sipur ha-'Ivri bi-yemey ha-beynayim: 'iyunim be-toldotav*

Lyuboshitsky's literary adaptation is quite original in the context of the entire corpus of his works. In its introduction, he wrote: "My main work in adapting the 'Book of the Upright' was to make it suitable for today's children and to dress the national story in new clothes—in contemporary Hebrew."[23]

That is, he believed that by deleting some of the content or refining it into a new essence that would contain the old, the adaptation would be appropriate for the young reader of his time. He further wrote:

> And here, from the literary-aesthetic perspective, I was completely determined to polish the style of *Sefer ha-yashar* and I did not even supply any explanation for the necessity of such a popular folk-book for the children of the Jews. *Sefer ha-yashar* is a folk-book in the full sense of the word, the most endearing educational book for the young and old and, as such, it is as appropriate for our children as it has been for generations of Jewish readers.[24]

Clearly, in Lyuboshitsky's view, the traditional *Sefer ha-yashar* is a folk classic, which, by definition, makes it an ethno-symbolic cultural treasure.

Furthermore, he continues:

> And I do not doubt for a moment that in its new form, this time, it will take its rightful place in our children's literature. And if I decided to get the attention of small and big readers in this preface, I did so with a special intention: to examine the *Sefer ha-yashar* in the light of secular values.[25]

The didactic tone of those words shows that Lyuboshitsky, the teacher, sought to provide historic and sentimental works that should be on shelves devoted to children's literature for future generations of Jewish readers of Hebrew.

The ethno-symbolic character of his children's adaptation of *Sefer ha-yashar* is reflected in the lines it draws between the Jewish Nation's glorious past, its present situation, and its treatment of a literary myth built on the Bible. Here, too, the reference is to the biblical Jewish Patriarchs, who represent the People at the height of their glory in their ancient 'promised' homeland.

(Jerusalem, 1974), 137. Eli Yassif, *Sipur ha-'am ha-'Ivri: toldotav, sugav, u-mashma'uto* (Jerusalem, 1994), 64.

[23] Aron Lyuboshitsky, "Introduction," in id., *Sefer ha-yashar*, 2. All Hebrew quotes have been translated by the author of the article, unless otherwise noted.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

Uriel Ofek praises Lyuboshitsky's originality in creating a nationalistic, Zionist Hebrew work for the young, noting that, on the one hand, he did not have a role model or a literary father and, on the other hand,[26] he became the guide for younger writers, such as Zalman Shneour and Yaacov Rimon.[27] However, Lyuboshitsky was also subjected to hostile criticism from critics, like David Frishman and Yitshok Leybush Peretz, who argued that his literary work was not good, but apparently this was because they objected to his public activism as a supporter of Herzl.[28] From the perspective of time, Frishman's and Peretz's negativism show the extent to which the Jewish-Polish literary arena was productive, broad, dynamic, tumultuous, and replete with both literary and emotional criticism.

Lyuboshitsky as a publisher and educator

To demonstrate the size of the Hebrew book industry in Poland I shall mention, for example, the "Tushiyah" Publishing House, founded by Abraham Leib Shalkovich (a.k.a. Szalkowicz; Hebrew pen-name: Ben-Avigdor), which operated in Warsaw from 1896 to 1911 and then merged with several other small publishing houses ("Ha-Shahar," "Farlag Progres," and "Sh. Shreberk") to form the cooperative "Tsentral," Lyuboshitsky's publisher. "Tsentral" published hundreds of Hebrew books and pamphlets, until Shlomo Shreberk bought "Tsentral" in 1921 and continued to run it in Warsaw until 1933, the year Hitler came to power.[29]

The extensive Varsovian literary activity in Hebrew for children and its outreach to the young Jewish readership demonstrates the flexibility and spread of modern Hebrew. It also reflects the tolerance of the Polish authorities toward the Hebrew printing industry. After World War II, the international center for Hebrew children's books shifted to Israel. As stated earlier, Lyuboshitsky's works were re-published in Israel, once Shreberk founded a new incarnation of "Tsentral" in Tel Aviv, known as "Hotsa'at Yizre'el" [Jezre'el Publishing].[30]

Lyuboshitsky was able to use his talent and knowledge to spread nationalistic ideas through ancient folk symbols. Ethno-symbolism has

[26] See Gries, "'Ivri, daber u-kra 'Ivrit!"

[27] See Ofek, *'Olam tsa'ir*.

[28] See Ofek, "Le-ma'an ehay ha-ketanim."

[29] Motti Neiger, *Motsi'im la-'or ke-metavhey tarbut: historia tarbutit shel me'a shnot hotsa'a la-'or be-'Ivrit be-Yisra'el, 1910–2010* (Jerusalem, 2017), 89–106.

[30] Ibid., 90.

tremendous explanatory power because it addresses emotion and nostalgia, as well as familiar, collective ethnocultural common denominators. In that sense, Lyuboshitsky's work engaged young people with its sublime tone of pathos, in a style reminiscent of high biblical Hebrew, but in the spirit of his time. It also resonated with Polish national literature, which had experienced a national awakening in the nineteenth century. In that respect, Lyuboshitsky's nationalistic writings also shared an ethno-symbolist discourse with Adam Mickiewicz's Polish epic poem, *Pan Tadeusz*.[31] Thus, Lyuboshitsky's efforts to create a national consciousness in young readers were in line with the Polish non-Jewish nationalistic spirit that flourished at that time.

Lyuboshitsky's literary-cultural and didactic oeuvre was devoted to reawakening the Jewish Nation by appealing to the younger generation. He connected the Hebrew language, Hebrew literature, the Jewish People, and the Holy Land together. The use of literature to revitalize a nation was a common phenomenon in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the Jewish case was unique, since the nationality being established generally included only a small and disparate minority group, one which, apart from its religion, also embraced secularity and a certain degree of local culture and norms. Beyond being a writer and poet, Lyuboshitsky was an educator–historian. His work simultaneously served two complementary roles: one of recounting collective Jewish history and memory and another of encouraging leisure reading in Hebrew to improve the mastery of the Hebrew language. The educator and the poet were not in competition and lived together in peace.

Appendix 1: The poems[32]

To Zion and Her Wanderers
To Zion and her wanderers
Like a widow in her youth
And like a bereaved mother who has lost
The last of her children.

[31] Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz* (Paris, 1834).
[32] Translations of the poems are my own, V. T.

To Benjamin, the nation's monk,
He pounced upon traitors like a wolf upon its prey.
He raised Israel's standard
And he poured blood into the frozen body.

In honor of this heart, the heart of a lion,
That was full of love, strength, and song,
And would sacrifice all for the wandering nation,
With its great desire to find its Land.

Wail, Zion, your sun has set!
Your second Bar Kokhba is forever dead,
A third destruction has befallen you in Adlah.
Oh, abandoned mother, you have been destroyed.

Oh, Homeland!
Alas, cradling homeland,
You are a lovely land.
Like the apple of our eye, we will forever guard you!
You are the breath in our noses,
The spark of our hope,
And, in our national body, the blood.

Like the apple of our eye,
With blood and weapon
We will protect you from enemies, we will defend you.
We will choose death,
Trouble will we all choose
And never will we hand you to a capricious foe.

We will wage war,
Our blood will we shed,
And tightly to the standard shall we hold.
Death's bullets
Will be considered like nothing.
Only a dead man will relinquish the flag.

Lay Down, Go to Sleep, My Dear Son
Listen to my song.
In ancient times
There was a city.

Your ancient forefathers
Lived in that city.
They had happy life
They were a nation.

A nation with land under its feet,
Flowing with milk and honey.
And there was
No poor man there.

But the ancestors were too happy
And they forgot the sayings of God.
And over their shiny success
Came clouds of dark shadows.

And when God got angry,
He expelled them from the city.
Lay down and sleep, my dear son.
I will sing my song.

In the marvelous castles
A foreign people settled.
And your ancestors are wanderers
Captured by enemies.

Hundreds of years they have been wandering.
They are here and there
But they hope for a day to come
To become a nation again.

As God had promised
On that day
They will all come back
To be a great nation again.

A day will come and from them
Will rise a man like a lion.
He will call and everyone
Will gather around him.

Then the roar of a lion will be heard
For peoplehood, come to me!

Then, everyone will cheer
The Messiah lives!

Then, lightning will light up the sky
And cross the endless sea
Toward the beautiful city
From where they were expelled.

And the will of God
Will bring them back to the city.
Now, lay down and sleep, my dear son.
Listen to my song.

Appendix 2: Hebrew texts

אלי ציון ונודדיה
אלי ציון ונודדיה
כאלמנה בנעוריה
וכאם שכולה שאבד לה
גם האחרון בבניה

עלי בנימין נזיר העם
כזאב על טרף בוגדים קם
וירם נס ישראל שם
ובגו קפוא יצק דם

עלי הלב זה לבב הכפיר
שנמלא אהב, עז ושיר,
ויקרב כל לגוי הנד
ובאדיר חפצו למצוא לו ניר.

הילילי ציון כי שמשך רד!
בר כוכבא שני לך מת לעד
וחורבן שלישי בכפר אדלח
הו, אם עזובה החרבת אַת.

הוי, ערש מולדת
את ארץ נחמדת
כאישון נשמרך לעולם!
את רוח אפנו,

ניצוץ תקוותנו,
בגוויית כל עמנו – הדם.

כאישון העין
בדם וכלי זין
נגנה, נגנה עליך מצר!
במוות נבחרה,
כולנו בצרה,
ולא ניתנך לאויב הנמהר

מלחמה נערוכה,
דמנו נשפוכה,
אחוז נחזיקה בנס.
כדורי המוות
יחשבו כאפס
הדגל יעזוב רק המת.

שכב, הירדם, בן לי יקיר
שמע, אדבר שיר.
בימי קדם במרחקים
היה היתה עיר.

אבותיך הקדמונים
לפנים גרו שם
אזי חיו חיי אושר,
אזי היו עם.

עם שארצו תחת רגליו
זבת חלב ודבש
עם שלעיתים מאוד רחוקות
נמצא בו איש רש.

אך האבות מרוב טובה
עזבו תורת אל.
ועלי שמש הצלחתם
עלו עבי צל.

ובהתקצף אל עליהם
גרשם מן העיר
שכב, הרדם, בן לי יקיר
שמע, אדבר שיר.

בהיכלים הנהדרים
עם התיישב זר
ואבותיך נדים נעים
נתונים בידי צר.

הרבה מאות שנים נדים
הם גם פה גם שם
אך הם מקוים כי יום יבוא
ושבו להיות עם.

כי כן אותם אל הבטיח
ביום האף הלז,
כי יום יבוא ושבו כולם
להיות עוד עם עז.

כי יום יבוא – וקם מקרבם
כארי נוהם איש,
שקול יתן – והתקבצו
אליו כולם חיש.

אש תישמע שאגת אריה:
מי לעם – אליי!
אז יריעו כולם כולם:
המשיח חי!

אז יעופו חיש כברקים
דרך מרחב ים
אל העיר ההיא היפה,
שגורשו משם

וברצון האל יבואו
כולם אל העיר…
עתה שכב וישן, בן יקיר,
שמע אדברה שיר…

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Vered Tohar
Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan Israel
vered.tohar@biu.ac.il