

Gradostroitel'naiia Politika v SSSR, 1917–1929: Ot goroda-sada k vedomstvennomu rabochemu poselku. By Mark Grigor'evich Meerovich. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2017. 347 pp. Notes. Glossary. Illustrations. Photographs. Tables. Maps. ₰619, hard bound.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.266

Urban Planning Policy in the USSR, 1917–1929 traces how Russian reformist aspirations for garden cities morphed into the realities of Soviet departmental workers' settlements. The book begins by situating pre-revolutionary Russia within a pan-European context and depicts the resonance of garden cities among Russian architects and liberals seeking reform “without revolutionary cataclysms” (48) through the harmonization of urban and rural life, and the provision of comfortable single-family, cottage-style homes. Even before the ideas of Ebenezer Howard spread with the 1911 Russian translation of his 1898 book *To-morrow*, analogues of the garden city had appeared in Russia; illustrative are nineteenth-century factory towns linked to the railway in the eastern parts of the empire. That the garden city failed to proliferate, Mark Meerovich suggests, was due in no small part to tsarist opposition to one of its key principals: self-government.

Soviet power brought hope to proponents of the garden city; architects in particular envisioned combining collective social organization and administration in planning and daily life with state resources for urban infrastructure. What the utopian enthusiasts did not anticipate, Meerovich asserts, was that the revolutionary regime would also be hostile to self-government. Indeed, policy decrees of the latter 1920s transferred housing from the purview of “civil” to “industrial” construction, and assigned executive power over housing directives, resources, and building to the Supreme Soviet of the National Economy. Regarding design, already in 1925, architects saw their planning mandate narrow from “residential buildings for workers' settlements” to “communal housing” (289–90). Meanwhile, popular input in resolving the housing crisis declined by the eve of the First Five-Year Plan as housing cooperatives became targets of state control.

At the same time, as Meerovich demonstrates, the garden city embodied notions of cooperation, equality and aligning urban and rural life that intersected with Bolshevik ideals for collectivism and eradicating social differentiation. Such convergences were manifested in a range of designs for workers' settlements, including ones with residential dwellings that incorporated exterior spaces for agricultural production. They were also evident in the 1924 legalization of housing cooperatives that condoned *de facto* popular initiative in housing construction through 1937.

Because they afforded individuals a degree of autonomy in acquiring living space, Meerovich casts housing cooperatives as a kind of compromise between the garden city and departmental housing. Yet in his overview of their history, their idealistic elements are eclipsed by sinister intentions. Meerovich certainly recognizes state support for workers contributing to the housing stock, but more conspicuous than benefits like building resources are ones like the power to deny housing to “bourgeois” elements (150–57). Meanwhile, he underscores the encroaching inequality that accompanied rising attention toward industry, as signified, for example, by individual housing for management personnel.

Apparently fixated on the end date of his study, Meerovich explains that departmental workers' housing became the norm because the state perceived it as optimal for economizing on resources and administration, mobilizing and disciplining the labor force, and monitoring conduct. While this is validated by housing legislation and policy, the wealth of material he incorporates from contemporary trade publications indicates noteworthy continuities with the romantic aspects of the garden

city. As is, emphasis on increasing centralization and decreasing experimentation detracts from discussions about the significance of the flexibility that remained in architecture and urban planning throughout the 1920s. That Meerovich abundantly shows this to have yielded a variety of designs and prolonged engagement with western European models is not surprising given that the book is largely set amid the New Economic Policy, an era that necessitated economic and ideological compromise, yet witnessed a fervor for social transformation. Further complicating his key assertion that the state strove to make housing an instrument of power are factors like the persistence of individual ownership and of cooperative construction—indicators of enduring popular influence in housing—that he himself recognizes.

That said, Meerovich achieves his aim of outlining the establishment of the Soviet departmental workers' settlement in terms of its predecessors and the official decrees, intentions and norms that attended its development. Especially interesting are his account of how European architecture and urban planning concepts were transmitted to Russia, and his portrayal of the myriad ideas for revamping daily living that emerged in the early Soviet era—all enriched by nearly two hundred illustrations. As Meerovich amply demonstrates, until late in the 1920s, the form that housing was to take was not dictated. His meticulously researched book is therefore of special value to scholars interested in the history of Russian architecture and urban planning across the revolutionary divide.

CHRISTINE VARGA-HARRIS
Illinois State University

Gendelev: Stikhi. Proza. Poetika. Tekstologiya. Ed. Evgenii Soshkin and Sergei Shargorodskii. Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie 2017. 725 pp. Appendix. Photographs. ₴632, hard bound.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.267

There are many reasons to edit a book by and about Mikhail Gendelev (1950–2009), as it has been done by Evgenii Soshkin and Sergei Shargorodsky. The poet, prose writer, feuilletonist, essayist, and translator holds an exceptional place within the last generation of the Russian writing diaspora in Israel. Leningrad-born Gendelev came to Israel in 1977. His experience at the front as an army doctor during the Lebanon war of 1982–85 played a crucial role for his later poetry. Gendelev's self-image transformed from an Israel national poet in the 1980s to a more universal Jewish author from the 1990s until to his death in 2009. He was shifting back and forth between Israel and Russia where he lived most of the time between 1999 and 2008, being a stranger in both countries and cultures.

Gendelev, who wrote his first poetry at the age of seventeen in Leningrad (15), dedicated his last poem to the boulevard Ben Maimon in Jerusalem where he lived at the end of his life. He is an author with a thrilling literary and political entanglement both in Israel and in Russia (he supported Boris Berezovskii). His writing—various, astute, elaborate and ironic—blurs the traditional understanding of high and low literature. It questions mimetic conceptions of literature and, in a Borges-like manner, mirrors identities and realities. His eccentric poetic approach decenters meaning and points of view. The result is relativism and semantic ambiguity—in a humorous mood.

The present book is conceived as a supplement to former editions of Gendelev's work. Accompanied by a precise introduction by the editors, a short biography, and insightful commentaries about the real circumstances, allusions, self-references,