

# Chapter 4. Immigrant Literature about the Fourth Wave of Russian Emigration: The Case of Germany

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## Material and Framework

“Russians” leaving the former Soviet Union in the fourth emigration wave<sup>1</sup> usually chose their destination on the basis of the so-called “ethnic ticket”: Soviet Greeks went to Greece, Soviet Finns to Finland, and Soviet Germans to Germany. The Jews, however, had two alternatives: Israel or Germany. A third option – the United States, and in fact the most preferred – ceased to exist during the 1990s, at least for people without close relatives there. This emigration wave has been researched by sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, linguists and folklorists in each destination country; a comparative approach has been taken as well (Dietz 2000; Dietz et al. 2002; Fialkova & Yelenevskaya 2007; Kaurinkoski 2003; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. 2003; Remennick 2007; Yelenevskaya 2005; etc.). These studies conclude that the FSU immigrants differ considerably from newcomers from other countries, and display the same patterns of adaptation and acculturation in all their destination countries. They also experience similar social problems wherever they settle. In general, FSU immigrants of diverse ethnic origin do not fit behavioral models typical of Finns, Greeks, Jews and Germans, and the natives of all the receiving societies see them as Russians.

Among the most important features of the former Soviets I would list affinity with the Russian culture, a high percentage of mixed marriages

and one-parent families, dependence on the state for problem-solving and readiness to deceive the state, xenophobic prejudices and an elitist attitude to the receiving society. Russian enclaves with their services and culture, including newspapers, theatres, schools – and literature, sprang up in all the destination countries and have attracted research. Yet despite the existence of important publications on the literature of the fourth wave of Russian emigration (e.g. Bugaeva 2006; Kaurinkoski 2010; Krutikov 2000; Madden 2008; Weiskopf 2001; etc.), this feature remains under-researched.

Estimates of the numbers of Russian Germans and Russian Jews who arrived in Germany with the fourth wave diverge significantly in the various sources. Nevertheless, at the very least a million and a half Russian Germans and 170,000 Russian Jews reside in Germany today (Baerwolf 2006: 173; Darieva 2011: 234; Dietz 2000; Remennick 2007: 317). Many contemporary writers living in Germany have emerged from these two groups.

In 1998 Vladimir Batshev, a former Soviet dissident who immigrated to Germany (Frankfurt am Maine) in 1995, formed the Union of Russian Writers in Germany. Using membership fees for financial support, that year Batshev launched a Russian-language journal *Literaturnyi evropeets* (Literary European) which is still active. In 2004 he founded another similar journal, *Mosty* (Bridges). In 2005 this union had 70 members, which does not include all writers. Indeed, many writers retain their membership of the Russian Writer's Union and of the writers' unions of the former Soviet republics; some have been accepted by the Union of German Writers. Russian books are published in Germany in two main publishing houses: one founded by Batshev, the other by Alexander Barsukov, who has lived in Germany since 1994. Barsukov founded a literary association, *Edita Gelsen*, which engages in publishing. He also edits two almanacs, *Vek XXI* (21<sup>st</sup> century), launched in 2000, and *Portfolio* (I could not find the date of its first publication). There are/were other journals and almanacs as well. One of them, *Rodnaia rech'* (Native speech), initiated by Olga Beschenkovskaia, was published in Hanover from 1998 to 2000. The "native speech" in its title was Russian, not German or Yiddish.

Russian writers now living in Germany publish their fiction in other countries as well, e.g. Russia, Kazakhstan, Israel and the USA, and in fact their chances of publishing in Russia are greater than in Germany (Madden 2008: 329; Ryshkova 2008). The works of some authors, such as Oleg Jurjew, are readily available, while in other cases they can be found in various Russian-language Internet sites.



**Figure 13.** The site “The New Literary Map of Russia” provides information about 31 countries. Visitors can learn about Russian-language writers outside Russia and their new publications. They can read blogs and see recordings of Russian literary events taking place in countries as different as Greece and Estonia, Japan and Germany. <http://www.litkarta.ru/world/>, last accessed on 28 Jan 2013.

The definition of the material researched in this chapter is flexible. At first I intended to title it “Russian literature in Germany and Austria”, but I did not do so for several reasons. First, the writers considered here emigrated during the fourth wave of Russian emigration from different republics of the former Soviet Union (FSU), or even from different countries of the CIS, and may regard not Russia but Ukraine, Kazakhstan, etc., as their motherland. Or they may be perceived by others as affiliated with different CIS countries. Yet their publications are accessible on the Internet contributing to the “New Literary Map of Russia”<sup>22</sup> and are intended for various Russian readers, inside Germany but also outside. Some of the authors (e.g. I. Hergenroether, O. Jurjew, A. Khurgin, Ju. Kissina, Iu. Maletskii, O. Martynova,

W. Weber) are listed in the Encyclopedia of the contemporary Russian literature (Chuprinin 2012).

Second, the fourth wave is “Russian” less in actual ethnic composition than in the cultural sense. All the authors covered here are Jews or Germans, and although I consider them Russian writers this is not the only approach possible. Other scholars research them separately as Russian-Jewish authors (Krutikov 2000) or Russian-German authors (Zeifert 2009).

Third, although the focus of my research is Russian-language literature, I decided to include one author who writes in German, namely Wladimir Kaminer (Germany).

The boundary situation of the immigrant authors manifests itself in various respects, including linguistic. This is especially evident regarding the various way-stations on the linguistic scale from German to Russian and vice versa. Some of the writers have entered German-language literature, for example, ethnic Germans Lorena Dottai, Elvira Schik, and Anton Mitliader, and ethnic Jews Wladimir Kaminer and Lena Gorelik. Can the writing of all or at least some of them be treated as Russian immigrant literature? This question is often discussed in respect of Kaminer, who emigrated from Moscow at age 22 and learned German in his new homeland. In his interviews Kaminer perceives himself, perhaps with some irony, as a Russian-speaking German writer of Soviet cultural background, whose choice of writing in German is market-driven rather than identity-driven (Kucherskaia 2004). Although I agree with Tikhomirova that interviews may be a dubious source, intended to satisfy the interviewer (Tikhomirova 2000), I think that they still reflect the immigrant discourse and should not be wholly ignored. Kaminer writes about ex-Soviet emigrants from the insider’s perspective and must certainly have read the Russian translation of his “Russendisco” (Kaminer 2003). His writing is discussed in different categories. For Mittelman he is a Jewish-German writer (Mittelman 2010), but other scholars, myself included, stress the Russian-German boundary (Madden<sup>3</sup> 2008: 331) or the Russian-Jewish-German character of his writings (Rindinsbakher 2006; Wanner 2005; Wanner 2011: 51–71).<sup>4</sup> Eva Hausbacher also places Kaminer in Russian literature, albeit with some reservations (Hausbacher 2009: 247–280).<sup>5</sup>

As stated above, some writers of diverse ethnic origin write solely or predominantly in Russian, for example, the ethnic Germans Igor Hergenroether and Vladimir Shtelet, and the ethnic Jews Boris Rublov (pen-name of Boris Rubenchik), Juri Kudlatsch, Alexander Khurgin,

Oleg Jurjew, and more. But the ethnic Germans Viktor Eduard Prieb and Waldemar Weber write in German and in Russian, which signals their attachment to both literatures. The poet and writer Olga Beschenkovskaia (1947–2006), a Jew, wrote and published in both these languages (Dvoretzskii 2004). Oleg Jurjew, also a Jew, occasionally writes in German rather than Russian, although the lower artistic level of his writing in the former language is clearly evident to him (Jurjew & Shubinskii 2004). The German influence is clear even in the spelling of the names of the FSU writers, which follows the German rules and not Russian transliteration (Beschenkovskaia instead of Beshenkovskaia, Jurjew instead of Iuriev, Juri Kudlatsch instead of Iurii Kudlach, Wladimir Kaminer instead of Vladimir<sup>6</sup> Kaminer). Some writers in Russian protect the purity of the language, but many immigrants' writings about immigrant life contain German words which signify local life. Their explanations are given in the text itself or in notes for the benefit of Russian readers who do not know German. According to Madden, some authors (e.g. Iurii Maletskii) even toy with bilingualism and/or multilingualism (Madden 2008: 328).<sup>7</sup> This "Germanized Russian" resembles the Hebraized Russian in Israel (Naiditch 2000; Naiditch 2004) with its various cognomens: *HebRush* (Remennick 2007: 98–101), *izrussskii* (Gutina 2011), and *russit* (Dida Sasha 2006). Olga Beschenkovskaia scornfully dubbed the Russian language as spoken in Germany *kontingetno-bezhenskii dialect* (contingent-refugee's dialect: Beschenkovskaia 1998), and communication among speakers of different emergent variants of Russian (e.g. Germanized and Americanized) *tarabarshchina* – gibberish (Beschenkovskaia 2008), which does not mean that such communication is not possible.

In my opinion, in the case of immigrant writers the different frameworks are not mutually exclusive. Any boundary phenomenon can be defined narrowly or broadly, and examined from either side; conclusions should be reached according to the context. If I research the writers' poetics, in Kaminer's case the language barrier will be crucial. But my research agenda is more anthropological than aesthetic. I am interested in the representation of the FSU emigrants of the fourth wave by the emigrant writers in that wave. This anthropological angle calls for information about me in relation to the researched group.

I am a Russian-speaking secular Jew and a former Soviet citizen from Kiev (Ukraine); I have lived in Israel since 1991. I do not know German nor have I ever visited Germany. Although starting my career as a scholar of Russian literature, I moved to folklore studies after

emigration with the focus on the personal narratives of the FSU immigrants in Israel (Fialkova 2007; Fialkova & Yelenevskaya 2007). I am particularly interested in the reflection of oral immigrant discourse in fiction. The choice of Russian literature in Germany rather than in Israel as the material for this chapter was triggered by the wish for estrangement (Shklovsky 1983: 15). According to Madden, who analyzed questionnaires completed by Russian writers in Germany, they perceive estrangement also as a major asset of their immigration (Madden 2008: 327). Thus I am a partial in-group member: I belong to the fourth wave of Russian emigration, I am a former Soviet person residing outside the CIS, and in some respects even a *zemliachka*. *Zemliaki* (plural; singular *zemliak*, masculine, *zemliachka*, feminine) are compatriots, people who come from the same place, which is also a typical form of identification in Russian culture (cf. note 1 on page 80). A former Kievan, I lived in the same city as a Russian writer, Boris Rublov (Rubenchik) – a Jew, and a Russian bard, Vadim Kuzema – a German; both now reside in Germany. But I am out-group in terms of German experience. I teach in Hebrew and write this paper in English, while my native language is Russian, which is followed by Ukrainian as regards emotional attachment. For a few years I was even a member of the Ukrainian section of the Israeli Writers' Union. With the same level of accuracy I can be called “a Russian immigrant scientist”, “an Israeli scholar” and “a Kiev-born Western scholar of Ukrainian folklore”. To my mind, my boundary position suits the boundary character of immigrant literature, which is intended for various Russian readers, inside Germany but also outside.

## Identity Issues in Immigrant Literature

Identity questions are addressed by immigrant writers, in their interviews and their fiction alike, from several interrelated angles. First among them is ethnic origin (*natsional'nost'*<sup>8</sup>) – the writers' and their characters', mostly German, Jewish or Russian, with various “deviations from the norm”, be they mixed ancestry, “improper” religious affiliation, ignorance of the language and culture, and/or perception by outsiders. Next is a connection between the victimized ethnic identity and a Soviet identity, which is directly linked to the Great Patriotic War.<sup>9</sup> The third angle concerns the Jews alone; it is the moral dilemma of the choice between Germany and Israel as the destination.

## Ethnic Identity

The centrality of ethnic origin in immigrant discourse lies in the “ethnic ticket”, the notion explained at the beginning of this chapter. In this case Hall’s (1996) philosophical question “Who needs identity?” has practical answers. The ethnic identity of potential immigrants is required by the officials who issue visas and by the receiving society’s taxpayers, who do not want to feed an abundance of newcomers who do not belong. It is needed by the fellow immigrants, who stress their legality by repeating that they were invited to come. These immigrants are at the same time reluctant to share their meager “slice of the pie” with those who are not entitled to it, and are ready to blame outsiders in their ranks for their own poor image in the eyes of the receiving society.

Ethnic identity is constantly used by literary critics as a criterion for scholarly definitions. According to Madden, German literary critics tend to accept Russian Germans who write in German as German writers proper, while Kaminer is perceived as Russian (Madden 2008: 331; see also Wanner 2005). Prieb likewise belittled Kaminer with the epithet “a Moscow Jew” (Prieb 2006: 144–145). I agree with Hall that race, which in this context is similar to ethnicity,

is a *discursive* not a biological category ... it is the organizing category of those ways of speaking, systems of representation, and social practices (discourses) which utilize a loose, often unspecified set of differences in physical characteristics – skin, colour, hair texture, physical and bodily features etc. – as *symbolic markers* in order to differentiate one group socially from another. (Hall 1992: 298)<sup>10</sup>

Ephemeral and profoundly criticized (e.g. Patai & Patai 1989), the racial (and, I would add, ethnic – *natsiona’nyi*) criterion is still widely assumed to be reliable as a primordial determination of subjective cultural identity. The profound interest in writers’ ethnicity and cultural identity abundant in Russian-language interviews clearly shows that Barthes’s premise about the death of the author (Barthes 1977) is premature – quite the reverse. Personal information, real or mythologized, is in demand as an author, as well as a publisher, is still perceived as “an unseen companion” of the texts (Lotman 1992: 369). This interest also sparks the popularity of autobiographical novels with blurred lines between the author and the protagonist. I agree with Wanner that “an autobiographical stance is also a typical feature of immigrant fiction” (Wanner 2011: 10; cf. Hausbacher 2009: 145–147).



I would like to illustrate this point with several quotations from the interviews.

The first is from an interview with the publisher Alexander Barsukov: "Alexander, please tell me about your ethnic origin – about your parents..."

I am a Jew on my father's side, if one can express it like that.<sup>11</sup> Real Jews here have a different opinion on this point. (Zeifert 2005)<sup>12</sup>

The second is from an interview with the literature scholar and poet Elena Zeifert: "How did your interest in the literature of Russian Germans arise? Is there anything personal about it?"

As I am a Russian German, it is especially important for me to study the literature of my ethnos. Perhaps every person has his ethnic mission (...) Critics and literary scholars who write about Russian-German literature may be divided along ethnic lines: they are Russian Germans (...) German Germans (...) and representatives of other ethnicities (...). In the *Leninka*<sup>13</sup> everything Russian awoke in me even though I have not a single drop of Russian blood in me: three quarters of it is German and a quarter Jewish.... (Paul'zen 2007)

The third excerpt is from an interview with Olga Beschenkovskaia: "Can you be called a 'German-Russian' poet?"

I'd prefer to steer clear of juggling with the "national adjectives". I have Jewish blood, and in the 1970s, when it was not fashionable and even not permitted, many of my poems touched on Jewish topics. Yet they were written in Russian, which means by a Russian poet. (...) Let's agree. When Jews are oppressed I am a Jewish poet. And if Germans are oppressed, consider me a German poet! (Dvoretiskii 2004)

In all the foregoing fragments the notion of blood has a clearly symbolic meaning, connected to admission to / exclusion from a group, and to knowledge about different expectations from its bearer. However, Beschenkovskaia and Zeifert differ in their willingness to satisfy these expectations. Another interesting point is Zeifert's distinction between Russian Germans and German Germans: the former are perceived as a different ethnic group, or in her terminology a different ethnos. This division makes blood, though mandatory, insufficient for unity. Blood indeed unites the two groups, but they are cleft by mentality and language use, which are derivatives of concrete historical and cultural circumstances. Such a discourse about Russian Jews as a cultural and linguistic minority different from veteran Israelis is typical for Israel.



The discussions specifying the blood composition, the “parity of mixes” and their implications are abundant in fiction. Jewish authors (e.g. Rublov, Khurgin, Maletskii) often describe Russian Germans as Kazakhs or Kazakh-*Deutsch*, and/or as having slanting eyes. The first two definitions may be just of geographic character indicating those who came from Kazakhstan, but they can have an additional derogatory meaning of “uncivilized Oriental people”. Both definitions may also be related to the third, which has an evident racial (albeit not always pejorative) meaning, indicating the progeny of mixed marriages, in this case Germans and Kazakhs.

I was brought here [to the hospital]. A Russian nurse of the Kazakhstan Germans has been invited. The girl by the way is super! She has slanting eyes.<sup>14</sup> You'll see her. (Rublov 2003: 106)<sup>15</sup>

A special bitterness is needed for a character's maternal and paternal sides to be perceived as mutually exclusive – for example, one is Jewish and the other Ukrainian as in the case of the protagonist of Boris Rublov's novel. Another is one parent Jewish and the other German, as in the case of Rudolf Germannovich Lannert, protagonist of Juri Kudlatch's novel.

Rublov's novel is stylized as an autobiography. Two characters, the protagonist and his Ukrainian friend Liuba (diminutive of Liubomir), are talking in Kiev when the protagonist is on a visit from Germany to his hometown:

Liuba didn't want to stop.

“Still, speaking honestly, which genes are more precious to you: the Ukrainian or the Jewish?”

Here I felt I was starting to boil, but I restrained myself and asked: “Tell me, Liuba, what would you call someone who asks a child whom he loves more – his mom or his dad?”

“An idiot!”

“That's right!” (Rublov 2003: 174)

The second quotation is from Kudlatch's novel *The Alms-house*. The conversation between half-Jewish Lannert and his Jewish neighbor Semien Iakovlevich takes place in *Haim*, a German hostel for immigrants, which in the novel is called the “alms-house”. Both are sunbathing.

“By the way, Rudik, how did you come by such a romantic first name and patronymic - Rudolf Germannovich? Is your father really Germann?”

“Sure!”

"Confess," said Semien Iakovlevich, (....), "speaking in confidence, you aren't Jewish."

"What if I'm not?" Lannert grinned uneasily. "What would it matter to you? Would you stop sunbathing with me? Would you want to move to another room, farther away from mine? Would you?"

"Rudik, how can you say that? What do you feel about me?!"

"I feel that you're an ordinary and normal person. Let me put your mind at rest at once – but only fifty percent: my mom was Jewish."

"And what about your dad, if you're being so honest?"

"I'm afraid you wouldn't like to hear about him. My dad was pure German."

"Sorry, so what are you on your passport?"

"Needless to say, I'm Jewish. I mean, now I'm Jewish. And before that I was German. I can assure you that it's no better at all. It required running around and wheedling. And I had to give bribes, damn it! I'm ashamed even thinking about it." (Kudlatch 2002)<sup>16</sup>

Some fictional characters created by Russian German writers also live in mixed marriages and/or are the offspring of such a union. Thus Viacheslav Slotov, journalist, writer and KGB agent, a character in Igor Hergenroether's novel, makes a deliberate effort to emigrate. He succeeds by marrying Martha, a German woman, after failing in his attempt to emigrate with a Jewish girl. To paraphrase a well known Soviet joke, his German wife "was not a luxury but a means of transportation" (Hergenroether 2006; cf. Fialkova & Yelenevskaya 2007: 269).

A protagonist of Victor Eduard Prieb's novel, addressed by the nicknames Kid (*Mal'ys'h* in Russian) and later Father, was the child of a German colonist and a Russian woman from Smolensk. When Kid grew up he married a Russian (or Byelorussian?) woman. Interestingly, Prieb specified that Kid was registered as German in his Soviet documents but said nothing about his daughters' ethnicity (*natsional'nost'*). In the novel's closing pages the entire family immigrates to Germany as German repatriates (Prieb 2006).

Writers are interested in the condition of mixed ethnicity because of its great importance for many emigrants from the USSR. The notions of "pure-blood" people and "halves" or "half-bloods" are deeply ingrained in the mentality of the former Soviets and have no correspondence with religious or ethnic traditions. Being Jewish, Russian, Tatar, German or whatever else was a fact of birth, of biological descent, not of religious or cultural identity. Ethnicity, or nationality (*natsional'nost'*), as it was called in Soviet usage, was registered in the notorious "fifth paragraph". This paragraph, which was innocuous for Russians, Ukrainians or Moldavians, could prove ominous for members of minorities. Germans,

Tatars or Chechens, for example, were deported; others, such as Jews, suffered other forms of discrimination. This is reflected in the use of the idea of the “fifth paragraph” and in the jocular expression “invalid of the fifth group”<sup>17</sup> (e.g. Beschenkovskaia 1998; Fialkova & Yelenevskaya 2007: 269–270). Prieb reflects on the implications of ethnicity for Kid [who at that point in the plot becomes Father]: “He has known all his life that he has no right to cross the borders of the Soviet Empire. His German nationality [*natsional’nost’*], which was entered forever in the fifth paragraph of his internal passport – notorious throughout the land – saw to that” (Prieb 2006: 23). Rublov ponders the influence of the same fifth paragraph entry on the life of one of his characters, the Jew Mikhail Leonchik: “Although he had absolute pitch, was very gifted and had secondary musical education, he was not admitted to the Kishinev conservatory because of the ‘fifth paragraph’” (Rublov 2003: 79).

This entry was indeed indelible and could never be changed even in the event of religious conversion. However, the progeny of mixed families, whose forebears belonged to different “nationalities”, were given the privilege to choose the “better” of the two at the age of sixteen. It is known that some 90–95% of children of mixed Jewish/non-Jewish origin preferred to be registered as non-Jews (Dymerskaia-Tsigelman 2000: 39). Researchers of the Department of Ethnography at the University of Omsk (Russia) have shown that in the Soviet era most children of mixed German/non-German families likewise opted out of the minority by registering as non-Germans; this situation has meanwhile changed because of the possibility of emigration to Germany (Anonymous author 2002). So Kid’s registration as German, not Russian, seems somewhat exceptional<sup>18</sup>. Lannert’s situation is more understandable: either option, the German or the Jewish, was pretty bad, and feelings about which was perhaps less harmful could vary in different historical periods. A parallel to Lannert’s choice albeit from different reasons can be found in the interview with a half-German and half-Jewish young immigrant Lida, who prefers to be a Jew. In the context of other interviews with young Russian speakers of German and Jewish origin her choice reflects the fact that Russian Germans perceive the Russian Jewish community in Germany as more successful than their own (Baerwolf 2006: 180–181).

The identity of people of mixed origin was flexible; it could change over time depending on the context of their family life and circle of friends. In any event, it was independent on the mere fact of maternal or paternal ancestry. For example, the character in Rublov’s novel whose

conversation with his friend Liubomir I quoted on page 193 is the son of a Jewish father, but he was raised by his Ukrainian mother as all trace of his Jewish father was lost in the battles of the Great Patriotic War. Still, everybody took him as a Jew. Needless to say, in the eyes of the German-Jewish community, as well as according to Israeli law, he is not Jewish at all. The condition of “Halachic and non-Halachic halves” is constantly discussed in scholarly publications, in the German and Israeli press, and in oral immigrant discourse (Dietz et al. 2002: 37–38; Fialkova & Yelenevskaya 2007: 51–68; Remennick 2007: 59–65, 317–326). Often the “halves” are registered differently before and after emigration. This change may be intended to help immigrants with their integration, but it can stem from religious law and block immigrants’ opportunities by marginalizing them. Thus both “Halachic and non-Halachic halves” were registered in the USSR as non-Jews. Yet children of Jewish mothers, who suffered less in the old country due to non-Jewish patronymics and family names, became Jews in Israel and Germany, managing to enjoy the better option in both situations. On the other hand, children of Jewish fathers who could suffer in the USSR on account of easily recognizable Jewish patronymics and family names became *goyim*<sup>19</sup> in the destination countries. Ironically, this circumstance confirms the relevance of the Soviet notion of “invalids of the fifth paragraph” and its derivatives, e.g. “people of wrong nationalities” and so on, even after emigration. Differently from the USSR, elsewhere conversion to Judaism for the “non-Halachic halves” is perceived as a legitimate ticket to “the right ethnicity”; but most immigrants, who are secular, are not willing to change their way of life drastically, as required by the Orthodox Jewish conversion. Sensitivity to the “wrong paragraph” is clear in the song of the Russian German chansonnier Vadim Kuzema, *The Fourth Paragraph*, which bemoans the new bureaucratic divisions of immigrants: in the old country they were equal, but in Germany they are separated by ethnicity. Russian Germans are registered in the fourth paragraph, ethnic Russians in the eighth (Kuzema [no year c]). Although this song presents an excessively idyllic picture of the Soviet national equality, it nevertheless highlights the amazement at the new discrimination, a feeling typical of many immigrants in Germany, and, I may add, in Israel, at least in the initial period. The artificial and utopian notion of the “Soviet people” has despite all left its nostalgic imprint on many immigrant stories.

The case of the half-German Lannert, the protagonist of Kudlatch's novel, is most intriguing. The choice between being Jewish or German in the USSR was not easy, nor was the choice between being "a Kike snout" or a "damned fascist". The latter had been Lannert's experience in full, but his emigration was triggered not by the attitude of the Soviets to ethnic Germans. It happened after the dissolution of the USSR and was motivated by the attitude of ethnic Kazakhs to Russian speakers as a whole, be they ethnic Germans, Jews or Greeks. In this context the logical step for Lannert would be to repatriate to Germany on the German "ticket" and escape being the "other". However, Lannert preferred to bribe officials and emigrate as a Jew.

This course of action seemed to run counter to everything I knew about managing one's ethnicity as I could not grasp its practicality. So I wrote to Juri Kudlatch to ask him about it. The answer came back quickly and was clear. The emigration procedure is much easier for Jews than for Germans, who must complete a lengthy tortuous questionnaire, devised by the German authorities in quest of enough evidence of the applicants' German way of life in their country of origin. This highly complex process was devised as German society reacted to the and unexpected "Russianness" of the German repatriates. Lannert's prototype, whom Kudlatch met in person, was a half-German from Tashkent. He preferred to forgo the lifetime pension paid by Germany to ethnic German repatriates, and to enter on the Jewish ticket. The situation becomes even stranger considering that his wife was German. For Kudlatch's literary hero, this choice resulted in his being the recipient of an anti-Jewish leaflet in Germany, demanding that immigrant Jews (Kike snouts) leave the country. He who had been taunted for being "a damned fascist" in the USSR has now become the target of neo-fascist activity in Germany.

## Religious Identity

Among typical features of Russian immigrant literature in Germany is the reflection on "inappropriate" religious affiliation of writers and their fictional characters alike. The term "inappropriate" in this context may have different meanings. It may refer to atheism, which was prescribed in the USSR but is perceived as problematic for the local religious communities:

No, the rumors which spread are not pointless. According to them, a synagogue is trembling, horrified in face of the Jews who have come from the former USSR. They are arrant atheists and disbelievers (although I wouldn't refer to myself as to disbeliever) (...). Returning to the synagogue: of course, it is not the edifice that is trembling. The building is strong and grey; it resembles the KGB (...). The back hairs stand on end on the heads of national functionaries – in the first place the rabbi's.... (Beschenkovskaia 1998)

...he [the average German] would like to know what all these strange bundles of middle-aged people are doing here. They entered the country through the Jewish quota with families and they have professions, which imply high professional status; yet they do not go to the synagogue. (Maletskii 1999)

The word “inappropriate” also applies to the disparity regarding strict religious laws. Russian Jews eat pork (Kaminer 2005: 107–108)<sup>20</sup> and an orthodox Jew from the USSR may have not been circumcised (Rublov 2003: 95–97). The adjective may also refer to the “wrong” language of prayers [Russian instead of German]. Other “inappropriate” deviations from the norm are Russian Germans who are Russian Orthodox [instead of Lutheran], Jews who are Orthodox Christians instead of followers of Judaism, and more. Thus the dramatic persona of Shtele's poem “prays in a Russian church and in the Russian language to his [non-Russian] gods (Shtele 1978–1998). Weber describes his protagonist's baptism during the war. The Russian German baby was baptized by a Russian Orthodox priest as no Lutheran priest could be found in the village. The protective effect of baptism is more important for his mother and grandparents than the differences between the denominations (Weber 2011). Especially important in this context are Jews of Christian faith, treated by Maletskii and Beschenkovskaia.<sup>21</sup> This excerpt from Maletskii's novel is part of a conversation between the protagonist and another former Moscow Jew, Lenia Reznik, who helps him to fill out the documents:

“Well, naturally in the paragraph on denomination we'll write ‘Orthodox Jew’, won't we? What do you mean by Orthodox Christian? Here it is called ‘Russian Orthodox’. But then, what have you lost in the synagogue? It means that when it refers to your faith, you are Russian Orthodox, while when you need the entry permit and the money, you are Jewish, aren't you? You have fixed it fine...”

“Sorry, why are you talking like that? It is not you who let us in, but the Germans. They exterminated the Jews, including my grandfather,

according to ethnic criteria, not religious. And in this same way they let us in, which is perfectly logical...”

“(...) Well, let’s stop waffling. I’m doing your documents not as a Jew for an apostate but as one former Muscovite for another.<sup>22</sup> But I ask you as a compatriot not to wave your cross around among the Russian-speaking residents of the town”. (Maletskii 1998)

The Jew whom Beschenkovskaia most appreciated of all her Jewish acquaintances was “the one nailed to the cross by children of different nations; some did it with a hammer, others with words” (Beschenkovskaia 1998).

A baptized Jew, Iakov Markovich Permanent, also appears in Oleg Jurjew’s novels. Being a Leningrader in the *Zhidiatin Peninsula*, in *New Golem*, he is already an immigrant to Germany and resides in the fictional town of Iudenshliukht (Jurjew 2000; 2004).<sup>23</sup> But unlike the previous examples, Jurjew’s depiction of Russian Orthodox Jews is ironic.

The spread of Russian Orthodoxy among Soviet and post-Soviet Jews is not an exclusively German phenomenon. Starting in Russia in the last years of Soviet rule, it crossed the borders to Germany, the U.S.A., and even Israel, although in the latter case in secret: the Law of Return prohibits repatriation of converts. Unlike conversion in earlier historical periods, baptism today is not perceived by those who choose it as a way to escape from the Jewish people. In most cases Jews come to Christianity not through conversion from Judaism but from atheism to faith. As a result no psychological betrayal is experienced, and Christianity is perceived by many of them as an alternative Jewish identity (Deutsch Kornblatt 2004; Nosenko-Stein 2010; Ulitskaia 2011).

In general, an “inappropriate” religious affiliation signifies divergence from the traditional “primordial” ties between ethnicity and religion. According to this approach, ethnicity does not determine religion, which can be chosen, like political and/or philosophical ideas, in accordance with one’s personal views. Although more popular among people of mixed origin, it is accepted by many descendents of mono-ethnic families as well. In my opinion, the separation of religion and ethnicity in the USSR, as well as the impossibility of escape through apostasy during Stalin’s purges and the Nazi occupation, conditioned this changed attitude.



## Identity and the Great Patriotic War

Although Russian Jews and Russian Germans suffered on account of Soviet national policy, their situations differed. Playing down the Holocaust as well as the contribution of Jews who fought in the Great Patriotic War was typical official Soviet policy, which nurtured the widespread anti-Semitic practice of blaming them for “holing up” in Tashkent. Yet their participation in the war as Soviet soldiers and officers was not denied altogether. Stalin’s death rescued the Jews from the planned deportation, saving them from the “criminal nations of the Soviet State” (Prieb 2006: 8). Although discriminated against, the Jews were allowed to be part of the Soviet national narrative of the Great Patriotic War, which became the cornerstone of the notion of Soviet and post-Soviet identity (Gudkov 2005). Virtually every Jewish family had a member who perished in the battles or returned as a decorated war hero. Reading books and watching the films about the war, Jews, together with other peoples of the USSR could identify, at least partially, with the representation of history provided in them. Jewish youngsters played the popular game “In the Great Patriotic War” and/or tremulously touched their father’s and grandfather’s medals (e.g. Beschenkovskaia 1998). The collective “we” of the Soviet Jews incorporated not just Babi Yar, Salaspils and the ghettos, but the battles of Stalingrad, Kursk and Berlin as well. The importance of this heroic identity persists after emigration. In Israel, for example, former Soviet Jews succeeded in instituting a celebration of Victory Day on 9 May, propagating the self-image of victors rather than victims (see pages 172–174 in this book). Clubs of veterans of the Great Patriotic War were also quick to emerge in Germany, and Soviet songs about the war are sung there as well (Bodemann 2001: 360; Yelenevskaya 2005). Such self-perception as victors, typical for Russian Jews contradicts the tendency to accept them as a community of victims, which was typical for the receiving society (Becker & Körber 2004: 10). In Germany there is an official People’s Day of Mourning which takes place on Sunday between 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of November. It commemorates all those who perished during World War II, slaughtered Jews, Wehrmacht and Waffen SS troops alike (Margalit 2010: 146) as a part of a reconciliation narrative. In 1995 according to polls, 17% of West Germans and 34% of East Germans saw the 8<sup>th</sup> of May in terms of defeat and not liberation (Morina 2011: 256). Public celebration of the Victory Day on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May restores the notion of the Great

Patriotic War rather than World War II, questions the reconciliation memory and activates alternative memory.

Persistent demonstration in Germany of their heroic past by the elderly Jewish immigrants is reflected in immigrant fiction as something strange or even inappropriate; here is an example:

“Are you going to join the tour to Munich tomorrow?”

“No, tomorrow is the 9<sup>th</sup> of May.”

“So what?”

“What do you mean? It’s Victory Day.”

“So what?”

“Our hometown association (*zemliachestvo*) appealed to the *re-girung fon Shvaben*<sup>24</sup> to provide us with the auditorium for tomorrow evening for the celebration of our Victory Day over fascist Germany.” (Maletskii 1998)

The only Jew in a big family from Dnepropetrovsk was a ninety-year-old grandfather, who used to walk in the street always wearing a jacket with a ribbon-bar... (Khurgin 2007)

A noise came from the room next door. Two attendants tried to take out an old man. His black jacket was decorated with the Soviet orders and other insignia. (...) He tried to prove heatedly that he had to have a discount as he was coming to the exhibition for the third time. (Rublov 2003: 229)

Still, Soviet military awards are respected by the writers, especially when they are not used to win undeserved privileges. The case in point is Solomon Rabinovich in Rublov’s novel:

He had seven injures, three contusions, and two stars on his shoulder straps, that is, he was a lieutenant, and he had six governmental awards, among which were such orders as the Order of the Great Patriotic War and the Third Degree order of Glory. (Rublov 2003: 53)

Russian Germans were not only denied the right to defend the USSR in the Great Patriotic War, but were collectively punished by the Soviet state as alleged traitors. Their ethnicity (*natsional’nost*) made them “guilty” merely by being co-ethnics of the Nazis. While the suffering of Jews was radically downplayed, the suffering of Russian Germans was muted, and they were excluded from an important part of the Soviet national narrative (Krieger 2007). According to Prieb, popular films about the war gave rise to vicious attacks by Russian children on their German peers. Kid, the protagonist of Prieb’s novel, born six years after the end of the war in a small pig-breeding settlement

whither the family had been deported, lost an eye in one such “battle” (Prieb 2006: 31). Clubs showing numerous films about the war appear also in Vladimir Shtele’s poem with the oxymoronic title *The Foreign Motherland*, referring to Russia. The dramatic speaker of this poem recollects his childhood spent in Siberian barracks. Such film clubs constituted the main leisure activity there. In these films “ours” were invincible. Importantly, the author sets the word “ours” in quote marks to signify severe problems of self-identification. Russian German kids had to identify with the Soviets, despite being continuously harassed by Russian neighbors for no reason. Nevertheless, it was their childhood and Russia was their motherland (Shtele 2010).

On the individual level, belonging to different discriminated minorities may bring about mutual sympathy, but not necessarily. Beschenkovskaia stressed that unlike Hitler, who created Auschwitz for the peoples of the *other*, namely Slavs and Jews, Stalin created his GULAG [which is thus equated to Auschwitz] for his own people [Soviets]. These camps were for Slavs and Jews too, and for Germans. But they were not for “Germany’s Germans, but for our own, for ‘ours’, and first of all for his own party comrades” (Beschenkovskaia 1998). Clearly, by “our own” Germans she meant Russian Germans. Kudlatch sympathizes with Lannert over his undeserved suffering when called “a damned fascist”. Rublov’s half-Jewish/half-Ukrainian protagonist remembers an unfortunate family of Russian Germans, refugees from the town of Engels, who were caught by the Soviet militia (Rublov 2003: 9). But antagonism is also abundant. Depicting the slave labor of Russian German women in the so called *trudarmia* [labor army], Weber, a German repatriate of the fourth wave, creates a repulsive image of Major Semien Mel’dison, whose first and second name are clearly Jewish [marking a Jewish character by a recognizable name is a typical Soviet practice, as explained above concerning non-Halachic halves]:

Mom’s battalion was commanded by Major Semien Mel’dison. He would remind them every day that the Germans could expunge their guilt only through zealous work. Tiny, dumpy and duck-legged, Mel’dison had a foible: he liked big women. He didn’t spare any of them his attention. A tall, plump immigrant woman related laughingly to her girl workmates, in her working-class Berlin accent, that he used to climb up her [*lazel po nei*] like a cat climbs up a tree. Mel’dison would scream at those who failed to meet the quota: “You bitches, you’re waiting for the Germans – no hope. And you won’t get a fascist’s dick either! I’ll have you tried as saboteurs.”

Another character, who according to her patronymic is also Jewish, seems to be the rescuer of the protagonist's mother:

Help came unexpectedly. The mother was accepted as an assistant by Maria Moiseevna Shatkhina, the physician at the camp's first-aid post and the elderly wife of one of local commanders. (Weber 2011)

The GULAG hell in Prieb's version is manned by "small, tacky Red Army soldiers, who for various reasons were unsuited for or not admitted to military service as combatants; most of them due to the black irony of fate were Soviet Jews..." (Prieb 2006: 124). Indicating the majority status of Jewish guards, Prieb makes them responsible for the suffering of peaceful Russian Germans, and reinforces the anti-Semitic myth of Jewish non-participation in the battles. In contrast to authors who focus only on peaceful Russian Germans, Prieb also defends those who, like Kid's father, decided to go to Germany during the war and were forcibly conscripted into the SS. For Prieb in accordance with the reconciliation narrative, these SS soldiers were guilty only of having "good height" and were unjustly betrayed both by American allies and later by postwar Germany (Prieb 2006: 120). Short fat Jews are thus contrasted to tall handsome SS soldiers. Although Prieb does not openly support the Nazi regime, he justifies it obliquely, equating it to Leninist-Jewish-Communist-Stalinist chauvinism (Prieb 2006: 123). Had he not included the adjective "Jewish" I would have agreed with him. This likening of Hitler's and Stalin's regimes is well founded, and not at all new to Russian literature; it was deeply analyzed many years ago by Vassilii Grossman, and again more recently by Olga Beschenkovskaia. Prieb, however, designates it also as Jewish. Importantly, Prieb is selectively "blind" to the presence of any Jewish prisoners in the camps. As a result, Jewish guards become a logical continuation of the "Jewish oppressive regime". This formula helps him to deny that Jews were victims of Stalin and the Holocaust and transforms them into culprits guilty of Russian Germans' distress.

The crisis of identity in the transition from Soviet citizens and Nazi victims/victors to loyal German citizens is a typical trait of Russian literature created by ethnic Jews. It was also articulated by Russian German chansonnier Vadim Kuzema in his song *Reichstag*. As we know, most Russian Germans, including Soviet officers, were collectively withdrawn from the Soviet Army by the notorious directive N35105c of 8 September 1941, irrespectively of their personal views (Shulga 2008: 131).<sup>25</sup> In Kuzema's song the dramatic speaker is an ethnically unspeci-

fied immigrant from Russia. He is repairing the Reichstag, trying to efface traces of the shells fired from his grandfather's artillery piece during the war. This work of the repairer provokes his grandfather's reproach. The inner conflict is resolved in two different ways. First, the boss has ordered the holes not to be filled but left as the marks of history. Second, the fact that the people who are inside the building now do not want a new war is highlighted. The hero overcomes his identity crisis and ends the song envisioning his own son in the uniform of a Bundeswehr officer. This song, written in 1999<sup>26</sup>, reflects the narrative of reconciliation and envisions a similar event which took place a year later. On the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Drezden the British Drezden Trust presented the Church of our Lady with a new cross. The cross was done by Alan Smith whose father participated in the bombing in which the original cross was destroyed (Margalit 2010: 164). And the hostile graffiti left on Reichstag by Russian soldiers were recently re-defined as art by the designer Norman Foster. According to Darieva, "the public display of previously sacrilegious symbols in the political heart of contemporary Germany and their "showcasting" as tourist attractions may signal trivialization of recent history, but at the same time it highlights seminal changes in the perception on everything "Russian" as common and unthreatening" (2007: 38).

Like their characters, most of the authors were children at the time of the Great Patriotic War or belong to the postwar generation. Some of them personally survived evacuation, devastation and war-imposed orphanage. The younger ones got an idea of the war indirectly through family stories, nightmares, books and films (Dubin 2011). The words "Nazis" and "Germans" in these contexts were routinely interchangeable, and the German language itself acquired hostile connotations. Considering that adaptation to any foreign language is troublesome for adult immigrants (cf. adaptation to Hebrew in immigrants' stories: Yelenevskaya & Fialkova 2003), the traumatic effect of German becomes clear. Some typical examples follow. The first refers to *Haim*, a German hostel, once the starting point for all the new immigrants.

"Akhtung! Akhtung!" My dear brothers, friends, fathers and teachers. Could I ever have thought that the classics were forever alive and I would hear this legendary command at my own address? This word resounded through the building at 5 a.m. sharp. The barking voice, painfully familiar from hundreds of films, was broadcasting the names of the families who had to move with their belongings to the exit, without delaying the others. Bus after bus carried used and worn out human fates to the surrendered and doomed Bavarian towns. (Maletskii 1999)

This excerpt is about the sorting of immigrants to board buses which will take them to places in Germany where they are allowed to settle. But linguistically this peacetime situation brings to mind two different wartime ones. The first is another type of sorting, more familiar, namely selection for life or death in the concentration camps;<sup>27</sup> the second recalls the slogan “The Russians are coming!” [*Russkie idut!*],<sup>28</sup> and in consequence the German capitulation.

The second excerpt, from Beschenkovskaia’s essay, tells of an unexpected meeting in the park:

So we were strolling in the park, my husband and I, and suddenly we saw helmets, which pierced our eyes like steel blades. These were not good-natured Soviet helmets (...) but those very helmets... These were those very ... One... Three... Five... It was an entire division... And there were voices... My God, why do I hear “*Akhtung! Akhtung!*” and soldiers’ boots which strike precisely: *ain-tsvai, ain-tsvai*?

The terrifying military image proved entirely peaceful as the imagined soldiers were apparently just firemen. Yet this perception, both acoustic and visual, is highly typical for the Jewish immigrants, even though many of them, like Beschenkovskaia herself, had seen “German fascists only at the cinema” (Beschenkovskaia 1998). The problem is that through these films they could visualize the true stories of their grandmothers and cousins who were burned in the flesh, with no firemen anywhere to save them.

The title of Rublov’s novel is *And Here I Heard German Spoken*, itself intimating the uneasy feeling caused by this mere fact. The protagonist, whose Jewish father had vanished at the front, heard German in his childhood’s nightmares:

In a dream I saw my dad sitting on the slope in his civilian clothes and in his constant leather cap. The Germans are slowly creeping up on him. I’m yelling, “Dad, look out!” But he doesn’t hear me. And the Germans are shouting: “*Kheende khokh!*” and pointing their machine-gun at him. At that moment I wake up shouting, “Dad’s been captured!” (Rublov 2003: 8)

Understandably, the deepest identity crisis is experienced by elderly Jewish immigrants, who personally experienced the war. One of Rublov’s characters, whom I mentioned earlier, is a pious Jew, Solomon Rabinovich from Kiev. He is a lonely old man who has not fully recovered from the tragedy of the war: while he, then a seventeen-year-old soldier, was heroically fighting in the front, his parents and little sisters were shot at Babi Yar. Solomon has immigrated to Germany,

following a similar move by a distant relative from Berdichev. Yet at some point he considers the possibility of a second immigration, this time from Germany to Israel. Fearing loneliness, he seeks out some relatives there, as he intends to start with a trial visit, not full commitment. A relative is indeed found. His letter, which is full of disdain both for Solomon's being in Germany and for hesitations concerning repatriation to Israel, intensifies Solomon's mental crisis and results in nightmares about Babi Yar. Unable to control them, Solomon commits suicide.

The theme of the Nazi past reemerges not only in the memories of the war or in the activities of contemporary neo-fascists, but even in various humorous misunderstandings, typical anywhere for most of the immigrants whose knowledge of the new language is still sparse. These situations are so characteristic that they merit a special type in the well known index *Types of Folktales*, edited by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson. This is no. 1699: Misunderstanding because of the ignorance of the foreign language (Aarne & Thompson 1964; cf. Fialkova & Yelenevskaya 2007: 259–266; Yelenevskaya 2008a). In Germany, however, these slips can lose their funny side. For example, Boriska, a character in Alexander Khurgin's novel *Those Who Kiss the Doll*, makes a mistake. Looking for the clinic of a Russian-speaking dentist, Dr. Emma Braun, on Gustav-Adolf Street, he approaches people and asks for Eva Braun on Adolf-Hitler Street. Naturally, the passerby whom he has accosted is deeply embarrassed. In this case the discomfiture was unintentional, although Russian literature in Germany also reflects immigrants' entirely deliberate abuse of the host population. Thus Boriska addresses a German clerk with a typical but adversely symbolic name [at least for the Russians], Frau Führer, who was not responsive enough to his needs, with the exclamation: "Unfortunately there is no Hitler upon you!" He thereby paraphrases the typical Russian exclamation "Unfortunately there is no Stalin upon you!" meaning the threat of severe punishment. Still more gruesome is Boriska's hobby "to beat the fascists", namely to attack the Germans together with a group of frequenters of a Russian discotheque.<sup>29</sup> This occasionally aggressive behavior towards the receiving society, verbal or physical, is a continuation of the Soviet experience in different circumstances. An example of the indiscriminate use of words "Nazis" and "Germans" is given by Prieb in the episode depicting a Soviet gathering dedicated to Victory Day. His protagonist, called Father [the adult Kid], defiantly



walks out when an old war veteran calls the entire German people “a wolf in the sheep’s clothing” (Prieb 2006: 146–147).

Immigration to Germany requires coming to terms with the past. Three authors, Beschenkovskaia, Kaminer and Prieb, two Jews and a German, connect their own or their protagonists’ move to the anniversary of the beginning or of the end of the Great Patriotic War. The autobiographic hero of Kaminer’s “*Militärmusik*” boards the train for Germany on 22 June 1990; Father (Kid) in Prieb’s novel obtains his entry visa at the last minute before the German embassy closes on the eve of the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory Day.<sup>30</sup> But Father, who has two daughters, waits for the end of the school year so the family leaves the USSR on 19 June. In fact, Kaminer’s and Prieb’s protagonists immigrated in the same year and the same month, with three days’ difference. This timing depended on getting the visa, hence is purely accidental; nevertheless, it acquires a symbolic dimension. For Father it means the end of the humiliation that he as a Russian German feels when Soviet festive ceremonies are held;<sup>31</sup> for the young man of Kaminer’s novel it objectively means indifference to the past (Wanner 2005: 592) or reconciliation with it. In any case he is already familiar with the facts of the war kept secret, and therefore is free of official Soviet mythology<sup>32</sup> (Kaminer 2005: 69, 130; Prieb 2006: 146). Beschenkovskaia wrote an essay, not a novel and it is overtly personal. She left the USSR on the 10 May, a day after Victory Day and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her father’s death, which occurred at the meeting with his fellow veterans. He had gone to Berlin as a soldier; she goes to Germany as an immigrant. The situation causes her suffering, although it leads to reconciliation in the end. This is evident in the essay, but even more in Beschenkovskaia’s poems. One of them starts with “Dad saw Berlin in 1945” and ends with an appeal to a German: “My German brother, let’s drink to our fathers / And to their obelisks, which cool the blood” (Beschenkovskaia 2005). The appeal was heard and when Igor Hergenroether wrote about the late Olga Beschenkovskaia, he chose to quote these very lines at the end of his essay (Hergenroether 2010).

While I accept Wanner’s premise about Kaminer’s relative indifference to the Holocaust, I cannot agree that it is inherent in the consciousness of most Russian Jewish immigrants in Germany (Wanner 2005: 592). Neither immigrants’ narratives nor immigrants’ literature provide enough evidence of this idea. Memories of the Holocaust, combined with current immigrants’ experiences, disturb them, kindling complex feelings about Germany’s Germans, from outrage to

gratitude. Nor can I accept Krutikov's conclusion that the only way open to former Soviet Jewry in Germany is self-hatred (Krutikov 2000: 230–234). Bitter criticism of provincial fellow Jews, which he finds in Beschenkovskaia's essay, is not exclusive to immigrants to Germany. It is a result of the blurring of ethnic and class boundaries experienced by Jewish immigrants in other countries as well, including Israel (Fialkova & Yelenevskaya 2007: 96–128). Wanner indicates them in Boris Saidman's novel, written in Hebrew in Israel (Wanner 2011: 91). Unlike the connections in somewhat limited circles of friends with a common cultural background, as was typical in the USSR, immigration inevitably joined people to sundry others, necessitating communication across secular/religious, central/peripheral, urban/rural, and educated/non-educated axes. The very existence of such axes proved a cultural shock for many Jews. Yet a similar shock was experienced by many Germans, above all by "Germany's Germans", on encountering their co-ethnics from Russia – many of whom came "from the settlements, which were God-forsaken", as Kuzema sings in the *Fourth Paragraph* (Kuzema [no year c]; see also Darieva 2011: 235–236).

Russian Jews in Germany have developed several principal strategies for reconciliation. First, following German reconciliation narrative they emphasize the suffering of German women and children under the Soviet and Allied occupation of Germany (cf. Margalit 2010: 46–57); next they stress the rapid physical disappearance of the guilty elders, and the innocence of the postwar generations of Germans. Thirdly they express gratitude to the country that provides immigrants with financial support and its distinction from the USSR and the CIS – cruel or at best indifferent to their citizens. Lastly they metaphorically replace immigration to Germany by "immigration to Europe"<sup>33</sup>.

## Conclusions

Immigrant literatures are "cultures in between" and employ a so-called "hybrid discourse" (Bhabha 1996: 58). Paraphrasing Hall's terminology, I may define their role as "narrating the minority",<sup>34</sup> which in this case consists of Russian speakers of diverse ethnic origin who immigrated to Germany from the former USSR on the eve of its disintegration or thereafter. Literary texts reflect grassroots practices and resist the institutional as well as the lay public's expectations of identities as fixed constructs based on primordial unity within an ethnic group.

Identity, according to Hall, is “a concept operating ‘under erasure’ in the interval between reversal and emergence”; by contrast, the concept of identifications is “drawing meanings from both discursive and psychological repertoire without being limited to either (...) and arise from the “narrativization of the self” (Hall 1996: 2, 4). It is never completed and is inherent in personal narratives and literary works alike. The process of immigration of the last Soviet generation (Yurchak 2005) turns identities into commodities (entry permit and financial support are granted for specific ethnic identity) and intensifies the identification discourse, leading both to divergence as well as convergence of groups and individuals.

In the case of Russian Germans and Russian Jews the traumatic past can produce the dynamic of both types. If perceived as conflicting agents (Jewish guards in the GULAG supervising arrested Russian Germans; Russian Germans sympathetic to the Nazis), they lead to alienation. Yet they can be united on the premise of the “fifth paragraph”, which caused suffering to both groups. Immigrants can be separated by different immigration rules (by new paragraphing), by place of origin (Kazakh villages versus Ukrainian provincial towns or various Soviet capitals, from Moscow and Leningrad to those of republics) and by education (village school versus prestigious university). They can also be separated by religion (Lutheran, Christian Orthodox, Judaism, as well as atheism) or by contrast united by it, often independent of ethnic origin, which itself is frequently mixed. Immigrants have common nodes: they meet at the same clinics of “Russian” doctors, be they German or Jewish, dance at the same discotheques, use the Runet (Russian language internet) and laugh at the same jokes. The most important thing, clearly seen in the immigrant literature, is that these identifications are situational and without fixed causation. Both the “Kazakh-Deutsch” who bursts out laughing on hearing a joke and the Jew who tells it become Russian. The same may happen when they sing or hear such songs as *Russian Weddings in Germany* or *Charter to Hannover* (Kuzema [no year a]). However, the two can be Russian only outside Russia. To be precise, in that case they still belong to “the Soviet people”. Russian literature in Germany reflects these attractions and divergences.

Immigrant literature is multivalent. It is a part of the literary scene of Germany as well as that of Russia and of the Russian diaspora (cf. other diaspora literatures in Kandiyoti 2009). It can be perceived as German, Jewish or Russian, or a combination of these. Different

frameworks imply different power relations. Perceived as a part of present-day German literature written in Russian, it is consigned to minority status with all its pitfalls (cf. minority discourse of Chinese literature in the USA in Chow 1993: 99–107), but traces the writers' personal integration. On the other hand, if understood as Russian and diasporic, it is directly connected to Russian literature per se, which is reinforced by its virtual presence there through publications and by the possibility of physical return (Wakamura 2009). But it prevents authors from feeling at home in Germany. While in the Soviet Union a "national frontier became a fact of literary process" (Chudakova 2007: 207) contemporary immigrant literature is not ostracized and is characterized both by centripetal and centrifugal tendencies. To my mind the former meanwhile dominates. The centers are multiple and also include various branches of the incipient Russian diaspora (Fialkova & Yelenevskaya 2005; Remennick 2002). To paraphrase the title of Olga Martynova's paper "Posthumous victory of the social realism" (Martynova 2009)<sup>35</sup> contemporary Russian literature can be defined as a "posthumous global victory of multiethnic Soviet literature" in the imagined global Russian community (Anderson 1991). However this victory does not presuppose immigrant authors' identifications with Russian Federation. The notion of Motherland can be altered and this change depends not on ethnic origin of a writer but rather on the level of his/her personal integration. Thus, Oleg Jurjew in his short poem *O chiem, o rodine?* [About what, about a Motherland?] writes about two unspecified motherlands, whereas the former can be easily identified as Russia and the latter as Germany: "... *Ob etoi / Pechal'noi rodine, l'dom oblachnym sogretoi? Ia bol'she ne o nei – ty znaesh' pochemu: / Inuiu rodinu voz'mu s soboi vo t'mu... / ... O kom, o rodine?*" [...about this / Sad motherland which is warmed up by the nebulous ice? / I don't [sing? speak?] about it anymore – and you know why: / I'll take another motherland with me into the dark... / ... About whom, about a motherland?"] (Jurjew 2011).

In visual terms, I would liken these identifications to the festive garland of lights on the New Year tree. The colors on it vary – they may shine in succession and be only blue or green or yellow or red. Yet all these lights are there together, as becomes clear when all of them are shining. But unlike the lights, diverse identifications, some despised by creators of this or that imagined national community (Anderson 1991), cannot be separated; they can only be muted by force at official representations, including scholarly reports as well as in the nation-

alistic discourse of the lay public. In this context literary texts, viewed as fictional narratives about daily practices and daily discourses, form an important supplementary source of anthropological and sociological studies. In this situation the artistic quality of the literary texts is subordinate.

Literature enjoys several advantages over traditional qualitative research, which is based on various methods of interviewing. First, literature does not depend on direct communication with the interviewer, hence on an unavoidable power effect. Clearly, interviewers' questions prompt specific topics, and unfortunately may influence the answers. Although various interviewing techniques are aimed to minimize these effects, they cannot entirely block them (Fialkova & Yelenevskaya 2007: 22–36). Immigrants' literature, on the other hand, addresses the questions chosen by the authors themselves out of their reflection on their own and other immigrants' daily life as well as their discourse. Secondly, in contrast to researchers, writers and poets are not influenced by any theoretical framework, which may give rise to selectivity. As a result they provide readers, including scholars, with their own sometimes conflicting frameworks, which can be used for both formulating questions and comparing with the outcome of the interview.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> On the waves of Russian emigration see Zemskaja 2001: 35–49. Some researchers do not distinguish the fourth wave from the third (Bugueva 2006: 58), which started in the 1970s; thus they disregard the profound differences caused by the disintegration of the USSR.

<sup>2</sup> The goal of the project “New Literary Map of Russia” is to rebuild united Russian literary space (see <http://www.litkarta.ru/about/>, last accessed on 8 Aug 2012). According to Weiskopf and Kissau, only 20.4% of Russian immigrants in Germany visit predominantly German websites, while 49.2% visit only Russian-language Internet websites and 27.1% visit both Russian and German websites. Among those who define their knowledge of German as “very good” and “good” one third still prefers to use mainly Russian-language websites in the countries of origin and residence. Russian language Internet has immense communicational importance for unifying the Former Soviets all over the world (Weiskopf & Kissau 2008: 103–104, 106–108; cf. Fialkova 2005; Elias & Shorer-Zeltser 2006).

- <sup>3</sup> Madden is the pen-name of Elena Tikhomirova.
- <sup>4</sup> After considerable hesitation I excluded an Austrian writer, Vladimir Vertlib, from the authors treated here, and thus limited this study to Germany alone. Vertlib, like Kaminer, writes in German and his writing is also discussed variously as Jewish-German (Matveev 2011), Russian-German or Russian-Jewish-German (Bugaeva 2006: 69; Fundaminskaia 2001). However, although bilingual and in the same age group as Kaminer, Vertlib moved to the West with his parents during the previous (third) wave of Russian emigration. Unlike all writers discussed in this paper, he was born in the USSR but not raised there. His novel, which has been translated into Russian, is autobiographical and is about the emigrants of the third wave (Vertlib 2009).
- <sup>5</sup> Kaminer is the only writer who is addressed both by Hausbacher and by myself in this paper. Otherwise our samples differ.
- <sup>6</sup> Interestingly, Vertlib's first name Vladimir is spelled according to the Russian rules of transliteration.
- <sup>7</sup> Language play is typical also for "translingual writers" (Wanner's term), including Kaminer. Although they do not write in their native language they tend to include "insider jokes" – obviously understandable only to those who know Russian as well (Wanner 2011: 12–13).
- <sup>8</sup> Ethnic origin was registered in the Soviet documents under the paragraph *natsional'nost'* – nationality. This word is used abundantly in both oral narratives and fiction.
- <sup>9</sup> I prefer this name instead of the neutral the Second World War as it played an important role in the formation of Soviet identity (cf. Dubin 2011: 145).
- <sup>10</sup> Italics are in the original.
- <sup>11</sup> Cf. Fialkova & Yelenevskaya 2007: 59–61.
- <sup>12</sup> All translations from Russian are mine.
- <sup>13</sup> Colloquial form for the State Library named after V.I. Lenin in Moscow.
- <sup>14</sup> All underlining and comments in square brackets are mine. The comments in round brackets () are part of quotations.
- <sup>15</sup> The word "Russian" incorporates the *other* into the in-group. However, "slanting" eyes may have overtly negative connotations as well, e.g. in Beschenkovskaia's essay when describing a clerk of Vietnamese origin working in *Haim* as "*raskosaia devka*" [slanty wench] (Beschenkovskaia 1998).

- <sup>16</sup> Where passages are cited from the Internet, page numbers sometimes cannot be provided.
- <sup>17</sup> Invalids with various health problems were divided into three groups: the first group consisted of people whose physical or mental deprivation was harshest. The joke plays on the equation of ethnicity with health deprivation.
- <sup>18</sup> Cf. it with Robert Leinonen's personal narrative. This immigrant writer of half-Finnish and half-German origin after serious hesitations registered as German still in the USSR (Zeifert 2009: 58–59).
- <sup>19</sup> A pejorative Hebrew word for non-Jews – L.F.
- <sup>20</sup> As this novel by Kaminer was not translated into Russian I read it in Hebrew translation. Similarly, Wanner, whose Hebrew proficiency does not allow him to read Boris Saidman's novel in the Hebrew original, read it in German (Wanner 2011: 16, 217).
- <sup>21</sup> Maletskii himself is a Jew and an Orthodox Christian. I do not know whether Beschenkovskaia was baptized or not, but Christian motifs abound in her poetry too.
- <sup>22</sup> Here is a clear example of the *zemliaki's* identity, discussed above.
- <sup>23</sup> Jurjew's novels are characterized by sophisticated poetics which resists anthropological analysis. That is why I refer to him only once.
- <sup>24</sup> In the original texts in all the quoted excerpts the German words are written in Cyrillic transliteration. For that reason I decided to use Latin transliteration of the Russian instead of German.
- <sup>25</sup> This directive could not be implemented immediately because of the military situation. Its enforcement lasted several months – until spring 1942, so that some Russian Germans continued to fight the Nazis (Shulga 2008: 137). In any event, they could not participate in the battle for Berlin.
- <sup>26</sup> I asked Vadim Kuzema about the date and he responded to me by e-mail. The website contains no date (Kuzema [no year a]).
- <sup>27</sup> The association of this sorting in *Haim* with that in the concentration camps is also reflected in Beschenkovskaia's essay (Beschenkovskaia 1998).
- <sup>28</sup> One of Kuzema's songs about the Russian *nouveaux riches* who "buy up the world" is entitled "The Russians Are Coming" (*Russkie idut*) (Kuzema [no year b]).



- <sup>29</sup> Is this not the same discotheque as that described by Wladimir Kaminer in his “Russendisco”?
- <sup>30</sup> Father’s [Kid’s] story of unexpected help in obtaining the visa belongs to typical stories of lucky coincidences, popular among emigrants from the USSR. In our work on immigrants’ narratives we defined a special type for them as an addition to Aarne and Thompson’s Types of Folktales: 947C\*–\*B (Fialkova & Yelenevskaya 2007: 211–237).
- <sup>31</sup> Alienation from Soviet festivities in general is also mentioned by Olga Beschenkovskaia, although in her case it was influenced by her Jewish ethnicity [*natsional’nost’*] (Beschenkovskaia 1998).
- <sup>32</sup> While writing this chapter I recorded an interview with a Russian Israeli student, who has absolutely no interest in the Victory Day, which he perceives not as a commemoration day of his forefathers’ glory but as a celebration of militarism.
- <sup>33</sup> Cf. with an excerpt from the interview with Iurii Kudlach: “I understood that we had to immigrate. But to immigrate where? I didn’t want to go to Israel (...) We, my late wife, who was also a pianist, and I used to dream sitting in the kitchen. “How great it would be to immigrate to Germany.” And not just to see the country which gave the world such geniuses [Beethoven, Schuman, Brahms, Hugo Wolf], but also to live there to join this great culture. But in those distant eighties nobody could see even in a most fantastic dream that Germany would accept immigrants. Nobody even thought about this. No to say that for most of the Soviet people who were parched by the war Germany was associated only with hysteric screams: “Khende khokh!” and such words as “fascist”, “SS man” and “Gestapo”. This ignoble war absolutely washed out from our consciousness the fact that Germany is a cradle of European culture. That phenomenon which is now called European music practically originated in three countries – in Italy, Germany and Austria. And for me it was most important. This became the main reason for my immigration to Germany” (Tsipris 2008).
- <sup>34</sup> Hall speaks about national cultures, whose concern is “narrating the nations” (Hall 1992: 292).
- <sup>35</sup> Originally written in German for *Neue Zuercher Zeitung*, this paper was translated into Russian in a piratical way and caused fervent polemics. As a result Olga Martynova had to retell it herself for Russian readers and to respond to critics. Differently from Olga Martynova, whose evaluation of the literature discussed is negative, I use this term neutrally.

# In Search of the Self: Reconciling the Past and the Present in Immigrants' Experience

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