Preface

It has become a universally accepted convention in scientific publishing that acknowledgements are placed after the preface. We would like to violate this rule and begin by expressing our deep gratitude to our Estonian colleagues, and to Mare Kõiva in particular, for initiating this project. Our professional ties with the Estonian Literary Museum began at the ISFNR Congress in Nairobi in 2000. Relatively frequent encounters at various meetings complemented by publication exchange and joint editorial activities paved the way to this project. We were given an opportunity to publish a volume of our articles, written in collaboration and individually but united by one theme. This offer once again revealed that in our professional circle we came to be perceived as an "academic duet". When we began working on this book we realized that its completion would mark the 15th anniversary of our joint work, so some reflections about collaborative research and writing are in place.

We first met in 1998 at an International Conference of Sociolinguistics held at the University of Haifa, where both of us contributed papers about the use of Russian in Israel. In fact, Larisa's participation was unexpected even for her, since as a literary scholar and folklorist she was not used to attending linguistic meetings. She accepted an invitation of a colleague who apparently was not acquainted with other scholars, recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU), but wanted a discussion about the increasing role of the Russian language in Israel. As a result, Larisa did not expect an incidental conference would have any impact on her future professional life. We listened to

each other's presentations with interest, exchanged some remarks in the intervals, and one of us gave a ride to the other, but no plans for future encounters, let alone joint projects, were mentioned. Several months later we ran into each other in town, and decided to get together for coffee. Only then did Larisa suggest a topic that required joint efforts of a folklorist and a linguist used to analyzing texts in English – a study of ghost stories on the Internet.

Working out a procedure for joint research was not a simple matter. How should we handle preparatory work: literature search, web-site monitoring, text selection and coding, archiving of materials and finally, their analysis? We had to decide how to distribute these tasks and divide time. An additional complication to this project stemmed from our poor computer literacy. Many a time did files disappear, messages wouldn't open and SOS signals were sent to our techno-savvy friends. We proceeded very slowly until the decision was made to reserve one day a week for sitting together discussing or writing. In later stages we would usually meet twice and sometimes even four times a week. Years later when our computer competence improved, and Skype became available we could maintain the usual schedule even in the periods when we were in different countries.

In the beginning, we probed our way forward carefully, learning about each other's work styles and testing the limits of mutual tolerance. At that stage we knew so little about each other that nothing was taken for granted, and every small decision was made together. Four months later a potential conflict started lurking: one of us was ready to submit the text to a journal; the other one was convinced that we were only half way through. The compromise was found, leaving both a bit disappointed, but the article was sent off. It is worth mentioning that although it was devoted to the internet, it was sent to the journal by snail mail – an anachronism difficult to imagine today.

At that time, although each of us had a record of publications in the USSR and the FSU, neither had publications in peer-reviewed Western journals. One had a bitter experience of rejected papers, the other was so scared of the possibility of impolitely formulated rejections that did not even dare submit, and like a Soviet dissident self-censured her own writing and shelved it. To our surprise, our first joint venture was accepted almost immediately, although scheduled for publication in two years (Fialkova & Yelenevskaya 2001). Narrating this story now we see that its plot fits well into the article about lucky coincidences viewed as miracles in immigrants' stories which we wrote in the framework of

our second collaborative project on personal narratives of ex-Soviets in Israel (Fialkova & Yelenevskaya 2001a). Had "the first pancake been a blob", our first joint project may well have proved to be the last one, but exhilarated by the first victory, we decided to continue and make a foray into immigrants' personal narratives.

Academic collaboration in humanities still remains a controversy discussed in scholarly publications (see, e.g., Harris 2000; Page & Smith 2010; Stone & Thompson 2006). Clearly, some of the problems and concerns of "academic relationships" are apparently common to all. First comes a question of hierarchies. Since we work at different universities, our partnership was never affected by institutional structure. Neither was it marked by status differences: both came to Israel as "Candidates of Sciences", the degree that was transformed into the internationally accepted Ph.D. We are almost equals in terms of age and length of professional experience. Furthermore, we immigrated and entered Israeli academia at the same time, so our exposure to the new professional conventions was also similar. Last but not least, we entered the field of internet research and later immigration studies in which both were complete novices. In terms of taxonomy proposed by Dustin Griffin for literary partnerships we started as equals, although we were neither friends,[1] nor bound by contract (Griffin 1987: 2–3).

Personality traits are also an important factor for successful collaboration. As educators we are used to being leaders and over the years may have developed dominant personalities often ridiculed in school folklore. It required a lot of self-restraint not to assume the dominant role because we quickly realized that neither of us would agree to be "closeted" as Stone and Thompson vividly describe invisibility of a partner in unequal collaborations (2006: 6).

For institutions, personal problems and family circumstances are to a large extent irrelevant. By contrast, joint research and collaborative writing are shaped by partners' readiness to take them into account. Making schedules and keeping to them, choosing the home in which to write, making adjustments when family members need care, or disasters like house remodeling befalls one of the partners are all essential elements of joint work. We also feel that comparable speed of thinking and reacting, humor appreciation and tolerance of critical remarks are essential for a long-term partnership. Numerous hours we spent together travelling to conduct fieldwork, discussing and analyzing material, writing and preparing conference presentations,

as well as cooking meals to relax during long work sessions[2] elevated "just work" to important social interaction and friendship.

Since most of our joint writing is in the realm of immigration studies, we couldn't refrain from expressing our ideological position, be it our attitudes to the Arab-Israeli conflict, ethnic policies, immigrants' use of their cultural capital or relations between religion and the state. If our opinions in these matters were not compatible, collaboration would be impossible.

While our colleagues often envy our creative companionship that helps avoid inevitable loneliness of single-author research, our institutions are ambivalent as to how to evaluate our long-term co-authorship. At the initial stage of our joint work on immigration we received a small grant promoting collaboration between our institutions. Yet in Maria's case there were obstacles to getting this grant as administration did not appreciate her spending time on investigating topics that had no direct impact on her teaching Technical English courses. As the number of joint publications grew, administration and colleagues in Larisa's university became perplexed and doubtful as to how to assess her joint publications when she was up for promotion. The most radical opponents of collaborative research in humanities suggested dividing the number of joint articles by two; others counted essays in which her name came first. These attitudes taught us to alternate the order of names. Moreover, while working on articles in legal anthropology we borrowed a formula used by jurists: irrespective of the name order we always add a footnote stating that the contribution of both authors to the reported study is equal.

In several cases we were offered collaboration by some other colleagues. It may have been fruitful to join efforts with jurists and sociologists while investigating issues in legal anthropology or professional re-integration of immigrant scientists, but the prospect of losing a name and becoming "et al.", let alone dividing the number of publications into three stopped us. Clearly, this consideration is on the mind of many researchers participating in joint projects. Scholars' concern about evaluation of their contribution is manifested in word juggling to invent terms which would reveal the hierarchy of contributors. Thus, in an article devoted to gender differences in publication rate and impact we came across the terms "senior author", "first author" and "last author" (Duch et al. 2012), and in the essay reporting the results of a similar study the term "first co-author" is introduced (Fellman 2012).

We find it ironic that we have to "play according to the rules of the game" because if we were asked to identify which idea is whose in our writing, we would be unable to answer. Like other research collaborators, we experience what Hughes and Lund aptly called "blurred boundaries of authorship" (1994: 50). We also know that when each of us writes separately the themes of studies diverge and the style changes. This is one of the reasons why selecting material for this book we had to be very careful to choose individually written chapters that would not disrupt thematic integrity of the whole. We hope we managed to achieve cohesion, and the five chapters of the book form a coherent whole, but at the same time are self-sufficient and can be read separately.

We wish to thank our interviewees for their willingness to share their stories and reflections about the influence of immigration on their life. We are grateful to Kadi Pajupuu for the design of the cover which reflects the spirit of the book, and we are grateful to Diana Kahre for her meticulous work on the layout.

We would like to thank our families for their constant support and encouragement. We appreciate their interest in the topics we investigate and their tolerance as listeners of our endless stories.

A Note on Transliteration

Throughout the book we have used the U.S. Library of Congress transliteration system for Russian proper and geographic names.

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

Larisa Fialkova & Maria Yelenevskaya