

# DOWNLOAD PDF AMBIVALENCE AND IDENTITY IN RUSSIAN JEWISH CINEMA OLGA GERSHENSON

## Chapter 1 : "Ambivalence and identity in Russian-Jewish cinema" by Olga Gershenson

*seven Ambivalence and Identity in Russian Jewish Cinema olga gershenson 'The Jew is ambivalence incarnate.' zygmut bauman Historically, the representation of Jews in Soviet national cinema (when and.*

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: Soviet Jewishness and Cultural Studies Olga Gershenson bio and David Shneer bio In Natan Sharansky, formerly an iconic Soviet refusenik and now an Israeli politician, was named chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, the wing of the Israeli government historically charged with fostering Jewish immigration to Israel, traditionally known as aliya. Sharansky, however, immediately reformulated the central mission of the Jewish Agency away from aliya and toward the strengthening of secular Jewish identity around the world. He and a tight group of ideological allies—mostly other Russian Jews—believe that the Jewish Agency must now become a global promoter of Jewish identity, particularly among the young. Peoplehood, according to its proponents, is defined as a sense of connectivity between Jews who share a common history and fate. These new developments give reason to think seriously about Soviet Jewish culture and its impact on global Jewish culture. Indeed, a growing number of books and articles on the subject indicate that there is a new body of scholarship, defined by a cultural studies approach to the Soviet and post-Soviet Jewish experience. These new studies come from varied disciplines, such as history, anthropology, film studies, and literary criticism, to name a few, but they all put culture and cultural production at the center of scholarship on Soviet and post-Soviet Jewish community and identity. We call this emerging field "Soviet Jewish Cultural Studies. It encompasses Jewish experiences in both the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, as well as within the borders of the Former Soviet Union and outside of it, in Israel, North America, or elsewhere, wherever Soviet and post-Soviet Jews have migrated. What the subjects of all of this research have in common is the experience of having lived under the Soviet Union with its radical experiments in Jewish identity and culture. Scholars working in this emerging field generally do not look at Soviet and post-Soviet Jews through the more traditional lenses of vanishing diasporas, [End Page ] Soviet anti-Semitism, and the disappearance of Yiddish and Hebrew cultures. Rather than approaching the Jewish experience of Soviet Jews with presumptions of what it means to be Jewish, and whether in fact Soviet Jews measure up, this scholarship asks what it means to be Jewish in a Soviet and post-Soviet context. In what ways is Jewishness performed and represented? By taking a birds-eye, interdisciplinary view, we want to redefine the field of Soviet Jewish Studies, and to use particular examples of the new research to suggest what a cultural studies approach reveals about Soviet and post-Soviet Jewish culture. We will demonstrate first that scholars of Soviet Jewish Cultural Studies have focused on new forms of Jewish practice that have sometimes supplanted traditional religious practices. Secondly, we show that this body of scholarship in Soviet Jewish Cultural Studies complicates the idea that twentieth century Jewish history is a history of assimilation, a movement downward from authentic Jewish practice rooted in Jewish languages to the end of a distinctive Jewish life. Most importantly, this new scholarship takes a global rather than national perspective, since post-Soviet Jewry is one of the most transnational in contemporary Jewish life. Thus, in a post-Soviet, post-Zionist, post-assimilationist moment in global Jewish culture, this group of Jews with their unique cultural history may be placed at the center, not periphery, of the global Jewish experience. Jews were identified first by their passports, which clearly defined their ethnicity You are not currently authenticated. View freely available titles:

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### Chapter 2 : Wrestling With Dark History: Soviet Holocaust Films And The New Ukraine - Odessa Review

Olga Gershenson. "Ambivalence and identity in Russian-Jewish cinema" *Oxford Jewish Cultural Studies, Volume 1. Jewishness: Expression, Identity, and Representation* ().

It depends on the date. Mar 7, The more recent *The Children of USSR* by a young Israel-educated director, Felix Gerchikov, also features a male protagonist, Slava, a former soccer star in his native town and now an immigrant, suffocating in a remote Israeli town and struggling to support his young family. Slava and his friends populate the margins of Israeli society, which also include violent Mizrahi youth, an Ethiopian immigrant and an oddball Hassidic soccer fan. Idiosyncratic bilingual spelling not only introduces a Russian word into a Hebrew title, but also uses a Cyrillic acronym as a nostalgic icon. But Slava is stubborn, and he succeeds in forming a soccer team. At the end of the film, Slava is reconciled both with his Russian wife and his Israeli surroundings. It is a historical drama set in the 1950s about the love affair between Hanna Rovina, star of the Habima, an Israeli theatre that originated in Moscow, and Alexander Penn, an Israeli communist poet who was originally from Siberia. Unlike mainstream Israeli movies, *Paper Snow* pays tribute to their culture of origin, to their Russian literary and theatrical background. In this way, the film focuses on the Russian roots of Israeli culture, emphasising the importance of Russian Jews past and present to Israel. In a more subtle form, the past also appears in the short film, *Dark Night*, by a successful young Russian- Israeli director, Leonid Prudovsky. The film opens with a scene of an Israeli patrol in the occupied territories. Driving the army jeep through the night, he explains to his fellow soldiers the significance of the song, which inspired Soviet troops, including his Jewish grandfather, as they fought against the Nazis. All these representations emphasise the identification of Russian immigrants with the Israeli-Jewish nation, while concurrently affirming their Russian cultural identity. If mainstream Israeli films, made to appeal to the Hebrew-speaking audience, feature few token words in Russian, Russian-Israeli films move freely between Russian and Hebrew. The recent TV series, *Between the Lines*, dir. Evgeniy Ruman, goes a step further. This series about a Russian-language newspaper in Israel features a staff of writers and reporters, all of whom are immigrants speaking to each other in Russian Hebrew subtitles are optional. Not only Russian immigrants but also their homeland began to appear on Israeli screens. This is unusual, as diasporic homelands are not often depicted in Israeli films, and certainly not positively. A brilliant recent TV series, *Troika*, by the above-mentioned Leonid Prudovsky, not only features dialogue that is almost entirely Russian, but is also filmed on location both in Russia and in Israel with characters moving freely between countries, languages and identities. As Russia began appearing on Israeli screens, Israel began appearing on Russian screens. This was a dramatic change from Soviet times, when the Cold War and continued anti-Zionist campaigns made any mention of Israel impossible. Only in the liberal era of perestroika did questions of Jewish life and interest appear on the Soviet screen. But in contrast to Israeli films, these films presented emigration as a tragedy—a consequence of local violence or injustice. Inter-ethnic romance involved a Russian Jew and a non-Jewish Russian, whose romance, as a rule, was doomed to failure. *Love*, an influential film by acclaimed director Valery Todorovsky, is the tragic love story of a Russian guy and a Jewish girl who are eventually parted as persecution and anti-Semitism leave her no choice but to go to Israel. Even in comedies, emigration is a kind of a tragic mistake and something to be fixed. He is desperate to return to his native Georgia. Not surprisingly, some Russian movies feature return immigrants. In *Daddy*, directed by a Russian film star Vladimir Mashkov, set in Israel, a character returns from Palestine, explaining that his return is a homecoming: More recently, Israel, and Russian immigrants to Israel, have started to appear even in mainstream Russian movies and TV series entirely unrelated to Jewish topics. *Padishah*, an episode of a hit detective series, *National Security Agent-3*, takes Russian detectives to Israel and features scenes filmed on location, including the most alluring tourist destinations—beaches, historical sites, hotels and restaurants. Russian detectives come in contact with a wide range of Israelis—religious and secular, new immigrants and native-born, so that the characters and

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audiences learn about everyday Israeli life. The main character played by Russian film star Mikhail Porechenkov even falls for a local colleague, a young, confident Israeli woman. The romance is not expected to last, but it does indicate warming relations between the two cultures. An episode in a more recent Russian detective series, Zhurov , colourfully titled Shabbes Goy, takes place not just in Israel but within a Hassidic sect in Jerusalem. It was filmed on location, in the religious neighbourhood of Mea Shearim. Again, the Russian detective Andrey Panin is working on a case together with a local colleague Russian-Israeli actor Vladimir Friedman who serves as both his interpreter and cultural mediator, helping him and the audience to gain a rare glimpse into the life of an insular religious community. These Russian films and TV shows appear to have no Jewish theme. Israel is a historically and culturally rich foreign locale, which makes it an exciting visual setting. But more importantly, the appearance of Israel in the Russian TV series affirms old social ties between Russian-Jewish cultural producers, some of them living in Russia and some in Israel, who still collaborate with each other. The script of Shabbes Goy was written by a Russian Israeli, and an Israeli production company staffed with Russian Israelis helped with the local casting. Some co-productions and collaborations blur national and cultural boundaries, to the point where it is hard to identify whether a film is actually Russian or Israeli. In the s, Kalik was a figurehead of the Soviet poetic cinema along with directors such as Andrey Tarkovsky and Sergey Paradjanov. Following the anti-Semitic censoring of his films, he emigrated to Israel in There, Kalik made only one film and failed to flourish as a director, but in Russia his oeuvre continued to be revered. And so, on the invitation of the Soviet film authorities, he travelled to Russia and made And the Wind Returneth, his cinematic autobiography. This was not a co-production: However, Horowitz now lives in his native Kiev. Are these filmmakers Russian or Israeli? Because such a large number of Jewish cultural producers immigrated to Israel, the social ties that they maintain with their Russian friends and colleagues create social networks, which, once in place, generate their own momentum, leading to new cultural production and distribution as well as the blurring of national and cultural boundaries. Movies made by these filmmakers, whether Russian or Israeli, circulate through the internet, transnational TV channels and Jewish film festivals, and are seen in Russia, Israel, and elsewhere in the Russian diaspora. These cultural crossings and exchanges make the Russian- Israeli cinema an extension of both post-Soviet or, in broader terms, Russian diasporic cinema. Of course, these developments are not limited to cinema—we see the same process at work in literature, art, business and scholarship. As Russian immigrants to Israel transform themselves through migration, they also transform cultures around them, which is why Israel today is a part of Russia, and Russia is a part of Israel. To learn more about her work, see [www](http://www). A version of this article appeared in the journal Israel Affairs.

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### Chapter 3 : Olga Gershenson | Professor of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies | Book Chapters

*Olga Gershenson, "Ambivalence and Identity in Russian-Jewish Cinema," in Jewish Cultural Studies, Volume 1: Jewish Cultural Studies: Expression, Identity, and Representation, ed. Simon J. Bronner (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, ).*

America with its multicultural and multiethnic environment puts the immigrant Gary in a very sensitive position. He does not know how to deal with African Americans; shall he avoid them or rim away? Shall he befriend Asian colleagues or not? Are Jewish friends more valuable than others? These are the questions that Gary Shteyngart has to answer and find his own voice. The protagonist of the novel under discussion tries to find his identity which is in continuous change. He tries to figure out in a world filled with cultural, racial and urban conflicts his own identity from the perspective of a former immigrant and as a member of a minority group. A Measure of Memory. The U of Georgia P. Brown, Sara and Armando Celayo. Ambivalence and Identity in Russian Jewish Cinema. Jewish Cultural Studies Volume One: Expression, Identity, and Representation, ed. The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization. Gershenson, Olga and David Shneer. Soviet Jewishness and Cultural Studies. Journal of Jewish Identities vol. The Library of America. A Dictionary of Sociology. The Politics of Representation. Writers and their Books. New Haven and London: The Story of Identity: American Fiction of the Sixties. Reisel, Ester and Rudi Reisel. A Rationalistic Motivation for Remaining Jewish. The New Immigrant Chic. A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis. Literature and the Relational Self. London, Berlin, New York and Sydney: The Threepenny Review no. Random House Trade Paperbacks. A Modern Dictionary of Sociology.

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## Chapter 4 : Soviet Jewishness and Cultural Studies | David Shneer - calendrierdelascience.com

*Russian-Israeli films exist in a particular constellation of Zionist ideology (where immigrant absorption is a national value), cultural policy (a combination of public and private local funding), and Russian-Jewish cultural identity (secularized, invested in Russian language and art).*

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: Russian Israeli Literature through the Lens of Immigrant Humor Anna Ronell bio From the s onwards, Russian Israeli fiction surprised its readers with an outpouring of immigrant humor ranging from mild playful jokes to biting social satire. Humor is one of the most important literary devices that can be traced through the entire corpus of Russian-Israeli literature, and doing so illuminates complex processes of identity formation in a new socio-historical context through an array of literary and linguistic experimentation. The phenomenon of Russian-Israeli humor is directly related to the travails of immigrant experience, and the collective efforts of many writers and journalists has resulted in a new Russian-Israeli idiom. The current hypostasis of Russian-Israeli humor has absorbed the legacy of Yiddish humorous self-criticism, the Bible and other religious texts, Russian-Hebrew word play, a complex network of intertextual allusions to canonic Russian and Soviet works, and, of course, a healthy dose of Soviet skepticism toward any ideology, political or religious passion, or official rhetoric. This article introduces several important figures: Looking at Russian Israeli culture through the lens of its literary humor allows us to see a sophisticated artistic response to the hardships of immigration and the pressures of self-identification with respect to both the past in the former Soviet Union and the present in Israel. In the words of Sara Cooper: While Guberman draws extensively on the legacy of Soviet cynicism, using Soviet political humor as his discursive blueprint, Rubina engages with the performative aspects of immigrant [End Page ] experience, structuring her humorous portrayals of the interactions between Russian Israelis and the sabras along the lines of the theater of absurd. Both incorporate familiar typesâ€”Homo Sovieticus co-exists with a luftmensch airhead and a schlimazel fool , the pretentious intellectual urbanite can be found alongside a conniving shakher-makher wheeler-dealer â€”along with the language of the "lower bodily stratum" and Hebrew-Russian linguistic fusions. Their humor can therefore be seen as a manifestation of the contemporary state of flux, global political upheaval, alienation, and re-negotiation of social and cultural foundations. Russian-Israeli humor becomes a discursive phenomenon that incorporates echoes of Russian culture and the Russian present in Israel, creating a new network of meanings and interpretations that can be understood only within its own cultural context. The importance of cultural context has been emphasized by many scholars of humor; in the case of Russian humor, this is particularly relevant due to the cognitive gaps between insiders and outsiders, where cultural context and unique historical circumstances have led to its formation. In fact, it is specifically through Russian-Israeli humor that the culture of the latest Russian aliya is made explicit by the strategy of foregrounding tacit assumptions such as misogyny, racism, and other forms of prejudice as the foundation of this humor. In the words of Emil Draitser: Properly analyzed, folk humor can help make visible areas of unacknowledged attitudes and behaviors in private, unofficial terms. Analyzing and interpreting jokes make it possible to deduce certain behavioral patterns based on deeply-held popular beliefs, the hidden underpinning of culture. Jokes, then, can give us clues to what people think about their lives; we learn by studying the way they verbalize their thoughts You are not currently authenticated. View freely available titles:

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## Chapter 5 : CiNii Books - Jewishness : expression, identity, and representation

*Chapters. Gershenson, O. (). The willing amnesia: The Holocaust in post-Soviet cinema. In O. Kobrynsky and G. Bayer (Eds.), Holocaust Cinema in the Twenty-First.*

Sharansky, however, immediately reformulated the central mission of the Jewish Agency away from aliyah and toward strengthening of secular Jewish identity around the world. He and a tight group of ideological allies—mostly other Russian Jews—believe that the Jewish Agency must now become a global promoter of Jewish identity, particularly among the young. Peoplehood, according to its proponents, is defined as a sense of connectivity between Jews who share a common history and fate. These new developments give reason to think seriously about Soviet Jewish culture and its impact on global Jewish culture. Indeed, a growing number of books and articles on the subject indicate that there is a new body of scholarship developing, defined by a cultural studies approach to the Soviet and post-Soviet Jewish experience. These new studies come from varied disciplines, such as history, anthropology, film studies, and literary criticism, to name a few, but they all put culture and cultural production at the center of scholarship on Soviet and post-Soviet Jewish community and identity. What the subject of all of this research has in common is the experience of having lived under the Soviet Union and its radical experiments in Jewish identity and culture. Scholars working in this emerging field generally do not look at Soviet and post-Soviet Jews through the more traditional lenses of vanishing diasporas, *Journal of Jewish Identities* January, 41 Soviet Jewishness and Cultural Studies Olga Gershenson and David Shneer Soviet anti-Semitism, and the disappearance of Yiddish and Hebrew cultures. In what ways is Jewishness performed and represented? By taking a beliefs, defined Jewishness. Secondly, we show that this body of scholarship express it. This is a paradox: They pick and choose elements of Jewish culture, this group of Jews with their unique of being Jewish that fit them, and custom-build their Jewish, partly-Jewish, or cultural history may be placed at the center, not periphery, of the global Jewish non-Jewish identities. Therefore, the body of scholarship forming Soviet Jewish Cultural their biologically-determined identities. Studies has much to offer to scholars in Jewish and Russian Studies, as well as The scholarly search for the practices that define Soviet and post-Soviet Jewish Diaspora Studies. Even today, with that rubric in of high literary culture. The expressed by their body type, noses, gait, hair, and skin color. For example, an analysis of the emerging body of Soviet Jewish Holocaust survivor testimony shows that survivors often describe widespread orthodox Christianity to Buddhism and Krishnaism, and even their experiences as having been defined by their bodies. Judith Kornblatt has analyzed why and how some Jews, especially However sociologists working on post-Soviet Jewish identity have begun artists and intellectuals, converted to Christianity in the 1990s. Larissa Remennick has demonstrated that although Jewishness a rejection of Jewishness. As Remennick ethnic Jews and religious Christians. Although Jewish culinary history is an established area of inquiry in scholarship on American Jewish culture, this is a new and disseminate both the medium itself and the content of the media for them—line of inquiry for Soviet Jewish Studies. For her, the idea of kosher pork was not an oxymoron. The fact of its preparation by a Jewish woman, and hence of being em- secular Yiddish institutions that fostered a specifically Jewish Soviet culture bedded in Jewish social relations, is what made the most taboo meat kosher. As scholars such as David Shneer and Gennady Several works by Alice Nakhimovsky also show the deep connections between Jewish food and Soviet Jewish identities. Paradoxically, even though ritual foods were divorced from their traditional symbolism and moved entirely into the private sphere, they became imbued with new meaning. For instance, matzo

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was s until the present. Scholars are now starting to ask the same questions of not used as a part of Passover celebrations. Matzo lost its role as a ritual film industry, the American musical, and German literature and film. They show that the fact that Jews were cookbooks reveals a contradictory but symptomatic picture: For petus to educate their readers in things Jewish, such cookbooks include chapters on laws of kashrut. Jews relied on texts, rather than nation-states, territories, or even common folk cultures to unify themselves across the globe. Cultural historian Robert Rothstein has examined Soviet Olga Gershenson, Maxim Shrayner, and David Shneer have shown that from music production on the specific backdrop of Jewish history. More importantly, research shows that their cans: Jews and the Broadway Musical. Soviet Jewish Cultural Studies is only just Jewishness mattered. Musically, some of these songs drew on the klezmer tradition, and the death camp, Maidanek: Cemetery of Europe, in Following in their footsteps, in and , in the era of the Babi Yar. This song cycle, sung in a Jewish voice, heroically in battle. The play was banned in for its affirmation of Jewish gave an alternative to the silencing of things Jewish. Even in this period, Jews and Jewishness were ever-betweeners, the mediators, between the many ethnicities that made up the present in the Soviet media, but they became coded. Perhaps as a result of Soviet empire. In Soviet studies more generally, scholarship on empire and this coding, scholars have generally neglected the Jewishness of post-Stalinist nationalities has proliferated in the last fifteen years with widely celebrated Soviet culture. Through sophisticated Ukraine, Belorussia, and Crimea have also received great scholarly attention editing of visual images and soundtrack, Romm is able to convey the brutality in the past ten years. For instance, the voiceover narration describes were often the ones studying, negotiating, and envisioning the Soviet empire. Thus, the message is coded but clear. These filmmakers and photographers, along production of sound and its dissemination. But the point is not to revel in Jew- with their more scholarly Soviet colleagues in anthropology and geography, ish triumphalism by showing off how many Jews made music. Rather, schol- were charged with the ominous and politically-motivated task of document- ars are starting to show how Jewish sound makers thematized Jewishness in ing the ethnic and physical diversity of the Soviet Union. Although the sub- their Soviet cultural work. Soviet Jews retained large Jewish pop- shared ambivalent Soviet cultural attitudes, ranging from a colonial attitude to ulations. Simultaneously deprived and The theater even recorded Figure 2: Playbill of Black Harness to a White privileged, they occupied an in-between space in Soviet society. As cultural a Yiddish musical, Black Horse, a Yiddish musical that premiered in in producers, they were privileged in a society that took its culture very seri- Harness to a White Horse, Birobidzhan. But Jews were also which was officially re- deprived because to get to the position of cultural producers, they had to go to leased and distributed. Studying the history and reception of this eccentric great lengths, being not simply good but better than any competing non-Jew. Complicating the Assimilation Model of Soviet Jewry atheism. It shows the persistence of Yiddish culture, both as a vernacular and a post-vernacular means of identification. Recent scholarship shows that even those Jews distant from But from the late nineteenth century on, urban Jews began claiming space in Yiddish and the culture of the shtetl identified themselves, and were identified Russian-language culture, and with it, the Russian language. This new line of inquiry into the significance of language in the construc- Much has been written about Soviet Yiddish Theater, literature, music, tion of Jewish identity shows that the adoption of Russian has not meant the and the press in the s and s, and its violent destruction from to abandonment of Jewish cultural markers. On the level of phonetics, one of the significant features used to stereotype the post-Stalinist Soviet period. The Gesher actor used Boris, and so on. So, ironically, Jewishness remained in coded form. This suggests that even today, when the vast majority of Russian Jews are not Such perfectly Russian names as Boris, Leonid, and Mikhail often became sig- native Yiddish speakers and do not speak Russian with a Yiddish accent, the nifiers of Jewishness as they were used as substitution for names like Baruch, perception of them doing so persists. Berl, Leyb, Moyshe, or Mendl. Today, few people speak ians. Like in English, speaking Jewishly Transnational Jews: However, un- In the last decades of the twentieth century, Soviet and post-Soviet Jews like Jewish English, Jewish Russian is still a new and understudied field. Although the statistics are contested, the dialect of Odessa, full of Yiddishisms

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and Jewish humor, which many Soviet recent migration has brought about one million people to Israel, , to Jews adopted as their own. The perception of Odessa as a site of Jewishness North America, about , to Germany, and some to places like Australia, grew out of a body of folklore and literature representing it as a multilin- the United Kingdom, and Sweden. Similarly, the number of Jews living in Rus- gual, carnival-esque city. Perhaps the main contribution to this perception was sia is contested, but is estimated at between , and 1. Who counts as a which in many ways codified the city of Odessa as the cradle of accented Rus- Jew: Who gets sian Jewishness. This imaginary Odessa was marked as Jewish space in Rus- labeled immigrant, refugee, repatriate, tourist, or migrant worker? Post-Soviet sian culture even in the most silenced Soviet eras, from the stand-up comedy Jews, who often maintain multiple passports, multiple homes, and multiple lan- of Mikhail Zhvanetsky to the song cycles of Rosenbaum. Historian Jarrod guages, make us re-think the meaning of homeland and exile: These transnational Jews and their transformations. Like twentieth century Jews in many parts of the transform themselves in the process of migration, through new employment world, Soviet Jews attempted to mimic the larger culture by changing their first patterns, language, and other signs of cultural integration, but also change their and last names. However, this act of mimicry merely revealed their Jewish dif- home and host countries. Their encounters with local Jewish communities in ference. Grinberg turned to Markov, Zelmanovitch to studies that are leading to changes in Jewish communal policy. Oth- Global post-Soviet Jews are simultaneously setting up traditional means ers Russified their first names as well â€”Abram became Arkadii, Baruch became of maintaining transnational communities through letter writing, remittances, Journal of Jewish Identities January , 4 1 Soviet Jewishness and Cultural Studies Olga Gershenson and David Shneer newspapers, and books, as well as through the new means of transnational raeli cultural landscape. A number of Russian-born artists have made success- media: Larisa Fialkova examines ful careers in Israel. The s theatrical sensation Geshet started in Israel as how technology transforms diasporic communities like Soviet and post-Soviet a marginal Russian theater company, but soon began producing plays in He- Jews. She shows that Russian-language international web-portals, some Jew- brew to national acclaim. A number of Russian-born filmmakers make Israeli ish, some functioning as social networking, are visited by tens of thousands of films in Russian and in Hebrew, which in turn reach global Jewish audiences people daily, allowing members to network, date, play, and even set up real including Russian Jewish through Jewish and international film festivals in life encounters, extending their virtual communication to the real world and Europe and the Americas. Chanukah is now celebrated in Russia. And scholars of American lar Russian literature today reflects traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes, and Jewish literature and culture are showing that post-Soviet Jewry is transform- the media coverage of Jews in contemporary mass media is mixed at best. Thus, Adam Rovner shows how these writers The post-Soviet Jewish cultural presence is now felt in their destination are bringing back the immigrant story, and are shaking complacent American countries across the globe. Wladimir Kaminer writes in German about Russian readers out of their cozy sense of being at home in America. Jewish literary magazine, dedicated an is- with their own political, social, and economic agendas. The traditional cultural, geographic, and national boundaries are guage, and their Soviet holidays, but also their own understanding of national blurred and in flux, and the study of this new, postmodern Russian Jewish loyalty and identification, their sense of homeland, as well as their notions of diaspora has much to contribute to both Jewish and Diaspora studies. Along with Hebrew, Arabic, and English, Russian became a de facto language of the Jewish state with media resources such as radio and television If scholars of Soviet and post-Soviet Jewry have started thinking very seri- stations, newspapers, theaters, and film catering to this new population. In the ously about culture and identity, so too have post-Soviet Jewish writers. In Israeli mainstream, Russian is still marginalized, and the topic of immigration the American Russian Jewish writer Gary Shteyngart came out with his is not in fashion, but some Russian-born culture-makers became part of the Is- second novel about the global Russian Jewish experience, Absurdistan. Americans and new immigrants.

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### Chapter 6 : Olga Gershenson | Professor of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies | Journal Articles

*AJS Perspectives: The Magazine of the Association for Jewish Studies, Gershenson, O. and D. Shneer (March 20, ). From Russia with lessons in transnational Jewish identity-building.*

Despite the fact that almost half of all Jewish victims of the Nazi Holocaust were killed on the territory of the Soviet Union, their Jewish identity was for decades effaced by Soviet policy. It was the policy of the Soviet Union to systematically minimize the fact that Jews were specifically targeted during the Holocaust. However, despite this policy, the Holocaust was represented in some Soviet films. They were executed, drowned or burned; they were herded in ghettos and camps, and then killed. The Nazis instigated and organized the killing, but some Ukrainian locals took part. And yet, this genocide of unprecedented proportion barely registers on screens, neither in films made in the Soviet era nor more recent ones. That obfuscation of the Jewish catastrophe has roots in long-lasting Soviet policies. Although the Soviets never denied the Holocaust, in actuality any attempt to speak of Jewish victims was silenced. The Holocaust was not to be treated as a unique and separate phenomenon. Instead, it was universalized or externalized – subsumed as part of the overall Soviet tragedy or located outside the borders of the Soviet Union. Both of these mechanisms were used to silence discussion of the Holocaust: As a result of this approach, there was no official commemoration of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union. These policies started taking shape during the war, when the Soviet propaganda machine churned out tremendous amounts of newsreels and documentaries, including those depicting Nazi crimes in Soviet territories. But the footage was edited to obfuscate the fact that most of the murdered victims were Jews. Similarly, the wartime documentaries of the celebrated Ukrainian filmmaker Oleksandr Dovzhenko emphasized the Ukrainian identity of the victims, avoiding altogether any mention of the Jewish genocide. Even the Soviet documentaries depicting the liberation of the Majdanek and Auschwitz death camps, did not state that most of the victims were Jewish. Feature films made during the war tell a similar story: Jews, even if marginally present in the original screenplays, were written out of the cinematic narrative of the war. And yet, some filmmakers attempted to acknowledge and commemorate the Holocaust in the face of Soviet censorship. Its central and most devastating scene depicts a mass execution, which was filmed in Babyn Yar in newly-liberated Kyiv, the place that came to symbolize the Holocaust in the Soviet Union. Although the story of Dr. Fishman played by the Soviet Yiddish actor Veniamin Zuskin, who was executed in the ravine, and his young granddaughter, who was saved by a sympathetic Ukrainian family, is only a subplot in a broader narrative, it is undoubtedly the most moving and memorable plot line. While this depiction was not historically accurate, it was cinematically powerful. At least in this scene, the particular Jewish predicament was neither universalized nor externalized. Alas, this film was an exception, not the rule. Many Jewish public figures were arrested, persecuted, or killed. During this dark era, the subject of the Holocaust was off limits for filmmakers. Although more personal and reflective than before, most of these new war movies did not touch upon the Holocaust at all, as if it had never happened. But several films created by courageous filmmakers were the exceptions. They were repeatedly censored: This film had a remarkable history: In the key scene, portrayed with great emotional force, the commissar has a vision of the Holocaust to come. The film was finally released only during Perestroika, in , to great international success. Not every censored project was that lucky. The plot tells a devastating story: She tries to find shelter from the cold and a safe haven for her boy, but to no avail. Both freeze to death. The censors forced numerous changes on the screenplay, only to ban it in the end. This long-suffering screenplay was finally made into a film in the Perestroika era, when the Soviet censorship retreated. Boris Ermolaev, sadly, resulted in a strange allegorical tale stripped of historic detail and overloaded with Christian allusions and dark symbolism. Several other films made during that time focus on the events of the Holocaust, none of which are very memorable or significant. Set in Kyiv on the eve of the mass execution in Babyn Yar, it tells the story of an old Jewish tailor played by beloved Soviet actor Innokenti Smoktunovsky who spends the last night with his family in their

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soon-to-be-lost home. The film ends with a procession of Jews being marched to Babyn Yar – that is to certain death. Even today, it is by far the best-known Soviet Holocaust film. At the end of , the Soviet Union was dissolved. Along with the state, the entire Soviet film industry ceased to exist. But this was not necessarily a cause for celebration as the films were in many instances not much better than those that were made in the Perestroika era. An Execution In Babyn Yar. Nikolai Zaseev-Rudenko, , tells the story of a Jewish woman, a survivor of Babyn Yar, who goes to visit the site of the atrocity many years later. Improbably, in the ravine she encounters a former Nazi who has also come to visit, and the two share a bizarre vision of the Madonna as they partake in bouts of grandiloquence. Predictably, none of these films achieved critical or box-office success. The novel was for years one of the very few works of Soviet literature that gave expression to Jewish history and culture. The resulting sixteen-part TV series , dir. At the center of the epic plot is the life story of a Jewish couple and their offspring, set a town of Snovsk, Ukraine the actual place where Rybakov spent his childhood. The last episodes depict the horrors of their life in the ghetto, and eventual uprising and escape. Unfortunately, the series represents Jews with idealized simplicity. This idealization revisits the tenets of socialist realism, only now, instead of workers and revolutionaries, Jews are model citizens and exemplary human beings. All these films differ radically from the ones made during the Soviet era. With the Soviet censorship restrictions removed, these films no longer need to universalize: Similarly, instead of externalizing the Holocaust, they can locate the events in the Soviet territories; some of them even cautiously address instances of local anti-Semitism and collaboration with the Nazis. At the same time, there are so few films that actually attempt to represent the Holocaust, that one wonders whether the Soviet legacy of silencing continues. This is also part of a larger problem: Despite the bombastic war memorials and official rhetoric about the glorious victory, the memory of WWII and the memory of the Holocaust are not integrated into the educational curriculum or everyday discussions. But there is potentially hope on the horizon. Several years ago, auteur director Sergei Loznitsa who grew up in Kyiv and is now based in Germany started working on a narrative feature based on the Babyn Yar massacre of . Originally, he planned to film on location, in Kyiv. Since then the filmmaker has returned to his original intent, with the current filming planned for . This ambitious and high-budgeted project is still in the midst of seeking European funding, but it has already received support from the state of Ukraine.

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### Chapter 7 : Limmud NY " Olga Gershenson

*Ambivalence and identity in Russian Jewish cinema / Olga Gershenson The delicatessen as an icon of secular Jewishness / Ted Merwin Hasidism versus Zionism as remembered by Carpatho-Russian Jews between the two World Wars / Ilana Rosen.*

Olga Gershenson *Israel Affairs* Vol. Since the s, Russian immigrants and their homeland began appearing in Israeli films. Meanwhile, Jewish themes, Downloaded By: Israel now appears in Russian films. Whether Russian or Israeli, these movies circulate through the internet, transnational TV channels, and Jewish film festivals, and are seen in Russia and elsewhere in the Russian diaspora. But once Russian Jews<sup>1</sup> became the largest wave of Jewish migration into Israel, to the point where today one out of every six Israelis speaks Russian, the country has in a way become part of Russia. And Russia has in some ways become a part of Israel. In a world that is increasingly globalized, decentralized, and diasporic, it is becoming difficult to talk about clear national boundaries. These immigrants, who often maintain multiple passports, homes, and languages, make us re-think the meaning of homeland and exile: Upon immigration they transform themselves through new employment patterns, language, and other signs of cultural integration. In the process, they also transform their home and host countries. Through an examination of recent films all dealing in some way with Russian- Jewish immigration to Israel, made in both Israel and Russia, I want to explore the changes in the cultural landscapes in both countries. Some of these characters have been created by immigrant filmmakers and actors themselves. As Russian immigrants began to appear in Israeli movies, Jewish topics, including emigration, became more common in Russian cinema. Immigrants to Israel became characters in several Russian-Jewish films, and Israel even became a setting for some movies unrelated to Jewish topics. Today, not only does Russia appear in Israeli film, but Israel also appears on Russian screens. Although these films whether Russian or Israeli have different production values and cultural significance, all of them have wide circulation in Russia and destination countries of the Russian diaspora worldwide. Even as the Israeli cinema moved away from the heroic-nationalist genre, its cinematic Russians remained in the cultural centre. In *The House on Chelouche Street*, dir. Moshe Mizrahi, Russian Sonia Michal Bat-Adam is positioned as a local both culturally and socially, in contrast to Mizrahi characters. This changed in the late s. They were now represented as typical immigrants, struggling with a new culture and language, not belonging to Israeli society, and certainly not constituting model Israelis. The first such film was the now forgotten drama *Lena*, dir. Eytan Green portraying Russian characters as foreign newcomers and moving them from the Israeli cultural centre to the margins. In many ways, *Lena* typifies the representation of Russian immigrants on Israeli screens that was to persist for years to come. Consistent with Zionist tenets, she chooses to leave her Russian husband. *Lena* herself, with her poor knowledge of Hebrew, her non-Israeli looks, and her struggle to negotiate a new society, is represented as a classic immigrant. As is common in Israeli films, interethnic tension is expressed through mixed coupling: *Lena* is inducted and assimilated into Israeli society via the narrative O. Gershenson strategy of romantic-sexual relations with a local male. In *Lena*, as in many other films, Russian male immigrants appear aggressive, irrational, and violent. None of them have any potential for developing relationships with Israeli women. Even more outrageous are Russian immigrant male characters used for comic relief, such as in *Kuni- Leml in Cairo*, dir. The casting and use of language in *Lena* are also typical: Russian immigrant actors play immigrant characters. In the s, Russian characters began to appear more often on Israeli screens. They are featured in many films, including *Saint Clara*, dir. Eytan Gorlin, *Made in Israel*, dir. Ari Folman, *What a Wonderful Place*, dir. Eyal Halfon, *The Schwartz Dynasty*, dir. Ron Ninio and *To Love Anna*, dir. Subplots involving minor immigrant characters appear in such mainstream hits as *Broken Wings*, dir. Savi Gabizon, and such popular TV serials as *Florentine*, dir. Eytan Fox and *The Mediator*, dir. Following in the footsteps of *Lena*, these films represent immigrants as dangerous and abusive men, and beautiful, helpless, sexualized women. The women often have distinctly Russian looks blond hair, blue eyes, round face and are frequently

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shown in frontal close-ups, disconnected from their Israeli environments. Their inassimilable foreignness can be overcome only in romantic involvement with an Israeli man. The Schwartz Dynasty is a good example of such a stereotype. As the daughter of a non-Jewish mother, Ana is not considered Jewish according to Jewish law. While trying to resolve this problem, she falls prey to various exploiters and crooks. An older woman, Miriam, an Israeli of Russian origin, tries to help Ana. Predictably, Ana and Avishai fall in love and get married. The Schwartz Dynasty portrays immigrants sympathetically, but constantly emphasizes their cultural and religious difference from Israelis. At the centre of this lyrical drama is Khen Vladimir Volov, a young boy battling a cultural conflict between his Russian-born mother and Israeli father. This is emphasized linguistically as his mother speaks to him in Russian and his father in Hebrew. Although Khen uneasily negotiates his Russianness and his Israeliness, his parents fail to reconcile their cultural differences and must part. In the narrative logic of the film, even the inassimilable hybrid Khen makes the right choice between his Russianness and his Israeliness. In contrast to bi-cultural Khen, immigrant men almost never become protagonists in Israeli films. In those rare cases where a romance between immigrant men and local Israeli women is featured, it is a failed or an illegitimate connection. Despite her love for Zorik, Rohale ultimately chooses to marry an ultra-orthodox man. An earlier TV series, Florentine, featured a subplot about an illicit affair between a married immigrant played by a Russian-Israeli star, Israel Demidov and a young Israeli woman Karin Ofir. In the logic of these films, a successful union between a Russian male immigrant and a local woman is unlikely. For the most part, the Russian male characters are depicted as unreliable husbands and fathers, or worse, as swindlers and mafia thugs; either way they are inassimilable strangers. Most importantly, whether male or female, stereotypical or nuanced, Russian immigrants are represented in these films from the Israeli perspective, which is deeply grounded in the local culture and sensibility. Israeli films with a Russian accent Gradually, immigrant filmmakers started breaking into the Israeli film industry. Russian-Israeli films exist in a particular constellation of Zionist ideology where immigrant absorption is a national value, cultural policy a combination of public and private local funding, and Russian-Jewish cultural identity secularized, invested in Russian language and art. Russian-Israeli films affirm and challenge, often simultaneously, the dominant national identity: Arik Kaplun and Five Hours to Paris, dir. Leonid Prudovsky are rare exceptions. Most couples are intra-ethnic, and the protagonists are often male immigrants. Leonid Horowitz, is already illustrative of these trends. At the centre of the plot is a famous Moscow actor played by an actual Russian film star, Aleksandr Abdulov who immigrates to Israel with his family, only to discover that he cannot bridge the cultural gap and is doomed to failure. In part, he comes to realize this due to his affair with his Hebrew teacher reversing the consequences of romance in Lena. He returns to Moscow and is killed there in a street shooting. At the end, the immigrant protagonist fits neither here nor there. Not only does his inter-ethnic affair fail; his immigration to Israel and his return to Russia result in tragedy. This is not a typical immigration narrative for an Israeli film. Later films present immigrant life in more positive terms. Slava and his friends populate the margins of Israeli society – the locals that they encounter are marginalized minorities themselves – among them the corrupt Mizrahi cops, an Ethiopian immigrant soccer player, and an oddball Hassidic soccer fan. Idiosyncratic bilingual spelling not only introduces a Russian word into Hebrew, but also uses a Cyrillic acronym as a nostalgic icon. But Slava is unwilling to give up the male camaraderie – he lives in a world of other young Russians, whose dreams have also been crushed. With the help of his ex-coach famous Russian-Israeli actor Vladimir Friedman, Slava succeeds in putting together a soccer team. At the end of the film, Slava is reconciled both with his Russian wife and his Israeli surroundings. Other characters also find peace. Another intra-ethnic romance is at the centre of Paper Snow, dir. Lena and Slava Chaplin. It is a historical drama about a love affair between Hanna Rovina Evgeniya Dodina, a star of the Habima national theatre that originated in Moscow, and Alexander Penn Zak Berkman, a communist poet from Siberia. Unlike mainstream Israeli movies, Paper Snow pays tribute to their culture of origin – to their Russian literary and theatrical background. In this way, the film focuses on the Russian roots of Israeli culture, emphasizing the importance of Russian Jews past and present to Israel. Its subplot

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involves an ostensibly Israeli woman and an immigrant male war veteran, who recognize each other as lovers separated by World War II in which they both fought on the Soviet side. Their son died defending Israel in the Six Day War. This subplot both pays tribute to the heroic Israeli history and claims this history as their own. Leonid Prudovsky , which opens with a scene of an Israeli patrol in the occupied territories. Driving the army jeep through the night, he explains to his fellow soldiers the significance of the song, which inspired Soviet troops, including his Jewish grandfather, as they went to defeat the Nazis. In another film, A Trumpet in the Wadi , dir. All these representations emphasize the identification of Russian immigrants with the Israeli-Jewish nation, while simultaneously affirming their Russianness. Unlike mainstream Israeli films, made to appeal to the Hebrew-speaking audience, Russian-Israeli films also target Russian speakers, with dialogue moving freely between Russian and Hebrew. This is particularly significant in Paper Snow, where Israeli historical figures are portrayed speaking to each other in Russian. The recent TV series Between the Lines , dir.

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