

ABSTRACT

Detective fiction has become enormously popular in Russia over the past decade. Although primarily intended as entertainment, these stories may also contain messages about current events and the reader can be influenced more than he would by a newspaper editorial or op-ed, since it is generally understood that those articles are meant to be read critically. When reading detective stories, the reader focuses on the question of “whodunit” and how the perpetrator will be caught, rather than on any political or moral message, and thus, may absorb such messages without examining them.

After a survey of historical images of and attitudes toward the Jews and Israel, we examine some of the recent works of the authors Alexandra Marinina, P. Dashkova, Friedrich Neznanski, Changiz Abdulaev, and Boris Akunin.

Though many of the Jewish characters in these novels are portrayed sympathetically, it is clear that the authors draw on both earlier and more recent stereotypes of Jews and images of the state of Israel.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade in Russia, the genre of detective fiction has developed greatly and gained in popularity across the country.¹ As everywhere, this type of literature is aimed at entertaining the reader. However, occasionally fiction of this kind contains messages regarding current events; in such cases, the reader can be influenced more than he would by a newspaper editorial or op-ed, since readers of these articles generally understand that they are meant to be read critically, not accepted blindly. On the other hand, when reading detective stories, the reader focuses on “whodunit” and how the perpetrator will be caught, rather than on any political or moral message. Thus, the reader is quite likely to absorb such messages without examining them.

Some of the detective stories popular in Russia today include Jewish characters, and their images can indeed affect readers’ attitudes towards Jews. Moreover, these books are much more widely read than literature on Jewish subjects, or even than newspaper articles about Jews

¹ V. Berezin, *Detektiv “Shpionskii roman.”* (1999). M. Aksenova, ed., *Russkaia literatura, Chast’ vtoraiia, 20 vek* (Moscow 1999). 488–96; L. Anninskii, “My shataemsia mezhdu dvumia merzostiami,” *Globus* 461 (2001), 43; B. Dubin, *Slovo. Pisimo. Literatura* (Moscow 2001), 175–83, 243–62, 306–24, 329–42.

and/or Israel. Therefore, they can often be the reader's only source of information about Jews.

Thus, an examination of the subject of the Jew and Israel in detective literature can help in reaching an understanding of the image of Jews in Russian popular culture. This is particularly intriguing because Jews are depicted in a variety of ways in these stories. While most of these books reflect the present time, some also concern times past, such as the Brezhnev and Stalin eras. Some stories blend detective story with historical fiction, depicting events in the Czarist period. So contemporary Russian detective fiction includes references to Jews in the present and also in the past.

Popular Russian detective fiction is set not only in different times but also in different locations. Today, unlike in the Soviet era, Russians are free to travel; reflecting this, stories take place not only inside Russia but also outside its borders. Some of the novels even take place in Israel—offering an opportunity to examine the image of Israel in popular Russian literature.

For our purposes, it is important to classify references to Jews. I chose works from two categories: a) works in which Jews and Israel are explicitly mentioned, and b) works in which it is crystal clear from the names of the characters that they are Jewish. By the same token, I did not include works in which the characters' names could be, but are not necessarily Jewish, or it is unclear whether the characters are Jewish. I did include one work—Marinina's *Posmertnyi obraz*—with a half-Jewish female character because the author attached great importance to the character's ethnic origin.

An additional criterion for selecting the stories is how well known and broadly distributed they are. I chose books by very popular authors, as I was most interested in widely read works that might influence public opinion. Although most of the books I selected are uncomplicated and aimed at readers who are not particularly well-educated, I also included novels such as those by B. Akunin, whose works are on a higher intellectual level and aimed at more educated readers. Thus, the books I chose reach various types of readers, and influence different sectors of the Russian public.

This paper will contribute to an understanding of attitudes towards Jews in Russian popular culture, and will also shed some light on this

culture. One more point should be noted: Although a number of articles have been written on detective stories in contemporary Russia, the subject of the Jew in these works has not been examined.

If we wish to understand how Jews and Israel are viewed in a particular aspect of popular culture—in this case, detective fiction—we must first of all understand how Jews and Israel are viewed in the culture itself. Therefore, in the Background section, I will briefly review attitudes towards Jews in various streams of Russian culture during the Czarist and Soviet eras; I will then look at shifts in attitudes towards Israel and the Jews from Gorbachev's time and onward.

Following this are chapters on the various images of the Jew in the works of five different authors. After identifying the unique characteristics of each author's attitude towards Jews and Israel, I will attempt to sketch out the elements in this genre that are shared by all the authors. As we will see, despite not inconsiderable differences in attitude towards Jews and Israel, several common threads are evident both in attitudes towards Jews and Israel as a whole and regarding Jews as individuals. Examining these will provide an image of the Jew in Russian popular literature.

BACKGROUND: THE IMAGE OF THE JEW IN THE EYES OF THE RUSSIAN PUBLIC THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS

The significance of the image of Jews and Israel in contemporary popular Russian culture requires an understanding Russian attitudes towards Jews past and present, why certain images and stereotypes arose, and how these images and stereotypes have changed in the past decade. While volumes could be written on this question, we will address only some of the main issues that are particularly relevant.

One vitally important factor in the attitude toward Jews was Russia's acceptance of Orthodox Christianity in 988, along with a number of characteristic Christian images of the Jew, such as Jews as the murderers of Jesus and Judas Iscariot as the traitor who betrayed the Messiah. It is no wonder that the first treatise by a Russian (Elareon, "On Law and Grace"), written in the 11th century, is devoted to refuting Judaism and proving the supremacy of Christianity.

A second and no less influential factor was the cult of conversion to Judaism that emerged in the late 15th century, and swept through

much of the country's nobility and clergy. The Orthodox Church, which by now dominated Russian life, saw this trend as a grave threat.² Since then in Russia, Jews have been perceived not only as the executioners of Jesus but also as endangering accepted values and the dominant ideology. As we will see, this image recurs in different forms in contemporary Russian antisemitism.

Following the emergence of the conversion cult, it was decided that not only would Jews be banned from residing within the Russian Empire, but they would also be prohibited from entering for commercial purposes. The ban on Jews in Russia remained in place until 1772, that is, until the partition of Poland. Even though the ban was not always enforced, for two centuries very few Jews lived in Russia. However, after the three partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793, and 1795, Russia became the country with the world's largest Jewish population.³

A number of factors influenced Russian attitudes towards Jews. The earlier Russian tradition had been tempered by the ruling Russian elite's adoption, in the first half of the 18th century, of the ideas of the Enlightenment movement advocating religious tolerance.⁴ But even among advocates of enlightenment there remained deep suspicion

² S. Ettinger, "HaHashpa'ah HaYehudit Al HaT'sisa Hadatit BeMizrah Europa Besof Hame'ah Ha-15 (The Jewish influence on the religious fermentation in Eastern Europe during the late 15th century)," 37–57; idem, "HaHashpa'ah HaYehudit Al Kfirat HaMityahedim BeRussia Hamuskova'it (The Jewish influence on the heresy of the converts to Judaism in Muscovite Russia)," 57–82; idem, "Medinat Moskva Beyahasa El Hayehudim (The state of Moscow in its relation to the Jews)," 172–77, in *Bein Polin LeRussia* (Between Poland and Russia), ed. S. Ettinger (Jerusalem 1994); B. Pincus, *Yehudei Rusia U'Brit HaMoatzot: Toldot Mint Leumi* (The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union: Chronicle of a national minority), (Beer Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 1986), 27–34.

³ For more on the Russian regime's policy towards the Jews under Catherine II and during the time of the partition of Poland, and on the various and conflicting factors influencing the consolidation of this policy, see J. Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews: Origins of the Jewish Question in Russia* (DeKalb, Ill. 1986); S. Ettinger, "HaYesodot veHamegamot BeItsuv Mediniuto Shel HaShilton Harussi Klapei HaYehudim Im Halukot Polin" (The bases and goals of Russian policy toward the Jews during the partition of Poland), in *On the History of the Jews in Poland and Russia*, ed. by S. Ettinger, Israel Bartal, and Jonathan Frankel (Jerusalem 1994), 217–34.

⁴ E. Anishenko, "Faktoy poiavleniia ukaza. 1791 goda v cherte osedlosti evreev," in *Evreiskaia tsivilizatsiya. Problemi i issledovaniya*, ed. R. Kaplanov (Moscow 1992), 110–13.

regarding the traditional Jewish way of life and the autonomy of the Jewish community, which was perceived as a state within a state. There was also a demand that, in exchange for being integrated into society, Jews should acquire general education and reform some of their ways of financial dealing. As early as 1791, the Russian regime arrived at a compromise between these two approaches. Jews were permitted to live only in regions that had been annexed from Poland and some other western regions, in what was called the Pale of Settlement. It was only in the 1860s, a liberal era in Russia, that some categories of Jews defined as particularly useful—wealthy, educated, craftsmen—were permitted to live outside the Pale.⁵

It can be said that from 1779–1881, the Russian regime’s attitude towards the Jews was full of contradictions, emanating from a number of considerations. Conflicting with the desire to integrate the Jews into society was the desire to use them as a scapegoat for the flaws of Russian society. Furthermore, a certain willingness to allow the Jews to conduct economic activity because it would benefit the country was countered by a willingness to appease their Christian competitors at their expense.

During the regime’s conservative periods, negative attitudes towards the Jews were heightened, although positive elements were not completely eradicated. During more liberal eras, positive attitudes gained ground, though these were inconsistent, and at the same time, stereotypical images of Jews began to develop, some of which remain in the Russian consciousness to this day.⁶ Since we will encounter them in the works reviewed by this paper, we will take a further look at them.

From the second half of the 19th century, the number of Jews with high school and higher education increased, even during times when the regime attempted to restrict education for Jews. The percentage of professionals among the Jews became higher than that among the general population, and the Russian public was well aware of this and had several views on the matter.⁷ While some Russians saw it as

⁵ B. Pincus, *Yehadut Rusia U’Brit HaMoatzot*, 45–48.

⁶ M. Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Society in Russia 1825–1855* (Philadelphia 1983); J. Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question 1855–1881* (London 1995).

⁷ V. Kelner, “Russko-evreiskaia intelligentsiia. Genezis i problemy natsional’noi indentsifikatsii,” *Vestnik Moskovskogo evreiskogo universiteta* 3 (13) (Moscow 1996): 4–21. B.

a positive phenomenon, antisemitic circles perceived it as a desire to take over Russian culture. Among other things, Jews were accused of shying away from physical labor. Most of these claims are still evident.

During the second half of the 19th century, Russia underwent rapid economic development that was accompanied by problems typical of the transition to the Industrial Age. Different sectors of the Jewish population were affected in different ways. Along with a cadre of wealthy Jewish industrialists and bankers, a significant number of Jewish craftsmen and merchants became impoverished.⁸ The antisemitic press, however, disregarded the poor Jews and played up the role of Jews among the very wealthy—to the point of accusing them of exploiting the Russian people and attempting to take control of the country's economy.⁹

Thus, the stereotype of the wealthy businessman Jew penetrated deeply not only among antisemitic circles, but also into the public consciousness. However, not everyone viewed this image negatively; some Russian liberals thought such individuals benefited Russian society. All in all, though, this image of the Jew was viewed more negatively than positively.

From the 1870s onward, more and more Jews joined revolutionary movements in Russia. Although they were still much fewer in number than they would be in the early 20th century, even then conservatives began to accuse the Jews of fomenting revolution. It was then that the

Natans, "Jews, Law, and the Legal Profession in Late Imperial Russia," in *Evrei v Rossii: istoriia i kul'tura: Sbornik nauchnykh statei*, ed. D. Eliashevich (St. Petersburg 1995), 101–28.

⁸ S. Ettinger, "Dmuta HaYeshuvit HaKalkalit Shel Yahadut Russia Besof Hameah Ha-19 (The image of the economic settlement of Russian Jewry in the late 19th century)," in *Bein Polin LeRussia*, 257–80; A. Kahan, "The Impact of Industrialization in Tsarist Russia on the Socioeconomic Conditions of the Jewish population," in *Mehkarim BeToldot Yisrael Be'et HaHadasha* (Studies in Israel's history in the new age), ed. A. Kahan, vol. 2 (Jerusalem 1998), 245–300.

⁹ S. Ettinger, "Reka Ideologi LeSafrut Antishemit BeRussia (Ideological Background of Antisemitic Literature in Russia)," 99–145, and "Dmut HaYehudim BeDaat Kahal HaRussit Ad Shnot Ha-80 Shel HaMeah Ha-19 (The Image of the Jews in Russian Public Opinion Until the 1880s)," 145–69 in *HaAntisemitut Be'Et HaHadasha* by S. Ettinger (Jerusalem 1978).

stereotype of Jews playing a major role in Russian political life entered the Russian consciousness, and this stereotype is still in force today.¹⁰

If between 1772 and 1881 the Russian regime had no uniform approach to the Jews, from 1881–1917 attitudes were openly antagonistic.¹¹ The conservative regime, which felt endangered, saw extremist Russian nationalism as its lifeline—and in Eastern Europe, extremist nationalism always went hand in hand with antisemitism. Nevertheless, circles close to the regime accused the Jews, as bourgeoisie, of exploiting the simple Russians, as well as of organizing revolutionary movements out of hostility to Russia and alienation from its deep-rooted culture, as well as attempting to take over Russian higher education.¹² It is in this period that the fake *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were published, in which it is claimed that the Jews met secretly at the end of the 19th century to devise a scheme for the destruction of Christian civilization and seizing control of the world. The first edition appeared in 1903, becoming popular at the time of World War I, and not only in antisemitic circles. Various versions of the *Protocols* continue to circulate in numerous languages even today.

Thus, the regime presented itself as defending the Russian people, while accusing liberals and revolutionaries of being agents of the Jews and of cutting themselves off from the true Russian culture. It is worth noting, though, that the regime's attitude toward the Jews was based more on traditional Jew-hatred than on racism, as any Jew who converted to Christianity was free of all restrictions applying to Jews—even though extremist elements emerging from the conservative camp

¹⁰ E. Haberer, *Jews and Revolution in Nineteenth Century Russia* (Cambridge 1995); E. Rozhkovskii, "Uchastie evreev v russkom narodnicheskom dvizhenii kak kulturno-istoricheskie problema," in *Istoricheskie sud'by evreev v Rossii i SSSR*, ed. by I. Krupnik and M. Kupovetski (Moscow 1992), 88–92.

¹¹ H. Rogger, *The Jewish Policy of Late Tsarism. A Reappraisal*, Wisser Library, Bulletin 25 (1971): 42–51; S. Gaspartin, "Evreiskii vopros v politike tsarskogo samodержaviiia 1880-1905," in *Evrei v Rossii i istoriia i kul'tura*, 125–34.

¹² E. Direnshein, "A. Suvorin i evreiskii vopros," *Vestnik evreiskogo universiteta v Moskve* 1 (1992): 57–75; A. Axhiezer, "Antisemitizm v Rossii. Vzgljad kulturologa," *Vestnik evreiskogo universiteta v Moskve* 1 (1992): 98–129.

sought to extend these restrictions to converts as well, claiming that the Jew cannot change his nature.¹³

Up to this point, we have discussed the Russian regime and circles close to it. However, during the late 19th and early 20th century, the influence of liberal and revolutionary parties gradually increased. At first, their attitude toward the Jews was inconsistent. For example, some revolutionary circles supported the 1881 anti-Jewish riots, in hopes that they marked the beginning of the revolution. These circles quickly learned, though, that antisemitism actually strengthened the Right, while liberals and the Left held universalist views and advocated equal rights for all. Thus, gradually both liberals and the leftist parties began to oppose antisemitism and to support equality for the Jews.¹⁴

Works by authors close to these streams feature positive Jewish characters, who are depicted variously as victims of discrimination and riots, as educated and cultured, and as bold revolutionaries.¹⁵ Yet if we compare these images of Jews with the negative stereotypes of the conservative nationalists, we see that while there is in principle a difference in how the image is perceived and interpreted, both groups speak of Jews as educated and as revolutionaries, but while one sees these as positive attributes, the other sees them as negative. The essential difference, evident not only in perception but also in fact, was that those opposed to antisemitism saw the Jews as victims, while the Jew-haters perceived them as scheming persecutors.

¹³ R. Ganelin and H. Markov, *O svoem puti ot shchernosotenstva k giterizmu* in *Evrei v Rossii. Istoriiia i kul'tura*, ed. by D. Eliashevich (St. Peterburg 1998), 201–19; M. Batunskii, “Rasistskii antisemitizm v Rossii. Genesis, dinamika, istoki” in *Istoricheskie sud'bi evreev v Rossii i SSSR*, ed. by I. Krupnik and M. Kupovetski (Moscow 1992), 330–35; M. Birman, “P. Miliukov and His Fight for Equal Rights for the Jews in Tsarist Russia,” *Sbvt* 1–2 (17–18) (1995): 30–49.

¹⁴ V. Soloviov, *Evreistvo i Khristsianskii vopros* (Berlin 1921), 31–80; idem, “Protest protiv antisemitskogo dvizheniia v pechati” in *Taina Izrailia: Evreiskii vopros v russkoi religioznoi mysli*, ed. by V. Boikova (St. Peterburg 1997), 94–95; N. Leskov, *Evrei v Rossii/Nes'kol'ko zamechanii po evreiskomu voprosu* (Moscow 1994); I. Oren and N. Prat, *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopediia* (Jerusalem 1976) 7: 503–504, 5: 463–64.

¹⁵ P. Struve, “Intelligentsiia i natsional'noe litso” in *Natsionalizm. Polemika 1909–1917*, ed. by M. Kolerova (Moscow 2000), 36–40; idem, “Polemicheskie zigzagi i nesvoevremennaia Pravda,” in *ibid.*, 44–47; M. Vinaver, “Otkrytoe pis'mo Struve,” in *ibid.*, 72–76.

Even if liberals and the Left tended to view Jews in a positive light, negative stereotypes did not completely disappear. It is important to remember that since in general the right-wing Russian press did not employ Jews, most Jewish journalists and literary critics worked for the liberal press, which sometimes gave rise to competition with Russian journalists, to the point of unpleasant incidents.¹⁶ Yet in relative terms, in this camp positive images of Jews overrode negative ones.

Thus, stereotypes and images of Jews were formed in Russian public opinion prior to the 1917 Russian Revolution, and although the Soviet and post-Soviet eras brought about marked shifts in attitudes towards Jews, we will see that many images created then still exist today.

Following the revolution, the Jews of Russia were granted equality. During the Civil War from 1917 to 1921, they were the target of riots, particularly during 1919. Yet during the 1920s and 1930s, under Communist rule, Jews received equal rights not only in theory but also in practice.¹⁷ In the Soviet literature of this period, Jews were usually shown in a positive light. Even though considerable numbers of Jews, among them merchants, Zionists, and the religious, suffered during this time, many others did well—they moved to the big cities, became educated, and took their place in the government apparatus, with some even becoming top officials.

Since it was not often that Jews actually gained equality in Eastern Europe, an explanation is in order. The regime promoted a universalist view and rejected discrimination based on nationality. The first generation of Communists who created the revolution genuinely espoused these ideas. A country experiencing rapid modernization needed educated manpower, and did not overlook the Jews. It would appear that popular antisemitism abated somewhat during this time, but it did not disappear. The antisemites perceived the marked Jewish presence in the higher education system and in the regime as further proof of what they called the “Jewish takeover” of the world. This was true during the period of World War II, but was even more pronounced after the war, from 1945–1953, in Stalin’s later years when official antisemitism was revived—and after over half of the Jews of the Soviet

¹⁶ B. Pincus, *Yebudai Russia U’Brit HaMoetzot: Toldot Mint Leumi*, 151–249.

¹⁷ M. Altshuler, *Soviet Jewry on the Eve of the Holocaust* (Jerusalem 1998).

Union had been murdered by the Nazis, in some regions with the help of some of the local populace.^{18 19}

Despite the universalism of the early Soviet regime, which was and remained Marxist-Leninist, it was gradually combined with a large dose of Russian nationalism, which became extreme during the 1940s and early 1950s. The Russians were considered the “firstborn” of the Socialist family, with most of the scientific advances throughout history being attributed to Russian scientists.²⁰ Anyone who claimed that Russian culture was influenced by Western culture was condemned and accused of being unpatriotic.

In Eastern Europe, extreme nationalism always goes hand in hand with antisemitism. But the official Soviet antisemitism had other causes as well, among them the desire to push the Jews out of their positions, and the need for a scapegoat. Yet there was another, uniquely Soviet aspect. In its desire to remove the British from the Middle East, the Soviet Union supported the establishment of the state of Israel—but when some Soviet Jews showed solidarity with the Jewish state, the regime became angry, because Soviets must have no other loyalties than besides loyalties to the Soviet Union.²¹ The regime’s attitude towards the State of Israel rapidly changed for the worse.²²

¹⁸ Marina Levin, “The Jewish Antifascist Committee in Perspective” *Jews and Jewish Topics in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Summer 1992): 53–59; G. Kostyrchenko, *V Plenu u krasnogo faraona* (Moscow 1994).

¹⁹ M. Altshuler, “The Unique Features of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union” in *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union*, ed. by Y. Roi (Tel Aviv 1995), 171–89; Y. Aradi, “HaShoah Behistoriografia Sovietit (The Holocaust in Soviet historiography),” in *HaShoah Behistoriografia*, ed. by Y. Gutman and G. Graetz (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem 1986–1987), 139–67; A. Eztragalitz, *The Holocaust in Latvia 1941–1944* (Riga 1996).

²⁰ G. Hosking, *Russian Nationalism, Past and Present* (Basingstoke, UK 1998); J. Dunnlop, *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism* (Princeton 1983)

²¹ G. Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East from World War Two to Gorbachev* (Cambridge, UK 1991), 29–44; Y. Rai, *Yahasei Yisrael-Brit HaMoetsot 1947–1954* (Israeli-Soviet relations 1947–1954) (Jerusalem 1972); Y. Govrin, *Yahasei Brit Hamoetsot Me’et Hidusham Bishnat 1953 Ve’Ad Nitukam Beshnat 1967* (Soviet relations from their renewal in 1953 to their cutoff in 1967) (Jerusalem 1990), 9–25.

²² *Ibid.*

Soviet antisemitism differed from Czarist antisemitism in one major aspect. During the Czarist era, claims against the Jews were presented openly, and anti-Jewish laws were enacted. But during the Soviet era, the government never clearly admitted that official antisemitism existed—according to the ideology, all were equal by law. The Communist Party's policy against the Jews was implemented in a number of ways: secret instructions to block Jews from advancing, arresting cultured Jews on charges of being Jewish nationalists, accusing assimilated Jewish scientists of being cosmopolitans with no homeland and foreign to and incapable of comprehending the soul of the Russian people. Individuals with Jewish names were depicted as villains, cheats, and traitors, as well as driven by greed.²³ A Jew adopting a Russian last name would have his previous last name listed in parentheses on official documents.

Despite the difference in implementation of antisemitic policy, the negative stereotypes of Jews that were cultivated by the Communist regime during the Stalin era were very much like those circulated prior to the Revolution. The Jew was a foreign, treacherous element; he was taking over Russian culture and at the same time was incapable of understanding it; he was a cheat and driven by greed.

The height of the official antisemitic propaganda campaign was reached with the Doctors' Plot, a modern manifestation of the age-old blood libel, in which a number of doctors at the Kremlin Hospital, which treated top officials, were charged with killing patients under their care, and with being agents for an international Jewish organization.²⁴ It should be noted that during the Stalin era, antisemitic propaganda was much more effective than during the Czarist era. Even though the Czarist regime aided the antisemitic press, it was counterbalanced by the liberal press. While the liberal press's writings against antisemitism were sometimes censored, it could not be completely suppressed. In the Stalin era, increased literacy meant that the newspaper readership had grown, and radio broadcasts were also an effective propaganda tool. This period

²³ See note 21.

²⁴ L. Rappaport, *Stalin's War Against the Jews: The Doctors' Plot and the Soviet Solution* (New York 1994); A. Borshchagovskii, *Obviniaetsia krovi* (Moscow 1994); M. Goldshtein, "The Doctors' Plot in the Poltava Region," *Shvut* 9(25) (2000): 93–102; see also note 18.

of extreme antisemitism lasted only four years, but it considerably reinforced antisemitic images and stereotypes.

After Stalin's death in 1953 came a period of partial liberalization, which continued until 1964.²⁵ Even though moderate antisemitism still reigned, extreme antisemitism ceased. This meant that when political prisoners were freed, Jews were among them, and the terror against Jews was stopped. Yet covert discrimination against Jews continued moderate antisemitic propaganda was still disseminated; publications with antisemitic references could still be found.

In the early 1960s the regime ran into economic difficulties again, and Soviets with Jewish last names were accused of greed, deception, and financial crimes.²⁶ At the same time, there was more freedom than in Stalin's era, and a number of literary works portrayed Jewish characters in a positive light. But it was easier to portray Jews negatively than positively—as well-known Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko found in 1961 when he was harshly criticized for publishing a poem hinting that the state was ignoring the memory of victims of the Holocaust and not taking action against antisemitism.²⁷ Nevertheless, he was not arrested, and his works continued to be published.

Thus, limited liberalization revived the debate between antisemites and their opponents. While different things could be written about Jews, Israel could only be portrayed in a negative light. Since the Soviet Union supported the Arab countries, Israel was shown to be the aggressor and the Arabs its victims.²⁸

²⁵ S. Kruschchev, *Khrushchev on Khrushchev. An Inside Account of the Man and His Era* (Boston 1990); P. Jonson, *Khrushchev and the Arts* (Cambridge, Mass. 1965); R. Medvedev, *N. Khrushchev: Politicheskaiia biografia* (Moscow 1990); D. Volkogonov, *7 vozhdai* (Moscow 1996), 1: 335–455.

²⁶ B. Pinkus, *The Soviet Government and the Jews 1948–1967: A Documented Study* (Cambridge, UK 1964); I. Oren and N. Prat, eds., “Sovietskii Soiuz,” *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopedia* (1996) 12: 256–67 (Jerusalem 1996).

²⁷ S. Markish, “Russkaia podtsenzurnaia literature i natsionalnoe vozrozhdenie,” in *Babel i drugie*, ed. by S. Markish (Moscow and Jerusalem 1997), 213–24; see also note 28.

²⁸ E. Oded, *Mediniut Hutx Shel Brit HaMoetsot MiLenin Ad Gorbachev* (Tel Aviv: Open University 1992), 2: 67–78, 60–64, 103–108; G. Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East From World War II to Gorbachev* (Cambridge, UK 1991), 44–58.

A conservative shift in Soviet policy towards the Jews came when Khrushchev was forced out of power in 1964, and lasted until 1985. While the terror of the Stalin era did not return, the partial freedom of the era of liberalization was restricted.²⁹ Policy towards the Jews was also influenced by other factors: the Arab countries' defeat in the 1967 Six-Day War were perceived as a Soviet failure as well. Moreover, the Soviet Union's unsuccessful attempt at forcing Israel to withdraw from the territories taken in 1967 contributed to a national awakening among the Soviet Jews—the harbingers of which had begun to be evident even before the war. Some Soviet Jews began to demand permission to emigrate to Israel.

The Soviet Jewish request to leave the country undercut official Soviet propaganda claims denying any connection between Israel and the Soviet Jews. Worse, the Soviet Jews' struggle for Aliyah (immigration to Israel) was supported by American Jewry.³⁰ During the early 1970s, the U.S.S.R. sought to improve Soviet-U.S. relations and thus, some Jews were allowed to leave, although before being allowed to go, they were publicly condemned as traitors in people's assemblies and stripped of their Soviet citizenship. Several dozen Aliyah activists were arrested and imprisoned. Fewer Jews were accepted at institutes of higher learning, and more obstacles were placed in the way of their career advancement. As a result, in addition to demands to emigrate to Israel, Jews began to leave the country for the United States, with visas for Israel, via Vienna and Italy, where they obtained refugee status.³¹ Thus, the Soviet regime found itself at odds with various Jewish elements: Israel, the United States, and some Soviet Jews.

When a regime is struggling with a particular sector of the population, it will often seek support from other elements that dislike

²⁹ J. Keep, *The Last of the Empires: A History of the Soviet Union 1945–1991* (Oxford 1995); P. Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union From the Beginning to the End* (Cambridge, UK 1999), 243–78; A. Bezborodov, ed., *Istoriia Rossii: Novieshee vremia* (Moscow 1999), 138–255.

³⁰ B. Pinkus, *T'biya VeTekuma Leumit HaTz'ionit VeHaTnuab HaTz'ionit BeBrit HaMoetsot* (Resurrection and Zionist national revival and the Zionist movement in the Soviet Union) (Beer Sheva: Ben Gurion University of the Negev 1993); D. Prital, ed., (1983). *In Search of Self: The Soviet Jewish Intelligentsia and the Exodus* (Jerusalem 1983); B. Morozov, *Evreiskaia Emigratsia v svete novikh dokumentov* (Tel Aviv 1998).

³¹ A. Orlek, *The Soviet Jewish Americans* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press 1999).

that sector. So it is no wonder that during the 1970s and the early 1980s a genre of literature developed that was termed “anti-Zionist” but actually was antisemitic propaganda. This genre revived all the charges against the Jews common to antisemitic literature—but with the term “Zionist” replacing “Jew” and broad hints that it was really the Jews who were at issue.³² The “Zionists” were accused of taking over the United States and attempting to take over the world. They were also accused of hating the Soviet Union, and of hating the Russian people even more, and of acting against them with the help of the Mossad, depicted as a monstrous organization that attempted to infiltrate everywhere and recruit Jews to its ranks in every country. This anti-Zionist literature also implied that the Jews were an untalented people; thus, it was claimed that Albert Einstein was no genius but had been pushed to the fore by the “Zionists.”

Along with these anti-Zionist publications, Jews were depicted as antiheroes in numerous literary works of the time, and it was implied that the Jews were the main movers behind various negative phenomena in the country, past and present.³³ Obviously, under such a regime, writings of this sort could only be published with the approval of influential factors. Since such works served the Communist Party, the party was interested in having them published. Nevertheless, during this period, some in the Soviet government thought that antisemitic literature in the guise of anti-Zionism had gone too far. Thus, along with the anti-Zionist works containing vicious antisemitic propaganda appeared works that either refrained from antisemitism completely or indulged in it only moderately.³⁴

³² T. Friedgut, “Soviet Anti-zionism and Antisemitism. Another Cycle,” *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 14 (1984): 3–33; Y. Seigelman, *HaKesher HaYehudi Haolami—Milkud HaTaamula HaAntisemit* (The world Jewish conspiracy—the trap of antisemitic propaganda), 100–32; J. Frankel, *The Soviet Regime and Anti-Zionism: An Analysis Research*, Paper 55. (Jerusalem: Soviet and East European Research Centre, 1984); S. Lyozov, “Rav Siach BeMoskva Al Safrut Anti-Tzionit (Moscow Symposium on Anti-Zionist Literature),” *Yebudei Brit HaMoetsot* (Soviet Jewry) 12 (1989): 61–93.

³³ M. Hafetz, “HaNoseh HaYehudi BeProza HaHistorit HaSovietit Beshanim 1975–1985 (The Jew in Soviet historical fiction 1975–1985) *Yebudei Brit HaMoetsot* (Soviet Jewry) 10 (1987): 125–43.

³⁴ S. Lyozov, “Rav Siach BeMoskva.”

Works placing Jewish characters in a genuinely positive light also sometimes appeared, though they were much fewer in number than the works in which Jews were negative characters. However, all works referring to Israel had to portray that country negatively, even as monstrous. Only the United States featured more prominently than Israel in Soviet literature. Israel was accused not only of aggression, but also of crimes against humanity, and its actions were often compared with Nazism. This was the situation up until the Gorbachev era.

Starting from 1985, there were significant changes in the Soviet attitude towards Israel and the Jews, which lasted through 1991. Basically, Gorbachev, who became president in 1985, sought to institute economic reform and expand cultural and political freedom—but within the framework of the existing system.³⁵ His reforms failed, however, and two opposing forces rose against him: the nationalist conservatives and democratic circles. Democratic circles said Gorbachev was to blame for the country's troubles, because his reforms were slow-moving and not comprehensive enough.³⁶ They proposed radical reforms, aimed ultimately at a transition to a Western-style market economy and the adoption of norms of Western democracy.

On the other side were the conservatives and nationalists. They claimed that Gorbachev's reform was a blind imitation of the West, and did not suit the Russian nature, with its spirituality and collective values. Antisemitism was an important part of the conservative/nationalist worldview; according to which the Jews sought to take over Soviet society and the world. The West, they claimed, was hostile to Russia, partly because it was controlled by the Jews; and democracy was good for some of the bourgeoisie and the Jews.³⁷ Russian Democrats were

³⁵ A. Sela, and T. Friedgut, *Medina BeMa'avar: MiBrit Hamoetsot LeHever Hamedinot HaAtzmaiot* (A state in transition: from U.S.S.R. to C.I.S.) (Jerusalem 1996); A. Cherniev, *6 let s Gobechevim* (Moscow 1993); C. Gill and R. Markwick, *Russia's Stillborn Democracy: From Gorbachev to Yeltsin* (Oxford 2000).

³⁶ J. Delvin, *The Rise of the Russian Democrats: The Cause and Consequences of Elite Revolution* (Aldershot, Hants., UK 1995); A. Lukin, *The Political Culture of the Russian Democrats* (Oxford 2000); V. Korotich, *Ot pervogo litsa* (Kharkov 2000).

³⁷ W. Laqueur, *Black Hundred: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia* (New York 1993), chs. 12–16.

accused of being agents for the Jews, of being Jewish themselves, or of being connected to Jews by marriage.³⁸

Thus the familiar negative Jewish stereotypes emerged in increasingly overt form in this period and gradually broke free of their anti-Zionist guise. In addition to the democratic condemnation of antisemitism, when Stalin's crimes became known and were condemned, statistics on antisemitism were published.

Democratic circles explained that antisemites needed Jews as a scapegoat because they did not want to solve problems.³⁹ Democrats opposed antisemitism because of their adherence to universal democratic values, human rights, and equality under the law. But even with this in mind, it took the democrats some time to break free of Soviet anti-Jewish stereotypes. Second, as we have seen, antisemites lumped Jews and democrats together, and both groups shared a common struggle against them. Third, democratic circles sought to improve relations with the West and to adopt its norms. These circles also sought a pragmatic foreign policy, and thus favored improving relations with Israel. Gradually but steadily, the democratic press began to publish articles depicting Israel in neutral terms, or even in a positive light.⁴⁰

While Gorbachev's government did not actively fight antisemitism, neither did it encourage it. Jewish cultural life gradually

³⁸ U. Borodin, "Pochemu pravoslavnyim ne goditsia protestanskii kapitalizm," *Nash sovremennik* 10 (1990): 4–16; A. Kazintsev, "Novaia mifologiya," *Nash sovremennik* 5 (1989): 146–67; V. Kozhinov, *Pobedy i Bedy Rossii* (Moscow 2000).

³⁹ S. Kreiz, "Russian Democrats and the Jewish Question During the Gorbachev Period: The Case of *Ogoniok*," *Shvut* 9 (25) (2000): 147–62; L. Dimreski-Seigelman, "Hitnagdut LeAntishemiut BeMa'avak HaIdeologi BeBrit HaMoetsot" (Resistance to antisemitism in the ideological struggle in the Soviet Union), *Yebudei Brit HaMoetsot* (Soviet Jewry) 12 (1989): 45–61.

⁴⁰ S. Hoffman, "Gvanim Shel Afor—Medinat Yisrael VeHaTzionut BeItonut Sovietit Be1988 (Shades of gray: the state of Israel and Zionism in the Soviet Press, 1988)," *Yebudei Brit HaMoetsot* (Soviet Jewry) 12 (1989), 119–27; A. Kiryakov, "Dmuta Shel Yisrael BeBrit HaMoetsot Shel Yameinu," *Yebudei Brit HaMoetsot* (Soviet Jewry) 13 (1990): 236–41; V. Naumkin, "HaInteresim Sovietim beMizrach ha-Tikhon," *Yebudei Brit HaMoetsot* 14 (1991): 181–87.

revived, and more Jews were permitted to leave the U.S.S.R.⁴¹ This followed a period in the early 1980s when the exodus was halted almost completely. More importantly, the emigrating Jews gradually came to be no longer considered traitors, and emigration began to be perceived as a normal matter.⁴²

Slowly but surely, Soviet relations with Israel began to thaw; in 1991, full diplomatic relations between the countries were restored.⁴³ During the Gorbachev era, public opinion polls were conducted on attitudes towards various ethnic groups, among them the Jews.⁴⁴ A closer look at this matter is in order, as it appears that the images and stereotypes of Jews that are widespread in public opinion are reflected not inconsiderably in detective stories. The poll results showed that the question of who the Soviet antisemites are is complex. The hard-core antisemites—those who see Jews in an unequivocally negative light—ranged from 5–7% of those polled, depending on the region.⁴⁵ A certain percentage showed an overall positive view, but most of the population had a mixed view of the Jews.

According to the polls, a majority of the population thought that Jews are educated, talented, and make good husbands, and that they evade hard work, like money too much, and play up their suffering. Most also thought that Jews are more wealthy than the average Soviet citizen. This last view, while not explicitly negative, was more negative than positive in the Soviet context. However, it was found that only the hard-core antisemites were opposed to renewing relations with Israel; most were either in favor or had no firm opinion.⁴⁶ Only an antisemitic minority claimed that Jews emigrated because they did not like the homeland, and only a minority said that Jews left because of

⁴¹ B. Pinkus, *Sofa Shel Tkufa: Yehudei Brit HaMoetsot Be'Eidan Gorbachev 1985–1991* (End of an era: Soviet Jewry in the Gorbachev period) (Beer Sheva 1999), 84–147.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 337–55.

⁴³ Oded, *Medinint Hutz, Shel Brit HaMoetsot*, 2: 252–313.; R. Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East: Soviet Policy since the Invasion of Afghanistan* (Cambridge, UK 1991); G. Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East*, (Cambridge, UK 1991), ch. 17.

⁴⁴ L. Gudkov and A. Levinson, "Izmenenia v otnoshenii k evreiam naselenia respublik na territorii byvshego SSSR," *Vestnik evreiskogo universiteta v Moskve* 4 (1993): 4–40.

⁴⁵ I. Borovoi, "Za stolom nikto u nas ne Lifshits," *Novoe vremia* 41 (1991): 25.

⁴⁶ A. Levinson, "Novye druz'ia ne khuzhe starykh," *Novoe vremia* 52 (1990): 24.

antisemitism; most said that the Jews left due to economic and political conditions, an uncertain future, or to improve their lot. However, most respondents perceived emigration as legitimate.⁴⁷ It is clear that most of the Soviet population during the final years of the U.S.S.R. was not hard-core antisemitic, but was also not enamored of Israel. Opinions on Jews were a mixture of positive and negative images and stereotypes. These images and stereotypes emerged for several reasons.

As we have seen, there is a much higher percentage of scientists and academics among the Jews than among the rest of the population. This can arouse different emotions: one can feel positively about talent and education, but negatively about the “evidence” that Jews go into such fields to avoid manual labor—ergo, Jews are lazy and do not like to work hard. Antisemites, of course, adopted only the negative image, while those who saw Jews in a positive light looked at the positive image. The average Soviet citizen absorbed both images/stereotypes.

The stereotype of the money-loving Jew is extremely common in antisemitic literature. Originating in the Middle Ages, the image of the usurious money-lending Jew was reinforced because many Jews engaged in commerce, individually during the revolutionary era and in an official capacity in the Soviet Union. Jews are also seen as being wealthier than average, and this stereotype recurs in the works we will discuss here.

If Jews are educated, talented, and wealthy, they make good husbands. It is interesting to note that Jewish women are not perceived as making good wives. Apparently, the average Russian expects his wife to work hard—and Jews are thought to evade hard work.

With regard to the stereotype of Jews playing up and emphasizing their suffering from antisemitism, it has already been mentioned that with the openness of the Gorbachev era, material on persecution of Jews during Stalin’s final years and on the less severe discrimination following the Stalin era began to emerge. The atrocities of the Holocaust also became more generally known—prior to Gorbachev, this was a subject that was little discussed.

However, for several reasons, most of the population was not inclined to think of the Jews as victims. First, it conflicted with the

⁴⁷ I. Nikitina and V. Sazonov, “Emigratsia evreev v zerkale sotsiologii,” *Novoe vremia* 33 (1990): 3.

image of the wealthy, educated Jew. Second, during the final Gorbachev years, circumstances were difficult, and Russians and other ethnic groups wanted to cast themselves in the role of suffering victims. Third, the older generation did not want to think of Jews in terms of victims because this meant that they might have to consider their part in actions or attitudes against the Jews.

As we have seen, the Gorbachev era marked an end to the powerful Soviet anti-Israel propaganda. But during Gorbachev's time, except for the extremist antisemitic minority most Soviets were not opposed to a renewal of diplomatic relations with Israel—and many were even in favor. In this author's opinion, this means that most of the population was influenced very little by the official propaganda showing Israel as cruel, aggressive, and wont to commit atrocities. Although there was, as we have seen, no shortage of negative Russian stereotypes of Jews, violence and cruelty were not seen to be Jewish characteristics—surveys showed that much of the Russian population attributed these characteristics to Muslims, and in particular to Muslims from the Caucasus. Thus, it is not surprising that the image of Israel as aggressor and Arab countries as victim gained limited acceptance, even prior to Gorbachev. This, along with the neutral depictions of Israel of the Gorbachev era, and mention of Israel's achievements, in various areas, meant that the image of a monstrous Israel were quickly effaced among most of the population, except for extremist antisemitic circles. This should be kept in mind when considering how Israel is depicted in the detective fiction that this paper examines.

Although Jews emigrating from the Soviet Union were considered traitors—even if this later became the view of a relatively small minority—most of the population actually had no objection to Jews leaving. However, the claim that most Jews were leaving due to antisemitism was not generally accepted—even though antisemitic organizations were quite active during the Gorbachev era, and the regime did little to act against them. In this instance as well, most of the population did not want to perceive the Jews as suffering from antisemitism—because it did not want to perceive them as victims at all.

Yet another factor is that during the last years of the Soviet Union, with its economic hard times, not only Jews but many others

wanted to emigrate—but it was much easier for Jews to leave. This aroused jealousy among the population, which, while it did not object to emigration, did refuse to see the Jews, who had this advantage, as victims.

The new post-Soviet Russia undertook radical reforms; although the shops, largely empty under Gorbachev, now had shelves full of goods, prices were extremely high.⁴⁸ The country became freer and more open, politically and otherwise. The formerly unattainable West became a common destination for citizens of the former Soviet Union, both for business and pleasure. This is reflected in the detective works set simultaneously in Russia and Israel, or the United States and Germany. But this new openness had a price. The rapid privatization, accompanied by shady dealings, significantly increased social disparity. A small group of *nouveau-riche*—the “New Russians”—emerged, while many lived in dire poverty. A middle class has also emerged, but its situation and status are extremely uncertain.

The economic situation has improved in recent years, but for many the standard of living remains low. The combination of poverty and social polarization contributed to a significant increase in crime. Many have lost interest in politics due to disappointment in the current leadership, yet do not want a return to the previous regime. But among some, and not only the hardest hit, nostalgia for the Soviet Union, and the Communist Party is still strong. For others, and not only those who have been successful, belief in democracy and economic reform is still strong.⁴⁹

It must be recalled that many Jews have left the former Soviet Union. Most emigrated to Israel, but many went to the United States, Germany, and other countries. Among those who remained, some prospered, and among the ranks of the New Russians are several Jews. Since the Russian press—and not only the antisemitic Russian press—emphasizes the role they play to the Russian public, there is an impression that most Russian Jews belong to the *nouveau riche*, and we will encounter such characters in the works of detective fiction. Yet,

⁴⁸ R. Medvedev, *Kapitalizm v Rossii?* (Moscow 1998); O. Volobuev, ed., *Istorii Sovremennoi Rossii 1985–1994* (Moscow 1995); A. Bezborodov, *Istoriia Rossii. Noveishee vremia 1945–1999* (Moscow 1999), 324–428; Sela, and Friedgut, *Medina BeMa'avar*.

⁴⁹ A. Yanov, *Posle Yeltsina Veirmarskaia Rossia* (Moscow 1995).

although there are a number of Jews among the nouveau riche, they constitute a small minority of all the Jews in Russia.⁵⁰ At the same time, since most of the émigrés are middle-aged or younger, there are many elderly Jews who live off tiny Russian pensions. Although many receive supplemental income from the Joint Distribution Committee, they are still impoverished.

There are currently no restrictions on Jewish cultural activity.⁵¹ Russia's relations with Israel have completely normalized. There are no secret government guidelines discriminating against Jews, but on the other hand little action is taken against antisemitic organizations that remain active and continue to see the Jews and the West as the source of all the evil in Russian society.

Jews, however, are not the only scapegoat. Prejudice against ethnic groups from the Caucasus is now more common than antisemitism.⁵² The war in Chechnya, and the accompanying terrorist actions in Russian cities have led many in the Russian public to be more understanding of Israel's situation. Furthermore, even though the government wishes to maintain good relations with the Arab world, it is also interested in good relations with Israel. The situation is therefore very different than during the Soviet era, when relations with Israel were sacrificed for relations with the Arab world. Furthermore, Israel is no longer a country that the Russian citizen hears of only from newspapers. Many Russians have visited Israel, because they have friends or relatives there—something that has a considerable effect on images of Israel in Russia.

⁵⁰ R. Rivkina, *Etrei postsovetsskoi Rossii. Kto oni* (Moscow 1996).

⁵¹ D. Fishman, "T'hiyatam Shel Mada'I HaYahadut BeRussia BiShnot HaTish'im" (The revival of Judaic studies in 1990s Russia), *Yebudei Brit HaMoetsot BeMa'avar* (Soviet Jewry in transition) (19) 4 (1999): 250–61; S. Hoffman, "Al Peilut Merkaz Sefer BeBrit HaMoetsot LeShe'avar" (On the Activity of the 'Sefer' Center in the FSU) *Yebudei Brit HaMoetsot BeMa'avar* (Soviet Jewry in transition) (19) 4 (1999): 261–65.

⁵² M. Mamedov, "Massovye Stereotipy i predrassudki v natsional'nykh istoriakh i predstavleniakh o proshlom (Na primere litsa kavkazskoi natsionalnosti)" in *Natsional'nye istorii v sovetskom i postsovetsskom gosudarstvakh*, ed. by K. Aimermakher and G. Bordiugova (Moscow 1999), 104–15.

BETWEEN REJECTION AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS:
JEWS IN WORKS BY ALEXANDRA MARININA

Alexandra Marinina is the pseudonym of M. Alekseeva, a retired police force officer.⁵³ She is considered the most popular author of detective fiction, and Jews feature frequently in nine of her numerous works. In some cases her Jewish characters are incidental, but in others, the author deals with them at length, with discussion of the Jews' situation, past and present. Although some motifs recur in all Marinina's works with Jewish characters, there is also some variation.

A central character in *Igra Na Chuzhom Pole* (Game in a foreign field, 1997) is Regina Arkadyevna Walter, a very talented musician. It is explicitly stated that Regina is Jewish, and also mentioned that she had been a victim of antisemitism during the Brezhnev era, when she was prohibited from performing abroad and her career advancement was blocked.⁵⁴ These experiences have made Regina a misanthropist and worse—she became the leader of a gang that arranged screenings of snuff films featuring children, for audiences of sadistic psychopaths.⁵⁵

Regina is a Jew and a monster, hiding her cruelty and hatred behind a veneer of education and urbanity. Although she was victimized as a Jew, it is abundantly clear to the reader that her actions are far more atrocious than the discrimination from which she had suffered. Furthermore, casting a Jew in the role of a procurer for the murder of children can be seen as a modern version of the blood libel. Although the children are not murdered so that their blood can be used to bake Passover matzos, the murder is filmed and screened for sick individuals who pay handsomely for the privilege of viewing.

Thus, Regina the Jewess has two classic antisemitic stereotypes attributed to her: misanthropy and greed. Yet it would appear that the author Marinina does not want to look like a complete antisemite; she

⁵³ E. Iakovleva, "Kamenskaia stala moim vtorym ia," *Globus* 469 (2001): 92; I. Ovchinnikov, "Maiatnik Marininoi. Russian Journal, Krug chteniia," <http://www.rus.ru> (1998); Marinina's Web page: <http://www.Marinina.ru>.

⁵⁴ A. Marinina, [pseud. M. Alekseeva], *Igra na chuzhom pole* (Game in a foreign field)(Ekaterinburg 1997), 50.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 238–39.

makes an attempt to mitigate her character's monstrous traits by stating that Regina had been a victim of discrimination.

Another two Jewish characters appear in this novel, both marginal and both negative. Zhenya Shachnovitch is a swindler, albeit a charming one⁵⁶; Boris Chenin is a sexual deviant.⁵⁷

In *Ne Mecsbaite Palachu* (Don't disturb the hangman, 1998) Marinina writes of another monstrous Jewish character: Michael Larkin, a talented young man who was denied entrance into the university humanities department as a student during the Brezhnev era.⁵⁸ Instead, he studied a technical profession with which he was unfamiliar and for which he had no talent. He did, however, have another talent—the ability to hypnotize others. Using this power, he does well academically, and later finds work with the security services, eventually moving into the criminal underworld.⁵⁹ With his special powers, he compels individuals to commit murders, always keeping himself in the clear.

Although Larkin is a member of a gang comprised of individuals from different minority groups, the author notes that he is the one who loves money more than anything else. Also, while other gang members are killed, he always escapes death.⁶⁰

Although discrimination against Jews during the Brezhnev era is mentioned, the reader is led to believe that although Larkin was touched by it, his horrendous deeds are much worse than the discrimination of that era. Larkin appears in a number of ways to be even worse than Regina in *Igra Na Chužom Pole*. Not only is he the driving force behind acts of murder, but with his talent for hypnosis he turns innocent people into criminals. Again, it seems that the author mentions discrimination against Larkin the student to avoid being accused of antisemitism.

A Jewish character somewhat less horrific, yet also negative and unlikable, appears in *Ubiitsa ponevole* (The man who had to murder, 1997). The greedy Michael Markovitch Steinberg emigrates to Israel.⁶¹ Although

⁵⁶ Ibid, 27.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 159.

⁵⁸ A. Marinina, *Ne mesbaite palachu* (Don't disturb the hangman)(Moscow: Iksm Press, 1998), 122.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 123–28.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 392–94.

⁶¹ A. Marinina, *Ubiitsa ponevole* (The man who had to murder) (Moscow 1997), 172–75.

he is in possession of military secrets, Steinberg is nevertheless allowed to leave, over the objections of a security service member who is favorably depicted by the author. However, Steinberg does not remain in Israel for long. In his striving to make more and more money, he was tempted into going to another country, where he fell into a trap.

To add to this character's unpleasantness, the author notes that when he lived in the Soviet Union he had disliked exerting himself, until forced to work hard when he began associating with criminal elements who threatened to harm him if he did not.

Steinberg represents the greedy Jew, who appears regularly in works by other authors examined in this paper. In addition, we must remember that during the 1970s and 1980s, Soviet authorities commonly prevented Jews from emigrating by claiming they "knew state secrets." Marinina's use of this plot device can be interpreted to mean that she in fact thinks that this policy was warranted—even though this policy was phased out later, during Gorbachev's time.

In *Ubiitsa ponevole*, the very minor Jewish character Stanislav Berkovitch is an abhorrent sexual deviant.⁶²

Another of Marinina's novels, *Chernyi Spisok* (Blacklist) has a Jewish character, Boris Yusipovich Rodin, who is part of the nouveau-riche class that emerged in the 1990s.⁶³ That this class is commonly thought to include a large number of Jews, is evident by the frequency with which nouveau-riche Jewish characters appear in the works examined by this paper. Although Rodin is not a criminal, but he is no more likeable than Marinina's previous characters. A wealthy businessman for whom money is more important than anything else, he stints on security, leaving people defenseless.⁶⁴

In her novel *Stechenie obstoiatel'stv* (Likely circumstances, 1998), Marinina's main Jewish character has some positive, as well as negative aspects.⁶⁵ Yavsi Yelitch Dorman is a professional criminal, who used to get caught when young, but as an adult had become more cautious and sophisticated and was good at his trade. He is also more human than most of his fellow criminals, and even once saved a policeman from

⁶² Ibid., 20, 91, 117–18. For details, see note 11.

⁶³ A. Marinina, *Chernyi spisok* (Blacklist) (Moscow 1998).

⁶⁴ Ibid., 242–56.

⁶⁵ A. Marinina, *Stechenie obstoiatel'stv* (Likely circumstances) (Moscow 1998).

death. But humanity and intelligence are his only virtues; Marinina specially emphasizes his laziness and dislike of manual labor, a common Jewish stereotype. He is a gourmand, and has a Russian woman tend his garden—another antisemitic stereotype, that Jews exploit others.

In *Stilist* (Stylist, 1998), several Jewish teens are murdered.⁶⁶ The bereaved parents claim the murders were motivated by antisemitism, an assertion picked up by the press.⁶⁷ The murder, however, turns out to be completely unconnected to the boys' ethnic origin. High-ranking police officer Anastasia Kamenskaia, who solves the crime, questions why Jews never believe they are simply victims of ordinary crime.⁶⁸ That is, Jews play up their suffering and see antisemitism where it doesn't exist.

Even so, the author herself, who seeks to lead the reader to the conclusion that this is how Jews behave, never claims that antisemitism does not exist. As we have seen, the discrimination of the Brezhnev era plays a role in some of her novels, as it does in other works to be examined.

In *Illuziia Grekha* (Illusion of sin, 1998), the husband of one of the Jewish characters was arrested at the time of the Doctors' Plot and died under torture.⁶⁹ Here a Jew is cast in the role of genuine victim. But while no negative traits are attributed to him, neither are any positive ones; the author merely reports what happened.

Jewish characters abound in Marinina's many works, but only one features a completely positive one—who is also completely marginal. In *Chuzhaia maska* (The foreign mask, 1997), Solomon Yakovlevitch Zafran is a brilliant intellectual, literary expert, and a good and moral man with a very rich spiritual life.⁷⁰ Thus, if a Jew is a positive character, then he is an intellectual. However, Marinina's recent novel, published in 2001, reflects a shift in her attitude towards Jews, as we will see below.

Before looking at her 2001 novel *Tot, kto znaet. Opasnie*, in which there is a shift in the image of Jews, we will look at *Posmertnyi obraz* (The image behind death, 1998), in which one main character, the well-known actress Elena Vaznes, is half-Jewish and half-Latvian, and is murdered

⁶⁶ A. Marinina, *Stilist* (Stylist)(Ekaterinburg 1998), 5–11.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 160–66.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 71.

⁶⁹ A. Marinina, *Illuziia grekha* (Illusion of sin)(Moscow 1998), 18.

⁷⁰ A. Marinina, *Chuzhaia maska* (The foreign mask)(Moscow 1997), 242–56.

under unusual circumstances.⁷¹ Some of Elena's character traits are attributed to her Jewish origins, while others are connected to her Latvian ancestry.

Latvians are generally viewed in a negative light by Russians. For centuries, the Latvians peasants were serfs of the German nobility. The region became part of the Russian empire in the 18th century, and in the 19th century, the Latvian peasants were released from their serfdom. An educated class emerged, among which a nationalist movement developed. After the crumbling of the Russian Empire, Latvia gained independence, but in 1940 it was re-annexed to the Soviet Union, and many Russians then settled there. In the Gorbachev period, Latvia began to struggle to regain its independence, finally doing so in 1991. The country's new government refused to recognize the resident Russians as citizens, causing much bitterness towards Latvia in Russia.⁷²

Marinina provides great detail about Elena Vaznes's parents. Her mother Sonya (Sarah in Russian) was from a very wealthy Jewish family—Jews are nearly always depicted as wealthy in Russian detective fiction.⁷³ Sonya's relatives had all emigrated to Israel, but Sonya, single and, it is implied, unattractive, remained behind and married a Latvian peasant whom she met at a vacation spot.⁷⁴

One character in the novel says of Elena that she successfully combined the stupidity and stolidity of the Latvian peasant with Jewish deviousness and nerve.⁷⁵ When a character in a novel makes such a statement, it can mean one of three things: a) the character's words express the author's opinion; b) the character's words express the opposite of the author's opinion; or c) the character's words do not

⁷¹ A. Marinina, *Posmertnyi obraz* (The image behind death) (Moscow 1998).

⁷² On Latvia and Russian attitudes towards Latvia, see A. Leskinea, "Latyshy," in *Narodi i religii mira*, ed. by V. Tishkov (Moscow 1998), 283–85; V. Markin, (1999), "Latvia," in *Strany. Narody. Tsivilizatsii*, ed. by M. Aksenova (Moscow 1999), 13: 219–22; G. Bordigova, *Natsional'nye istorii v sovetskom i postsovetskikh gosudarstvakh* (Moscow 1999), 93–95, 408–16; R. Misiunas and R. Faagepera, *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence* (Berkeley, Calif. 1993); A. Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and the Path to Independence* (New Haven, Conn. 1993).

⁷³ Marinina, *Posmertnyi obraz*, 374, details in note 26.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 342, details in note 26.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 299.

unequivocally express the author's opinion, but it is implied that his or her opinion has some truth in it.

Here we have the third instance. The character making the statement is more negative than positive—meaning that the author is not responsible for them. However, describing Elena thus makes the point that while the statement may not be completely true, it is largely true. Elena is a talented actress, but a cynical and unfeeling woman, who as a sideline lends money at a monthly interest rate of 15%—not only calling to mind the age-old image of the usurious Jew, but also a common stereotype regarding Latvians, whom Russians perceive as miserly.⁷⁶

Elena is also depicted as merciless, dismissing an older actress and denying her a last chance to live a normal life.⁷⁷ When offended, she does not respond openly, but takes her revenge in secret.⁷⁸ In short, she is a thoroughly unsympathetic victim, and many had a motive to murder her. Obviously, such a character is always good for the plot of a detective story, as the reader is kept guessing, but the author also intimates that the character is so unlikable because of her ethnic traits.

At one point, however, criticism of Elena is mitigated by mention that she had been a long-term victim of overt sexual harassment, which affected her personality. Marinina is again trying to maintain some measure of political correctness, counteracting her negative depiction of a Jewish character by pointing out that she had also been victimized, thus making it difficult to accuse the author of an antisemitic depiction. Yet, as always, Marinina makes it clear that the character's vile deeds are much worse than any injustice done them.

Until her two-volume *Tot, kto znaet. Opasnye voprosy* (Whoever knows. Dangerous questions, 2001) all Marinina's Jewish characters had been negative.⁷⁹ Here there appears to be a different kind of Jewish character, although upon closer examination, it is evident that the difference is only partial. There has been a shift in her attitude toward Jews, and she also devotes attention to Israel.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 300.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 307–308.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 333–37.

⁷⁹ A. Marinina, *Tot, kto znaet. Opasnye voprosy* (Whoever knows; Dangerous Questions), 2 vols. (Moscow 2001).

The story opens during the Brezhnev era and concludes in the 1990s. It is set in an apartment building occupied by several families, among them a Jewish family—Bella Levovna and her son Mark, who was not accepted to study in the physics department at the university because he was Jewish.⁸⁰ The heroine Natasha, who represents the “good Russian woman” and is still a girl as the novel opens, is aware that some people dislike Jews.⁸¹ In the novel, the Jewish characters are brilliant intellectuals who help Natasha in her studies, and encourage her to read books.⁸² Another tenant is Paulina, an elderly alcoholic and an antisemite, who at one point comments that Jews know how to manage in any circumstances.⁸³

Mark emigrates from the Soviet Union in the 1970s, leaving his mother behind. He tells her:

“They didn’t accept me to the institution where I wanted to study, and they didn’t let me choose the profession I wanted. All my life they let me know that because I am a Jew, I am flawed, and have limited rights.”⁸⁴

Bella Lvovna says to him:

“I cannot cut myself off from the people with whom I have become friends; I cannot cut myself off from the language in which I spoke and thought all my life, and in which I wrote letters to Father during the war...”⁸⁵

Mark leaves behind not only his mother but an illegitimate daughter, wholeheartedly cared for by Natasha. Bella Lvovna says that Mark is weak because he left the country even though he knew she would not go—in her opinion, a selfish act.⁸⁶ She says she is not angry, but knows that for him, the chance to succeed is more important than a mother’s love.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1: 16.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 1: 39.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 1: 94.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 1: 279.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 1: 279.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Even though Mark is a more positive figure than the Jews in Marinina's other novels, the author still stresses that success and money are most important to Jews—unlike for Russians such as Natasha, who loves and helps others out of the goodness of her heart. However, in this novel this attitude is toned down. When Paulina, the elderly alcoholic antisemite, calls Bella Lvovna a *Zhidovka* and complains that her son Mark is living the good life in America while they are poverty stricken, Natasha silences her by saying that her life would have been no better had Mark stayed.⁸⁸

In the 1990s, after the dismantling of the Soviet Union, Mark comes back to Russia for a visit. Natasha's husband accuses him of succeeding at the expense of the others, leaving his mother behind under Natasha's care, and says that he should have remained because his mother hadn't wanted to come. Mark tells him:

“You have no right to talk that way. You didn't have to be a Jew in a country where militant antisemitism was rampant, and you will never be able to understand those who escaped this humiliation. What do you know about my life? Do you know that even though I was an outstanding student, I could not get accepted to university, even though I had excellent grades in every subject? They deprived me of any chance of a career. The parents of one pupil forbade him to make friends with me because I was a Jew, and in their opinion all Jews were enemies of the people, like Trotsky, and the doctors [of the Doctors' Plot]. The children called me *Zhidenok*, and when I was a teacher and gave low grades to the son of an influential man, the [father] ran to the principal to demand that I should be replaced by a Russian, because he considered me a member of the Zionist mafia.”⁸⁹

We see here the full spectrum of antisemitic stereotypes. Mark's behavior is understandable, and all in all he is depicted favorably. But it is implied that for him, success and advancement in life are most important—which is not the case for “good Russians.”

Thus, how the author handles Jews in her most recent novel differs only slightly from her attitude in previous works. Jews here are more favorably depicted, but they are not as good as the good Russians. While the antisemitism on the part of the characters is more explicit, and

⁸⁸ Ibid., 1: 228.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 2: 330–31.

is also more explicitly condemned, we have already seen that antisemitism is evident in several of the author's previous works.

Summary

In Marinina's novels, negatively depicted Jews vastly outnumber those who are positively depicted. Nevertheless, there are significant differences among the Jewish characters. While some are truly monsters, such as Regina Arkadyevna, and Walter and Michael Larkin, others are merely egotistical and unlikable, such as Michael Markovitch Steinberg and Boris Yusipovich Rodin. Still others are overall positive characters, like Mark—yet they still do not attain the degree of goodness of the best of her Russian characters, who represent the “good Russian man” or “good Russian woman.”

Although Marinina often mentions antisemitism and discrimination against Jews, the Jewish characters thus victimized are now rich and successful, and nearly all of them are driven to attain still more riches and success. Thus, most of the negative stereotypes seen in the public opinion polls appear in Marinina's novels. Less common in her works are Jews with positive attributes such as education and talent.

Although it would perhaps be an exaggeration to unequivocally categorize Marinina as an antisemitic author, her unfavorable depictions of Jews definitely outnumber her favorable ones.

BETWEEN SOVIET STEREOTYPE AND APPARENT BALANCE: ISRAEL AND JEWS IN A WORK BY P. DASHKOVA

While Alexandra Marinina mentions Israel only in connection with the emigration of Soviet Jewry, other authors' treatment is more thorough. Some actually set their stories in Israel, describing Israeli life and characters in some detail. One such work is *Obraz vraga* (Image of the enemy, 2000), by P. Dashkova.⁹⁰

P. Dashkova is the pseudonym of Paulina Shpilova, former journalist and translator with a literary background.⁹¹ Her very popular

⁹⁰ P. Dashkova [pseud. Paulina Shpilova], *Obraz vraga* (Image of the enemy) (Moscow 2000).

⁹¹ G. Shulapiakov, “Sto dnei do kontsa siuzheta,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 7 Dec. 2000, <http://www.exlibris.ng.ru/izdat/>; N. Keller, “Polina Dashkova: za”

works, aimed at a general readership, are a combination of detective fiction and women's novel.

*Israel in **Obraz vraga***

Dashkova's novel is set in Russia, Germany, and Israel, and Israeli life is depicted as it is seen through the eyes of a Russian tourist—who evidently reflects the first-hand impressions either of Dashkova herself (it is not clear whether she has ever been to Israel) or of others who have visited the country.

In the novel, unfavorable impressions of Israel outnumber the favorable ones—even though one positive discovery is that every fifth Jew is a Russian speaker.⁹² Prices are high. There are constant security checks, by soldiers and police (and the novel was written before the outbreak of violence in September 2000). Although the author notes that these security measures are not mere drills, and that terrorist attacks are possible, they are depicted as needlessly excessive.⁹³ Also mentioned are terror operations against Israel, and Israel's subsequent assassination of terror leaders.⁹⁴ The closing of shops on the Sabbath is also viewed unfavorably.⁹⁵ In east Jerusalem, the Russian tourist is injured by rocks thrown by Arabs who take her for a Jew.⁹⁶ Although the author mentions that Israel is developing biological weapons, she emphasizes that other countries are doing so as well.⁹⁷

The author writes that not only does the Jewish Agency encourage Russian Jews to emigrate to Israel, but also states that it seeks to discover Russian military secrets.. She also claims that the Jewish Agency is collaborating with the antisemitic Pamyat organization—exactly, she says, as it did with the Nazis during World War II.⁹⁸

<http://www.sobesednik.ru>; K. Kushekova, "Balerina i bandit, Zheleznaia ledi v puantakh," <http://www.art.uralinfo.ru>

⁹² Dashkova, *Obraz vraga*, 12, see note 1.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 14–15.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 153–62.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 187–94.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 6, 44–99.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 348–49.

An examination of Dashkova's depictions of Israel reveals a mix of standard anti-Zionist propaganda and new claims. Accusing the Jewish Agency of collaboration with antisemites, of past collaboration with the Nazis, and of espionage is a reflection of themes commonly found in antisemitic literature during the 1970s and 1980s that promulgated antisemitic propaganda in the guise of anti-Zionism, as we saw in the introduction to this paper.

While Dashkova uses some anti-Zionist arguments, she rejects others. As explained in the introduction, during the 1970s, the official Soviet line was that Israel was the aggressor in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and that the Palestinians and Arab countries were its victims. Yet Dashkova presents the conflict differently: according to her, each side's cause is equally just, and both sides are equally to blame; in any event, they are killing each other. The Russian tourist, who is obviously giving voice to the author's views, doesn't know and doesn't make an effort to find out who is right; both sides are simultaneously hangman and victim.

It is interesting that in this novel, Dashkova has used several images from 1970s anti-Zionist literature but rejected others. It is possible that the author says the Jewish Agency engages in espionage and collaborates with antisemites because it is appropriate for this work—part detective fiction, part spy thriller replete with murders by political elements and security services, and cynical operatives acting against the dictates of their conscience and ideals.

Yet even if the author is willing to adopt elements of Soviet propaganda when they suit the book's viewpoint, she dismisses other elements that conflict with it. Furthermore, the old Soviet argument that Israel is the culprit and the Arab states the victims appear too self-righteous, and do not fit her view of political reality—that is, that there is no good guy or bad guy in this violent struggle in which the absurd surpasses logic.

Ideology notwithstanding, the author views much of Israeli life with an unsympathetic eye. For a Russian with a small salary, the Far East seems a much better shopping destination. The Sabbath closure of stores is portrayed as negative largely because Russians are not used to such a phenomenon. The only positive aspect noted by the author is the abundance of Russian speakers.

Thus, in *Obraz vraga*, Israel is depicted mostly in an unfavorable manner even though it is not shown as the aggressor in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It can be said that Dashkova portrays Israel more negatively than the other authors examined here.

*The Jews in **Obraz vraga***

The action in *Obraz vraga* takes place in Israel, Russia, and Germany and Jews figure prominently in the plot. One central character is Nathan Brenner, a Soviet Jew who emigrated to Israel in the 1970s. The author mentions that in the Soviet Union, Brenner had been discriminated against and his career advancement blocked when he sought to emigrate.⁹⁹ In one scene that takes place after it becomes known that Brenner wants to leave the country, the authorities organize a meeting in which he is publicly condemned as a traitor. During the meeting, one of Brenner's Jewish coworkers spoke more strongly than anyone else present against those who wanted to leave the Soviet Union—but after work, everyone asked Brenner for forgiveness.¹⁰⁰

Brenner did well in Israel, advancing in his career and becoming successful. Yet he still missed Russia and the Russian language, and he was sad that his children, though fluent in English and French, did not speak Russian well. Brenner is depicted as good-hearted and intelligent; although his work involves the manufacture of biological weapons, the author does not hold this against him, as she states that other countries besides Israel have bio-weapons.

Contrasting with the “good” Jew Brenner is an “ugly Jew”—the nouveau riche Gennady Podosinsky.¹⁰¹ Podosinsky orders Brenner kidnapped, as part of a plot to debase Israel. Podosinsky wants Israel discredited because he deals in oil and has connections with Iraq. The author describes Podosinsky as having a technical education, and says he became wealthy during the 1990s and had tremendous behind-the-scenes influence in the government.¹⁰² With his hired killers, he eliminates anyone who stands in his way.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 44–49.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 121–24.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 304–12.

¹⁰² Ibid., 6–10, 48–50.

The novel also portrays antisemitic organizations in Russia, and it is obvious that the author takes a negative and scornful view of them.¹⁰³ She lets her readers know that antisemitism is indeed an undesirable phenomenon, but that in Russia today it is marginal and non-threatening.

The positive Jewish character in this novel is an intellectual, while the clearly negative Jewish character is a nouveau riche villain for whom money is more important than anything, who acts against Israel's interests though he is a Jew, and has great influence in the government. Although Jewish control has always been one of the most common antisemitic themes, the author cannot be accused of antisemitism, since her negative Jewish character is offset by a positive one.

It is interesting that Dashkova's positive Jewish character is one who emigrated to Israel, while her negative Jewish character is one who remained in Russia and became wealthy. Thus, emigration to Israel is not perceived by the author as negative, and the anti-emigration persecution of the Brezhnev era is depicted unfavorably, although this is mitigated somewhat when the author shows how Brenner's coworkers, though condemning him in a public forum, asked for his forgiveness afterwards in private—transforming them from seeming antisemites into people driven to act thus out of fear of the authorities. The novel also showed that Jews are no better than Russians, as Brenner's Jewish coworker condemned Brenner even more vehemently than the others.

Jewish persecution is depicted as imposed from above. Although Dashkova knows that antisemitism continued to exist after the breakup of the Soviet Union, she portrays it as something marginal, even risible. While there are numerous opinions on the scope of antisemitism in Russia today, some researchers would certainly disagree with her claim that it is no longer a significant phenomenon.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Ibid., 102–14.

¹⁰⁴ For more on antisemitism in Russia following the breakup of the Soviet Union, see Robert S. Wistrich, "Antisemiut Be'Eidan Post-Kommunisti (Antisemitism in the Post-Communist Era)," *Yehudei Brit HaMoetzot* (Soviet Jewry), 1, no. 16 (1993): 65–70; L. Gudkov, L., "HaYahas LeYehudim BeRussia Al Pi Netunei Mehkarim Sotsiologiim Be-1990–1998 (The attitude towards the Jews in Russia according to sociological research data 1990–1998)," *Yehudei Brit HaMoetzot* 4, no. 19 (2000): 231–50; R. Rivkina, (1996), "Evrei v postsovetskoi Rossii. Kto oni?," ch. 4, *Postsovetskii antisemitizm. Mif i real'nosti* (Moscow 1996).

Another point worth noting is that Brenner is viewed favorably also because he still yearns for the Russian language and culture.

In sum, we see that in *Obraz vraga*, Jews are depicted in a more balanced fashion than in Marinina's novels: a positive Jewish character is counterbalanced by a negative one. Here, too, however, Dashkova's positive character is an intellectual, while the negative one is a money-chasing nouveau riche individual. Her description of Israel is more negative than positive; however, despite vestiges of official Soviet views from the 1970s and 1980s, she does try to refrain from demonizing the country and from assigning "good guy" and "bad guy" roles in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

BETWEEN NEUTRALITY AND SUPERFICIALITY:
ISRAEL AND THE JEWS IN *OPERATSIJA KRISTAL*

Friedrich Neznanski, born in 1932, is a jurist by profession who over the past decade has become known for his detective fiction. Some of his stories are based on actual crimes, while others are fictional. He has a very broad readership, and his works have gone through several printings.¹⁰⁵ Most of the action in his 1999 novel *Operatsiia kristal* (Operation Crystal) takes place in Israel.¹⁰⁶ The story is centered on the investigation of a terrorist operation in Tel Aviv. At first, suspicion falls on the Hizbullah organization, as the attack was particularly brutal, a Hizbullah hallmark.¹⁰⁷ However, it turns out that the attack was perpetrated by the Islamic Jihad group.¹⁰⁸

The organizers of the terror attack are depicted negatively. One of them, Ahmet Bustoum, is a criminal who murders innocents and becomes wealthy under the cover of liberating Palestine.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, ordinary terrorists are described as brave.¹¹⁰ Towards the end,

¹⁰⁵ On Friedrich Neznanski, see: www.neznanski.ru Addresses and biographical material on Neznanski at www.ozon.ru ; see also note 1.

¹⁰⁶ F. Neznanski, *Operatsiia kristal* (Operation Crystal) (Moscow 1999).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 206.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 204–205.

however, it becomes clear that the terrorists were only pawns in the rivalry among different groups.¹¹¹

It is obvious that the author knows very little about Israel. He has heard that girls serve in the Israeli army, and so describes a group of girl soldiers participating in an anti-terrorist operation, which does not happen in the Israel Defense Force.¹¹² He also writes that Tel Aviv is the capital of Israel.¹¹³ Although the Soviet Union never recognized Jerusalem as the capital, Neznanski writes this out of ignorance. Yet at the same time, the author shows no hostility towards Israel. While Dashkova depicts Israel in a largely unfavorable manner, Neznanski is neutral. Even Israeli security forces are described more sympathetically than Israel's enemies. This is a clear departure from the pre-Gorbachev attitude in the Soviet Union.

Parts of the novel take place in the Soviet Union, involving a Russian Jewish doctor whose father, also a doctor, was a victim of Stalin, in the Doctors' Plot.¹¹⁴ The son is shown to be full of hatred towards security personnel—a vengeful man who neither forgives nor forgets.

Antisemitism is, therefore, mentioned in this novel, but a Jewish character is depicted as an unlikable victim who plays up his suffering—an image we have already seen depicted, though much more harshly, in the works of Marinina.

BETWEEN CONDEMNING ANTISEMITISM AND AMBIVALENCE TOWARD JEWS IN THE WORKS OF CHANGIZ ABDULAEV

Changiz Abdulaev, an Azeri jurist, an Azeri writing in Russian, is a prolific author of detective fiction.¹¹⁵ In most of his works, his hero, the private investigator Drongo, solves horrific crimes. Abdulaev's works are very widely read, and have been translated into several languages. Many

¹¹¹ Ibid., 538.

¹¹² Ibid., 206.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 111.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 239–40.

¹¹⁵ The Azeris live in Azerbaijan and northern Iran. They are Shiite Muslims and their language is related to Turkish. For more on Changiz Abdulaev see internet-gazeta/Literaturnaia stranitsa. A. Riskin, "Gde bi chto pochitat'," <http://www.pihalor-club-al.ru>. For distribution of detective fiction, see www.rax.ru/new

feature Jewish characters, and one, his 1999 novel *Simfonia smerti* (Symphony of death), focuses extensively on Israel and the Jews.¹¹⁶

*Persecuted and Paranoid: Jews and Israel in **Simfoniia smerti***

Abdulaev's *Simfoniia smerti* addresses the subjects of Israel and the Jews at length. The novel is a combination of detective story and spy thriller. In it, the Mossad, together with, though not always in full cooperation with, American and Russian intelligence services battle a mysterious organization that turns out to be an extremist antisemitic group seeking to take over the world. Private investigator Drongo—a positive hero who voices the author's opinions is—*de rigueur* in such works—smarter than the intelligence organizations.

It is clear that the author has investigated the subject of Israel and the Jews much more thoroughly than Dashkova or Neznanski, and has a greater knowledge of Jews and Israel. The Mossad, Israeli military intelligence, and the General Security Service (Shabak) are mentioned, along with prominent Israelis such as senior Shabak official Yossi Ginnosar, and Shabak head Ami Ayalon.¹¹⁷ The novel also brings up the 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, asserting that Israel could not have prevented it because it was believed that a Jew could never commit such a crime.¹¹⁸ The Mossad is depicted as a superior intelligence agency equipped with the newest technology.¹¹⁹

Overall, the novel depicts Israel more favorably than it does the elements working against it. However, Drongo (whose character reflects the author's views) says the country suffers from a persecution complex, and that even when it is right it overreacts. At one point, he says, "When you defend yourself against genuine aggression, you sometimes cross over the line of self-defense. Without wishing it, you yourselves become aggressors."¹²⁰ His interlocutor, a Mossad agent, tells him that even if there is a rational core to what he says, it must not be forgotten that Israel has simply wearied of the war that all its neighbors are waging against it, and that the terrible experience of the Holocaust proves that

¹¹⁶ C. Abdulaev, *Simfoniia smerti* (Symphony of death) (Moscow 1999).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5–13.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23–32.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 384.

Jews cannot afford to be weak, and that it is not an inferiority complex, but a sense of guilt about parents killed in the Holocaust.¹²¹ When Drongo points out that the Nazis murdered others besides Jews, the latter answers that the others were murdered for resisting, while the Jews were murdered simply for being Jews. Later on, the Mossad agent says: “Remember how many thousands of years they murdered and strangled us. Don’t we have the right to protect ourselves?”¹²² Drongo replies, “Absolutely. You have the right to defend yourselves, but not to carry out attacks in the context of preventive operations; as a result of these, the stronger you become, the more you are hated in the world.”¹²³

While Abdulaev’s depiction of Israel is very different from image of Israel promoted in the former Soviet Union, there are some elements in common. The Soviet media consistently portrayed Israel as the aggressor, but while the media depicted this aggression as unwarranted and for its own sake, Abdulaev shows that Israel is fighting for its existence against an enemy more cruel than itself. However, like the Soviet media, Abdulaev, too, shows that Israel’s self-defensive actions have become so aggressive that they now harm its own security than they protect it.

Abdulaev does not want to appear friendly towards Israel, yet neither does he want to cling to old Soviet clichés. Depicting Israel and the Jews as gripped by a persecution complex that magnifies the persecution itself serves his goal. He also mentions Jewish suffering during the Holocaust and other periods.

At one point, Drongo condemns antisemitism:

“For thousands of years, they murdered Jews and persecuted them across the world; there were pogroms; they burned them; and thus by natural selection only the cleverest and most devious could survive. So today among them are many financiers, politicians, businessmen, and artists. People must not be hated because they are intelligent and talented. Their right to exist in the world must simply be acknowledged.”¹²⁴

¹²¹ Ibid., 367.

¹²² Ibid., 367–68.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 417–18.

Thus, we have here an unequivocal condemnation of antisemitism. Jews are described as more intelligent than others—a positive depiction—but are also said to be more devious. A look at Abdulaev's other works shows that he portrays quite a few Jewish businessmen as devious and unlikable.

While the novel's hero unequivocally condemns antisemitism, it is apparent that this hero, and the author himself, are not completely free of it. Thus, when a man whose mother was Jewish is discovered to be a secret Mossad agent, Drongo asks the Mossad agent whether it is true that every Jew is a potential Mossad agent, and whether every country has Jews who are Mossad agents. Although the man says he doesn't know, it is still implied, though not explicitly stated, that this image is accurate.¹²⁵

It should be mentioned that the Soviet antisemitic literature from the 1970s and early 1980s frequently accused the Mossad of using Jews across the world for its nefarious conspiracies, and was attempting to recruit Jews for the same purpose in the Soviet Union, thus justifying anti-Jewish discrimination. It would appear that in contrast with most of the Soviet stereotypes which have fallen by the wayside, this one remains in the author's consciousness, even though he presents it ambiguously, so as not to take explicit responsibility for it.

It is possible, then, to say that Abdulaev's attitude towards Israel and the Jews is ambiguous. While he does depict them as being victims of persecution, he also shows them as suffering from a persecution complex that magnifies that persecution. He portrays Israel's enemies as worse than Israel, and Jews as talented and intelligent but by the same token devious and, perhaps, also potential Mossad agents.

Negative or Ambiguous: Jews in Other Novels by Abdulaev

Jews also appear in other works by Abdulaev, for the most part depicted negatively or, at best, ambiguously. Nouveau riche Jews are depicted in a particularly unfavorable manner.

The Jew Alexander Gorshman is a main character in *Tunel' prizrakov* (Subway of shadows, 1999)¹²⁶. He is a former deputy prime

¹²⁵ Ibid., 232.

¹²⁶ C. Abdulaev, *Tunel' prizrakov* (Subway of shadows)(Moscow 1999).

minister, and also heads a large company.¹²⁷ The author stresses that Gorshman, like other nouveau riche, is unprincipled and unencumbered by conscience. Although the country is in a terrible crisis, he lives a life of luxury.¹²⁸ Gorshman, though intelligent and possessed of a good memory, is too proud, and considers himself above the law because he is so important.¹²⁹ His intelligence does him little good; he ends up as a murder victim.

The initial investigation reveals that many people had good reason to murder him.¹³⁰ He bankrupted one man, refused to help another, and harmed many more.¹³¹ One character says that Gorshman was a dog and deserved to die like one.¹³² Thus, we have an extremely unlikable victim to whom money mattered more than anything, and who climbed over many to get it, amassing wealth at their expense. Even his intelligence and cunning could not protect him from being murdered.

The 2000 novella *Srok prigovorennikh* (Detention for the convicted) features another nouveau riche Jewish character, Mark Tsfasman.¹³³ In contrast with *Tunel' prizrakov*, the Jew is a marginal figure—yet here, too, he is widely disliked. Tsfasman is a banker and businessman¹³⁴ who became wealthy almost overnight, and is now one of the country's richest and most influential individuals.¹³⁵

We have here again a Jewish character with excessive wealth and influence. To make sure that the reader dislikes him as well, the author has Tsfasman lose more money in a single night gambling at a casino than the hero needs for medical treatment for his son.¹³⁶ The author stresses that Tsfasman acts only in his own interests. When it is worth his while, he can pretend to be a good man, but on all other occasions he

¹²⁷ Ibid., 14.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 15–18.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 29–30.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 42–43.

¹³¹ Ibid., 49–59.

¹³² Ibid., 59.

¹³³ C. Abdulaev, *Srok prigovorennikh* (Detention for the convicted)(Moscow 1999); published in the same volume with *Tunel' prizrakov*.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 246.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 254.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 247–49.

is completely contemptible,¹³⁷ and indifferent to the suffering of others.¹³⁸ Tsfasman is also a coward—another negative depiction of a Jew. Eventually, it is his deviousness and cowardice that lead him to his death, and his bodyguards cannot protect him.¹³⁹

The novel *Plata Kharonu* (Payment to Haronous, 2000) depicts another nouveau riche Jewish character.¹⁴⁰ Jewish businessman Sergei Blomberg, a once-wealthy man involved in dubious business dealings,¹⁴¹ has gotten deeply into debt, and stages his own death in order to extricate himself.¹⁴² Blomberg hints that antisemitism is one reason for his difficulties. However, Drongo laughs at his claim, saying that Russia's current finance minister is himself a Jew.¹⁴³

Ultimately, it turns out that Blomberg is trying to evade not only his creditors but also his wife, to whom he is unfaithful.¹⁴⁴ The author hints broadly that this infidelity is not for the usual reasons, but is possibly connected to the fact that he is Jewish. His wife is a non-Jew—a Muslim Azeri. Her brother Said actually tells his sister that she should not have married a Jew, as Jews are good and faithful husbands to Jewish wives—but he cheats on her because she is not a Jew.¹⁴⁵

This statement is worth another look. Blomberg's brother-in-law, Said, is hardly a sterling character himself. Unlike Drongo, he doesn't necessarily express the author's opinions. Yet in light of Blomberg's actions, it is possible for the reader to perceive such a statement as true. In this writer's opinion, the ambiguity is understood. Saying that a Jew can't be faithful to a non-Jewish wife is racist, and the author is unwilling to back such a statement—but he offers it to the reader as if saying, "if you want to accept this, go right ahead."

¹³⁷ Ibid., 251.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 253–54.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 255–60.

¹⁴⁰ C. Abdulaev, *Plata Kharonu* (Payment to Haronous)(Moscow 2000); published in the volume *Rai obrechennykh*.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 17.

¹⁴² Ibid., 35.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 41.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 118.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 145–46.

Thus, as in the works by Marinina and Dashkova, all Abdulaev's Jewish businessmen are depicted in a negative manner. However, some of Abdulaev's other Jewish characters are shown to be less negative, although their negative aspects overrule their positive aspects.

In Abdulaev's 2000 novel *Ideal'naiia mishen'* (The perfect target),¹⁴⁶ talented Jewish lawyer David Bergman is said to be unbeatable in a court of law—undeniably a positive image.¹⁴⁷ However, Bergman defends a crook charged with corruption. He knows that the charges against his client are true—but is not bothered by them.¹⁴⁸ So, here again we see the educated and talented Jew to whom money is of overriding importance.

Not all of Abdulaev's Jewish characters are driven by greed; one in particular is rather atypical of this author. In *Vyberi sebe smert'* (Choose your own death, 2000),¹⁴⁹ Mark Fogelson is a political extremist. When he was a child, his entire family was murdered by the Nazis, and he watched from his hiding place as his mother was killed.¹⁵⁰ He was saved by the Soviet army; Soviet soldiers shared their meager bread rations with him. Fogelson grew up to become a lieutenant colonel in the Soviet security service and, despite open antisemitism, was loyal to the regime and served in a unit that carried out assassinations.¹⁵¹

Fogelson remained absolutely loyal to the regime, and the breakup of the Soviet Union was for him a personal tragedy. He was involved in a conspiracy to restore the Communist regime and rebuild the Soviet Union.¹⁵² While he believed that the good of the state justified killing, he is nevertheless depicted as the most human of all the conspirators.¹⁵³ He attempts to limit the number of victims, and saves the protagonist Drongo from death.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁶ C. Abdulaev, *Ideal'naiia mishen'* (The perfect target) (Moscow 2000); published in the volume *Altari zla*.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 35, 41–46.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁴⁹ C. Abdulaev, *Vyberi sebe smert'* (Choose your own death) (Moscow 2000).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 210.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 275, 338.

Fogelson is also depicted as an educated man who speaks eight languages. Yet all his talents are directed towards reestablishing the Soviet Union. When Drongo comments to him that it is odd indeed for a Jew to say that his goal is saving the Russian homeland, Fogelson accuses him of being an antisemite. Drongo says he is no antisemite and is opposed to antisemitism, and that it is Fogelson who, in his desire to rebuild the Soviet Union, is collaborating with antisemitic circles.¹⁵⁵

Ultimately, when Fogelson's dream fails, he commits suicide—but before doing so, he saves Drongo from death. While Fogelson is willing to kill for an idea, he does not like killing when it does not advance his ideas—especially when the intended victim is a good person.

But what does Abdulaev's treatment of his Jewish characters mean? While the Holocaust is mentioned in the novel, the guilty parties are of course the Germans; it is never brought out that sometimes the local population also participated in murdering Jews.¹⁵⁶ Soviet soldiers are depicted as saviors. Fogelson himself is depicted differently than Abdulaev's other Jewish characters in other novels. He is not greedy; he is willing to die for an idea. Apparently, if a Jew is both educated and honest, he must be an extremist, willing to sacrifice both himself and others for his goals.

Abdulaev's condemnation of antisemitism is accompanied by ambiguous comments regarding the Jews. Drongo points out that it sounds peculiar for a Jew to want to save Russia. This can be accounted for in one of two ways: a) Drongo is against Fogelson's utopian dream of restoring the Soviet Union—which has nothing to do with antisemitism, or b) Drongo thinks Jews have no right to interfere in the country's political matters. We have seen that such statements about Jews are common in Abdulaev's works.

The same ambiguity towards Jews can be seen in Abdulaev's 2000 work *Moe prekrasnoe alibi* (My beautiful alibi).¹⁵⁷ In it, a Jew is an advisor to the Russian leader (apparently Yeltsin). The leader does not completely trust his advisor, and suspects he may be working for the Communists.¹⁵⁸ The message is that although the Communists dislike the

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 319–21.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 343.

¹⁵⁷ C. Abdulaev, *Moe prekrasnoe alibi* (My beautiful alibi) (Moscow: Eskimo Press 2000).

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 430.

Jews, it is common knowledge that it was the Jews who fomented the Bolshevik Revolution.¹⁵⁹

We again have a character—the leader—who does not necessarily express the author’s views. It is not clear whether his suspicions about his Jewish advisor are justified. But no matter what the author’s views on the subject, the suspicions raised are not countered. If the reader wants to believe that the Jews were behind the Bolshevik Revolution and that the Jews are traitors, then that is fine. We see that this ambiguity is a method used consistently by Abdulaev.

In *Osuzhdenie istiny* (Condemnation of truth),¹⁶⁰ the Jew, Yaakov Goldman, was a prison warden during the Soviet era; he is called “Hangman” by one of the female characters.¹⁶¹ After the collapse of the Soviet Union, he works as a guard in a bank. He kills some bank robbers, and serves a prison term for deviating from the rules of defense.¹⁶² After his release, he finds a job as bodyguard to a millionaire.

Goldman is clever and very cynical. He says he disliked communists when he was a prison warden, and also dislikes his nouveau riche employer.¹⁶³ Goldman begins to suspect who the real murderer in the story is, but before he can expose her, she kills him.¹⁶⁴

Here is another negative image of the Jew: an unlikable murder victim whose intelligence does not protect him, and who is more cynical than he is smart. He is also a Jew who, during the Soviet era, was a cruel prison warden, and who is constantly blaming others, but never himself.

Summary

We have seen that Jews and Israel appear extensively in Abdulaev’s novels. The author depicts Israel as better than its foes, but in the grips of a persecution complex. Nevertheless, overall, Israel is described by the author more favorably than the various Jewish characters, whose negative aspects overrule their positive aspects. To most of the Jewish characters—and all those who are nouveau riche—money is of supreme

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ C. Abdulaev, *Osuzhdenie istiny* (Condemnation of truth) (Moscow 2000).

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 243.

¹⁶² Ibid., 253.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 252.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 337.

importance; in the one exception, the character is a political extremist. Many of the Jewish characters are intelligent and talented—another Jewish stereotype—but in most cases their intelligence and cleverness do not protect them. The author includes explicit condemnation of antisemitism in his novels, but at the same time also presents ambiguous images that can be interpreted as anti-Jewish images.

JEWIS IN BORIS AKUNIN'S HISTORICAL DETECTIVE FICTION

Boris Akunin is the pseudonym of G. Chahretshvili, a historian and researcher of Japanese culture of Georgian origin.¹⁶⁵ A brilliant intellectual, his works contain much more cultural content than the usual detective fiction. While stories of the other writers we have discussed are set in the present, even if they hark back to past events, Akunin's novels, set in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, combine historical fiction and detective story. Since most feature Jewish characters, we can see how this author perceives Jews of the past.

*Discrimination, Wealth, and Revolution:
Jewish Stereotypes in **Statskii sovetnik***

Jews figure prominently in *Statskii sovetnik* (Top official, (2000)).¹⁶⁶ The plot revolves around the struggle between revolutionaries and Czarists in pre-Soviet Russia. Most of the revolutionaries are admirable idealists, willing to sacrifice themselves for their beliefs. However, the narrator leads the reader to realize that they are fighting for a utopian ideal that will ultimately bring more harm than good. While the regime's cause may be just, it is made up primarily of corrupt and cynical individuals; those among them who are truly good, such as the protagonist Fandorin (who appears in several of Akunin's works), are ultimately pushed out.

Thus we have a paradox: Advocates of the wrong cause are depicted as good people, while the good of the country is promoted by

¹⁶⁵ For information on Boris Akunin, see A. Makarkin, "Rossiia, kotoruiu my ne teriali," *Internet-gazeta*, 7 dnei, 28 June 2000, www.segodnya.ru; F. Aleksandrovich, "B. Akunin: Ia ne pisatel', ia belletrist," www.aif.ru; T. Kravchenko, "Tabletka vmesto konfetki. Kak vnedriaiut v massy istoriu i literatury," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 10 July 2000, www.ng.ru; and www.akunin.ru

¹⁶⁶ B. Akunin, *Statskii sovetnik* (Top official) (Moscow 2000).

corrupt individuals who will ultimately bring about their own failure.¹⁶⁷ While this paper is not the forum for a discussion on how well this reflects historical truth, it certainly reflects today's postmodern atmosphere.

How does Akunin portray the Jews in this novel? One of the main characters is the Jewish revolutionary Grigory Greenberg, called Green by his revolutionary comrades. He is the son of a pharmacist. He was the only Jewish pupil at the Gymnasia, and as such he had to maintain excellent grades, while the non-Jewish pupils could get away with much lower achievement.¹⁶⁸ The author notes that Green hated injustice, and that it was this, and his constant reading, that shaped his revolutionary views. Also emphasized is his willingness to sacrifice himself for the revolution—to serve as the match that kindles the flame.¹⁶⁹ The novel also tells of the pogroms against the Jews in Russia.

Green's attitude towards his Jewishness is ambivalent. Traditional Jewish life was foreign to him, and he didn't know Yiddish because his father, the educated pharmacist, had always spoken Russian with him. His alienation from the Jewish environment notwithstanding, he takes up a gun and fires on rioters. He manages to stop them, and is arrested.¹⁷⁰ These events influenced his decision to fight for the revolution, as an idealist willing to sacrifice himself—but also helped turn him into an extremist who systematically eliminates members of the regime. At one point, when a young revolutionary points out to him that an innocent man was killed as well, Green explains that in this war, like in any war, it is not always possible to prevent harm to innocents.¹⁷¹

With regard to the plot of *Statskii sovetnik*, it is important to remember that there are today in Russia several views of the Russian Revolution and the revolutionaries that carried it out, and that the dominant view of the Revolution is a dim one. Today's antisemitic circles revile the revolutionaries with Jewish last names, and blame them for most or all of the atrocities of that time. The revolutionaries are today accused of hating Russians and of seeking to destroy the Russian

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 198.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 41.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 42.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 41–44.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 171.

Empire. When Akunin's depictions of Jews are compared to this, it becomes clear that Akunin is no antisemite. His character Green is far more positive than negative, and the regime's antisemitic policy is shown as one of the factors provoking the Jews to revolution. But beyond that, Akunin portrays Jews more favorably than any of the authors already discussed.

Nevertheless, his works contain many common Jewish stereotypes. With all Green's good traits, the author emphasizes that their good intentions notwithstanding, fanatics like him are leading the country to disaster. Unlike the antisemites, Akunin does not assert that Jews were a decisive factor in the revolution, but he does make it clear that they played an important role. And unlike nationalist Russian authors, Akunin does not idealize the Czarist regime; he depicts it as more realistic than the revolutionaries, but also as corrupt. Akunin shows the regime's fall as being caused not only by the revolutionaries' utopian fantasies, but by its intrinsic weaknesses—and also by the enemies it made by persecuting Jews.

There are two other Jews, of sorts, in *Statskii sovetnik*—the banker, Absalom Litvinov, and his daughter, Esther (Asfir in Russian) Litvinov. Absalom Litvinov is a convert to Christianity, who has donated a great deal of money to various institutions, among them Church institutions, and is received in the finest homes. However, behind his back, people say “*zhd kreshenii chto vor proshenni?*”—a *Zhid* who converts to Christianity is like a thief whose offenses have been forgiven.¹⁷² When a Jew converts to Christianity, he may gain equal rights, but he is nonetheless still considered a Jew.

With regard to the character himself, again here is a Jewish businessman. But unlike similar characters in the works of other authors, Litvinov is depicted positively, for two reasons: Akunin's attitude toward Jews is more positive, and this particular Jewish businessman lives in Czarist Russia, not the post-Soviet era when attitudes towards the nouveau-riche are immeasurably more negative.

Esther (Asfir) Litvinov, the banker's daughter, is a pretty but rather flighty girl.¹⁷³ She identifies with the revolutionary ideas, but falls in love with the main character, who is struggling against the

¹⁷² Ibid., 157.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 71–72.

revolutionaries, and is thrilled to be invited to a dance held by the governor, where she is the belle of the ball.¹⁷⁴

With her beauty and her mode of dress—somewhat more revealing than is generally accepted—Asfir appears to be a liberated woman.¹⁷⁵ As a character, she is ambiguous: She speaks out against discrimination against Jews and the injustices of the regime, but as a young girl from a wealthy family, befriendng revolutionaries, yet attending the governor’s grand ball, she is somewhat risible.¹⁷⁶

Thus, in *Statskii sovetnik*, Boris Akunin depicts Jews as suffering from discrimination, clearly perceived by the author as unjustified. Yet his Jewish characters are either rich and successful or leading revolutionaries. While such groups did exist in the Jewish community, there were far more impoverished and powerless Jews in Russia at the turn of the 20th century, and they are not represented in *Statskii sovetnik*. Overall, though, it must be stressed that this author depicts Jews more accurately, and more positively, than most of the other authors examined by this paper.

Converted Jews: Not fully accepted

Jews who have converted to Christianity appear in other works by Akunin as well. One appears in his 2000 work *Pelagea i belii bulldog* (Pelagea and the white dog), set in a city on the Volga river.¹⁷⁷ Matvei (Matthew) Berdichevsky of St. Petersburg, depicted as a **positive character, converts to Christianity under the influence of a** Christian cleric. Before his conversion, Berdichevsky was called “Mordka,” a deprecatory diminutive of Mordechai; and even after his conversion, some continued to call him that.¹⁷⁸ An orphan, he earned a law degree with honors, and then moved to a provincial city. In St. Petersburg, he had been constantly being reminded of his Jewish origins, and being of Jewish origin was worse than being a nobody.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 85–86.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 159–63.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 177–78.

¹⁷⁷ B. Akunin, *Pelagia i belyi bulldog* (Pelagea and the white dog) (Moscow 2000).

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 34.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

He is treated better in his new location, and is appointed deputy prosecutor. He writes speeches for the stupid but handsome Russian prosecutor, but refrains from speaking himself because of his own unimpressive looks; thus, the prosecutor gets all the credit.¹⁸⁰ Berdichevsky is depicted as decent but weak, honest, and man enough to challenge a villain to a duel even though he knows he is a poor shot.¹⁸¹ While he knows how to draft brilliant indictments, he can't catch criminals.¹⁸²

Berdichevsky also appears in the book's sequel, *Pelagia i chernyi monakh* (Pelagea and the black monk, 2001), in which he is the victim of antisemitism.¹⁸³ The monastery's head, Father Vitaly, tells him, "Your people are not suited to spiritual matters."¹⁸⁴ Berdichevsky reminds Father Vitaly that "in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek," and pointing out that he is an Orthodox Christian just like himself. Father Vitaly replies that Orthodox Christianity suits Russians, but not Jewish pride, and, as in *Statskii sovetnik*, tells Berdichevsky that a *Zhid* who converts to Christianity is like a thief whose offenses have been forgiven.¹⁸⁵

Berdichevsky sets out to see whether there is any truth in what Father Vitaly says. Perhaps his faith is not pure, he thinks, because he converted under the influence of a cleric who impressed him. Had he met a Muslim or a Buddhist who impressed him the same way, perhaps he would have converted to their religion—except that then he would not be such a success, because he would not be a member of the dominant church.¹⁸⁶ He feels somewhat guilty; even though he did not convert to promote his career, he knows others may think that he had.

Thus, Akunin gives us a character of an assimilated Jew who has cut himself off from his people, yet finds that while his adopted society permits him to advance, it does not fully accept him. Berdichevsky is depicted favorably, as a good, decent, intelligent man, willing to be self-

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 35.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 160–61.

¹⁸² Ibid., 186–87.

¹⁸³ B. Akunin, *Pelagia i chernyi monakh* (Pelagea and the black monk)(Moscow 2001).

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 145.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 146.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 147.

critical, but weak and lacking in self-confidence—overall, more positive than negative. Although in most cases a Jew who converts to Christianity is perceived by Jews and non-Jews alike as having done so to further his career, it is clear that Berdichevsky did so for other reasons, such as his own rootlessness—alienated from Jewish culture, he sought new values. Yet he is tarred with the same brush as other converts, and remains suspect in the eyes of society, and feels guilty as a result.

Another convert is Lazar Medvedev in the 1998 *Smert' akhillesa* (Death of Achilles).¹⁸⁷ Medvedev is a very wealthy man who married a pretty, dowerless girl.¹⁸⁸ He is depicted as very cautious, smart, and devious,¹⁸⁹ and the author notes that money is more important to him than life itself.¹⁹⁰ Lazar is very perceptive and difficult to fool. He is also courageous when it comes to protecting his property—but his wife betrays him by aiding a murderous robber, thus disrupting all his preparations and leading to his death.¹⁹¹

Again, here is a Jew for whom money matters most of all, and whose intelligence and deviousness cannot save him; his financial expertise does him no good in understanding the feelings of real people. Medvedev is similar to Marinina's and Abdulaev's wealthy Jews, with one difference—Marinina and Abdulaev depict their wealthy Jewish characters in a distinctly negative manner, and have them carry out foul deeds. But Akunin's Lazar does nothing of the sort. While he is not positive, neither is he negative. This reflects Akunin's more positive attitude towards Jews.

The Jew as Scapegoat

In some of Akunin's works, the Jewish characters are marginal, but antisemitism appears. In *Dekorator* (Decorator, 2000), a mentally disturbed man commits murders, but instead of searching for him, a detective prefers to accuse Jews of ritual murder.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ B. Akunin, (1998). *Smert' akhillesa* (The death of Achilles)(Moscow 1998).

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 197.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 199.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 200.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 204.

¹⁹² B. Akunin, "Dekorator (Decorator)," in *Osobyie porucheniia*, by B. Akunin (Moscow 2000), 228.

In *Liubovnik smerti* (Death's lover, 2001), the detective Fandorin asks Senka, a teenage Russian boy, to disguise himself as a Jew to try to solve a crime.¹⁹³ At first, Senka refuses, saying that he hates Jews. Fandorin tells him that much thought should be invested when falling in love, but much more is required when deciding to hate, and that one should not hate because of the shape of a person's nose.¹⁹⁴ Also in this novel, Jews are not allowed to build a synagogue, and criminals try to blackmail them.¹⁹⁵

Akunin's Jewish characters are generally discriminated against, and on more than one occasion they are scapegoats. Even if they convert to Christianity, they are not fully accepted by Russian society. They are successful and wealthy as government officials, or they are revolutionaries. Akunin's Jews are either positive or neutral, which reflects the author's positive attitude towards them. Nevertheless, his frame of reference is the same as that of the other authors surveyed.

Another factor of note is that all of Akunin's Jews are assimilated. Had his stories been set in the Russia of today, this would be no surprise, but they are set in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although there were some assimilated Jews at that time, most still firmly identified themselves as Jews, though many of these lived outside the Pale of Settlement, where they were few in number, and where Akunin's novels are set. But location is not why Akunin depicts only assimilated Jews; he simply does not want to deal with the Jewish world with which he is not familiar.

THE ROLES OF JEWS IN RUSSIAN DETECTIVE FICTION

Despite the differences of approach to Jews and Israel among the authors discussed, there are many points in common, producing a comprehensive picture as reflected in Russian detective fiction.

First, we must look at the stock characters in detective fiction, so as to better understand the place of Jews within this framework. A detective novel nearly always has a hero who discovers "whodunit"—usually a police investigator. It sometimes happens that it is a private

¹⁹³ B. Akunin, *Liubovnik smerti* (Death's lover) (Moscow 2001).

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 239.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 231.

investigator or even an ordinary citizen who ensnares the criminal. In any event, the hero is usually intelligent, positive, good, and expresses the author's opinion. A second character is one (or more) who investigate the crime but have little success in solving it. A third is the perpetrator or perpetrators—some of whom are repellent, others likeable. No less important is the victim, and victims are diverse. In some novels, the murder is presented as a tragedy, because the victim is pitiable, but in others the victim is shown to be widely hated, with many having a motive to murder him. Other characters commonly found in detective fiction are those suspected of the crime who are actually innocent, and family and friends of all the characters.

Where do the Jews fit in Russian detective fiction? What roles do they play? Jews can appear in almost any role, except that of the hero who solves the crime, who is always a Russian (with the exception of Abdulaev's Caucasian Drongo—but in this case, the author himself is Caucasian). Apparently, no author wants to give the good-guy role to a Jew, though this may be unconscious. This hypothesis is further reinforced by the fact that Jews are not completely ruled out from investigating the crime, but they always appear as the characters who do not succeed in solving it.

One such character is Matvei Berdichevsky, the deputy prosecutor in two of Akunin's novels, *Pelagea i belyi buldog* and *Pelagea i chernyi monakh*. Although he is good, he is also weak, a great speechwriter but a poor detective. The one who solves this crime is a Russian monk.

Abdulaev's Mossad agents in *Simfonia smert'* are sophisticated and have the most advanced technology at their disposal, but it is not they who expose the forces of evil but the detective Drongo. The obvious conclusion, though not explicitly stated, is that a Jew can be sophisticated, and sometimes good, but the locals are better and smarter.

Jews are also cast in the roles of criminal and victim. Some of the Jewish criminals are depicted as true monsters, even if the author rounds out this picture by noting that they had been discriminated against as Jews sometime in their past. Marinina's Regina in *Igra Na chuzhom pole* is one of these, as is her Michael Larkin in *Ne Meshaite palaty*. In *Stechenie obstoiatel'stv*, Marinina's Jewish criminal Dorman has some favorable traits, but is a useless parasite. Overall, however, Jewish criminals appear

somewhat likeable only when they are political criminals—fanatical ideologues willing to lay down their lives for an idea.

While the crime victims in detective fiction are sometimes likeable and sometimes not, the Jewish victims in the novels reviewed are nearly always unlikable. All Abdulaev's businessmen-cum-victims are repellent characters. Nor is Marinina's half-Jewish actress Elena Vaznes a very nice person. Even Akunin's Lazar Medvedev is at best ambiguous and arouses mixed responses.

In the detective fiction reviewed here, we see that while the role of hero is reserved for a Russian (or Caucasian), the Jewish characters in the stories may have positive traits and complex personalities that go beyond common stereotypes. Jewish characters as villains, or with negative traits are also found.

Similarities and Differences in Depictions of Jews and Israel

Although the authors whose works we have reviewed handle the subject of Jews and Israel in differing ways, we do find recurring themes that reflect general images of Jews commonly found among the Russian public.

While Marinina's Jewish characters are more negative than positive, Akunin's are the opposite. Dashkova depicts a neutral Jewish character, but depicts Israel in a more negative than positive light. While Abdulaev shows Israel as more appealing than the neighboring Arab countries, and identifies with the Jewish tragedy, his actual Jewish characters are more negative than positive. Yet despite these differences, the authors share several common motifs.

First, all the authors show that they do not support antisemitism, and even condemn it. This is the case even for Marinina. The novels feature various manifestations of antisemitism: persecution in Czarist Russia, the Holocaust, the Doctor's Plot, state-sponsored dissemination of antisemitism during the Brezhnev era. This notwithstanding, all the authors feature Jewish characters who are wealthy and educated. All these characters may be victims, but they are far from powerless. While they are persecuted for being Jews, they nevertheless manage to succeed far more than most of the non-Jewish characters.

In my opinion, these depictions reflect the view of the majority of the Russian public—that is, while not supporting extreme antisemitism, and in recent years gaining more knowledge about the phenomenon of

antisemitism, it is generally believed that Jews are both wealthier than Russian society at large and play up their suffering for maximum effect.

Second, all the authors' educated Jewish characters are depicted more positively than their wealthy Jewish characters. With the exception of Akunin, all the authors' wealthy Jewish characters are negative. In part, this reflects Russian society's attitude towards its nouveau riche class—but the Jews of that class are shown in a much more negative light due, in my opinion, to the effects of a long tradition of the stereotype of the Jewish financier and a general view that Jews consider money to be more important than personal relationships. The attitude towards the authors' Jewish intellectual characters is more positive, at least in some cases.

Third, each of the novels dealing with Israel presents it differently than the official view during the Soviet era. Israel is not shown as the one at fault in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and Israel is not demonized. But there is a noticeable attempt—by all the authors—not to describe Israel in unambiguously positive terms. Abdulaev depicts Israel in a more positive light than he does the neighboring Arab countries, but sees the country as overreacting in its defensive measures. These approaches reflect the shift towards neutrality in the Russian view of Israel. While adherence to the standard Soviet view of Jews would be perceived as conservative, the Russian reader still has not become a lover of Israel, so combining positive and negative appears to be the best policy.

Thus, we see that Russian detective fiction is both influenced by and reinforces images of Jews that combine negative with positive. We see further that both negative and kinds of images appear in all the works in varying ratios.