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“Neither East nor West: Polyphony and Deterritorialisation in Contemporary European Fiction”// In: *The Fall of the Iron Curtain and the Culture of Europe*. Ed. Peter Barta. London: Routledge, 2013, 92-103.

Relying on [the] unity among the civilized people, countless men and women have exchanged their native home for a foreign one, and made their existence dependent on the intercommunication between friendly nations. Moreover anyone who was not by stress of circumstance confined to one spot could create for himself out of all the advantages and attractions of these civilized countries a new and wider fatherland, in which he would move about without hindrance or suspicion. In this way he enjoyed the blue sea and the grey; the beauty of snow-covered mountains and of green meadow lands; the magic of northern forests and the splendour of southern vegetation; the mood evoked by landscapes that recall great historical events, and the silence of untouched nature. This new fatherland was a museum for him, too, filled with all the treasures which the artists of civilized humanity had in the successive centuries created and left behind. As he wandered from one gallery to another in this museum, he could recognize with impartial appreciation what varied types of perfection a mixture of blood, the course of history, and the special quality of their mother-earth had produced among his compatriots in this wider sense. Here he would find cool, inflexible energy developed to the highest point; there, the graceful art of beautifying existence; elsewhere, the feeling for orderliness and law, or others among the qualities which have made mankind the lords of the earth.

(Sigmund Freud, 'Thoughts for the Times of War and Death')

‘Cultural diversity is the great European value.’¹
(Milan Kundera, ‘Die Welfliteratur’ : 28)

The re-mapping of geographical and political boundaries between East and West in the wake of the fall of the Iron Curtain, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the Eastern bloc created a new reality and as a result the conventional terminology used to describe cultural patterns and models has gradually become inadequate. In particular, there seems to be an urgent need to revise and to re-define such concepts as 'exile', 'emigre', 'refugee', 'diaspora', 'host country', 'homeland', 'nostalgia', 'mother tongue', 'adopted tongue', 'insider', 'outsider', 'foreign', 'native', 'national literature' and even 'East' and 'West'.

In the first instance, I propose to discuss the evolution of the ideological and social parameters outlined above, focusing on Russia. Between the October Revolution and the late 1980s, there existed a powerful Russian culture beyond Soviet borders. For most of the communist period, the relationship between literature created in Russia and in emigration was characterised by hostility and mutual exclusion. There was a stark contrast between the topics and discourses used by Soviet writers and by emigre authors. With a few exceptions,² texts published abroad had a very slim chance of being released in the

USSR. The underlying paradigm described the country of origin as the centre and the diaspora as the periphery. Russian verbal artists living in exile, cut off from millions of readers in the Soviet Union and having access only to a very limited audience abroad, were forced by and large to admit their marginal status.³

At the same time, there also existed a discourse that challenged this relationship, only to invert it and to replace it with its direct opposite: the diaspora was regarded as a true locus of Russian culture, literature and spirituality, whereas Soviet fiction was seen as peripheral and insignificant or was dismissed altogether as non-existent and 'non-Russian'. Thus many die-hard anti-Bolsheviks among the 'first wave' of Russian emigration (1920-30s) promoted the rhetoric of the diaspora's 'mission' to preserve the memory of their phantom homeland through, first and foremost, the conservation of classical Russian culture (as emigres often labelled both Golden and Silver age culture, lumped together), which had been brutally eradicated by the Bolsheviks. A formula expressing the gist of this mission was promptly coined, most likely by Nina Berberova, although frequently attributed to Zinaida Gippius: 'my ne v izgnan'i, my v poslan'i' (we are not in exile, we are on a mission).⁴ Ivan Bunin's speech 'Missiia russkoi emigratsii' (The Mission of Russian Emigration, delivered in Paris on 16 February 1924) was an important step in the initial articulation of this idea. In her article 'Nashe priamoe delo' (Our Immediate Task),⁵ Gippius evaluates Russian emigration as a unique and unprecedented historical event, a thought dear to many of her fellow exiles. According to Gippius, the Russian diaspora is not only all of Russia in miniature; more than that, it encompasses everything valuable in Russia's culture. What logically follows from this premise is that emigres are destined to preserve the national cultural heritage and to develop it further. In another article, 'Poliot v Evropu' (The Flight to Europe, 2002), Gippius declares: 'contemporary Russian literature (as represented by its leading authors) has been dumped into Europe. And this is where one should look for it' (Gippius 2002: 60). Further, she charts additional aspects of the émigrés' 'mission': to 'rejuvenate' Europe (and here the 'mission' appears in the guise of traditional Russian messianism), and to enrich Russian culture with the best artistic and intellectual achievements of the West:

From this point of view, our catastrophe may turn out to be beneficial. After all, Russian literature possesses a certain spirit, and if it saturates Europe, it will be to Europe's advantage, rather than disadvantage: Europe will be rejuvenated. Our writers will not be harmed by this rapprochement either. There is something to learn from the old West. Literature was thrown out the window, and the window was closed. That's just fine. One day the doors to Russia will open, and literature will return there, God willing, with a greater consciousness of worldliness than before.⁶

Because of this ideological divide, which persisted for many decades, the relationship between the Soviet Union and Russia Abroad can best be described as mutually exclusive; consequently, emigre authors occupied a space that could never have been filled by their Soviet peers, and vice versa.

During the last two decades, however, most of the binary oppositions that characterized the previous period have collapsed. It is no longer appropriate to define Russian authors residing abroad as exiles. Today, voluntary migration has replaced forced emigration, and there is no longer any centrally sanctioned ban on the publication in Russia of literary works of any political, ideological or aesthetic import. Many former emigre writers returned to Russia (Irina Odoevtseva, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Eduard Limonov, to name just a few well-publicized cases), or split their time between two countries (for example, practically until his death in 2009 this was the case with Vasily Aksyonov, who had exchanged his American exile for an alternating residence in the south of France and in Moscow). Most importantly,

Russian writers abroad have the opportunity to publish their texts in Russian periodicals before releasing them in book form, both in Russia and abroad. In this post-exilic context, the relations between Russia and various diasporic centres have become complementary.

Writers who have some experience living in other countries introduce original, perhaps slightly exotic, voices into the polyphony of contemporary Russian writing, and occupy their own niche in the Russian book market. In other words, in the early twenty-first century, literature is becoming more and more deterritorialized, or dissociated from a definite, fixed geographical location, acquiring a truly international identity.

This new condition was articulated in the collective manifesto-style introduction to an anthology entitled *Simvol 'My': Evreiskaia khrestomatia novoi russkoi literatury* (Vrubel'-Golubkina 2003, Symbol 'We': Jewish Anthology of New Russian Literature), which contains prose, poetry and interviews from a score of Russian Jewish authors living in different countries, from Israel and the United States to Italy and Germany. They conceptualize the contemporary situation in Russian-language literature abroad as one marked by a transition from 'emigration', with its possibly obsolete political connotations, to 'diaspora', a transition marked by the breakdown of hierarchical relations with Russia and Russian past, mentality, thematic repertoire, cultural tradition and conventional forms of expression :

literary emigration as a legitimate phenomenon, laying a claim to a particular cultural-historical mission, ... has ceased to exist. ... The international character of contemporary Russian literature is unquestionable—a major transition from emigration to diaspora has taken place. ... Russian literature as it has emerged by the beginning of the XXI century appears not only free from the confrontational division into Russian and foreign, which was typical of the previous period ... but also from the hierarchy of 'dominance and subordination,' determined by the geographical location of the text and the author. To be in the diaspora means for us to develop the aspects of the Russian word which ... cannot be developed in the country of origin. Consequently, the relationship between the metropolis and the diaspora is defined by complementarity, which is as indispensable as it is mutually beneficial. ... [T]he geography of our speech has expanded to fit the proportions of the entire world.⁷

Moreover, this introduction rather paradoxically urges authors residing in the diaspora to distance themselves linguistically as far as possible from their country of origin, and to cultivate their 'foreignness'.⁸ This illustrates a clear and radical break with the 'mission' of conservation of the Russian tradition and the Russian language in emigration in its purest form, articulated repeatedly by the leaders of the cultural community of Russian exiles in the twentieth century.

The Russian cultural diaspora in Israel, by far the most compact, well-equipped and organized among all the centres of Russian dispersion, has been in the forefront of the process of gradual emancipation from Russia. Russian-Israeli writers, united into the Israeli Union of Russian Writers (founded in 1971), assimilate a range of traditions, with Russian influences competing against the Jewish intellectual and religious tradition, Israeli culture and the modern context of the Middle East. Meanwhile, postmodernism in its Western and Russian expression is superimposed onto a powerful post-Zionist trend. It is unsurprising that the language of contemporary Russian literature in Israel⁹

displays signs of creolization, due to cross-pollination with Hebrew (including words and concepts such as *olim*, *moshav*, *Sokhnut*, *tsevet*, *vatik*, *motek*, written in Cyrillic and left without any explanation, which routinely crop up in the texts of Russian-Israeli authors). This specific 'middle-eastern' intonation and vocabulary often results in word play, with Hebrew words filtered through the prism of Russian phonetics, saturating these texts with an absurdist, experimental and often non-sensical quality.¹⁰ This provokes a split in linguistic consciousness, whereas the superimposition of Russian and Hebrew creates new meanings, underscoring the carnivalesque character of textual reality.¹¹ At the same time, the popularity in Russia (and across the entire international Russian reading audience) of such authors as Dina Rubina, David Markish, Svetlana Schönbrunn, Mikhail Gendelev and Anna Gorenko, among others, who interpolate into their texts Hebrew words and concepts that would be incomprehensible to someone unfamiliar with life in Israel, is a sign of a new openness of post-Soviet Russian readers, the Russian book market and, most importantly, the Russian language itself, to a range of international influences. (This process also finds powerful expression in an avalanche of borrowings from English and other foreign tongues into Russian over the last twenty years).

Symptomatic of the new cultural reality, distinguished by a higher level of diversity, is the Mark Aldanov Prize, introduced in 2006 by the primary literary journal of the Russian diaspora, *The New Review*, based in New York. The prize is awarded annually to a prose writer living outside the Russian Federation and writing in Russian. The main objective of this initiative is conceptualized as 'the preservation and development of the traditions of Russian literature *in the context of world culture*'¹² (emphasis mine). Since its inception, award-winning and short-listed authors have included writers from dozens of countries, in particular from post-Soviet republics. This geographical area, defined as the 'new Russian diaspora', adds to the complexity of the mosaic pattern of Russian culture today. Voices of Ukrainian, Kazakh, Georgian and Byelorussian authors join in the polyphonic chorus of international Russian literature. They are quite distinct from the voices of writers living in Russia and of those who reside in the West. The majority of these authors never left their homeland, not all of them are ethnically Russian and their main point of reference is not Russia proper but their own immediate reality. The importance of this category of Russian-language writers, living in the post-Soviet space, was also emphasized by the establishment in 2005 of another literary competition, 'the Russian Award' (Russkaia premiia). In 2009, this Russian Award was transformed to include Russian-language authors living all over the globe outside the Russian Federation.¹³ In addition to the awards in three categories (poetry, short prose and long prose),¹⁴ a special prize is given for the 'contribution to the conservation and development of the traditions of Russian culture beyond the borders of the Russian Federation'.¹⁵

Obviously, the decentralization of literature is not a uniquely Russian phenomenon. In fact, it goes hand in hand with analogous processes in other languages affected by the globalization of culture. For example, in the contemporary French context, the traditional Gallocentrism of the literary establishment has been gradually replaced by a new willingness to include markedly foreign elements. Foreign-born authors were occasionally awarded literary prizes for their contribution to French letters before, but they were as a rule completely assimilated and positioned themselves as French writers. For instance, the Russian immigrant Lev Tarasov was advised to choose a French-sounding pen-name if he wished to achieve recognition in his adopted country. Heeding this advice, he reinvented himself as Henri Troyat, and in 1938 received the most prestigious literary prize for contributions to French literature, the Prix Goncourt. Irène Némirovsky, a popular writer of the inter-war period, presents a more

extreme case: her dream of complete assimilation led her not only to deny her Russian/Jewish/Ukrainian background in a number of interviews in the French press, but also her ability to write or even speak her mother tongue. At the same time, under her original name — Irina Nemirovskaya — she was publishing book reviews in perfect Russian in emigre journals such as *Chisla*.¹⁶ The writing of immigrants who did not wish to undergo such mimicry was eventually marginalized by way of isolation from the dominant French literary canon and by being labelled as ‘francophonie’. This literature became known as ‘minor literature’ (littérature mineure), to use the definition popularised by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari;¹⁷ it encompassed primarily authors from former French colonies.

However, since the 1990s, French literature has been defined by the influx of writers with overtly foreign-sounding Arab, African, Vietnamese, Greek, Chinese, English, Russian or Czech names. Major literary prizes, including the Prix Goncourt, Prix de Medicis, le Grand Prix de l'Académie française and Femina, have been awarded to authors who were not born and brought up in France and whose mother tongue frequently was not French, but who chose French as the linguistic medium for their creative self-expression. Among these writers are Daj Siji, Vassilis Alexakis, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Andrei Makine, Nancy Huston, Alain Mabanckou, Calixt Beyala, Assia Djebar (an Algerian writer who in 2005 became the first non-French member of the Académie française), not to mention Julia Kristeva and the winners of the Prix Goncourt in recent years: New York-born Jonathan Littell (2006, for the novel *Les Bienveillantes*) and Kabul-born Atiq Rahimi (2008, for *Syngué sabour. Pierre de patience*). Although the winner of 2009 Prix Goncourt, Marie NDiaye, of Senegalese descent, was born and educated in France, her African-sounding name is another reminder of the conscious effort of the Goncourt committee to promote multiculturalism and to encourage polyphony in contemporary French fiction.

This policy of the establishment was reinforced by a ‘grassroots’ initiative. On 16 March 2007, a multinational group of authors who write in French published a manifesto, entitled ‘Pour une “littérature-monde” en français’ (For a ‘world literature’ in French; Barbery *et al.*).¹⁸ In this manifesto, the authors proclaim an end to French ‘cultural imperialism’ and assert the de facto deterritorialization of French literature no longer circumscribed by traditional geographical and national boundaries. The signatories of this manifesto take issue with the term ‘francophonie’, which they characterize as ‘virtual reality’ (because ‘no one speaks or writes in francophone’). They proclaim that the French language has now been liberated from its ‘exclusive pact with the nation’, and as a consequence demand that the notion of francophonie be replaced by ‘literatures in French language’ or ‘French international literature’.¹⁹ These writers, who compose directly in French, an adopted tongue for most of them, claim equal status in French letters alongside ‘native’ authors. But on the other hand, their manifesto is an interesting attempt to revisit, in a new and emphatically different context, the concept of *Weltliteratur* advanced by Goethe in the nineteenth century.²⁰ With increasing frequency, contemporary writers choose their language of artistic expression based on a combination of aesthetic and commercial considerations (book markets, target readership, the ambition to write themselves into a particular linguistic, cultural and literary tradition or to reproduce fashionable models of fiction writing), thereby dramatically obscuring and even cancelling the conventional notion of ‘national literature’.

For many ‘translingual’ authors who adopted a new language, this shift became a sign of liberation from the constraints of a previous identity. As Irina

Prokhorova observes, in the contemporary 'globalised and multicultural' world, 'the (self)identification of a writer through a mono-cultural or linguistic affiliation is no longer mandatory or sufficient'.²¹ Furthermore, the 'affirmation of the dual identity as a norm entails a drastic revision of the attitude to emigration. Departure from "the soil and destiny" is no longer a curse, a life catastrophe, but instead an act of free choice and therefore a positive strategy'.²²

Among the numerous (formerly) Eastern/Central European writers who have reinvented themselves in the Western European literary context, Milan Kundera is particularly noteworthy for a militant campaign he waged for many years against the persistent attempts to conceptualize him as a dissident celebrity from the Eastern bloc. His lack of engagement with Czechoslovakia after his emigration to France, withdrawal into a strictly literary domain, shedding of any 'exotic' features of Czech identity and positioning himself as a European (rather than specifically Czech) author, eventually resulted in his switching to French, first in his essays, and later in his fiction.²³ After 1989, Kundera frustrated the expectations of his countrymen by rejecting the idea of a 'grand return' both on a personal and fictional level.²⁴ As Petr Bilek observed, in 'the early 1990s situation ... the Czech cultural context just wanted to fill out the idea of "eternal return" and bring back Kundera to the same position he had had in the late 1960s. Kundera's refusal to return physically as well as to play the role of a Czech cultural icon was then perceived as a gesture of betrayal'.²⁵ Predictably, his offended compatriots accused him of hubris, of writing for fame and money, producing superficial bestsellers, pursuing the goal of entertainment above all, and even catering to Western demands for pornography (thus reinvigorating the pathos of Milan Jungmann's controversial 1985 article, 'Kunderian Paradoxes', in which Jungmann attacked Kundera on similar grounds²⁶). Meanwhile, having rejected any public role in the Czech context (and moreover, not authorizing until quite recently the publication of some of his key texts in Czech²⁷), Kundera has remained 'unrepentant' in his view that exile was an escape for his art from potential parochialism, and that, in exile, the French language has improved his art.²⁸

Kundera has also attempted to deconstruct the 'grand return' myth through the medium of fiction. His novel *Ignorance* narrates the story of two Czech emigres who, persuaded against their will by their Western friends to return 'home', visit the post-communist Czech Republic after twenty years in the West, only to realize that they no longer have very much in common with their homeland or the people there. This polyphonic text incorporates different types of discourse, genres and registers, including essays (the story of Arnold Schönberg and other prominent exiles), quasi-scholarly musings on the etymology of the word 'nostalgia' and even an ironic rewriting of *The Odyssey*. Challenging the archetypal interpretation of the Homeric epic, characterized as the 'foundation epic of nostalgia', Kundera states provocatively that Odysseus' best years were spent outside Ithaca. Upon his return home after twenty years of wandering, Odysseus, much like the contemporary Czech protagonists of *Ignorance*, feels like a stranger. The author proceeds to subvert such 'sacred' notions as 'homeland', 'return', 'mother tongue' and 'nostalgia' (the latter, according to Kundera's etymological musings, no longer signifies 'pain induced by one's separation from one's country of origin', but rather 'pain induced by ignorance' about the place of the emigre's birth).²⁹

In his recent essay, 'L'exil libérateur selon Vera Linhartová (The liberating exile according to Vera Linhartová)', Kundera identifies with a fellow Czech emigre, the poet and writer Vera Linhartová, who after emigration (like Kundera himself) switched to writing in French. After the fall of communism, Linhartová accepted the invitation of the French Institute in Prague to deliver a speech on the topic of exile. In that speech, Linhartová responded to the dominant post-communist Czech

discourse addressed to emigres — aimed at luring them back home — by stating that an individual should not be considered to be the property of any nation. Moreover, the writer, according to Linhartová, is not obliged to serve as guardian of his mother tongue, because 'l'écrivain n'est pas prisonnier d'une seule langue' (a writer is not a prisoner of any one language). In fact, only the natural limitations of the human life span prevent the author from taking full advantage of this freedom by adopting ever new languages and inhabiting ever new cultural spaces. Kundera enthusiastically develops the theory of his compatriot's cultural nomadism, and challenges the conventional formulae of a writer's identity: 'Quand Linhartová écrit en français, est-elle encore un écrivain tchèque? Non. Devient-elle un écrivain français? Non plus. Elle est ailleurs'.³⁰ (When Linhartová writes in French, is she still a Czech writer? No. Has she become a French writer? Not that, either. She is somewhere else).

A slightly different but no less eloquent example of a former Eastern European with multiple cultural identities who has successfully made a place for himself in the cultural processes of a Western country is the bestselling writer and pop culture personality Wladimir Kaminer. Kaminer emigrated from Russia to eastern Germany in 1990 without speaking a word of German, but just ten years later he published a collection of vignettes on Russian emigre life in Berlin, entitled *Russendisko*, and became an instant celebrity. He has since produced a dozen more books in German, and each landed on the *Der Spiegel* bestseller list. Kaminer releases books in audio format, writes regular columns for several leading German newspapers and magazines, for some time produced a show on the radio station Multikulti, and hosts a 'Russen Disko' night in one of Berlin's nightclubs. He is a regular guest on TV and radio and frequently goes abroad as an emissary of German culture, giving talks in the framework of the Goethe Institute and other networks in various countries, including Russia. Although Kaminer writes exclusively in German (in what Adrian Wanner calls 'a demotic ... idiom, a rather earthy, no-frills language characterized by a simple syntax replete with colloquialisms and occasional four-letter words'³¹), he speaks the language with a thick Russian accent and occasionally makes grammatical mistakes; this does not seem to bother his fans, nor German cultural policy makers, who continue to send him on cultural missions around the world. Indeed, as Kathleen Condray suggests, Kaminer's 'multimedia success is due largely to the charm of his foreign identity'.³² In fact, his image also fits the needs of the partisans of 'political correctness': 'Kaminer's foreignness is part of his allure and intrinsic to his artistic and public persona. The fact that ZDF employs him as a correspondent despite his accented German implies some degree of increasing tolerance for foreigners among the German viewing public.'³³

In his books, Kaminer contributes to the popularity in Germany of Gastarbeiterliteratur (even though he hardly belongs to this category himself) as he skilfully capitalizes on German clichés about Russians, as well as Russian stereotypes about Germany, ironically conflating the perspectives of insider and outsider. In his typical tongue-in-cheek interviews, he insists on his hybrid identity: 'Meine Heimat ist die Sowjetunion. Meine Muttersprache ist Russisch, privat bin ich ein Russe, beruflich ein deutscher Schriftsteller und mein über alles geliebter Wohnort ist Berlin'.³⁴ ('My homeland is the Soviet Union. My mother tongue is Russian. Privately, I'm Russian. By profession I am a German writer. And my most beloved place of residence is Berlin.')

At the very beginning of World War I, Sigmund Freud wrote an essay entitled 'Zeitgemässes über Krieg und Tod' (Thoughts for the Times of War and Death, 1915), a passage from which serves as an epigraph for this article. In this essay,

Freud conjured up an idealistic vision of an individual migrating freely between various friendly countries (i.e. an individual who does not need to be, to use Kundera's words, the 'property' of any single nation). For most people at the time, this vision was not only unrealizable but even inconceivable. The Great War, the Russian Revolution, World War II, the Cold War and many other calamities that shook the twentieth century, made the Freudian dream appear ever more utopian. However, with the fall of the Iron Curtain, the enlargement of the European Union, the liberalization of border controls between its member states and the rapidly developing process of globalization, this dream has partially turned into reality — at least within the European cultural space, as testified by the unprecedented polyphony of 'languages' and 'accents' in today's literary landscape and the plurality of writers' national, cultural, linguistic and aesthetic identities.

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¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine (MR).

² The most notable exception was the phenomenon of 'Russian Berlin' of the early 1920s, where emigre and Soviet writers mingled freely in literary clubs and artistic cafes. Moreover, for several years Berlin-based Russian publishers received steady commissions from the Bolshevik government and supplied the Soviet book market. On Russian Berlin see, for instance, L. Fleishman, R. Hughes and O. Rayevska-Hughes (1983) *Russkii Berlin 1921-23*, Paris: YMCA Press.

³ In a peculiar *mise-en-abime* twist, this pattern of dominance and marginality was duplicated within the emigre community itself. For instance, during the inter-war period, Paris was considered the 'cultural capital' of Russia Abroad, and it was rather difficult for Russian writers living in other, 'peripheral' locations (Harbin, Belgrade, Sofia etc.) to get their works published in prestigious Paris-based Russian literary journals.

⁴ In her long narrative poem 'Liricheskaiia poema' (A Lyric Poem), in which the post-revolutionary emigration from Russia is projected upon the story of creation and the exile of Adam from paradise, Nina Berberova used several variants of this phrase: 'I esli zdes' ia sred' drugikh, —/Ia ne v izgnan'i, ia v poslan'i/I vovse ne bylo izgnan'ia, / Padenii ne bylo moikh !' (227) ; and 'Ia govoriu: ia ne v izgnan'i, ia ne ishchu zemnykh putei. /Ia ne v izgnan'i — ia v poslan'i,/Legko mne zhit' sredi liudei' (230); (Sovremennye zapiski,

30 (1927): 221-30).

⁵ Z. N. Gippius and I. I. Bunakov (1930) *Chto delat' russkoi emigratsii'*. Paris: Rodnik.

⁶ Cited from O. A. Korostelev and N. G. Mel'nikov (eds.) (2002) *Kritika russkogo zarubezh'ia*, Vol. 1, Moscow: Olimp: 60.

⁷ *Simvol 'My': Evreiskaia khrestomatiia novoi russkoi literatury* (2003) Moscow: NLO: 5-8.

⁸ *Ibid.*: 7.

⁹ Ironically but pointedly characterized by Mikhail Gendelev as a 'non-Russian literature' ('nerusskaia literatura').

¹⁰ Dina Rubina, a best-selling Russian Israeli writer, is particularly prone to such word play and her prose contains countless witty meta-remarks on 'double-coded' Hebrew words. See, for example, her novel *Poslednii kaban iz lesov Pontevedra*.

¹¹ For a more detailed discussion of the peculiarities of Russian Israeli literature, see Maria Rubins, 'La prose israélienne d'expression russe', in Helene Mélat (ed.) (2006) *Le premier quinquennat de la prose russe du XXIe siècle*, Paris: Institut d'Etudes Slaves, 74-86.

¹² 'Laureaty literaturnoi premii imeni Marka Aldanova', *The New Review*, 246 (2007): 5-7.

¹³ A chief partner and sponsor of the 'Russian Award' is the Foundation 'B.N. Yeltsin's Presidential Centre'.

¹⁴ The list of the winners of the 2010 competition demonstrates the geographical diversity and the wide range of ethnic and cultural identities in contemporary Russian-language writing. The award in the category 'Poetry' went to Maria Timakova (USA); in the category 'Short Prose' to Aleksei Turk (Kyrgyzstan); and the winner in the category long Prose' was Mariam Petrosyan (Armenia).

¹⁵ In 2009, this prize was awarded to Dr Olesia Rudiagina, poet and professor of the Slavic University in Chisinau (Moldova).

¹⁶ For details see my articles 'Irène Némirovsky. Strategii integratsii' (*The New Review*, 253, 2008: 228-58) and 'Figures de l'émigré russe dans les écrits d'Irène Némirovsky', Tatiana Viktoroff and Charlotte Kraus (eds.) (2012) *Figures de l'émigré russe en France au XIXe-XXe: fiction et réalité*, Amsterdam: Rodopi: 377-92.

¹⁷ Cf. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure*, Paris: Minuit, 1975.

¹⁸ 'Pour une "littérature-monde" en français', *Le Monde littéraire*, 16 mars 2007.

¹⁹ The pathos of this manifesto, informed by a globalized (rather than Gallo- or even Euro-centric) vision of contemporary cultural identities, is at odds with the main thesis of Tijana Miletic's study, according to which the adoption of French is a way for foreign authors to validate their European identity, subsequently leading to the intensification of their adherence to European cultural values (cf. Tijana Miletic [2008] *European Literary Immigration into the French Language. Readings of Gary, Kristof, Kundera and Semprun*, Amsterdam: Rodopi).

²⁰ The ideas of the manifesto found further elaboration in a collective volume under the same title, *Pour tine literature-monde en franfais*, edited by Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud. For a contextualized commentary of both the manifesto and the volume, see Jacqueline Dutton, 'Littérature-monde or Francophonie? From the manifesto to the great debate', *Essays in French Literature and Culture*, Number 49, November 2008: 43-67.

²¹ Irina Prokhorova, 'Iskusstvo pamiati i zabveniiia. Sovremennaia rossiiskaia literatura v poiskakh identichnosti' (unpublished).

²² Cf. an earlier attempt to debunk the archetypal notion that exile equates to death (first articulated by Ovid), and to proclaim the positive creative potential resulting from one's separation from the native land (Ewa Thompson, 'Writers in Exile: the Good Years', *Slavic and East European Journal*, 33(4), 1989: 499).

²³ Today, Kundera's French-language books include several collections of essays: *L'Art du roman* (The Art of the Novel, 1986), *Les Testaments trahis* (Betrayed Testaments, 1993), *Le Rideau* (The Curtain, 2005), *Une Rencontre* (A Meeting, 2009), and three brief novels: *La Lenteur* (Slowness, 199.5), *L'Identité* (Identity, 1997), and *L'Ignorance* (Ignorance, 2003; first appeared in Spanish translation in 2000).

²⁴ The mythologeme of the 'grand return' and the reluctance of Kundera and another Francophone author from Eastern Europe, Andrei Makine, to assume an identity based on their country of birth, constitute a focus in my article ('In fremden Zungen: Milan Kunderas and Andrei Makines französische Prosa', in B. Menzel and U. Schmid (eds.) *Der Osten im Westen. Importe der Populärkultur*, Special issue of *Osteuropa*, 57, Jg. 5, 2007: 169-88. This issue of *Osteuropa* contains a number of other case studies, which demonstrate various creative strategies of inhabiting Western culture developed by some formerly Eastern European artists. Ironically, the content of this special issue suggests that the very title of the journal may be obsolete.

²⁵ Petr Bilek, 'A Journey of a Name from the Realm of Reference to the Realm of Meaning: The Reception of Milan Kundera within the Czech Cultural Context', *Kosmas: Czechoslovak and Central European Journal*, Fall 17 (1), 2003: 22.

²⁶ Cf. Milan Jungmann, 'Kunderovské paradoxy', *Obsah* 5, September-December, 1985.

²⁷ The ban included even his masterpiece, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, which for a long time was only available in the authorized French version or in translation into other languages. In 2006 Kundera finally agreed to the publication of the novel in the Czech Republic and in the original tongue. Ironically, he gave the rights to the publishing house Host, whose name means 'guest' in Czech.

²⁸ Michelle Wood (2006) *Translating Milan Kundera*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd: 22.

²⁹ For a detailed discussion of the problems outlined above see Maria Rubins, 'L'Odyssée à la tchèque: le roman de Milan Kundera L'Ignorance', in Anne-Marie Gresser et Boris Czerny (eds), *L'hôte étranger: stratégies de l'hospitalité*, Caen: Presses universitaires de Caen, 2010: 213-20.

³⁰ Milan Kundera, *Une rencontre*, Paris: Gallimard, 2009: 124.

³¹ Adrian Wanner, *Out of Russia. Fictions of a New Translingual Diaspora*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011: 52.

³² Kathleen Condray, 'The Colonization of Germany: Migrant and German Identity in Wladimir Kaminer's Mein deutsches Dschungelbuch', *A Journal of Germanic Studies*, 42 (3), September 2006: 321-36, 332.

³³ *Ibid.*: 332.

³⁴ Wladimir Kaminer, 'Feurige Tanzer!' Interview with Jan Boris Wintzenburg, *Stern*, 17 October 2003.