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Russian Diasporic Cinema in Israel: Leonid Gorovets and Arik Kaplun

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Russian diaspora, numerous since the late 19th – early 20th century's pogroms and the 1917 Russian revolution, has gained a renewed interest with the impact of postcommunist migration, whether to Northern Greece (Demetriou 2006) or Costa Rica (Rodriguez and Cohen 2005). This approach underlines the changes at the levels of culture, society and nation, and probes 'the emergence of new asymmetrical power relations' in the postcommunist era (Berdahl 2000: 1). Film Studies, too, account for the transnational Russian aspect of diasporic cinema, in particular, in connection with the Russian-Israeli filmmaking (On transnational cinema, see Higbee & Lim 2010; Lim 2019. On Russian-Israeli cinema, see Gershenson & Hudson 2007; 2008). Most accounts dealing with Russian-speaking Israeli cinema make use of the most prominent writer in the field of exilic and diasporic cinema, Hamid Naficy (1999, 2001), who examines diaspora filmmakers as being on the margin of larger hegemonies within a national cinema, working interstitial in-between nations in terms of production and distribution, but also through their filmmaking aesthetics. For example, Avi Santo examines three 'Russian-speaking' (ex-Soviet Union) films and the creation of a post-Soviet 'subsociety' within Israel (Santo 2005). In finding the particularities of Russian diasporic cinema, these accounts of Russian-Israeli cinema also leave room for improvement. This cinema needs to be examined in relation to the larger picture of Russians abroad and in relation to gender, ethnicity and identity (Laitin 1998; Kopnina 2005). The latter is of particular interest in the Israeli context, as here the Russian national identity is interfaced with Jewish identity, an identity that, according to John Durham Peters (1999), has been built on the notion of Diaspora. The present article will uphold and add to these well-crafted arguments, but see them in the larger syncretism of representation that includes the essential nationalistic narratives.

The postcommunist condition that the present article is focusing on is tied to travel and migration. The desire to get out of the former communist countries has been rooted in the socialist system within the Warsaw Pact. People's desire to travel to see what lay outside the communist bloc was a major factor in why the system fell in the first place. In 1988, Hungary removed restrictions on foreign travels, which meant that for the first time since World War II, Hungarians could cross the border freely into Western Europe. This led to a stream of people travelling to Austria. In particular, East Germans were keen to exploit this open 'window' leading to thousands of GDR citizens travelling to Hungary on tourist visas and then exiting the communist bloc from Hungary. Soon other countries implemented the open window policy, but GDR stood firm in trying to hold people back by forbidding them to travel to 'brotherly' countries. East Germans, however, continued the mass movement by occupying embassies, and in November 1989 the legitimacy of the East German government had lost its grip. Those who wanted to cross into the forbidden West overran the Berlin Wall. The Velvet revolution had reached its climax, and throughout the region the ruling communist parties were abolished – except in the Soviet Union.

However, the same desire to travel abroad was to be found within the Soviet Union. The urge to exit the communist bloc can be seen most prominently in the case of Jewish migration from the Soviet Union, when it finally opened its borders for emigration. This exodus from the Soviet Union is characterised by two of the biggest waves: 1) the 1970s to early 1980s, and 2) from 1989 and throughout the 1990s. In this perspective, the migration before WWII to Mandatory Palestine from the Soviet Union is not included, but nonetheless significant (see introduction). Furthermore, some statistics will divide the latter wave into two distinctive waves; one communist (1989-1991) and the other postcommunist (post-1991) (Engel' 2007: 172), but it will here be considered as one wave.

Diasporic Cinema

My investigation of Russian-Israeli cinema will concentrate on the career of the filmmaker as someone having a decisive significance for the film product. However, here it is different migratory paths that are compared: the nature of cinematic representation of Russians abroad in part depends on which generation the filmmaker belongs to. As will be shown, differences in migratory paths are projected onto the portrayal of Russians in Israel, a country that has seen nearly a million people arrive from the former Soviet Union (FSU) since the late 1980s. The two filmmakers I have chosen for my analysis are Leonid Gorovets, a second wave immigrant to Israel, and Arik Kaplun, who is from the first wave. My analytical approach to the filmmakers and their films will involve a strong emphasis on the autobiographical, which will be used to reveal a personal experience behind the films' representations, where both function as 'translators' or informers of Russian cultural values that arise from the diasporic situation, but without involvement in the production from the Russian film industry. Thus, the filmmakers dealt with here are distinct from non-Russian filmmakers who portray Russian migration on screen (see e.g. Kristensen 2012). The perspective of the 'informer' blurs the dichotomy of self-representation and representation by the Other, since it can be seen as reflecting both modes of representation depending on which level of analysis is applied. On the personal level of the filmmakers – it is certainly about representation of self, but on the level of production, it is also informed by the representation by the Other. Russian-Israeli cinema is not Russian cinema and the films dealt with here have no Russian funding. The films have predominantly emerged from the context of Israeli cinema. *Coffee with Lemon* (Gorovets, 1994) and *Yana's Friends* (Kaplun, 1999) were financed entirely by the Israeli film industry. As Russian funding was sought but not granted in both cases, this lack of Russian co-operation makes them stand apart from transnational co-productions, such as, for example, are *Bear's Kiss* (2002) and *Mongol* (2007) by Sergei Bodrov.

In this article I shall examine how the two filmmakers of Russian origin, each in their different way, have migrated and re-established themselves in an Israeli context. Russian-Israeli cinema is a diasporic cinema rather than an exilic cinema, as described by Hamid Naficy in *An Accented Cinema*. Naficy makes a distinction between the two cinemas in relation to place,

where exilic cinema is focused on a 'there and then' and diasporic on 'here and now' (Naficy 2001: 15). This means that the filmmakers dealt with here are different from the Soviet émigré filmmakers, exemplified by Mikhail Kalik, who had no option of returning or collaborating with the Soviet Union almost to the end of the country's existence. The feature-length cinematographic memoir *And the Wind Returneth* (1991), which is can be placed within the 'there and then' perspective, 'was the outcome of an official invitation to Kalik by Moscow's Gorky Film Studios to return to the USSR and undertake a project of his choosing' (Moshkin 2019: 119). Both Gorovets and Kaplun were able to travel back and forth between post-Soviet Russia and Israel – indeed Gorovets later returned to make films in Lithuania.

Opening with some historical observations of Russian immigration to Israel, I make a clear distinction between what I am calling the first wave of immigrants, from the early 1970s to the late 1980s, and the second wave, which began in 1989. Then the focus shifts to explore the contexts of Israeli cinema and to underline specific considerations given to ethnicity within the Israeli/Jewish national and multicultural identity. It is in this context that the two Russian-Israeli filmmakers, Leonid Gorovets and Arik Kaplun, will be dealt with. The study will first give a biographical account of their respective migration trajectories and then provide an analysis of their films. Lastly, I will make some brief observations concerning new developments in Russian-Israeli filmmaking by discussing films by the younger generation of Russian diasporic filmmakers.

The Israeli Context

The World Refugee Survey states at the beginning of every report on Israel that 'Jews are eligible to immigrate and become Israeli citizens under the Law of Return' (Anon. 1998). The Law of Return is sometimes referred to as repatriation, emphasising a Jew's right 'to return' to the Promised Land. However, this right to return has led to ethnic conflicts not only in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian relations, but also between Jews of different ethnicity, such as the Ashkenazis and the Sephardis. While both groups originate in Europe, Ashkenazi in Germany and Sephardi in Spain, the term 'Sephardi' has largely become associated with the Oriental Jews.[1] The position of most Russian-Soviet Jews within the hierarchy is highly ambiguous. While technically they are (or used to be) Yiddish speakers and clearly not Oriental Sephardic Jews (who could for example be Ladino speakers), they are nonetheless somehow peripheral to what the desired Israeli Jew is. There are certain 'second class' and 'glass ceiling' sentiments (or inferiority issues) associated with the Russian Jew (in the of Israel context, 'Russian' here serves as a shorthand for those originating from the FSU), playing on a hushed gradation that is somewhat muted but sufficiently well known to everybody familiar with the realities of contemporary Israel. There is something in the cultural capital of the Russian Jew that is not quite right in the Israeli context. Ethnically looking the part of the white European Ashkenazi, the Russian immigrant is poor, in need of economic support, and behaves differently; from an Israeli perspective, i.e. that of the host country, he is often unscrupulous, dishonest and corrupt. This somewhat lower standing accorded to the Russian-Israeli immigrant can result in a tension, which characterises everyday social interactions involving the new immigrants.

It is an ambiguity that could be seen as an expression of the difference between the First and the Third World. As Ella Shohat has observed, 'although Zionism collapses the Sephardi and the Ashkenazi into a single category of "one people", at the same time the Sephardi's oriental "difference" threatens the European ideal-ego' (Shohat 1987: 207). It is the Sephardi ethnic difference that problematises Israel's European belonging, pointing rather to Israel's geographical position in the Middle East. Post-Soviet Russian migration to Israel is viewed generally as a flow that is fuelled by economic concerns rather than Zionist zeal, a situation that radically undermines their standing in the new country. If the Sephardi lowliness threatens the lofty Israeli (West) European ideal, then Russian immigration with its legacy of totalitarianism and inadequate cultural capital also stirs up problems for the narration of Eurocentric Israel. If the Sephardi can be seen as threatening Israel's European ideal on the level of ethnicity and race, the Russian Jew, while conforming to that ideal as far as appearance is concerned, still stands out in a position of liminality on the margins of Europe. While Russian migration history reports Russian Jews as being Ashkenazi, in Israel, the postcommunist Russian immigrants are regarded as inadequate individuals who have trouble fitting the Israeli European ideal and remain suspended between the First World and the Third World, between the Occident and the Orient.

Russian Migration to Israel

It is important to stress from the outset that migration to Israel from Russia and the Soviet Union has a long history and, although the emphasis of this chapter is on the two waves of the late 20th century, this migration process has gone on for much longer. Since the late 19th century Zionist newcomers have migrated to Palestine through different Aliyah movements. Haim Watzman identifies five such waves of migration leading up to the establishment of the Israeli state and Russian immigrants were very much part of these waves (Watzman 2000: xii-xiv). One example is the Bilu Movement, which in the 1880s Russian Jews comprised the very first Aliyah, fleeing pogroms in pre-Soviet Russia. Emigration from the Soviet Union only increased after the revolution in 1917 when Soviet Jews emigrated to Yishuv (Jewish communities) in Palestine for ideological reasons in order to build a Kibbutz where socialist and Zionist ideas merged into the utopian idea of communal living. Later, after the establishment of the State of Israel, migration from the Soviet Union became less oriented towards ideology and more a result of a threat of anti-Semitic actions, which swept over the Cold War socialist countries – for example, the so-called Doctors' plot (1952-53), which officially targeted Jewish nationalism and cosmopolitanism and singled out Jewish doctors in particular as enemies of the state. As for the oriental Jews, they mostly came to Israel from West Asia and North Africa after World War II.

This early migration is important to the study at hand, because contemporary Israeli cinema has to be analysed in terms of its representation of conflicting ethnic constellations (in this case the conflict between the Askhenazi and Sephardi Jews). The mythical ideal that these two principal forms of Jewish identity aspire to is the Sabra Jew. Sabra means 'born in Palestine' and has, according to Oz Almoq (2000: 8), 'turned into something of a linguistic code for expressing the nation's love for its loyal youth […] the stereotypical Sabra appeared to become a cultural hero'. Russian immigrants are part of the formation of this Jewish ideal, but it has to be recognised that they are also part of a perennial European position that differs from the Ashkenazi West European ideal (Shohat 1987: 208). Our examination will concentrate on the Russians of late Soviet and postcommunist migration, since Russians 'constitute the largest ethnic group to have immigrated to the Israeli state' (Kimmerling 2001: 136). Therefore, the contextualization that frames the analysis of the two films and their filmmakers lies within the period of the early 1970s up to the present day.

The First Wave of Russian Immigrants to Israel

The wave started around 1971 and ended ten years later, in 1981, when the 'open gate' policy of the Soviet authorities was abandoned. While Soviet Jews still emigrated both prior to and after this period, it is generally believed that the possibility for allowing a great number of Soviet Jews to emigrate was instigated by the Soviet Union itself. Where the Khrushchev period (1954-64) saw only 2,418 Jews emigrating, the number of people migrating during the Brezhnev period (1964-84) soon began to

increase. The outflow peaked in 1979 with 51,320 leaving the country in just one year, only to decrease dramatically by 1982, when only a couple of thousand migrated (Karlilow 1983: 32). Overall, the Brezhnev period saw about 250,000 Soviet Jews departing for a life outside the communist bloc. This does not mean that all Soviet Jewish emigrants ended up in Israel. A great number opted either not to travel to Israel once they reached the interim transportation hub in Vienna,[2] or simply to leave for other countries after spending some time in Israel. According to Kimmerling (2001: 139), only 57,000 immigrants chose Israel as their final destination. Thus, it appears that only a quarter of the people who emigrated actually ended up in Israel.

Several factors contributed to the Soviet Union's opening this gate of migration, but the most important one was the pressure coming from Jews and their organisations, both inside and outside the Soviet Union, which forced the question of emigration to be addressed. This is evident in the fact that almost 400,000 Jews in the Soviet Union had asked for permission to leave the country by the time the migration gate closed (Karlilow 1983: 35). It is small wonder that, when the gate opened again in 1989, many Jews had already been prepared to go with what was to become the second wave of migration. Furthermore, it is important to note that whereas the first wave had a 'choice' in destination, the second wave was characterised by having Israel as 'practically' the only possible country of migration (Kimmerling 2001: 139), largely because the US had imposed a strict selection process on people emigrating from the Soviet Union which, as a result, almost stopped the migration of Russians to the United States. In short, the second wave had fewer alternatives in its country of destination when embarking on the migration route.

The Second Wave of Russian Immigration to Israel

The second wave began in 1989 when restrictions on migration from the Soviet Union were loosened as a consequence of Glasnost. The figure for postcommunist immigration to Israel amounts to almost 850,000 arriving from the FSU during the 1990s (USCRI 2000), which, according to Madij Al-Haj, 'constitutes about 15 per cent of the Israeli population [7.1 million]' (Al-Haj 2002: 52). This is still under the 20 per cent (1.5 million) mark, which is the population size of Arab Israelis. It is important to emphasise that when we speak of the position of Russian immigrants within Israeli society and their identity formation therein, we are articulating national Jewish identities, which are placed above the Arab Israeli identity that finds itself at the bottom of the stratification. Viewed from a perspective of Arab Israelis, Russians are privileged with a Russian-language television channel.

Although the fall of communism split the Soviet Empire into 15 different countries, migration figures continued to count them as a whole. The non-differential term 'Russian speaking' is used when issues of migration from the FSU are dealt with in the Israeli context. Alternatively, scholars insert inverted commas over the word 'Russians' (Al-Haj 2002: Santo 2005: 25). While both practices reflect the fact that not all immigrants from the FSU are Russian Jews, it is vital to highlight that the term 'immigrants from FSU' is confusing. The World Refugee Report from 1998, as mentioned above, acknowledges this when it states that in 1998 Ukrainian Jews doubled the number of immigrants from the Russian Federation. Despite this, it is still difficult to say how many of these immigrants are Russian, as Russian Jews might just as well have migrated from the territories beyond Russia proper. For example, during the Soviet period many Russian Jews moved to Central Asia and hence would have migrated from there. It is outside the scope of this book to break down the numbers of immigration to Israel into ethnicities from the Soviet bloc. Yet it is important to keep these details in mind when examining this flow of migration in terms of ethnic identity formations within Israeli society.

A migrational flow the size of the Russian immigration to Israel is bound to make an impact on the receiving society and as such the waves of Russian immigrants have had a major influence on the cultural, ethnic and national outlook of Israel. Israeli society is said to consist of seven cultural strata: middle-class Ashkenazi; a national religious class; traditionalist Sephardi/Mizrahi; Orthodox religious; Arab/Palestinians; Russian and finally Ethiopian (Kimmerling 2001: 2). Because the Israelis are divided by ethnicity, religious rituals and class, the influx of immigrants of Soviet origin also becomes subdivided within this stratification. In other words, the immigrants are divided into migrants from the southern Soviet sphere (Georgia, Caucasus and Central Asia) and the 'European' Soviet sphere, but this does not automatically mean that 'European' Russian Jews are elevated to the Ashkenazi status. Rather Russians are left to fight for a better position with the Sephardis; from the Ashkenazis' point of view, Russian immigrants are still viewed as inferior to European Jewry and the Sabra ideal. It is important to stress this fallen status of the Russian Jew, because it reflects the large-scale disappearance of the Second World, and with it, Russia's position as a World superpower. It is due to the poor economic status of the Russian immigrant, infused with the quasi-European position of being Russian, that the Russian Jew is aligned with the Sephardi position. It is here that the postcolonial perspective can be detected in representations of the Russian Jew.

The Russian imperial 'fatigue' surfaced in the early 2000s as a way to capture Russia's turn from empire to nation-state, leading to xenophobia towards former colonialised subjects, but this is also felt in diaspora. Dimitry Shumsky (2005) accounts for a 'Russian speaking' Orientalism and Islamophobia within the Russian-Israeli intelligentsia. This Russian-Soviet imperialist discourse functions on the local level as representing an identity which sees itself as superior to other minorities in Israel and, on a global level, as a Western defence against 'Islamic fundamentalism' (Shumsky 2004: 95: see also Lipovetsky & Leiderman 2009: 207). This corresponds with what can be perceived as a typical Russian self-representation, where antagonism against other minorities constitutes an important part of confirming the Russian self as part of the First World. This is not a discourse exclusive to the postcommunist era. Writing in the mid-1980s, Ella Shohat (1987: 208) remarked that

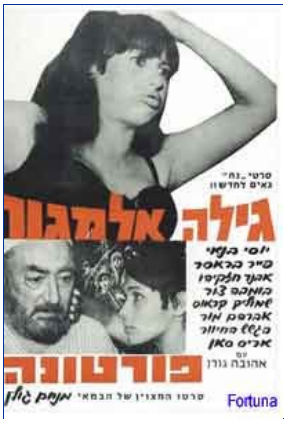
> the Ostjuden, perennially marginalised by Europe, realised their desire of becoming European, ironically, in the Middle East, this time on the back of their own "Ostjuden", the Eastern Jews. Having passed through their own "ordeal of civility", as the "Blacks" of Europe, they now imposed their own civilising standards on their own "Blacks" [the Sephardis].

Where this is an established discourse, and one that serves the national dominant voice of 'Israel's European ideal', then the children of postcommunist migration show more complex attitudes towards Mizrahi culture and literature, forming alternative modes of negotiating the ethnicities of Israel (Lomsky-Feder, Rapoport & Lerner 2005). However, this generation also has critical views on the national Israeli ethos, viewing the national Zionism as the only parameter of assimilation (see Lomsky-Feder & Rapoport: 2001: 4). This suggests that Russian-Israeli immigrants are redefining their self-perception in relation to other diasporic communities, and in particular in relation to the older and larger Sephardi group.

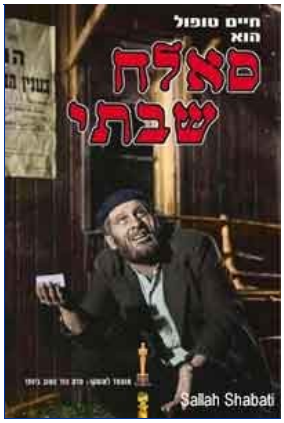
Israeli Cinema

Since this study explores Israeli representations from the transnational perspective, it is the transnational journey of the filmmaker that is of most interest. How is the exilic and diasporic trajectory reflected in the expression of the films? Since the state of Israel is founded on the influx of Jews, the history of its cinema also consists of the histories of individual filmmakers' migration. In this regard, the account of Russians abroad in Israeli films will also emphasise the personal history of the relevant filmmakers. Having

said that, the Israeli cinematic context is obsessed with Jewish national identity, which is most clearly detected in the specific portrayal of Sephardi identity. Ella Shohat's pioneering research sets up the interpretative framework of the Ashkenazi and Sephardi ethnic divide and its relation to the Arab-Palestinian conflict which is continued in later studies (Yosef 2000; Loshitzky 2001; see also Yosef 2011: 63-81). Despite the fact that general academic work on Israeli cinema tends to exclude the Russian element in Israeli filmmaking, recent research aims to fill this gap. The favoured approach is through the writings of Naficy (2001) and Laura U. Marks (2000). However, in Marks' and Naficy's transnational cinema studies, hybridity becomes experimental in form, fusing documentary, fiction, personal and experimental genres (see e.g. Marks 2000: 7). In Russian-Israeli cinema, on the other hand, the mode of diasporic film production is not entirely divorced from the Israeli film industry (Santo 2005: 39) and its normative mainstream national cinema. Instead the diasporic approach is revealed in terms of an overall examination of representation, gender and ethnicity (Gershenson & Hudson 2007; 2008). Similarly, the aim here is to examine the particularities of representation within Israeli cinema and its relationship to the postcolonial syncretism, revealing how the representation of Russians is formed on the backdrop of other ethnic and gendered representations.



For this reason, it is necessary to pick up on the so-called Boureka cinema (1960s-1980s) and its portrayal of Sephardi identity, which has 'a prevalent *topos* in the current post-colonial discourse' (Loshitzky 1996: 94). The stereotypical portrayal of Sephardi in the Boureka films (a term derived from the spaghetti western and referring to a Middle Eastern savoury pie, traditionally found in the Sephardic menu) and in popular films centring on the Oriental Sephardis, is found in popular comedies like *Sallah Shabati* (Ephaim Kishon, 1964). In the film, the leading character Sallah Shabati, a Yemenite Jew, arrives in Israel with his extended family. The plot centres on the family's settlement in a government camp, where also other Jews, both Ashkenazi and Mizrahi, try to make a living in the new land.[3] The film is one of Shohat's examples of popular (mis)representations of Sephardis, where they are depicted as the undeveloped Orientals, and of Askhenazis as the natural Israelis who make the desert bloom. As in the Eurocentric framework, the Oriental here is associated with death, while the European – with life and development (Shohat 1987: 158). In *Fortuna* (Menahem Golan, 1966), the focus is on a Sephardi woman in need of rescue from her backward patriarchal Sephardi family. The rescue narrative is of particular interest to us here, as the postcommunist condition constructs the female Russian character abroad as in need of rescue. Israeli society has been the target for postcommunist trafficking of women for prostitution, in which postcommunism is seen as the main trigger (Levenkron & Dahan 2003). Trafficking is the subject of Amos Gitai's *Promised Land* (2004), where Russian-Estonian girls are trafficked to work in an underwater brothel.



While both *Sallah Shabati* and *Fortuna* are examples of representations where the Oriental Jewish immigrants are constructed as uncivilised and undeveloped, there are also examples of the Boureka films being balanced; for example, *Or Min Hahefker*/*Light out of Nowhere* (Nissim Dayan, 1973) or *Ha-Bayit Berechov Chelouche*/*The House on Chelouche Street* (Moché Mizrahi, 1973). However, as a consequence of the 'misrepresentations', the fortification of Oriental identity leads to the formation of the Israeli Black Panther movement (Loshitzky 1996: 100n5). In other words, issues of representation in the Boureka films of the early 1970s became the backdrop to the Black Panther movement in Israel and a reinforced attitude of resistance and fighting back. While postcommunist Russian immigration has not formed an equivalent of the Black Panther movement (itself an indication of refusing a postcolonial position), Russian-Israelis do feature as an integral part of the Israeli subculture, e.g. in rap music of Russian-Israeli Vulkan, who has risen to considerable success with his style of mixing both Russian and Hebrew into his lyrics.

As with Sephardis in the Boureka films, *how* Russians are represented in work by Russian-Israeli filmmakers is of vital importance in the consolidation of a postcommunist Russian-Israeli identity. My subsequent analysis focuses on the work of two filmmakers, whose similarities and differences represent the ways in which Russian-Israeli filmmakers engage with/in Israeli cinema. In *Coffee with Lemon*, Valery immigrates to Israel, but has problems in gaining recognition as the famous actor he was in Russia. Struggling with the Hebrew language, a love affair with his teacher and an inability to perform according to his own standards, Valery leaves Israel and is killed during riots in Moscow. In *Yana's Friends*, Yana is abandoned in Tel Aviv by her Russian husband. Unable to return to Russia, she starts forming a relationship with Eli, her flatmate.

My investigation begins with the journey of Leonid Gorovets because, although he belongs to the second, later wave of Russian migrants, he is the oldest of the two filmmakers. Furthermore, his film, *Coffee with Lemon*, was made earlier than Arik Kaplun's *Yana's Friends*. Thus, even if Leonid Gorovets migrated to Israel after Arik Kaplun, his migratory trajectory takes logical precedence.

A Road to the Jewish Homeland

Leonid Gorovets (b. 1950–d. 2013) emigrated from Kiev in 1990, largely 'because of the Chernobyl accident, but, to be honest, I still do not understand why. Even after all these years'.[4] He has two degrees, one in Russian and the other in filmmaking, from the State University of Moscow. Before moving to Israel, Gorovets completed his first feature *Damskii portnoi*/*Ladies' Tailor* (1990), on a Holocaust topic, which enjoyed considerable success both in and outside the Soviet Union. While calling the film 'not great', Judith Kornblatt (1999: 192) still goes on to write a 15-page article about it. The film won an award at a festival in Germany, and its leading actor, Innokenti Smoktunovsky, took the Best Actor award at the Soviet Nika Awards in 1990. Although it might seem strange for the director to emigrate just as he is enjoying the success of a debut film, it is important to stress that at the time there were great uncertainties as to where the Soviet Union was heading. The political hard-liners could as easily have gained the upper hand as could the reforming forces. As Gorovets said, 'the second wave emigrated out of fear. Out of the fear of what could happen with the Soviet Union'. Therefore the case of Gorovets follows the general pattern of the second wave of immigration, where the ideological grounds for migration are subdued, and the uncertainties of what the future holds are cited as the main motivation. Another Soviet filmmaker, although Latvian, is Herz Frank who also immigrated to Israel in 1993 but continues to work from Latvia despite taking residence in Jerusalem. Herz Frank was the leading figure in the Riga School of Poetic Documentary Cinema. Gorovets is not of the same caliber as Frank, who was well established within Soviet cinema, but their postcommunist trajectories illustrate filmmakers' search away from the crumbling Soviet film industry.

In Israel, Gorovets made only one feature film and has since worked mostly in television production, having made a numbers of documentaries (Kornblatt 1999: 193n10). The small national film industry cannot cater for all its members, hence idle times for filmmakers are commonplace and often work in television comes in handy for providing the daily bread. This is not something that is particular to the immigrant filmmaker, but rather a condition that affects the field as a whole. Furthermore, Israeli cinema has a preoccupation with documentary filmmaking, which is highly regarded and, at times, placed higher than feature filmmaking. However, because Gorovets is less religious in conviction with regard to his profession, he finds himself being censored by the Israeli industry authorities. Gorovets states: 'I consider myself a very "Christian" Jew and at times feel that Jewishness (the skullcap or Kippah) is used as an emblem of access and virtue, just as the party membership card was a necessary thing to hold during communism'. In this way, Gorovets feels outside the hegemonic society and emphasises that his film, *Coffee with Lemon*, was criticised both in Israel and in Russia. The film did better outside these countries, in the United States and in Germany, where Gorovets felt he received more understanding for his work than in Israel. Gorovets continues to uphold the sense of being a Russian Jew in Diaspora, rather than being a Russian-Israeli filmmaker whose engagement is in Israeli cinema. He, as an artist, is less concerned with the justification of the Jewish national idea than with making art that, in his opinion, reflects reality. Consequently, Gorovets has not made any feature films since *Coffee with Lemon*. Gorovets's Soviet classical literary education and his auteurish style would have suited the Israeli Personal Film of the 1980s, but this style is difficult to realize in the contemporary Israeli climate. Gorovets casts himself as suffering from prevailing anti-intellectualism, and sees himself as upholding the position of the Russian outsider. As Kornblatt notes, Gorovets has a troubled relationship with his own immigration, or Aliyah (Kornblatt 1999: 193n10). Gorovets makes no attempt to hide that he is still considering leaving Israel for a climate that is friendlier towards art and artistic production. In fact, rather than the diasporic and exilic form set in Israel, Gorovets has opted for a more free-floating project-based transnational form of filmmaking resettling in his native city of Kiev, Ukraine. He directed the Lithuanian comedy *Linksmoji našlė*/*Merry Widow* (2009), which is produced by Baltic Film Group, and was awarded Honoured Artist of Ukraine in 2010 according to the website *Glavnoe*, before he passed away in 2013.

Another Road to the Jewish Homeland

Arik Kaplun (b. 1958) emigrated in 1980 at the age of 22. As he emphasised to me, 'initially, I didn't want to move to Israel, but I went along with my parents'.[5] The Kapluns had relatives in Israel, who had emigrated from Soviet Russia in the 1920s, and therefore Arik Kaplun's migrational narrative is constructed as a family reunification. Moreover, this linkage to the early Soviet Zionist emigration underlines Kaplun's alignment to the Askhenazi European identity. Before leaving the Soviet Union, he began to study medicine in Moscow, but received most of his education in Israel. Kaplun's background is in theatre and he has formal training in filmmaking from Tel Aviv University, which is important in our framework. The fact that Kaplun's schooling as a filmmaker happened in Israel, and not in Russia, makes him different from Gorovets, who carried over his cinematic cultural capital from Russia to Israel.

Thus, in the migrating exchange system, the capital of Kaplun lies almost exclusively with his ethnic origin, which the host society, through education, is able to mould in its own image. This partly explains the success, both critical and popular, of his first feature film, *Yana's Friends* (1999). That said, Kaplun's student film, *Solo for Tuba* (1985), resembles Gorovets's first feature in Israel, *Coffee with Lemon*. In an authoritarian state where resistance fighters are being shot at every street corner, a lone tuba player gets caught up in the conflict. As an artist, he refuses to take sides. However, after helping a young female blond, blue eyes rebellion he cannot remain indifferent to the conflict. While the setting of Kaplun's debut film is generative and not specific, it could be any authoritarian regime, it is an accented film in the sense that it does focus on language (Naficy 2001: 24-5). The epigraph to the film reads: 'Another palace, another time, another language…' and in one scene of the film the protagonist's voice is erased by the sound of a wind-up toy device. While Kaplun's short film is darker and more explosive with gunshot being heard constantly, the theme of the film can be compared to Gorovets's *Coffee with Lemon*, as both films have an artist protagonist who is lost in conflicts around them. They are both individuals who are unable to find a place for their art. The fact that both films share this similarity points to comparable migrational roads, which interrogate the host society once the filmmaker has settled in Israel. Kaplun himself tells the online *Jewish Journal* that his short is 'an allegory about the artist's condition during a civil war — inspired by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict' (Pfefferman 2001). The film was Kaplun's graduation project and won him a US student Oscar nomination, but it was not until the late 1990s that Kaplun was to make his full-length feature film debut with *Yana's Friends*. In between these two films, Kaplun worked in scriptwriting on various projects for television, and taught filmmaking both in the US and Israel.

The difference of the two migrational paths – Kaplun's earlier emigration, his educational background and moreover, his family ties to the early Russian Aliyah movement – underlines the process of assimilation and integration into Israeli society. This is clearly expressed in the way Kaplun aligns Russianness with the Ashkenazis. Kaplun returned my question as to where Russian immigrants are positioned in the Israeli ethnic divide by asking, 'are they [Russian immigrants] the European type of people?'. Explaining that Russians themselves might be uncertain as to whether they are European or Asian, Kaplun replied: 'The immigrants from the southern republics are Sephardis, while the immigrants from the Baltic countries, Ukraine and Russia are Ashkenazis'. In response to the same question, Marek Rozenbaum, the producer of *Yana's Friends*, added, 'if my school education still stands, then Leningrad and Moscow are European cities'.[6] In these responses, we can detect how the divisions are constructed according to skin colour, ethnicity and region, rather than Jewish liturgy, suggesting that the Sephardi/Ashkenazi discourse is based on race and class struggles. Although Kaplun is associated with the first wave of Russian immigrants and is well established into the Ashkenazi European identity, he still nurtures his Russian background. For example, he maintains contacts with other Russian filmmakers, such as Sergei Bodrov and Rustam Ibragimbekov.

Two Russian Israeli films, Two Immigration Strategies

The two filmmakers' stylistic preferences differ, as can be seen in their work. The style of Kaplun's *Yana's Friends* is fast-paced with few lingering shots. The mood is light, mainly achieved through humour, and it employs a rather convoluted narrative. In the film's finale, all the clues of the story come together. Gorovets's *Coffee with Lemon*, on the other hand, resembles the late Glasnost period with a dismal feel, and is constructed in style that is familiar to the postcommunist region. This is chiefly achieved through narrative, but also the cinematography makes the locations seem dull and dark. The pace of the film is relatively slow with a storytelling that seems to want to include all aspects of the plot, to want to tell the 'whole' story in a chronological order. Furthermore, because the film is omitted from some accounts of Russian-Israeli filmmaking (Santo, however, does include it), it has been necessary to rely on Gorovets's own view of the film.

Kafe v'limon*/*Coffee with Lemon

Leonid Gorovets's narrative begins on a theatre stage in Moscow. Valery Ostrovsky (Aleksandr Abdulov) is performing a duel scene, which ends in great applause from the audience. Valery, as we discover, is a famous actor, who, with a wife and a teenage son, is embarking on emigration to Israel. As the farewell party at the Ostrovskys' spacious flat progresses, voices of concern from the gathered friends are heard, e.g. how will the family cope with language barriers? To this Valery, speaking directly into the camera, says, 'I am worried for my wife and son. I want simply to be an artist.' Here Gorovets is quick to set the dramatic composition of the film from early on. The question that is put forward stands as follows: is it possible to be an artist without engaging with the outside world? Can one, despite emigration, 'simply' be an artist? However, Valery's answer to his friends also testifies that the protagonist is emigrating out of fear for the political climate, rather than an ideological belief, which echoes Gorovets's own emigration. The next day the Ostrovskys leave their housing block, a Stalinist-style skyscraper.[7] Valery puts on his sunglasses, and the film cuts to Israel. The scene contrasts the buzzing Moscow with the barren land of the Judean Hills – the grandiose buildings of Stalin to the newly erected Israeli settlement, which becomes the Ostrovskys' new home.

There is a great significance to Valery's landing in the settlement, because it points to the tendency of Russian immigrants to be 'posted' in frontline territories as part of the Zionist ideology making claims on land. Land acquisition is of course a major theme in the early nationalist films of Israeli cinema that Shohat analyses (Shohat 1987: 22). However, I suspect that Gorovets's main point in having Valery and family arriving at the settlement is to point to the contrast between Valery's old and new creative environment. This is evident in the subplot that is attached to the depiction of the settlement. An elderly Russian immigrant has shipped his grand piano to Israel, but the sheer size of the piano makes it unsuitable for the prefab houses. On several occasions the main narrative is intercut with the old man's efforts to accommodate the piano into the settlement. At first, a plastic-roofed extension to the house is built, where the old man can play his piano. Eventually, the piano gets disassembled, and thus makes its way into the trailer house. Gorovets got a lot of criticism in Israel for this subplot: the critique centred on the apparent suggestion that Russian high culture is too big and out of place for the Israeli setting.

While the story of the piano could be interpreted in this way, Gorovets's aim was to ask: 'Can we find a place for art in Israel?'. This is, of course, also the objective of the main narrative of Valery's emigration. However, the fact that Gorovets asks the question points to his own detachment from his host country, Israel, and his own recent immigration. In short, he is asking if there is a place in Israel for people like him. To an Israeli audience, however, this would be a nonsensical question, because an Israeli would consider art as natural to Israel. For the postcolonial perspective, the question illustrates very well the exchange, or failed exchange, of cultural capital. What Gorovets does with his narrative is to question the very desirability of his protagonist for the Israeli society. Gorovets is ambivalent when answering his own question, because, while the piano (i.e. Russian high art) story does end with the high art accommodated into the Israeli settlement, Valery enjoys much less success at finding true art in Israel.

Once in Israel, Valery gets in touch with an old acting friend from Russia and is employed as the lead character in a Hebrew performance of Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. During rehearsals for the play, Valery performs a solo act of his own in Russian, which is at first well attended by Russian immigrants. Soon, though, the audiences dwindle and instead it is Valery's old friend's dubious trick that becomes the most popular people magnet. The friend performs an act of healing where an accomplice, the young daughter of the theatre's boss, gets pulled out from the audience and is 'miraculously' cured from her illness. The performance echoes the quack doctor in the Western film, who exposes common folk's naivety and lack of judgement. The connotations are the same in Gorovets's film: people ostensibly cannot judge a good, serious act from a bad and deceitful one.

At one point, when Valery is to perform his 'serious' act, the audience is revealed to be Ethiopian-Israelis. All in colourful dresses, they are waiting for the friend to go on stage as a spiritual oracle. If the Sephardi characteristics expose the Israeli European ideal, then Ethiopian Jews are even more of a threat to this ideal. Ironically, the Ethiopian-Israelis are more religiously conscious, but are sometimes apparently treated worse than postcommunist Russian immigrants.[8] From the scene of Valery's performance to the Ethiopian Israelis, there are two things that we can level at the analysis of Russians in Israel. Firstly, it should be noted that racist connotations are implicit in the scene – Valery thinks of himself as 'higher' than his audience, which, according to him, is unable to comprehend his art. Thus, the film asserts to Dimitri Shumsky's notions of Russian immigrants carrying over the 'imperial fatigue' from the postcommunist condition. Secondly, according to the film, creative Russian immigrants come in two forms. One of the forms adapts to the surroundings by downgrading the artistic value of their performance. The other tries hard to establish the 'high' Russian standard of art in Israel. The first of these two is more successful in terms of popularity and financial outcome, but also doomed to cater for the 'bottom' of the Israeli society. The latter, in wanting to bring Russian cultural values to Israel, is, according to Gorovets's film, doomed to failure, because of popular Israeli audiences' inability to understand the nuances of the Russian language or to translate Russian values.

This is nothing new to Israeli cinema. For example, in the film *Hem Hayu Asarah*/*They Were Ten* (Baruch Dienar, 1960), Russian

pioneers in Israel 'show their mastery of Pushkin and Chekhov [thus reinforcing] the image of the pioneers as possessors of [European] knowledge, implicitly suggesting their potential power to enlighten an Orient presumed to be living in the Dark Ages' (Shohat 1987:. 45). It is easy to level the cultural capital of the Russians in the migrant narrative with Valery's high art capital that is not recognized by Israeli society any longer. In Gorovets's narrative, however, the act of translating values is futile, e.g. Valery fails to gain the level of fluency in Hebrew required for his performance in the Bulgakov play. In the scene where Valery stands in front of the Ethiopian-Israeli audience, he starts to laugh and eventually completely halts his performance by walking off the stage. This testifies to the position of the Russian immigrant's perceived superiority over the Ethiopian-Israeli Jew. Furthermore, also implicit in this context is the Russian immigrant's inability to engage and communicate effectively with the European Ashkenazi population. The Russian high art in the postcommunist era no longer means instant elevation to the Ashkenazi status. The Russian, even in the context of diaspora, stands outside the First World Eurocentric narrative.

This failure to engage with Ashkenazis is echoed in the intimate relationship that Valery forms with Michal, his Hebrew teacher of Ashkenazi origin. As Avi Santo asserts, Michal 'is revealed to be more interested in using Valery as a sexual object to escape her malaise than in actually helping him' (Santo 2005: 30). This failed attempt to align the two Israeli ethnicities, the Russian and the Ashkenazi, points to the construction of the Russian as an exoticized and eroticized other, over whom the Ashkenazi wields superiority. Gorovets's film is aimed at a particular audience, the Russian-Israeli communities, and the eroticization here is depicted as downgrading the Russian cultural capital. Thus, the film expresses feelings about the impossibility for a Russian to assume an equal place among the Ashkenazi middle classes.

Language acquisition is one of the areas that is an obstacle for the Russian immigrant. However, learning Hebrew is just part of the migration deal, because it helps in entering the labour market. It does not carry with it an identification with Israel; it is just 'a necessary tool' (Santo 2005: 30). This is also the reason for the film's return narrative that has Valery going back to Russia after having failed at being 'simply an actor'. Valery is disgruntled when the production of the high art Bulgakov play is moved outside to a historical site with many structural changes to Bulgakov's famous story. Gorovets spoke of visiting such a historical site once, discovering that the attendant guard was sitting reading Bulgakov. However, it puzzled Gorovets what this guard could possibly get out of reading Bulgakov in that particular context. When Valery tells the director of the play that he has problems in finding the heart and soul of the production, the director, also a Russian immigrant, tells Valery that these are luxury problems, saying 'in Moscow you were a star. But here you are nothing. You are just an immigrant living in a trailer van'. Valery is replaced in the play by somebody else and returns to Russia and to the kitchen of his friends and an empty theatre stage that needs to be filled. But the return narrative of the diasporic cinema is not idealised – Valery is killed on the streets of Moscow during the siege of the White House.[9] The Russian 'home' of the Russian Jew does not offer him salvation. Rather, in Gorovets's portrayal, it is linked to the eternal wandering Jew, a form of a nostalgia for Jewish nomadism that never finds home (Peters 1999: 38). The narrative of the film reflects the filmmaker's own position as exilic, fraught with issues of displacement and in-betweenness. Of his film's denouement, Gorovets emphasises, 'I made the ending as I felt it should be'. It came about on the spur of the moment, when they were shooting in Moscow. It was at the time of the 1993 White House siege and as a result the ending revealed itself right there with Valery getting killed. However, since it is a return narrative, we can also assert that Gorovets's film is kept with the framework of tragic migration. While Gorovets would probably call it a more realistic mode of filmmaking, it nonetheless underscores the film's difficult position within the Israeli national cinema.

In Israel, the film received a great deal of criticism. This made Gorovets leave the country for Holland, whence he returned to Ukraine for a short spell, only to return to Israel again. Hence the film could be seen as an allegory of Gorovets's own failure in the Russian diaspora. But this would mean to place too much weight on an auteurist reading of the film. Instead, I prefer to forward a reading of the film that takes into account the question that Gorovets initially set out to explore when making it: 'Can we find a place for art in Israel?' This question moulds Gorovets into an outsider within Israeli society (needless to say, there is plenty of art in Israel, but no artist is guaranteed making a living by art alone). However, Valery's return to Moscow is not an answer to Gorovets' question, because the production of the Bulgakov play will continue without Valery.[10] While the protagonist of the film fails to find a place in Israel, Gorovets has found a place as a filmmaker there despite the difficulties of not knowing all the codes of the adopted Hebrew language. For the Russian intelligentsia in Israel this is an almost insurmountable obstacle, because they cannot really compete for high-end jobs without mastering the new language (Santo 2005: 30). For Gorovets, educated in Russian philology and filmmaking, art and the ability to express oneself artistically lie at the heart of his working practice. This ability is somewhat lost by experiencing emigration at the age of forty. As he told me, '[before] I was a poet which meant that I mastered the codes of the Russian language and the codes of one's different "life stages", but these code systems are lost in migration'. Gorovets is the 'informer' filmmaker for an imaginary audience of back home, which can no longer be reached. Hence his bitterness towards Israel emerges in the film. In this way, Gorovets is an émigré Russian artist, who prefers to remain an outsider and act as the elevated visionary in order to make predictions about society marred by jaded authority. As such, Gorovets is representative of the second wave of Russian immigration to Israel, for whom a sense of self-containment (aided by the Israeli Russian-language media outlets (see Besprozvannaya, Timenchik & Rogachevskii 2016)) has led to detachment, which in turn allows 'naïve' questions to be asked. That said, it also leads to criticisms from the dominant 'voice' of the Israeli cultural establishment.

Before moving on to *Yana's Friends* and a different kind of Russian diaspora narrative, it is worth underlining the features of Gorovets's filmmaking that are important in the context of this study. Firstly, Gorovets's educational background bears significant weight on his working practice as well as on the content of *Coffee with Lemon*. Secondly, Gorovets is a second wave immigrant in Israel, which is reflected in his critical stance towards Zionism and in his efforts to be an outsider looking in on Israeli society. Thirdly, the time of Gorovets's emigration is important, coming, contrary to that of Arik Kaplun, at the age of forty. This late emigration, fused with the size of the immigration wave, makes it hard to shed the homeland identity completely. Therefore a return to the immigrant's place of origin is considered a tangible possibility. Such a possibility of return is refused to the characters from *Yana's Friends*.

Ha-Chaverim Shel Yana/*Yana's Friends*

The film is set during the First Gulf War (1991) and Iraqi missile attacks on Israel. The time frame of the film points to the paradox that many postcommunist immigrants experienced. That is, many emigrated from the FSU precisely because of the fear of armed civil unrest, only to arrive in Israel and realize that they had come to a country which is sporadically at war with its neighbors. The

war is explicitly referred to in *Yana's Friends* through several television news reports. One report switches to Russian Jewish immigrants alighting from the plane at the airport, kissing the ground and obviously glad to escape the Soviet Union, to covering the impact of missiles. Gas masks also feature prominently, worn by various protagonists in the film.

Arik Kaplun begins the story with black and white shots of the streets of Tel Aviv. The images focus on street musicians, be they a chamber ensemble or soloists playing the violin or accordion. Other street dwellers are not musicians but just beggars asking for money. The opening of the film sets up an important subplot in a way that sets it apart from *Coffee with Lemon*: the narrative of *Yana's Friends* follows multiple storylines which converge in the end. While in *Coffee with Lemon* the side story of the old man and his piano only adds to the main narrative, there are several stories in *Yana's Friends* that run in parallel. It soon, however, becomes clear that the story of three-month pregnant Yana commands the centre of attention. Yana is a slim blonde woman in her early thirties, who seems to be abroad for the first time in her life. The viewer gets no information as to her social position back in Russia, nor about her family background. Yana is abandoned in Tel Aviv by her husband Fimka, who has gone back to Russia to set up a business with the money he has loaned as a new immigrant in Israel. Yana is 'placed' in a room of a flat where Eli, an amateur filmmaker, also lives. The room, paid for by Fimka, is rented from Rosa, a first-wave Russian immigrant.

Also moving into the block of flats are Alik and his family: wife, baby son and grandad Isaac. Isaac, who comes to play an important role in the film, is a mute, wheelchair-bound World War II veteran. Because Isaac is disabled, his entrepreneurial son-in-law Alik sees potential fortunes in wheeling Isaac out into the streets to beg. For this income to materialise, Alik positions Isaac beside another Russian immigrant, Yuri Kalantarov, an accordion player, who is basking near a music school. Yuri, a former music teacher, hopes that once the people who run the music school hear his playing, they will employ him (again an example of cultural capital that goes unrecognised by the host country). For the time being, though, it is only the children from the school who listen to his music. When wheeled out beside Yuri the musician, veteran Isaac gets all the money from the kind-hearted passers-by. Soon an argument erupts between Yuri and Alik. 'I was here first', says the accordion player, but Alik is scrupulously arguing that people merely like the war veteran better (grandad Isaac wears World War II medals across his chest).

This image of the enterprising Russian wheeler-dealer 'taking over' from the earnest, well-educated and hard-working immigrant is a theme that runs throughout the film. This is also seen in the portrayal of Yana's husband Fimka who only cares for money and not for the human sacrifices that are left in his wake. Alik is sacrificing the dignity of grandad Isaac and Yana is being sacrificed by Fimka. Neither Isaac nor Yana consent to the condition in which they are placed. That said, while Isaac is paralysed and mute, Yana has both her voice and her mobility. Yana tries to leave Israel but is held back at the passport control because she does not have a release statement from the bank that gave her husband the loan. When Yana forces her way through and causes the airport to close down for several hours, Eli, her flatmate, has to come and vouch for her. Yana's efforts to leave Israel continue despite Eli's advances and his growing desire to 'rescue' Yana from her predicament, which is part of the narrative ploy that Kaplun sets out: will she or will she not return to Russia?

That said, the film could be viewed as a rescue drama, which suggests that the post-Soviet Russian female immigrant in Israel is victimized and in need of rescue by 'friends', i.e. Askhenazi men. Indeed the translation of the Hebrew title can also mean 'Yana's Boyfriends', which casts moral questions over Yana and her entrance into Israeli society – an entrance that, in the words of Gershenson and Hudson, 'only the romance with *sabra* can facilitate' (Gershenson & Hudson 2008: 33).

In order for Yana to get the bank release, she has to claw a year's worth of rent money from Rosa the landlady, and in Rosa Yana finds her match. In a scene where Yana tries to negotiate the rent money, Rosa tells Yana her own story of migration, which is contrasted with that of Yana's. When Rosa arrived in 1967 with a newborn baby, she got no help from the state and had to raise her son by herself. Rosa's contrasting account makes explicit the view that second-wave Russian immigrants are spoiled and complain whenever they can. The viewer's empathy towards Yana, however, makes her stand apart from the depiction of Alik, who seems to have no other goal than to be a parasite on the Israeli system. It is when she learns Rosa's story that Yana first begins taking matters into her own hands and starts looking for a job. She goes to shops and cafés in search of employment but is refused. She finds Alik's notice seeking a carer for grandad Isaac, but is beaten to the job by Edik, yet another Russian immigrant of the parasite mould.

What is important in Yana's job hunt is that she does not possess a 'cultural capital' of interest to potential employers. In fact, Kaplun had to defend his protagonist in this regard when applying for funding for the film: not all FSU immigrants are doctors of science or medicine. According to Kaplun, the reasoning from the Israeli Film Fund was that it is spending the taxpayers' money and hence has its doubts about funding screen representations of unsuccessful immigrants. This is also typical for other second wave characters, whose educational backgrounds or specialists' skills that might contribute to Israeli society are not mentioned – reflecting popular sentiments in Israeli society, wherein the second wave of Russian immigrants is viewed as lacking an understanding of a free-market economy and having an underdeveloped sense 'of an entrepreneurial spirit following years of communist cradling' (Santo 2005: 25). These are also some of the characteristics that are described in the stereotypical portrayals in *Sallah Shabati*; the Shabati family's creative sense of getting by in their new country is formed as sponging on Israeli society.

In *Yana's Friends*, Alik's family is depicted similarly. However, rather than viewing these skills as underdeveloped and backward, one could see the entrepreneurial spirit of post-Soviet Russians as quite advanced. There is entrepreneurial creativity but of a bend that stretches at times outside commonly accepted standards of both morality and law, which is predominantly obvious in the depiction of Alik. While he is presented in a bad light in his dealings with grandad Isaac, he is also energetic and inventive in providing for his family. Just as Yana's character does, Alik gains our sympathy during the film and in the end, when he and his family have decided to leave for the US, the viewers have sympathy for him. It should be mentioned that the actor playing Alik is Valdimir Friedman, a Gesher Theatre actor and one of the most popular and well-known Russian-Israeli actors on Israeli screens, who has risen to fame as a comedian with roles in other popular films: in for example, *Circus Palestine*/*Zircus Palestina* (Eyal Halfon,

1998) or *Schwartz Dynasty*/*Shoshelet Schwartz* (Amir Hasfari, 2005). The film plays the card of casting a shadow over the second wave of Russian immigrants to Israel, in order to reveal in the end the characters' loveable nature.

Another ingenious invention of these Russian immigrants is accordion-player Yuri's response to the challenge from grandad Isaac in gaining street audiences.[11] On a television programme, Yuri discovers the Theremin, a Russian-invented electronic musical instrument that again suggests a way of implementing Russian 'cultural capital.' Yuri, who passes the Theremin off as his own invention, uses it to recover the attention of the crowd. Thus Yuri's character points to the ingenuity of becoming a crowd pleaser. Furthermore, this image of the immigrant 'tricking' his audience in order to become popular echoes Valery's friend in *Coffee with Lemon*. As in *Coffee with Lemon*, one needs to lower one's act (or artistry) in order to gain recognition from the general public. Although Yuri's story points to the ingenuity of Russian immigrants, it also addresses the potential value that immigrants can offer to their host country. In this regard, Yuri's potential for giving music lessons to the children of the music school is realised in a scene where he conducts the children in his flat. The scene underlines that if the immigrant's cultural capital is placed in the right environment, then the host country can gain from the immigrant's skills and achieve an enriching cultural outlook. Contrary to the parasitic immigrant, as represented by Alik and Edik, Russian immigrants are often highly educated and have great cultural capital, exactly because they arrive from the FSU.[12]

In Baruch Kimmerling's account, the high educational credentials of Russian immigrants make them easier to mingle with the Askhenazi middle class and, furthermore, enable them to overtake the Sephardi Jews and Arab-Israelis in the competition for white-collar jobs. That said, *Yana's Friends* shies away from explicitly stating this, because, even though the two main characters, Yana and Eli, could be seen as joining forces in their love relationship, the distance between them remain and no complete merger of the two is realised.[13] In the postcolonial syncretism, the union between the two is not total, despite their similarities. However, the relationship is neither forced nor involuntary, but based on mutual consent; the two need each other, which in turn places the film completely within the diasporic mode of filmmaking.

In this regard, I divert from Avi Santo's reading of the film. In his analysis of the lovemaking scene, where both characters are wearing gas masks, he emphasises 'their sameness' (Santo 2005: 36). The gas mask scenes, however, could also be read as emphasising their detachment from, and their inability to take shape in, a complete symbiosis of the two ethnicities. This estranging effect of the gas masks I take from yet another Russian-Israeli immigration narrative. *10, Weitzman St.* (2006) is a short film by Pini Tavger about a Russian family arriving in Tel Aviv at the same time period as the protagonists of *Yana's Friends*. The strangeness and alienation from the situation of the First Gulf War is also at the centre of Tavger's short. In it, the family wrongly enters a house thinking that this is their new place of abode, but as they arrive during a missile attack, they find the streets deserted and all tenants in the house wearing gas masks. Therefore, I read the gas masks in *Yana's Friends* not as an assimilation, but rather as a distancing between the two characters, despite their intimate relationship. Furthermore, Santo merges Kaplun the filmmaker with the Eli character concluding that 'this is particularly disturbing since Kaplun is an actual "Russian" immigrant and Eli a fictive Israeli Sabra' (Santo 2005: 38). In my view, this again the case of an all too 'auteurist' reading of popular filmmaking, not in considering Eli the ideal Sabra Jew, but in narrating Kaplun as a Russian immigrant. Although not a Sabra, Kaplun has had an Israeli education and had lived in Israel for over 20 years by the time *Yana's Friends* was made, thus having adapted to Israeli society.

This is also why, time after time, Kaplun tries to get across that *Yana's Friends* is not *about* Russian immigration per se.[14] Kaplun wanted the film to be universal and to reach out to viewers well beyond the Russian diaspora in Israel. Kaplun wants to address Israeli viewers and to use the narrative to voice some of the problems that Israelis are already concerned with: the dubious morality of the Russian immigration's second wave in particular. It is in this regard that the Boureka film genre is brought into prominence, because Kaplun's picture addresses the 'interethnic tension between Russian immigrants and *sabras*' (Gershenson & Hudson 2008: 28). Kaplun does not subvert the image of the Russian immigrant, but plays along with the popular consensus of how immigrants from the FSU behave. Moreover, whereas Gorovets had trouble fusing the Russian immigrant with the Askhenazi Jew, Kaplun goes a step further in this attempt but stops before its completion. In his film, the post-Soviet Russian has the ability to integrate into the First World, yet in the process of this integration the Russian has something which confines him/her to the notion of being non-Western. Another factor in the divergence of the two Russian-Israeli filmmakers is that their leading characters are of different genders. Through love, marriage or prostitution the entrance of post-Soviet Russian female gender in the European 'West' (Israel included) is somehow easier than the admission of their male counterparts.

The New Generation of Russian Diasporic Filmmakers

Before concluding, it is necessary to point to the emergence of a new generation of Russian-Israeli filmmakers. Termed 'children of the second wave Russian immigrants', they were given viewing space at the 8th Jerusalem Film Festival in 2006 (Maftsir 2006: 61). The festival organised two special programmes with student short films by young Russian-Israeli filmmakers and an evening discussion. The moderator, Boris Maftsir, says in the festival programme: 'they arrived as children and matured into adults. They graduated from high school, went to the army, and studied film. Their films are filled with talent and candour' (Maftsir 2006: 61). Many of the student shorts in the programme do show the candour that the programme mentions. Two shorts in particular should be highlighted.

Alex (2003) by Noam Josephides shows the arrival of a family to peacetime Israel. Here the teenage boy Alex, who has problems with getting accepted, pulls a trick on an old Askhenazi lady from his neighbourhood by pretending that he is her long-lost son. Again the desire of becoming Askhenazi (even if by deception) is evident: by the end of the film, after the boy has been accepted by the Askhenazi youths of the backyard, a removals van brings in new immigrants. These new immigrants are Ethiopian Israelis, suggesting a hierarchy where the Russians are already aligned with the Askhenazis, while the 'new' immigrants are relegated to society's bottom. Although this is a continuation of the discourse found in *Coffee with Lemon*, the politics in *Alex* is much more subtle and inoffensive than Gorovets's heavy-handedness. This suggests that the new generation of filmmakers is in possession of greater awareness and sensibility, and that their cultural capital has largely been formed within the context of the host country rather than carried over from the home country.

Issues of assimilation and integration are also the topic of *Russian Dance* (2001) by another young Russian-Israeli filmmaker, Boris Levinzon. A young adult, Shay, after having spent ten years in the country, is an assimilated Israeli with no visible Russian markers. He has been in the army and has a red-haired (key symbol of the Ashkenazis) Israeli girlfriend but is thrown into turmoil

by the fact that his parents have decided to return to their 'hometown' of St Petersburg. Shay takes a trip down memory lane by visiting his old Russian Youth club, where he encounters a new Russian immigrant girl from St Petersburg. They have different memories of the city: he remembers Leningrad and she postcommunist St Petersburg. Realising that his Leningrad is no more, Shay decides to stay in Israel not least because of the new girl's hostility towards the Israeli society. Because he has learned to love Israel, he sees no point in returning to a country he once knew but to which he is now a stranger. As in *Alex*, *Russian Dance* emphasises the alignment of the Askhenazis with Russianness. Since these student shorts are somewhat cruder and less refined in their depiction of the topic of Russian immigration, they tend to be a lot more explicit in voicing the concerns of the Russian diaspora.

At the centre of the programme of the 2006 Jerusalem Film Festival was a new feature film, *Yaldey CCCP*/*The Children of CCCP* (2005) by Felix Gerchikov, who was born in the USSR and came to Israel in 1990 with his parents, at the age of nine.[15] This film reveals unabashedly the process of fighting for a place in Israeli society. Slava is thrown out by his girlfriend, with whom he has a newborn baby, because of his inability to find work in a small southern town. He protests that 'here they wouldn't have Russians' but seeks to reform his petty criminal gang by engaging them in a football match against the local Israeli team. The film centres on the gang's overcoming the obstacles of getting everybody fit for the match, out of prison and away from drugs. Furthermore, following encouragement from their coach, who is a former Soviet international football team member (played by Vladimir Friedman), an African-Israeli player is invited to join the Russians. Sporting red T-shirts with 'CCCP' (USSR) written on them, the team makes it to the match despite a team member's suicide. The film ends with the kick-off, hinting at a continuation of the struggle of the Russian diaspora.

The Children of CCCP suggests that Russian immigrants are the new Blacks in Israeli society, echoing the Sephardi experience found in the Boureka films. Just as might happen to a juvenile Sephardi character in the early 1970s' Israeli cinema, in *The Children of CCCP*, Slava stands at the crossroads of choosing between a life of crime and a life among honest elders – mainly his football coach. Gerchikov's film clearly shows Russians abroad from the postcolonial perspective, because the film positions its main protagonist as being angered at his status as a social outcast, an anger that is geared towards the dominant society. It is a male-driven narrative that bears little resemblance to Valery and the projection of homeland in *Coffee with Lemon*; instead, similarly to the Sephardi narratives of the 1970s, it gives voice to discontent and resentment. Pointing to a continuous struggle, the film projects a fight back in the postcolonial mould which is aimed at tackling discrimination. However, the film is simultaneously (self-)critical of the diasporic community. For example, the parents of Slava's girlfriend also look down upon him and his inability to find work. Slava has to fight prejudices from both the dominant society and within his own diasporic community.

This new wave of younger Russian-Israeli filmmakers points to the Russian diaspora in Israel as continuing to express their concerns through a cinematic style and narrative tone that searches for popular reception. In particular, Gerchikov's film suggests that Israeli cinema has the ability to produce 'ethnic' narratives (in the mould of Boureka), which can engage wider Israeli audiences. These young filmmakers are closer to *Yana's Friends* and Arik Kaplun than to *Coffee with Lemon* and Leonid Gorovets. Return is not an option for these filmmakers. They are firmly grounded in Israeli society, with all the problems that this entails. When asked about *The Children of CCCP*, Gorovets retorted:

We are in a new epoch of filmmaking, where cinema has split into art cinema [the old language] and new cinema [narrative language]. The latter is an unprofessional cinema with young directors who have no formal education or training. *The Children of CCCP* is made in this way. The director is very young and inexperienced. I do not like this film. Instead of working with Israeli actors, I prefer to work with Russian actors, because they are better trained.

The fact is that for over a decade, Gerchikov and Prudovsky have been making feature films and TV series in Russia (some of them co-produced with Israel). Gerchikov graduated with distinction from the film school at Israel's Sapir College.

Gorovets's Soviet cultural capital and his formal cinematic training is termed old and undesirable, while the young faster pace, clearer cultural clashes and self-criticism are with the new generation. In terms of cinematic styles, then, and unlike Gorovets, Kaplun adheres to narrative cinema and entertainment art forms. Hence he has no grudge to bear against the new up-and-coming Russian Israeli filmmakers. Talking about *The Children of CCCP*, Kaplun makes it clear that he likes the film very much. He said: 'it resembles an early Robert Altman film'. The difference between the two filmmakers becomes obvious here: Kaplun's linkage to narrative cinema, and Gorovets's insistence on auteurist cinema. While both filmmakers represent the 'informer' perspective, they aim at different audiences that are located outside the Israeli context. Kaplun seeks to make his narrative compatible with an internationally accepted formula, while Gorovets reworks the Russian and Soviet formula of high art cinema. In short, while both look at the Russian diaspora, Gorovets addresses his work more to Russian viewers back home, while Kaplun targets international 'Western' viewers. This difference goes beyond the dichotomy of art versus popular cinema, suggesting that there are differences in discourses of the diaspora narrative. Therefore, the two principal films analysed here in depth are not pitted against one another but are viewed as complementary and representing two different accounts of the Russian Israeli diaspora.

To conclude, the films analysed here have been made entirely within the context of the Israeli film industry and therefore have been through a strict rubber-stamping process, where they have been assessed as fit for public release and deemed having something to offer the average Israeli cinema audience, whether Russian-speaking or not. Thus these films are part of the Israeli public discourse, as seen most clearly in Kaplun's feature. *Yana's Friends* addresses popular Israeli perceptions of Russian newcomers as economic migrants who are not particularly concerned with Zionist beliefs. This topic of Russians struggling their way through the lower strata of Israeli society is further developed more recently in films such as *The Children of CCCP*. Just as the children of Sephardis/Mizrahis in the 1970s, for whom ethnicity and class played a large role in the formation of a national Israeli identity, so too do the children of postcommunist Russian immigrants stand at a crossroads, posing a threat to dominant society and in need of identity (national and/or diasporic) for themselves. This is why the Boureka films and the analysis of Sephardi characters is useful for examining Russian-Israeli filmmaking. The representation of Sephardis in Israeli cinema went from the construction of otherness through a Manichaean split where 'the putative "essence" was separated into positive [Ashkenazis] and negative [Sephardis] poles' (Shohat 1987: 147), to a more balanced narrative, in which juvenile characters search for selfhood and an identity outwith their parents' diaspora identity.

In *Coffee with Lemon*, Valery assumes he is the Manichaean positive – just like in the nationalist Israeli cinema of the 1950s. However, Valery's cultural capital goes unrecognised by the dominant society. *Yana's Friends*' comic play on the positive and the negative aspects of Russian immigration equally reinforces the postcommunist stereotype of the Russian abroad, which is evident, in particular, in the dubious 'entrepreneurial' skills of Alik. It appears from the depiction of *Yana's Friends* that the postcommunist Russian immigrant to Israel carries the split within him, the positive ('Western appearance') as well as the negative ('Oriental laziness'). The assertion in this chapter is that the Russian immigrant in the Israeli context adheres to the general European outlook by 'overtaking' the Sephardi Oriental Jew but fails to be a full member of the idealised Sabra community, because of his or

her perennial Eastern European position of origin. It would be a gross mistake to compare outright the representation of Russians in *Yana's Friends* to those of Sephardis in *Sallah Shabati*. However, the investigation should not fail to notice that both films are comedies, and both play on popularly accepted stereotypes and notions of large waves of immigration to Israel.

Notes

1] The term Mizrahi might be better suited, as it groups the Jews who originate from the Arab world. However, Mizrahi Jews use the Sephardi liturgy, and hence are grouped as Sephardi. I use the term 'Sephardi' here because of the ethnic connotations. Sephardi Jews are considered to be Mediterranean and not just Spanish Jews. Just as Ashkenazi has become an umbrella term for white Northern European Jews, so Sephardi has become the term for the Oriental, black Jews. That said, this dynamic excludes consideration of the Ethiopian Jews. The voice of the Sephardi community is much larger because of the community's size, and therefore more politically and culturally influential.

2] Vienna was the first destination en route to Israel (the Soviet Union had cut diplomatic relations with Israel in 1967 and direct journey became impossible). Here many opted for changing their Israeli destination. This is also the destination of the leading character in *Passport* (Georgi Danelia 1990), whose migration to Israel happens by accident. Yosefa Loshitzky deals with Vienna's liminal position during the Cold War with regard to *Nordrand/Northern Skirts* (Barbara Albert 1999) (see Loshitzky 2010: 50).

3] It is worth noting that the actor playing Sallad Shabati is Haim Topol of Ashkenazi origin, who also performs the leading role of Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* (Norman Jewison, 1971), which tells us of the Jewish Russian shtetl exodus from pre-Revolutionary Russia. This indicates, as Shohat points out, that the casting of the Sephardi roles often involves Ashkenazi actors. 'This ethnic imbalance is especially true for the sixties' "bourekas", in which the overwhelming majority of the producers, writers, directors, actors, and musicians were Ashkenazi. *Sallah Shabati*, for example, was produced by Golan, scripted and directed by Kishon and starred Topol in the leading role, while Sallah's wife was played by Ester Greenberg' (Shohat 1987: 135-6).

4] Leonid Gorovets was interviewed by the author on 19 January 2007 at the Cinematheque in Tel Aviv.

5] Arik Kaplun was interviewed by the author at his own flat in Tel Aviv on 21 January 2007.

6] Marek Rozenbaum was interviewed by the author at the offices of Transfax Film in Tel Aviv on 22 January 2007.

7] Also called 'Vysotki' (or the Seven Sisters by English-speaking expatriates), these 'cupcake' buildings of Stalin's 'Empire' style are desirable and much preferred living accommodation, which again suggests the high status of Valery in the Soviet Union.

8] Religious authorities have not been willing to recognize their religious practice and the unemployment rate among Ethiopians is about three times above the national average, forcing many Ethiopian-Israelis into professional military service, as it constitutes their only way into Israeli society. Furthermore, the Ethiopian population has been segregated from the rest of Israeli society, settling in Israel's most impoverished urban areas. 'Numbering about 70,000, most of Israel's immigrants from Ethiopia arrived in dramatic airlifts in 1984 and 1991' (See USCRI 2000).

9] Analysing the images of Moscow that appear throughout the film, Avi Santo notes that Gorovets 'shatters the illusion of a mystical homeland to which the exiled FSU community can return, choosing instead to end the film with images of the harsh reality of life in [post-Soviet Russia] after its economic collapse and with [Valery's wife] trapped in liminality with no escape in sight' (Santo 2005: 31).

10] *The Master and Margarita* was performed at the Russian Gesher theatre in Tel Aviv a couple of years after the film had been released, which, Gorovets admitted, indicated that there was a place for high (Russian) art in Israel, after all.

11] The character is played by the Israeli actor Shmil Ben-Ari, which points to a casting strategy where well-known faces of Israeli cinema are employed to allow the film to reach out beyond the Russian diaspora filmmaking. Gershenson and Hudson stress that Ben-Ari's accented Russian does not interfere with the narrative, because he plays a Bukharan Jew from Central Asia (Gershenson & Hudson 2007: 312). While this could be highlighted within the multiple language use of the film and as part of its diasporic traits, I will underline the film's viewer strategy, as mentioned above, and Yuri's profession as important.

12] According to Kimmerling, referring to the second wave of Russian immigrants to Israel, '58% of the immigrants of working age were classified as having academic [education] (in comparison to 25 percent of the veteran Israeli population)' (Kimmerling 2001: 141).

13] Still, the two end up closer to each other than the protagonists of a bittersweet romance by the Russian-Israeli film director Leonid Prudovsky, *Five Hours from Paris* (Hamesh Shaot me'Pariz, 2009). Prudovsky can be considered a child of the second wave, as he arrived in Israel in 1991 at the age of 13 and was educated at the Tel Aviv University's Film and TV Department. In the film, a Sephardi taxi driver and a Russian-Jewish immigrant music teacher are drawn to one another but can only manage a brief affair.

14] Kaplun mediated this in his interview conducted for my study, in an interview with *Jewish Journal* and, presumably, also when talking to Avi Santo. Kaplun said, 'when the film was in circulation, I was very much against calling this film a Russian immigrant film, for the same reasons that *Othello* is not an immigrant story. To me the film is about love and I didn't care about the migrant situation. In fact, the First Gulf War is the only thing that ties it to Israel and the Israeli situation. It could as easily have been made in LA during the race riots or during 9/11 in New York'.

15] For alternative brief analyses of the film, see, for example, Gershenson 2011; and Åsne Høgetveit's review in this special issue of *KinoKultura*.

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