Introduction

> This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has caught his wings with such force that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.
>
> Benjamin 1969, 258

The storm of progress propels Walter Benjamin's "angel of history" into the future, but at the same time, the ongoing catastrophe of history accumulates rubble at his feet. The storm of progress, the pile of debris, and the angel's unfulfilled wish to redeem what has been destroyed shape the landscape of Russian-Jewish and Soviet Yiddish literature of the twentieth century, a century that saw massive dislocation and death, and yet also the creation of an extraordinary literature in both Russian and Yiddish.[1] In a speech given in Warsaw in 1930, the Yiddish writer David Bergelson said that literature from the Soviet Union was like a symphony orchestra playing on an express train. Those standing on the platform hear the "interrupted, incomplete sounds" as the train passes and want to catch it (1930, 439). The train was commonly used as a symbol of progress at this time, but splitting the perspective between those on it and those not was unique to Bergelson. He framed the question of the Jewish reader's response to Soviet literature as a physics problem, the difference between the source and the observer and the effect of relative motion on sound (the Doppler effect). In so doing, Bergelson suggests the fundamental paradox underlining Soviet culture: its actors are always too early or too late for their bright future. It continually eludes them. For those left behind on the platform, the train of progress only piles up disaster. Jewish literature in Russian and Yiddish from the Soviet century is in both places at once—on the rushing express train and on the platform, contemplating the bodies that lie in its wake.

The story of Russian-Jewish and Soviet Yiddish literature in the twentieth century remains largely untold. Most versions end the story in the late 1930s, or in 1952, when leading Yiddish authors were shot. Many critics insist that what was published after the 1920s was the result of force. The story does not end at midcentury, however, but continues into the 1960s and 1970s, when Yiddish and Russian translations of Yiddish resumed publication; and extends through the turn of the twenty-first century, as Russian-Jewish authors craft new works.

Studies by Jeffrey Veidlinger, David Shneer, Gennady Estraikh, Mikhail Krutikov, and Anna Shternshis have demonstrated the importance of Soviet Yiddish institutions and writers, established a model of cultural production in which the categories "Jewish" and "Soviet" could coexist, and argued for the rich cross-fertilization of Yiddish and Russian literature.[2] Other scholars have discussed Russian-Jewish authors such as Isaac Babel, but no full-scale literary study combining Russian and Yiddish is available.[3] The wall that has been erected in the critical literature separating Yiddish from Russian obscures the rich interplay between the two languages and literary traditions. Although some critics, especially Efraim Sicher, have noted that Babel's artistic and political concerns were similar to those of the Yiddish writers of the same period, few discussions include both literatures.[4] It is as if Babel, Perets Markish, and Bergelson lived on different planets, as if Babel did not translate from Yiddish (in addition to editing the translation of Sholem Aleichem, Babel translated Bergelson's story "Dzhiro dzhiro," about a little girl in a New York tenement), and as if he and Bergelson did not speak at the same inaugural conference of the Soviet Writer's Union in 1934. That was when Babel said he had become a "master of the genre of silence." While the critical literature has neglected the literary interactions of Babel, Markish, and Bergelson, the writers themselves were familiar with each other's work. Shimon Markish, the son of the Yiddish writer and an important critical voice in Russian-Jewish literature, has written that both his father and Bergelson were "entranced" by Babel's work.[5] The Russian-language poet Osip Mandelshtam was similarly entranced by the performance of the Yiddish actor Solomon Mikhoels.[6]

This study is a work of restoration, an attempt to recover Jewish literature and culture from the Soviet Union, in order to tell a story long overshadowed by the teleology of "hope to ashes." The recovery does not depend on a trip to archives closed until 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed. The recovery depends rather on the act of reading. My readings situate Isaac Babel, David Bergelson, Mandelshtam, Perets Markish, Leyb Kvitko, Der Nister, Semen Gekht, Itsik Kipnis, Il'ia Erenburg, Emmanuel Kazakevich, Vasilii Grossman, Semen Lipkin, Il'ia Sel'vinskii, Fridrikh Gorenshtein, Shire Gorshman, Dina Kalinovskaia, Dina Rubina, Alexandr Melikhov, Inna Lesovaia, and other authors in the same literary universe in which modernism and socialist realism, revolution and catastrophe, as well as traditional Jewish writings, including the Hebrew Bible, liturgy, and classic rabbinic texts provide the framework for creativity.

Traditional Jews saw ongoing reality in light of biblical precedent, according to a paradigm that linked each successive event to "the continuum of Jewish sacred history" (Miron 2000, 40).[7] Before the 1917 revolutions and outside any ideological commitment to socialism, Yiddish authors pushed their readers to abandon this biblical lens, and offered in its place the conventions of literary realism, which emphasizes the here and now and the ordinariness of daily life. Later, in the 1930s, official cultural doctrine in the Soviet Union stressed the role of the arts in creating a path toward the future, subordinating the present and the past to its purposes.[8]

Nonetheless, the Jewish historiographical habit of seeing the present in light of the past persisted. The Soviet century, for all its emphasis on construction and mobilization, also gave rise to the reinvention of a backward-glancing Jewish temporality. During his interrogation Bergelson described the power of biblical images, especially the destructions of the Temple, commemorated on the Ninth of Av (Rubenstein and Naumov 2001, 150–51). Mandelshtam's writing reveals a secular but nonetheless Jewish temporal orientation: his exploration of the fractured chronology of his epoch, his repulsion from and subsequent attraction to the Jewish past, and his renunciation of contemporaneity put him in the same orbit of thought as authors who knew classic Yiddish literature and whose religious upbringing enabled them to see the destruction of their own era in light of ancient Jewish history.[9] Writing in the early Soviet era, Mandelshtam came to see his own present moment as an aftereffect of catastrophe. Both Benjamin's angel of history and Mandelshtam's terrible century look backward, only Mandelshtam's century, like a wounded beast, looks back at "the traces left by its own paws" (*na sledy svoikh zhe lap*) (Mandelshtam 1991, 103).

Zvi Gitelman and Anna Shternshis have established that religious observance and knowledge were not significant factors in Soviet Jewish identity.[10] Soviet Jews shared a secular and ethnic form of Jewish identification rather than an attachment to the Jewish calendar or the Jewish textual tradition. Soviet nationality policy in the 1930s, urbanization, and the devastation of the Second World War, taken together, resulted in what Gitelman calls a "thin culture," devoid of external manifestations of Jewishness (Gitelman 2003, 49). My readings, especially of postwar Jewish literature, suggest that this culture was not necessarily so thin; my focus, however, is not on personal identity but rather on artistic compositions, primarily prose and poetry, and also journalism and films—in other words, cultural artifacts whose formal patterns can be traced, analyzed, and put in dialogue with other works.[11] The literary methodology that I use includes close reading, the examination of poetics, and the exploration of intertextuality. Rhythm and sound can enhance the experience of temporal disjuncture that many of these works sought to create; hidden quotation can reanimate silenced voices. My formalism is a defensive reaction against the ways that most of the works I discuss have been previously received; it is a way of recovering the pleasure of reading a body of literature that has been made invisible as literature.[12] After the catastrophic violence of the twentieth century and the hope and delusion of the Soviet project, what still remains is the trace left by the text, which must be considered in its historical context but cannot be reduced to a mere reflection of it, or to a repository of identity markers, the author's biography, or the reigning political doctrine of the time (which the author may support or oppose). These things must be taken into account, but the text has to be understood in its own terms, according to its own internal logic.

Most of the authors I discuss, with the exception of Babel, Mandelshtam, and Grossman, are unknown to the English-language audience.

New translations from Yiddish and new anthologies of Russian-Jewish literature in English have changed the picture somewhat.[13] Nonetheless, the undeserved obscurity of many of the writers in this study stems not only from linguistic obstacles. The long-term consequences of the Cold War have led many scholars to accept the lachrymose view of Soviet Jewry, and its corollary in the oft-quoted line, "Hitler killed the readers and Stalin killed the writers."[14] According to this view, there was little Jewish culture in the Soviet Union after the 1920s until the so-called Jewish national revival after the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War. The chapters that follow provide more detailed historical background, but a few general remarks challenging this view must be made at the outset. Jews and secular Jewish culture in Yiddish and Russian were not the particular target of negative government campaigns in the 1920s; Jews lost their lives in the purges of the 1930s but were not uniquely singled out as Jews, although Jewish cultural institutions, like those of other nationalities, were targeted.[15] Yiddish and Jewish-oriented literature flourished during the war against Hitler. Stalin murdered Mandelshtam and Babel, the Yiddish actors Solomon Mikhoels and Veniamin Zuskin, and the Yiddish writers Bergelson, Der Nister, Leyb Kvitko, David Hofshteyn, Markish, Shmuel Persov, and Itsik Fefer, but many other Yiddish writers of note survived Hitler and Stalin and saw their work published after the Second World War (I discuss Shmuel Halkin, Shire Gorshman, Moshe Altman, and Itsik Kipnis, for example).[16] Jewish literary and visual artists were prominent figures in Soviet life; Yuri Slezkine, among others, has amply documented their success as professionals and members of the elite.[17]

A central misapprehension about literature from the Soviet Union, whether authored by Jews or not, is that it lacks artistic interest. There is no point in reading anything written in Soviet Yiddish or in Russian after the 1920s, because from 1934 on, socialist realism was the only officially tolerated doctrine in all the arts. Many critics repeat Stalin's dictum about Soviet "national cultures as being 'national in form, socialist in content'" (Martin 2001, 182).[18] The forced marriage of national form and socialist content produced a wide range of results, including some that subverted the socialist project. The only works that that were strictly "socialist in content and national in form" were birthday greetings to Stalin, translations of Marx and Lenin into Yiddish, and so on.

Entering the world of Jewish literature from the Soviet Union, readers may expect to find themselves in a remote backwater, in an ancient grandmotherly apartment infused with the smell of mothballs; decorated with sofas draped in plastic slipcovers, busts of Lenin, and dishes of hard candies so old that their flavors would be indistinguishable; and enveloped by the "gentle aroma of decay," as in Gedali's shop. What I discovered, in contrast, was an intensely vibrant literature, violent and erotic, earthy and prophetic, expressing searing pain, savage irony, and bitter humor, and in active dialogue with its time and place. These works are not merely vessels of an obsolete ideology, of value only as historical documents. On the contrary, they are hauntingly beautiful, emotionally compelling, and philosophically engaged, "good to think with" in relation to current critical issues, including the questions of how the state inscribes itself on the bodies of its citizens, how gender relates to narratives of foundation, and how literature testifies to atrocity. These works disturb our ideas about the Jewish past; reading them attentively expands and unsettles our model of the Jewish literary imagination, particularly in relation to Yiddish.

How I found Jewish literature from the Soviet Union is another story. In the bibliographic sources published during the Soviet times, there was no entry labeled "Jewish works"; even when the term *evreiskii* appeared, it meant literature written in Yiddish, and not all Yiddish literature found its way into Soviet reference books. This is where conversation proved more helpful than bibliography. Many of the works I discuss were recommended to me by other knowledgeable scholars, including Ol'ga Boravaia, Valerii Dymshits, Gennady Estraikh, Leonid Katsis, Viktor Kel'ner, and Mikhail Krutikov. Every time I traveled to the former Soviet Union, I asked people what they read when they were growing up, what books were on their parents' bookshelves, how they found out about the Holocaust, what literature from the Soviet Union they considered Jewish, and why.

A brief introduction to Yiddish literature, a clarification of the term "Soviet Yiddish," and a preliminary discussion of socialist realism will help set the stage for the chapters that follow. Modern secular Yiddish literature emerged in the 1860s, with the work of Sh. Y. Abramovitsh (Mendele Moykher Sforim, the Book Seller), Y. L. Peretz, and Sholem

Rabinovitsh (Sholem Aleichem).[19] These canonical authors created prose works that were often harshly critical of traditional Jewish life in the small market towns of the Pale of Settlement. Satire, an orientation to the forms of oral speech, and a verbose, folksy narrator are the hallmarks of the best-known Yiddish classics, although Peretz's prose and drama do not conform to this model. There is a direct continuity between the didactic social criticism characteristic of nineteenth-century Yiddish and works from the early Soviet period, which also attacked the shtetl, depicting its way of life as moribund. Yiddish writers in the Soviet Union in the postwar period continued to respond to the legacy of the classics; Moshe Altman, for example, references Freud, Bergson, and Sholem Aleichem, and Kanovich similarly engages Peretz.

The rise of secular Yiddish culture coincided with the development of modern Hebrew literature; Abramovitsh, for example, wrote in both languages. By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, Jews had also created a Russian-language literature aimed at Jews; among the prominent authors were the poet Semen Frug and the prose author Semen Iushkevich. The journal *Razsvet* (Dawn), which later became *Evreiskaia zhizn'* (Jewish life), played a major role.[20] In 1908 Kornei Chukovsky, who would become one of the Soviet Union's preeminent theoreticians of translation, wrote a provocative article on the contribution of Jews to Russian literature.[21] Appealing to the secular, Russian-speaking Jewish intelligentsia, S. An-sky sought to renew Jewish art and literature with the objects, photographs, music, stories, and folklore that he had gathered during his ethnographic expeditions in the Pale of Settlement before the First World War.[22] He used Russian and Yiddish for his fiction, drama, and polemical writings. In 1918 the critic Abram Efros predicted a "renaissance" for Jewish culture on the basis of An-sky's discoveries (Efros 2001).

In the same period, a new type of Yiddish literature began to appear. Formal experimentation, new developments in poetry, and an orientation away from the shtetl and toward European, universal, and humanist ideals were the watchwords of this new departure. A variety of literary movements emerged in Kiev, New York, and elsewhere that focused on the emotional experience of individuals free from the burden of heritage and community. The early lyric poetry of Perets Markish and David

Hofshteyn celebrates the beauty and pleasure of subjective experience in the moment of its unfolding.[23] In the ironically titled "Ikh gleyb s'iz mir bashert" (I believe I am fated), Hofshteyn renounces fate, burdens, and debts, and enjoys the light, like "mother-of-pearl," that plays on his eyelids, reflected from the parchment walls of his room (Hofshteyn 1987). What later became formalized as the "Kiev group" included I. J. Singer, Kadia Molodovsky, the theoretician Moshe Litvakov, in addition to Bergelson, Markish, Osher Shvartsman, and Der Nister.[24] A Jewish cultural movement that emphasized high art in both Hebrew and Yiddish briefly flowered in the period 1917–19 (Moss 2009). The Kiev Kultur-Lige, one of the central institutions of this movement, oversaw the production of remarkable works of visual and literary art.[25]

Jewish cultural activists had long debated whether Hebrew or Yiddish should be the language of the Jewish people, but by 1920–21, the Jewish sections of the Communist Party closed Hebrew down, and in 1921 Yiddish became the official language of the Jewish people in the Soviet Union, a government-sponsored language of an ethnic minority.[26] Hebrew may have been shut down, but it was not forgotten. For example, Itsik Kipnis's postwar autobiographical fiction "Fun mayne togbikher" (From my diaries), published in the Soviet Yiddish journal *Sovetish heymland* (Soviet homeland) in 1965, pays homage to Chaim Nachman Bialik, the Hebrew national poet. Like other languages of the new Soviet state, including Russian, Yiddish underwent a process of reform, centered mostly on the phonetic spelling of its Hebrew words.[27] Other ethnic minority languages were subject to transformations with far greater long-range consequences; for example, changing from Arabic to Latin alphabets.[28] "Soviet Yiddish" in a technical sense refers to works that used Soviet Yiddish orthography; in terms of themes, Soviet Yiddish writers produced works promoting pig-farming, intermarriage, and other changes that would undermine traditional Jewish practice.[29]

But they also created a form of Jewish literature within the Soviet framework. Choosing Yiddish as the language of literary creativity was a profoundly *Jewish* choice, as Bergelson argued in the communist Yiddish journal *In shpan* (In harness), which he helped to create. In "Dray tsentern" (Three centers), an article published in 1926, Bergelson said that Yiddish was going to survive best in Moscow. Economically successful American Jews were making the "old Jewish mistake" of pursuing assimilation. Bergelson explicitly used the language of religious conversion ("*optsushmadn*") to critique American Jews, who used English to enter the mainstream. The propertied classes feel that "if baptismal water (*shmad-vaser*) converts only the body, language converts also the soul" (1926, 84). In contrast, the "conscious Jewish worker" has no desire to lose Yiddish, because to do so would be to risk becoming an "impotent and sterile stammerer" (*a shafungslozer impotenter kvatpe*) (85). Losing Yiddish threatens creativity, rendered in the masculinist terms of impotence; indeed its loss threatens the very capacity to speak.

So much for Yiddish as mere form. Bergelson's polemically bleak assessment of the possibilities of Jewish expression in languages other than Yiddish, however, ought to be taken with a grain of salt, given that his audience was Moscow. A few remarks about the issue he raises—Jewish literature in non-Jewish languages—are nonetheless in order. By 1926 outstanding examples had already appeared, including, in Russian, the work of Babel and Mandelshtam, and in German, Kafka.[30] Soviet officials may not have recognized the fluidity of language and the hybridity of artistic utterance, but writers in the Soviet Union both theorized and expressed themselves creatively by using this open-ended model (see Chapter Seven).[31] Jewish authors working in Russian looked over their shoulder at Yiddish (for example, Babel, Gekht, Sel'vinskii, and Karabchievskii), and writers working in Yiddish and Russian looked back to the scenes and cadences of the Hebrew Bible (Bergelson, Der Nister, Markish, Altman, Gorshman, Slutskii, Lipkin, and Grossman).

In using the terms "Russian-Jewish literature" and "Jewish literature in Russian" I mean Russian-language work with Jewish themes written by Jews. Since this study is concerned with cultural production in Soviet Russia generally, I will also discuss works written by Jews without any ostensible Jewish content. I intend to push on the question of what constitutes Jewish literature. A body of critical work engages this issue; however, one of the most provocative discussions is not focused specifically on Jews but rather on the broad question of ethnicity and literature.[32] Werner Sollors explains:

> Especially since Herder and the Grimms, the notion has gained dominance that a 'people' is held together by a subliminal culture of fairy

> tales, songs, and folk beliefs—the original ethnic ('völkisch') subsoil of the common people's art forms that may culminate in the highest artistic achievements. As a result of this legacy "ethnicity" as a term for literary study largely evokes the accumulation of cultural bits that demonstrate the original creativity, emotive cohesion, and temporal depth of a particular collectivity, especially in a situation of emergence—be it from obscurity, suppression, embattlement, dependence, diaspora, or previous membership in a larger grouping. (Sollors 1995, 290)

Authors producing literature with a high quotient of "cultural bits" in order to demonstrate the cohesion of a particular people are often doing so under the glare of the colonial spotlight, under the watchful eyes of an external power that denies them status, rights, and acceptance. Sollors's argument sheds light on the pitfalls of defining ethnic literature. Literary scholars tracking down "cultural bits" run the risk of ignoring how external constraints shape what they look like. Scholarship preoccupied with defining and policing the borders of ethnic identity in order to demarcate the field of ethnic literature can end up miming the oppressive surveillance of a state or colonial apparatus. The critic who dismisses a Soviet era literary work in Yiddish or Russian because it is not Jewish enough (because it lacks "Jewish cultural bits") resembles Soviet era critics (in the case of Yiddish works, these would have been Jews) who dismissed a work because it was too "nationalist" and not sufficiently Soviet. In 1929 the Yiddish critic Moshe Litvakov attacked the Yiddish poet Perets Markish on the grounds that his civil war epic *Brider* (Brothers) was too Jewish, even though he did not use these words (Litvakov 1929). In 1937 Moshe Litvakov was shot.[33] The Soviet bureaucrats who closed down Yiddish journals and publication houses in 1949 amassed evidence of Jewish nationalism in the works of prominent Yiddish writers of the time in order to justify their attempt to destroy Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union. Their reading practices ought not to provide a model for our own.

"Cultural bits" can be important when examined in dynamic interaction with other literary factors, but an exclusive focus on their accumulation is not productive, because it reduces both Jewish identity and Jewish literature to static monoliths. A literary work that features a higher number of Jewish characters with dark, mournful eyes, side curls, dreaminess, or disabilities in horsemanship and other athletic or martial skills is no more Jewish than a text lacking protagonists with such alleged Jewish characteristics. Framing the question of Soviet Jewish studies with a fixed template of what Jews and Jewishness are precludes the discovery of anything new. This includes even some recent definitions of the Jew, such as Yuri Slezkine's model of Jews as "Mercurians," service nomads, whose mobility, intellect, and adaptability make them well-suited to be moderns (2004). Assumptions about Jewishness must be suspended in order to discover the meanings and associations of this term in Russia and elsewhere in the twentieth and early twenty-first century. To explore the specificity of Russian-Jewish cultural production in both Russian and Yiddish, it is necessary to trace the absences, and incongruities, noticing what has been *re-marked* in a second, translated, or sometimes encoded language, instead of looking for the authentic essence of Jewish identity. Doing so, I hope, provides an escape from the "matrix of continuity" and makes more concrete the concept of "contiguity, the state of being a borderline," which Dan Miron argues is necessary for a "new Jewish literary thinking" (2010, 305–7). Literary texts are produced by a structure of differences; they are not transparent vessels of "identity." Literary authors—as Sollors and Bakhtin before him point out—speak in multivocal, heteroglot languages. The chapters that follow attempt to make visible the space in between, where Russian and Jewish and Yiddish writing touch one another.

The theme of continuity nonetheless has a place in my argument. Work produced by Jews in Russia in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries comprises a unique Jewish cultural entity, informed both by Soviet civilization, which they helped to build, and by the heritage of the past. Whether they purport to "overcome" and remake Jewish life in the former Pale of Settlement, as in the 1920s and 1930s, whether they merely revisit this legacy, or what is more often the case, it visits and haunts them, as in the postwar and post-Soviet periods, the culture created by Jews in both Russian and Yiddish has a deep attachment to Jewish life of the past.

The preoccupation with the past challenges the prime directive of the Soviet aesthetic system known as "socialist realism." Invented in 1932, socialist realism was officially promulgated at the First Congress of the Soviet Writer's Union in 1934, when it was declared to be "the basic method of Soviet literature and literary criticism. It demands of the artist the truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. Moreover, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic representation must be linked with the task of ideological transformation and education of workers in the spirit of socialism."[34] There is an obvious disparity between the truthful representation of reality and its representation in an idealized form, or "in its revolutionary development." Meir Viner, a well-known critic of both Yiddish and Russian literature, explained in 1935 that "to see and recognize authentic reality means to see and recognize the inevitable future in its more or less developed embryo."[35] Socialist realist literature glossed over reality, as Soviet critics themselves pointed out in the 1950s. The template for socialist realist literature shifted over the course of Soviet history, but generally artistic works had to show their "ideological commitment" (*ideinost'*), party-mindedness (*partiinost'*), national/popular spirit (*narodnost'*), and "contemporaneity" (*sovremennost'*).[36] Another requirement concerned the representation and self-representation of the "national minorities," which necessarily included the stereotype of the Russian friend and comrade teaching the minority individual, under the policy known as the "friendship of nations" (discussed in Chapters Two and Seven).

Some aspects of socialist realism are alien to Western culture. The didactic goal of educating workers in the spirit of socialism contradicts the American promise about the individual's right to pursue happiness. On closer inspection, however, there are parallels to be drawn.[37] The purpose of the transformation of individuals under socialism, as Maxim Gorkii said at the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers, was for the sake of their happiness. Capitalism and socialism competed over which system could best secure personal happiness and the happiness of minority groups. Socialist realist art and literature from the Soviet Union, not unlike Norman Rockwell paintings, Disneyland, and "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" and other artifacts of American culture, provided the reassuring vision of age-old dreams fulfilled in the here and now, as in the popular Soviet song of the 1930s "The March of the Aviator," the first line of which reads, "We were born to make fairy tales come true."[38]

Jews contributed to the sound of that quintessentially American holiday, Christmas (it may be unnecessary to point out that Irving Berlin wrote "White Christmas"), just as they contributed to the sound, look, and narrative of Soviet life ("Aviator" was composed by two Jews).

Katerina Clark's classic work on socialist realism shows that the art produced under its aegis sought to transform the time of daily life, *chronos*, into sacred time, *kairos*.[39] Personal happiness under socialism exceeded the lives of mere individuals to achieve transcendent historical significance: the triumph of socialism and the end of time; eternity now. Evgenii Dobrenko emphasizes Clark's key point about time: the socialist realist "dream factory . . . represented the future as the present . . . everything produced by Socialist Realism already existed, had already come to pass" (Dobrenko 2004, 700). Socialist realism transformed everyday life into an airbrushed, pumped-up monument to the everyday life that socialism was to have achieved—hence novels about heroic nighttime factory construction and ergonomic work methods (for example, Markish's *Eyns af eyns* [One by one], discussed in Chapter Two). If eternity is now, then the merely mundane, inconvenient, and unpleasant dimensions of ordinary life simply do not exist. Socialist realism, as Dobrenko puts it, "de-realized everydayness."

The second volume of Bergelson's novel *At the Dnieper*, published in 1940, shows how socialist realism substitutes the future for the present. In one scene, a worker in the revolutionary underground confronts the death of his colleague, Matosov:

> Looking at this fallen body, he felt only dimly that he was looking at something important, as if Matosov were already shielded from his view by a gravestone inscribed with the epitaph: "Here lies a man who in descending to work here in the pit, had paid up his account in the book of the present, unworthy time, and had paid in advance his account in the book of the time to come, the pure, worthy future." (Bergelson 1940, 297)

Matosov paid for his leap into the future with his life, but the language of the epitaph obscures the loss. The imaginary gravestone, with its heroic rhetoric of self-sacrifice, shields the corpse from view, leaving only the problem of how to get rid of it. Instead of preserving memory, the memorial inscription impedes memory.

The socialist realist manipulation of time, narrative, and memory is central to this study. As a number of scholars have observed, the revolutionary period and the avant-garde movements of the time, in which Jews fully participated, aimed at a radical shift with regard to the past. Revolutionary culture did not acknowledge the value of memory. However, beginning in the 1930s, and especially during the Second World War, the past began to have value. Bergelson's *At the Dnieper*, for example, published in 1940 and set in the period leading up to the 1905 revolution, looks back to the bright future, anticipating the triumph of the revolution, the end of anti-Semitism, and the birth of a new form of Jewish culture. As Vladimir Papernyi argues in *Kul'tura dva* (Culture two), Soviet culture's tolerance for a certain triumphant version of the past coexisted with revolutionary disdain for anything other than the future (2006).

The teleological, instrumental, and linear narrative characteristic of socialist realism leaves little space for loss. Soviet Jewish literature in Yiddish and Russian, in contrast, used a variety of artistic means to acknowledge loss—sometimes in expressionist images of wounded bodies, sometimes through a poetics of silence, and sometimes in references to the Hebrew Bible and other traditional Jewish texts and rituals. The penultimate scene of Bergelson's *At the Dnieper*, for example, is a *yisker* (memorial) service. As Bergelson describes the service, the congregation mourns their losses both as individuals and as members of the Jewish people as a whole: "everyone remembered the great anguish and immense desolation of the people, to whom they, gathered here, belong" (534). This passage alone challenges the view that socialist realist literature is only about collective farms and cement factories. Bergelson's description of a synagogue memorial service should, furthermore, put to rest the formula that Soviet Yiddish was national merely in form. Other works, of course, also challenge this established wisdom.[40]

I am not claiming that remembrance, mourning, and the backward glance are the unique province of Jewish authors, or that all Jewish authors wrote about these themes. In Il'ia Erenburg's *Julio Jurenito* and *The Life and Death of Nikolai Kurbov*, mourning is absent, even though *Jurenito* imagines the future annihilation of all the Jews of Europe. Scholars of Silver Age Russian literature identify an all-pervasive sense of catastrophe in works that predate the revolution.[41] Biblical motifs are not unique to Jewish authors. In "Lot's Wife" (Lotova zhena, 1924) Anna Akhmatova inverts the biblical story to privilege the backward glance at the destruction of a world. The poet will "never forget" the woman "who gave her life for a single glance" (568). Nearly seventy years later Russian journalists used the creation story from Genesis to describe the utterly new beginning of Russian history following the August 1991 putsch and subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union (see Chapter Eight).

Without arguing for uniqueness, then, I contend that the traditional emphasis on remembrance lends a distinctive color to the work produced by Jewish artists working in both Russian and Yiddish in the 1920s, and even in the 1950s and 1960s when Jewish cultural production had come to a virtual standstill in Russia and beyond, through the beginning of the twenty-first century. For Markish, Bergelson, Babel, Gekht, Grossman, Gorshman, and others the obligation and the pain of remembering came together with the desire for a socialist future and the obligation and pain of building it. My interest in this fractured temporality—the literary Doppler effect—has motivated my choice of authors and texts. I focus mostly on prose, because prose accommodates the explorations of time, narrative, and memory that are my particular concern. The poetry that I discuss, including works by Markish, Mandelshtam, Slutskii, Lipkin, and Sel'vinskii, shares the multiplicity of perspective and the doubled temporality of prose. I address works that were censored and banned, but I center on what was published, what was considered sufficiently "Soviet," because my claim is about the Jewish presence in Soviet mainstream culture. I discuss the image of the Jew as outsider, other, and pariah in Chapter Seven; my primary goal, however, is to show what Jews as insiders created within the framework of Soviet culture.

The first part of the book is framed chronologically. Chapter One, "The Stillbirth of Revolution," explores the trauma of the civil war years by focusing on Markish, Babel, Gekht, Bergelson, and Mandelshtam. In Markish's *Brider* (Brothers) (1929) the creation of the new type of Jewish Bolshevik partisan unfolds against the backdrop of the dissolution of the social order. Markish's officially praised civil war epic, however, contains a subtle form of lament over the destruction of the shtetl: he quotes his own earlier pogrom poem of 1921 "Di kupe" (The mound). In both works, the lament appears indirectly in the image of the body exceeding its limits. This imagery resembles the world of Babel's *Red Cavalry* with its graphic depictions of death, rot, and decay. In Bergelson's cycle of civil war stories, especially "Birgerkrig" (Civil war), authority breaks down and violence erupts in a decentered narrative, whose focus constantly shifts and changes. Gekht's stories from the 1920s reveal a similarly abject landscape. Iurii Libedinskii's novella "Commissars" and Fadeev's "The Rout" provide a contrast. Libedinskii, who was Jewish, and Fadeev, who was not, both portray Jews in the new, stronger, Soviet world unmarred by remnants of the past.

Chapter Two, "Socialist Construction, the *Luftmentsh*, and the New Jew," uses the concept of gender, masculinity, and the body to explore the Jewish literary imagination of a new Soviet political order. Soviet Yiddish and Russian novels, journalism, and film associated with the vast socialist construction projects of the 1930s explicitly link the reconstruction of the Jewish male body with socialist construction and national belonging. Markish and Bergelson rework the biblical trope of the covenant in their literary imagining of the new Soviet promised land. Babel's story "Karl-Yankel" (1931, published in Russian and translated into Yiddish) provides a grotesquely comical fiction of circumcision on trial. In Yiddish works of the 1930s, gaining a place in the new Soviet community is uncertain; the promise remains unfulfilled; and the doomed shtetl Jew never leaves the scene. In films from the 1930s ostensibly designed to tout the Soviet transformation of the Jew (*The Return of Neitan Bekker* and *Seekers of Happiness*), it is the shtetl Jew who steals the show. The emblematic figure of the past haunts the project of the future. Writing by women Yiddish authors in the 1930s, however, takes a different tack. Shire Gorshman's stories of her experience on a Jewish agricultural commune in Crimea reject the biblically inflected Soviet narrative of foundation developed by Markish, Bergelson, and others.

Chapter Three, "Fighting the Great Patriotic War," and Chapter Four, "In Mourning: Responding to the Destruction of the Jews," explore Russian and Yiddish fiction and reportage from the 1940s, focusing on the Jewish participation in the Soviet war effort and the Jewish response to what was not called the Holocaust. Writers such as Emmanuel Kazakevich (who switched from Yiddish to Russian at this time), Vasilii Grossman, Il'ia Erenburg, Der Nister, Bergelson, and the poets Il'ia Sel'vinskii and Boris Slutskii negotiated a difficult position both as Soviets and as Jews. In Grossman's "Staryi uchitel'" (The old teacher), for example, the title character locates the Nazi murder of Jews within a universalizing framework of the Nazi war against all the nationalities of Europe. In "An eydes" (A witness) Bergelson makes a case for the continued existence of Yiddish literature as a literature of testimony even as he tells the story (in Yiddish) of the translation of Yiddish testimony into Russian. Bergelson's story "Geven iz nakht un gevorn iz tog" (It was night and became day, 1943) explores the question of what the Jew's proper response to the German ought to be. In his poem "Kandava" (1947), Sel'vinskii describes himself both as a Jewish victim of the Nazi genocide and also as a triumphant Soviet and Jewish army officer accepting the German surrender at Kandava (Sel'vinskii in fact participated in the ceremony in May 1945 as a Soviet officer). The poem, remarkably, frames its account of military triumph with the Jewish nightmare of the death camp. The double position as Soviet and as Jew—victor and victim—had implications for the problem of representing, remembering, mourning, and testifying to what took place on the battlefields and killing fields. In contrast to the dominant scholarship that claims there was little artistic representation of the Nazi genocide in the Soviet Union, I demonstrate the scope and power of the Soviet Jewish response to the killings that took place under German occupation, focusing in particular on work published in Russian and Yiddish in the 1940s.

Whereas the first part of this study focuses on events—the revolution, the civil war, the five-year plans, the "Great Patriotic War," and the Nazi genocide—the second part moves beyond a chronological framework in order to avoid the well-worn narrative of Soviet Jewish oppression, national reawakening, and redemption via immigration. The introduction to Part II takes up the problem of postwar continuity in the face of catastrophe: Boris Slutskii's poem about the death of Yiddish, "Ia osvobozhdal Ukrainu" (I liberated Ukraine), provides the key to the problem. Cold War politics have influenced the reception of postwar Jewish literature from the Soviet Union; competing Western and Soviet narratives, as I show in Part II, have made Soviet Jewish writers nearly invisible as anything other than mouthpieces of Soviet propaganda. The concluding chapter discusses the collapse of the Soviet Union. The hero of Alexandr Melikhov's 1993 novel *The Confession of a Jew*, like Benjamin's angel, finds himself at a trash heap, surrounded by the flattened tin cans of Soviet civilization.