

The Public Defense of the Doctoral Thesis in  
Comparative History of Central, Southeastern and Eastern Europe

by

**Ksenia Polouektova**

on

“Foreign Land as a Metaphor for One’s Own”:  
Travel and Travel Writing in Russian History and Culture, 1200s-1800s”

will be held on

**Monday, 14 December 2009 at 14:30**

in the

**Hanák room, Nádor 11  
Central European University (CEU)  
Budapest—1051  
Nádor u. 9.**

Examination Committee

Chair:

Katalin Szende (Department of Medieval Studies, CEU)

Members:

András Kovács – PhD supervisor (Department of Nationalism Studies, CEU)

Zsuzsa Hetényi – external supervisor (ELTE, Budapest)

Michael Miller – CEU internal member (Department of Nationalism Studies, CEU)

Elena Volkova – external member (Moscow State University)

Olga Maiorova –external reader (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor)

The doctoral thesis is available for inspection in the CEU Library, Budapest, Nador u.9

## ABSTRACT

In attempting to reconstruct a cultural history of travel and travel writing in Russia I read practices and narratives of travel as forms of discourse on matters of national character, cultural identity, and on ways of imagining foreign and domestic space. Understanding travel and travel writing as a “means of world-making and self-fashioning” presents travel as a fascinating venue for the exploration of the development of modern identity. My specific focus on the history of Russian travel and travelogue determines the two-fold thrust of this work. On the one hand, I look at the historical evolution of European styles and ideologies of travel and forms of travel writing (particularly focusing on the moments of transition). On the other hand, I analyze the relationship between western European textual models, ideologies and practices of travel and travelogue and their Russian adaptations, tracing continuities and ruptures between the historically evolving notions of both Russia’s domestic and foreign spaces from medieval religious imagination to modern secular consciousness. What conceptual framework should one apply to the nuances of the specifically Russian context without relapsing into patronizing, Orientalist appropriations? To what extent are western paradigms useful, if at all, in writing the history of Russian travel and travelogue? What is the role of social and cultural determinants in the evolution of Russian travelogue, a genre, which is too often considered exclusively in terms of its textual characteristics? My assumption is that the historically sensitive analysis of paradigms of travel and travel narratives illuminates mechanisms of cultural, social and ideological change and cross-cultural translation/adaptation, of which these practices are both agents and upshots and that the poetic essence of travelogues (e.g. narrative strategies, intertextuality, sophisticated imagery) is coeval with their political contingency. Practices and narratives of travel reflect and elaborate conceptions of space and place, border (of separation or of distinction?) and border crossing, devising imaginary, symbolic maps for the actual landscapes covered during the journeys. They highlight conjunctions between the perception/imagination of space and the national character and psyche. Ultimately, and most importantly, the exploration of foreign realm and encounter with difference inevitably compels the traveler to engage with his or her own individual, national or artistic identity. It is here that the foreign country truly becomes a springboard for reflecting on one’s own, a metaphor of the native realm.

***Ksenia L. Polouektova***

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**Educational background**

*2008-present*

Golda Meir Post-Doctoral Fellow; Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

*2001-2009*

Doctoral student at the History dept., Central European University, Budapest, Hungary  
Dissertation title: *“Foreign Land as a Metaphor of One’s Own”: Travel and Travel Writing in Russian History and Culture, 1200s-1800s.*

*2003-2004, summer term 2007*

MA in Jewish Studies from the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies; University of Michigan (U-of-M) Ann Arbor, USA

Thesis title: *“Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s 200 years Together and the Russian Jewish Question”* (published in 2008 by the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Jerusalem)

*2000-2001*

MA (summa cum laude) in Nationalism Studies; CEU

*1996-2000*

BA (summa cum laude) in Theories of Communication and Public Relations; College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; University of Colorado, Denver, USA

BA (summa cum laude) in Comparative Literature (with specialization in French studies); Foreign Languages dept.; Moscow State University, Russia.

**Professional background**

*2006 - present*

Research assistant for professor Zvi Gitelman. (University of Michigan) at the archival collections of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington D.C.), Russian State Archive (*GARF*, Moscow) and the archives of Yad Vashem (Jerusalem). Project on the formation of Soviet policies regarding the Nazi atrocities against the Jews committed on the occupied territories.

*Fall term’20007*

Research fellow at Collegium Budapest, Institute for Advanced Study, Hungary. Research Project: *Between Home and Host Cultures: Twentieth-Century East European Writers in Exile*. Individual contribution: *“Is There a Place Like Home? Jewish Narratives of Exile and Homecoming in the Late XX c. East Central Europe.”* (published with De Greuyter, 2009).

*Aug. 2007 - present*

Member and assistant coordinator of the research and curriculum development project ‘Alternative Cultures Beyond Borders’

(OSA/Stanford/McMaster University.) Project title: “Urban Spaces of Nostalgia in the post-1989 East Central Europe”.

*June 2007* Assistant organizer of the CEU conference “Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism and the Jews of East Central Europe” (Budapest, May 27-29, 2007)

*November 2006* Verzio 3 Human Rights Documentary Film Festival (Budapest, Nov. 8-12) program coordinator, co-editor of the festival catalogue.

*Summer 2006* Research fellow at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Washington D.C.. Archival research of the Soviet Extraordinary Commissions’ reports that documented Nazi-perpetuated atrocities in Belorussia, Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania; entries written for the *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos in Nazi Occupied Europe* (Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies).

*Spring term 2006* Research assistant at the Open Society Archives film/video collection

*Fall term 2004* Graduate Student Instructor for HIST 205/505 “Introduction to Jewish civilization” at University of Michigan (Ann Arbor.)

*2002 - 2003* Visiting Scholar on CEU ‘Research Abroad’ doctoral dissertation grant at the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, University of Michigan (Ann Arbor).

### **Selected publications**

Monograph:

*Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s 200 years Together and the Russian Jewish Question. Analysis of Current Trends in Antisemitism* series of position papers (Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Jerusalem, 2008.)

Book chapters:

“The Holocaust in Post-Soviet Russian History Textbooks” in Harriet Murav and Gennady Estraikh (eds.) *Soviet Jewish War and the Holocaust* (provisional title) (Urbana Champaign UP, forthcoming for publication).

“Is There a Place Like Home?” Jewish Narratives of Exile and Homecoming in Late Twentieth-Century East-Central Europe in John Neubauer and Zsuzsanna Torok (eds.) *Between Home and Host Cultures: Twentieth-Century East European Writers in Exile* (Berlin:Walter de Gruyter, 2009).

“Private memories in a Public Space: Notes on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum” in Ene Kõresaar, Kristin Kuutma and Epp Lauk (eds.) *The Burden of Remembering. Recollections and Representations of Twentieth Century Memories* forthcoming (Tartu: Studia Historica 2009)

Articles:

“Tourist as a *Faux Voyageur*? Notes on the Comparative Semiotics of Travel and Tourism” forthcoming in *PARADIGMA* (St. Petersburg State University).

“Articulations of Memory: Issues in the Holocaust Representation” in Andras Kovacs and Michael Miller (eds.) *Jewish Studies at the Central European University Year Book (2006-2008)*. (Budapest: CEU Press, 2008.)

“On the Evolution of Social Memory Studies” in *Collected Conference Papers: IV International Philosophical and Cultural Studies Symposium “Man in the World of Culture: Challenges of Modernity* (Dept. of Cultural Studies, Riazan’ State University, Russia, 2007.)

“Israeli Policies of Immigration and Immigrant Absorption: The Role of the Institutional System in the Social, Economic, and Cultural Integration of the *Mizrachim*. From the *Yishuv* to the early years of Israeli statehood” in Kovacs, Andras (ed.) *Jewish Studies at the Central European University Year Book (2001-2002)*. (Budapest: CEU Press, 2002.)

“Difficult Representations of the Horror” [In Italian] in *Ecclesiae*, n.2 (2009).

“Anatoly Osmolovsky’s *Poklonenie/Adoration*” [In Italian] in *Ecclesiae* (Rome) n.4 (2009).

“Kamenetz-Podolsky”, “Khmeln’nik”, “Mstislavl” in *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos in Nazi Occupied Europe* forthcoming at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2010.

**Selected Conferences/Seminars and Summer Schools**

*Novemeber 2009* ( Tel Aviv, Israel)

*First Israeli Conference of Young Researchers and Scholars on Russia, East Central Europe and Eurasia*. Paper given “Holocaust and collaboration in Soviet/Russian historical discourses” (sent for publication).

*November 2008* ( New York, USA)

*Soviet Jewish Soldiers, Jewish Resistance, and Jews in the USSR during the Holocaust* (New York University’s Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies). Paper given “The Holocaust and Collaboration in Russian post-1991 History Textbooks” (sent for publication).

*October 2008* (Kiev, Ukraine)

*Methodology of History* ReSET seminar; guest speaker with the paper “Holocaust in Soviet and Russian historical and cultural narratives, continuity and change”.

*August 2008* (Split, Croatia)

*Alternative Cultures Beyond Borders* Summer Session. Paper given “The politics of Soviet travel writing: borders and crossings in Sergei Obraztsov's travel to London (1953-54)”.

*August 2007* (St. Petersburg, Russia)

*Alternative Cultures Beyond Borders* Summer Session; paper presented “Comparative Semiotics of Tourism and Travel” (forthcoming for publication).

*November 2007* (Budapest, Hungary)

Exile project presentation at Institute for Advanced study, Collegium Budapest; paper presented "Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* and Susan Suleiman's *Budapest Diary: Two Jewish Women's Narratives of Homecoming to the post-Shoah Eastern Europe*" (published).

*January 2007* (Tartu, Estonia)

History and Memory conference; paper presented "Private Memories in a Public Space: Notes on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum" (published).

*September 2006* (Budapest, Hungary)

*Between Home and Host Cultures: Twentieth-Century East European Writers in Exile*: workshop; paper presented "Reading Exile and Estrangement. Danilo Kis: The Stranger In and Of the Text".

*September 2006* (Palermo, Italy)

*Borders and Crossings* conference; paper presented "A Rehearsed Homecoming: Joseph Brodsky's Flight from Byzantium/Journey to Istanbul".

*November 2005* (Berlin, Germany)

CEU/BKVG conference; paper presented "Fragile Publics: Media and Public Responses to Aleksander Solzhenitsyn's *200 Years Together*" (published).

### **Academic Awards**

-Lady Davis Fellowship Trust post-doctoral scholarship, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel (2008/2009)

-The Robert Bosch Foundation Fellowship for the 3-month research at the Institute for Advanced Study, Collegium Budapest (October 2007)

- OSA/CEERS/HESP – ReSET scholarship for the participation in the "Alternative Cultures Beyond Borders" research and curriculum development project (May 2007)

- Dorot Summer Graduate Research Fellowship at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Washington D.C. (April 2007)

-Stanley Frankel Summer Thesis Writing and Research Support Grant; U-of-M (April 2004)

- CEU Doctoral 'Research Abroad' doctoral student grant for conducting research at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (September 2002)

- Best Thesis Award in the Nationalism studies department; CEU (June 2001)

- American Jewish Committee Thesis Writing and Research Support Grant (November 2000)

- Open Society Institute graduate scholarship to pursue a MA degree in Nationalism Studies at the CEU (June 2000)

- Dean's List of the University of Colorado at Denver (1997-2000)

### **Language proficiency**

*Russian* – native; *English* –fluent; *Hebrew* – level "gimel", *French* – advanced.

References are available upon request from professor Zvi Gitelman (University of Michigan), professor Andras Kovacs (CEU/ELTE), professor Michael.L.Miller (CEU) and professor Tamar Rapoport (Hebrew University)