

higher education into a global competitive market. Research declined in the 1990s as institutes merged with universities and research subsidies ended. Quality assurance mechanisms were totally absent; corruption in admission and assessment was rife. The status of academics plummeted as did their salaries, and bribes were common.

The commodification of higher education and competition gradually fostered greater understanding of market models that promoted efficiencies and educational quality. Universities began to adapt to the needs of the free market. By the turn of the century, various levels of public funding returned. Tuition fees remained but varied widely from nation to nation and within nations. Only Estonia provides free access. An early intervention to manage corruption was the establishment of state-wide school leaving examinations to govern admissions. That step heralded a further move toward the internationalization of higher education among the successor states that culminated in the entry of eleven of them into the European Higher Education Area under the Bologna Process of 2010. Bachelor, masters, and doctoral degrees replaced the Soviet degree structure (except in Belarus), and mandated credit transfers and common quality assurance standards. Widespread English language teaching facilitates advanced study abroad. Although the flow of students across borders has increased, less than half of post-Soviet universities pursue internationalization. Several Russian universities have branch campuses in Central Asia to exert influence in the region and also host many students from Central Asia and China. Elsewhere Russian language study has declined. Students generally prefer former Soviet universities to newcomers.

Along with public support came a diminution of university autonomy and academic freedom. On the Academic Freedom Index, only five states hold A status and four have the lowest rank E. Russia ranks at D. As in the USSR, state appointed rectors, except in the Baltic States, exercise extensive authority. Working on renewable contracts keeps professors compliant. Teaching loads are heavy, leaving little time for research, which narrowly focuses on economic development and eschews civic society building. In Russia the latter is grounds for dismissal. Universities serve the needs of the labor market, and student career choices drive the curriculum. Critical thinking is not valued. States impose restrictions on what can be taught.

Universities in the region are, however, a work in progress. The author detects signs of further change at least in several of the successor states. Universities are serving nation building, and some aspire to internationalization and a global profile. She concludes, however, that governance structures and curriculum are in most states centralized on the old Soviet model, making academic liberation a distant if desirable goal.

This is an admirable work of thoughtful scholarship that will be of interest to all who care about universities both in the region under study and elsewhere, where public universities increasingly face related issues.

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Mother Tongue, Other Tongue: Soviet-born Jewish Writers in Their New Language Environment. By Sergii Gurbych. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2021. 225 pp. Notes. Bibliography. €32.00, hard bound.

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Emigration of Jews from the former USSR to Israel, the United States, and Germany created circumstances for the emergence of literary fiction in the migrants' adopted

tongues—Hebrew, English, and German, respectively—in the last two decades. Parts of this phenomenon had been studied by Miriam Finkelstein, Natasha Gordinsky, Alex Moshkin, Karolina Krasuska, Maggie Levantovskaya, Adrian Wanner, and others, including the author of this review. Sergii Gurbych's *Mother Tongue, Other Tongue: Soviet-born Jewish Writers in Their New Language Environment*, however, is the first book-length study of émigré authors in all three of these adopted languages. This book, therefore, represents an important effort to size up this phenomenon in its multilingual heterogeneity. At the same time, the book lacks analytical rigor and manifests notable shortcomings in theorizing the broader phenomenon beyond a perfunctory reliance on reader-response theory, which does not offer the author much assistance in developing a sustained central argument.

In the introduction, Gurbych notes that authors writing in their second tongues have a “choice of language [which] reflects their intended readership” and that, therefore, the scholar researching this phenomenon, studies “how the information enclosed in a message is coded by the writer, who is representative of one culture, and then decoded by the reader, who belongs to another culture” (10). The formative culture in this equation, as Gurbych rightly notes, is “Soviet” rather than “Russian,” as several other scholars have termed it (11); “Soviet” and “Russian” are not necessarily or even often synonymous despite established misleading associations about the supposed interchangeability of the two terms. As such, the writers in question can become transcultural rather than multicultural and thus “depict the ways to go beyond [the] society” from which they have originally come (18). Chap. 1, which focuses on the book's methodology and provides some historical background, further elucidates its focus on writers whose work manifests “transculturality” (32) or transculturalism, as used in most of the book—their ability to address life in their adopted countries with reference to their Soviet backgrounds—rather than “on the so-called ‘Russianness’ in their work” (29). Here Gurbych ponders, among other questions, whether there is something that might be called a “post-Soviet English” (39–40), deployed by the Anglophone immigrant writers to decenter concepts established in English (“the Second World War”) by introducing into broader circulation terms (“the Great Patriotic War”) brought over from the USSR (40). Chap. 2 focuses on the Hebrew-language works of Soviet-born Israeli writers Boris Zaidman, Alex Epstein, and Alona Kimhi; Chap. 3 discusses the English-language works of Soviet-born US writers Lara Vapnyar and Gary Shteyngart; Chap. 4 deals with the works of Soviet-born German-language writers Katja Petrowskaja, Olga Grjasnowa, and Alina Bronsky. Works of some of these writers should be well familiar to scholars and general readers; for others, Gurbych's book offers a useful introduction, including biographical notes about the authors.

The book's significant shortcomings come from Gurbych's reliance on needing to imagine a reader who, in his estimation, may or may not be able to understand specific linguistic games of the writers in question in their adopted tongues. In imagining such a reader, at times Gurbych invents potential miscomprehensions based on flimsy evidence (as, for example, when he suggests that not all Israeli readers would understand Boris Zaidman's use of Hebrew military slang or Biblical associations [67], although it would be reasonable to assume the contrary in a society where nearly all Jews are expected to serve in the army and receive secondary schooling that includes the Hebrew Bible). At other times, Gurbych's attempts to track down the implied reader seem to miss some of the central aspects of this or that text's plot (when he, for example, faults the narrator of Shteyngart's *Absurdistan* for having “no clear understanding of the concept of multiculturalism” when this is precisely the central aspect of the novel's relation to this term, 145). Such examples, when taken as a whole, produce a rather disjointed picture, and are, moreover, buoyed by the book's

disjointed organization that siloes discussions of a rather large number of texts in separate subchapters. For all the promise of its trilingual approach to the subject matter, *Mother Tongue, Other Tongue* represents somewhat of a lost opportunity; other scholars who possess the linguistic skills similar to Gurbych's would find ample reasons to revisit this important subject with more nuance and careful close readings that it deserves.

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Jews in the Soviet Union: A History. Eds. David Engel and Gennady Estraikh. **Vol. 5: After Stalin, 1953–1967**. By Gennady Estraikh. The Eugene Shvidler Project for the History of the Jews of the Soviet Union. New York: New York University Press, 2022. xv, 409 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Plates. Maps. \$35.00, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.71

Gennady Estraikh's well-researched account of Soviet Jewry between Iosif Stalin's death in 1953 and the 1967 war between Israel and its Arab neighbors is the penultimate volume of a planned six-volume history of Jews in the Soviet Union. Drawing upon memoirs, newspapers, periodicals, and archival material in English, Russian, and Yiddish, Estraikh provides a comprehensive overview of the main currents of the Kremlin's policies toward Jews during the rule of Nikita Khrushchev and the initial years of the Leonid Brezhnev era. One strength of the book is the author's emphasis on placing the Jewish experience in the context of general developments in Soviet politics and society. The book is encyclopedic in coverage and will be essential reading about many aspects of the Soviet Jewish experience in the mid-twentieth century.

Many of the themes Estraikh explores will not be new to the informed reader. But much of the material significantly deepens and broadens our understanding of the Doctors' Plot; the fate of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee; Birobidzhan; rumors of the mass expulsion of Jews to the eastern territories of the country; discussions of the Holocaust (and Babyn Yar in particular); prosecution of Jews for alleged economic crimes, and Yiddish publishing. Estraikh is a master of informative and perceptive vignettes that illustrate the all-too-real tragic trials and tribulations of the Jewish intelligentsia in the tumultuous years after the end of World War II. His reflections on Aron Vergelis, editor of the journal *Sovetish Heymland* (Soviet Homeland), is especially enlightening as is his analysis of how Soviet authorities handled the publication of *The Diary of Anne Frank* and the lesser-known diary by Masha Rolnikaite, as well as the existence of hundreds of Holocaust memorials established by Jewish communities in towns, cities, and villages.

After Stalin, 1953–1967 reads in places like a who's who of Jewish cultural, literary, religious, and political personages who were involved in public Jewish life. The fact that many of them all too frequently ran afoul of the government and sometimes found themselves in prison merits the attention Estraikh devotes to them. The narrative would have benefited from trimming some of the material with regard to writings on the Holocaust and other examples of writing in Yiddish and Russian on Jewish themes. Although focus on Jewish public intellectuals reflects the sources available to scholars, Estraikh's volume suffers from the lack of extended discussion of the fabric of everyday life of the vast majority of Soviet Jews who were not in the public eye. As he notes, Soviet Jewry was in fact diverse in terms of geography, culture, and socio-economic characteristics. Similarly, the lure of acculturation, integration, and assimilation into mainstream Soviet society—especially the opportunities available