[Chapter 2]

Negotiating Cosmopolitanism: Migration, Religious Education and Shifting Jewish Orientations in Post–Soviet Odessa

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> It was the most 'un-Jewish' of Jewish cities from the traditional point of view, and the most Jewish from the perspective of nontraditional Jewish life and attitudes.
> (Klier 2002: 173 describing Odessa through much of its history)

The city of Odessa, sprawling along the coast of the Black Sea, is commonly recognised as 'cosmopolitan', 'unique' and 'Jewish'.[1] Behind this is a complex reality: although there was a mass out-migration of Jews in the late 1980s– 1990s, today some returnees as well as international Jewish organisations are taking root. Such post-Soviet transformations have created new arenas of Jewish practice in the city. For some Jewish Odessans, the emergence of present-day religious forms of Jewish expression can be incorporated within the city's long-standing ethos of tolerance. For them, the current development of Jewish life is thus interpreted as a means of rebuilding the Jewishness of Odessa, which stands as one of the defining elements of the city's cosmopolitanism. However, for others – especially in the light of mass Jewish emigration – these changes in the orientation of Jewish practice, together with the increasing pressure of state Ukrainisation policies, signal a sad decline in the city's cosmopolitan virtues.[2]

Through the discourses and activities of religious, Zionist and other foreign Jewish emissaries, Odessa's remaining Jews and returnees have been exposed to an assortment of competing cultural and religious models, various definitions of who is a Jew, and new ideas about individual and communal Jewish values that challenge both the Soviet-informed

classifications of Jewish 'nationality' and local perceptions of Jewish identity.[3] This chapter examines the various ways in which these new social norms are negotiated, partially appropriated and, at times, contested by Odessa's Jewry, using as its main source local understandings of Jewishness informed by (somewhat idealised) pictures of the city's historical cosmopolitan orientations (see Humphrey, this volume) and of the Soviet era.

It is important to appreciate that Odessa, historically an international port, has had a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional population from its early days until the beginning of the Soviet regime. According to the 1897 census, the city was home to speakers of some fifty-five languages, who came from over thirty countries and adhered to a wide variety of religious beliefs (Herlihy 1986: 241–43).[4] Equally, the city's Jewish population has a long history of exposure to competing ideologies and external points of reference. As Klier highlights, 'Odessa was a town without "native" Jewish traditions, where new Jewish traditions had to be created' (2002: 175). At the beginning of the nineteenth century, newly arrived Jews, mostly from Germany and Austrian Galicia, as well as newcomers from other areas of the Pale of Settlement,[5] were instrumental in setting up Odessa's most influential religious congregations.[6] This background is central to understanding both Odessa's famed cosmopolitanism and current religious activity.

In both the literature on contemporary Judaism and academic engagements with religious phenomena in the FSU, the issue of revival is hotly debated (Gruber 2002; Pelkmans 2009: 2; Broz 2009: 2; Solomon 1994: 87, 97; Jessa 2006: 169). Researchers of religious life in the FSU question to what extent we can speak of a revival when describing the current situation in ex-Soviet states.[7] The term assumes that what is being revived was, in fact, previously part of the cultural milieu of the population; in other words, that it is actually a new vitalisation, the re-production of an old phenomenon. Revival implies historical roots that can grow and be nourished: a revival rejuvenates and restores the forgotten and abandoned elements of life, a returning to traditions. Yet, in many instances, ethnic, national and religious revivals include significant innovation and new inventions rather than a return to a past. In the case of Odessa, one might say, ironically, that the current wave of revival is, indeed, replicating a tradition – a 'tradition' of external interventions that Odessa's Jewry experienced historically. Among some local and newly arrived Jews there is a sentiment that Odessa's rich Jewish history makes the city particularly open to the current religious development. Many Jewish leaders and activists involved in organised Jewish life envision themselves as actively rebuilding the lost and forgotten world of pre-Soviet Odessan Jewry. Indeed, nineteenth-century Odessa was home to a number of vibrant traditional communities, including the large congregation of the *Glavnaia* (Main) Synagogue and approximately seventy smaller prayer houses, including followers of Hasidism. The city was perhaps most famous for its impressive Reform congregation organised around the Brody Synagogue. Odessa also

served as a centre of Zionist activity, Jewish press, Jewish education and Jewish philanthropy.

Today some of this activity has been reinstated in the city through the efforts of local and foreign Jews; a number of Odessa's current organisations even appear with their pre-Revolutionary names, including the Jewish learning centre and publication Moria, the Jewish sports community Makkabi and the Jewish literary club *Beseda* (Conversation). The Odessa local City Council has contributed to the project of renewal by handing over three Jewish synagogue buildings for the use of Jewish organisations. Today the former butchers' synagogue houses the Jewish community/cultural centre, Migdal, while the other two buildings, the *Glavnaia* (Main) Synagogue and the former tailors' synagogue, are once again being used for their original purpose. So, at least in some senses, a revival of religious phenomena is undoubtedly occurring.

However, what marks the current wider religious developments is that many of the new organisations can hardly be described as historically Odessan. The Soviet system destroyed pre-Revolutionary Odessan Jewish institutions: in this sense there are few roots left to revitalise. Equally, the Soviet era produced *secular* rather than religious markers of Jewish identity. As Richardson recounts, the current wave of religiosity is alien 'for some Odessan Jews who grew up in the Soviet era and who did not emigrate'; for them, 'the deeply religious communal life that is becoming increasingly dominant is in fact foreign to the city and to their own idea of what it means to be Jewish' (2008: 189). Speaking of the observant Jews he saw gathered outside of the synagogue, one Odessan told me:

> Those are not real Odessan Jews. They are all *priezjie* [newcomers]. Real Odessan Jews do not need any of that … These *priezjie* are all diplomats, for them it's just business. Odessan Jews never went to the synagogue, they ate *salo* [pig's fat, a traditional Ukrainian delicacy] and entertained more than they prayed.

While this Odessan assumed that the religiously dressed Jews he saw were all religious emissaries from abroad, many of the congregants were actually local Jews who had become active members of the city's religious life and who regularly attended prayer service. At the core of this man's hostility was not so much the literal foreignness of new religious and ethnic solidarities and institutions as their inappropriateness in Odessa, a city that, according to local perception, lacks the taste for ethnic purity and prides itself on the mixing of people from different nationalities.[8]

By contrast to the past, Odessa's Reform Jews now occupy a relatively weak status. The dominant position of the two Orthodox congregations, especially the stronghold of Chabad Lubavitch[9] in the city, has led some scholars to point out the 'ironic renewal of Hasidism in a city that was always better known as a centre for liberal Jewish traditions'.[10] Thus, it can be argued that present-day missions of world Jewry are creating and

teaching variants of their own understandings of Jewishness rather than reviving traditions locally recognised as Odessan or cosmopolitan.[11]

In Odessa, as in other places in the FSU, the foreign Jewish institutions, with their policies of Jewish membership and identity, have cultivated new, often international, alliances while, at the same time, heightening ethnoreligious boundaries previously flattened by the rhetoric and practice of assimilation (see Cooper 1988; Goluboff 2003). Odessa's local population is engaged with divergent understandings of what it means to be Jewish today. I argue that these new constellations and ambiguities have, on some levels, widened the social distance both among Jews themselves and between Jews and others. The contestations described here are connected to the larger process of cultural transformation in Odessa and elsewhere in the FSU, where new systems of meanings are pitted against existing rubrics of moral standing, solidarity and material wealth deriving from the specific history of Soviet socialisation. However, in the case of Odessa specifically, the local cosmopolitan characteristics of the city, including its Jewishness, also play a role in the negotiation of current values, practices and orientations.

Odessa and Jewish migration

> If a Jew from the Pale of Settlement does not dream about America or Palestine, then you know he'll be in Odessa.
> Svirskii (1904: 169) quoted in Weinberg (1993: 9)

The city of Odessa was founded under Catherine the Great in the wake of the second Russo–Turkish war in 1794. Six Jews were officially registered in the territory of this new settlement when it became part of the Russian Empire. Eager to develop the sparsely settled lands and attract labour, Catherine offered a number of valuable incentives to attract new settlers. As a result, many new migrants arrived, including communities of Russians, Ukrainian, Greeks, Albanians, Moldavians, Armenians, Jews, Bulgarians, and Germans, who chose to settle on the shores of the Black Sea. The empress's commercial policies actively promoted trade, and foreign merchants from Greece, Italy, Galicia and other parts of the world established brokerage houses in Odessa, contributing to the international and bustling aura of the city. The subsequent administration further stimulated migration to the region: Odessa experienced one of the most dynamic growth rates in nineteenth-century Russia – comparable only to the American cities of Chicago and San Francisco: 'In the period of 1800–92 alone, the population [of Odessa] increased by an astonishing 3,677 per cent compared to rates of 220 per cent for Moscow, 323 per cent for St Petersburg' (Skinner 1986: 209–11). During this time, the second largest group of immigrants, surpassed only by the Russians, was the Jews. By 1897, nearly 100 years after its birth, Odessa was home to 138,935 Jews,

accounting for one third of the total population (Herlihy 1986: 251; Rozenboim 2007: 33). For the Jews, Odessa quickly turned into a little heaven just inside the border of the Pale where they could experience an equality of rights unattainable in other areas of the country. Its status as a *Porto Franco* (free port) (1819–1859) further secured Odessa's pre-eminent commercial position (Richardson 2004: 11) and prosperity in grain and other export goods, which were exempt from the otherwise heavy burden of tax. By the end of the nineteenth century, 'Odessa was ranked as Russia's number one port for foreign trade … handling the shipment of nearly all the wheat and more than half of the other grains exported from Russia' (Weinberg 1993: 2). Unlike other areas in the territory of the Pale, where competition in trade and industry led to anti-Jewish sentiment, Odessa's ruling elite during this period welcomed competition in trade and labour and thrived on the city's lucrative achievements. This is not to say that Jews did not suffer from violent attacks during later years of their residency in Odessa. Outbreaks of pogroms occurred in 1821, 1849, 1859, 1871, 1881, 1900 and 1905 (Weinberg 1992: 248–89; see Humphrey, this volume). Despite these eruptions of anti-Jewish violence, the economic opportunities in Odessa continued to attract new Jewish migrants to the city.

The migration of Galician Jews (mostly from the city of Brody) further diversified Odessa's Jewish population. Brody Jews were by far the wealthiest of all of Odessa's Jewry, strongly oriented toward trade, and more liberal and progressive in their religious observance. Taking a leading part in the functions of middlemen, factory owners, managers and agents in the grain trade, Brody Jews worked closely with the Greek and Italian merchants, who at the time still controlled most of the export trade (Zipperstein 1986: 42). Within a few years of their arrival in the city, Brody Jews dominated most of the important positions within the Jewish population and had taken over many of the local community organisations and thus all major community decisions. Among them were many adherents of the German-based eighteenth-century Jewish Enlightenment movement known as *Haskalah*. The followers of *Haskalah* (*maskilim*) in Odessa were eager to connect their city's Jewish population with the greater world without abandoning their Jewish identity. As early as 1826, immigrants from Galicia had opened a modern Jewish school, the first of its kind in all of Russia, where education was provided in both secular and Jewish subjects (Zipperstein 1986: 43,45; Gubar and Rozenboim 2003: 91). Fifteen years later, Odessa became home to the first Reform Synagogue in the Russian Empire – the Brody synagogue – and, by the turn of the century, services were accompanied by organ music; seats were individually sold to members of the congregation.

A number of other developments were important in setting Jewish Odessa apart from the greater circumference of the Pale and the Russian Empire. Unlike the majority of Russian, Ukrainian and Polish cities, where Jews primarily lived in segregated areas, early Jewish settlers arriving in Odessa were not restricted. Rather, they settled freely throughout the city and thus

were exposed to an array of cultural practices by their Italian, Greek, Romanian, Bulgarian, Russian, Ukrainian and other neighbours (Zipperstein 1986: 39). While Odessa enjoyed what many scholars describe as a cosmopolitan sociality from the outset, historians debate whether it is appropriate to describe it as a 'melting pot', due to the relatively limited interaction between different ethnic groups except in the market place (Mazis 2004: 25).

Nonetheless, the high level of integration that Jews found in trade, the geographical location of Odessa (far from any major centre of Judaism), the city's openness to varied ethnic and religious practices, and its mercantile ethos had all started to have an effect in eroding the traditional values experienced by Odessa's Jewish contingent (Zipperstein 1986: 36–37). All these processes reinforced popular Yiddish sayings that associated the city with indifference to religion: 'Seven miles around Odessa burn the fires of Hell' and, referring to their life of comfort, 'To live like God in Odessa' (Zipperstein 1986: 1).

Jewish activity in the city was periodically curbed by internal disputes that erupted in anti-Jewish violence. Pogroms, which ravaged Odessa's Jewish life, were rooted in various socioeconomic, political, and cultural realities, and presented Jews as dangerous to the society, overly successful in trade or too prominent for their minority status in Russia. Such actions and sentiments not only spoiled relations between Jews and non-Jews in the city but also led to early waves of Jewish emigration. By 1904 the percentage of Jews in the city had dropped from 35 per cent to 30.5 per cent and, in the aftermath of the 1905 pogrom alone, nearly 50,000 Jews left Odessa (Herlihy 1986: 258). Despite the outflow of Jews from the city and from the rest of the Russian Empire, Odessa's Jewish population quickly recovered its losses and, mainly due to immigration, continued to grow. This growth continued well into the twentieth century.

Historically, emigration from Odessa reflected the pattern visible across the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. The pogroms and other forms of social persecution and discrimination were the cause of earlier waves of out-migration from the city. The events of the First World War, the Communist Revolution of 1917 and the Second World War also served as 'push factors' in the emigration of Odessa's Jews. In more recent times, Odessa experienced large swathes of Jewish emigration from the city in the 1970s and the early 1990s when Soviet authorities, under much international pressure, relaxed quotas on Jewish exit visas. Jewish emigration from the city continued well into the early years of Ukraine's independence. While for most of the nineteenth and early twentieth century Odessa's Jewish population benefited from immigration alongside emigration, the recent history of Odessa's Jews has been overshadowed by this mass emigration. During the last years of Soviet rule and after the break-up of the USSR, Odessa experienced some of the largest outflows of its Jewish population.

Since the early 1990s, however, Jewish emigration from Odessa has slowed down considerably, in part due to improved conditions at home but

also due to tighter immigration policies of receiving countries (with the exception of Israel). According to the (somewhat varying) statistics, in 1989 Odessa was home to some 65–90,000 Jews whereas today – present-day figures also vary widely – the city's Jewish inhabitants number anywhere between 12,000 and 30,000 out of the total city population of 1,010,298.[12]

The 'one-way ticket' that characterised emigration, and attitudes to it, in the late 1980s and early 1990s no longer defines the patterns of border crossings. Since the breakup of the USSR, individuals may (and do) choose to return, permanently or temporarily, to their countries of origin, which was impossible under Soviet rule. It is notable that, compared to other former Soviet cities that experienced mass Jewish emigration, Odessa still has a relatively large 'stay behind' Jewish population of continuous residents.

projects of Jewish revival

In the years since Ukrainian independence in 1991, Odessa has experienced a large influx of Jewish international organisations and emissaries whose efforts and economic resources are focused on reviving Jewish traditions and providing support for the local Jewish population. These projects are mainly sponsored and spearheaded by international Jewish organisations and private donors primarily from the United States and Israel. Many earlier local initiatives that sprang up at the end of Soviet rule were not able to sustain themselves individually and have been incorporated into the larger apparatus of foreign Jewish development. Contemporary international interventions can be traced back to the mass initiatives to 'save' Soviet Jewry launched during the 1970s: pressure from American Jewry and others lobbying to 'Let Our People Go' eventually forced Soviet leaders to allow some of their Jewish citizens and their families to emigrate (see Friedman and Chernin 1999; Altshuler 2005). The mission to save Soviet Jewry also focused on the way of life of those who chose to stay on after the fall of the USSR, seeking to restore what was taken to be long-forgotten and forbidden elements of Jewish life, such as Jewish education, religious institutions and cultural activities. These initiatives can be neatly summarised as attempts to help Jews leave or to help them live.

Odessa is not unique in being the recipient of such religious and national initiatives to save, rejuvenate, relocate, or redress the loss of a Jewish way of life. Since the decline and ultimate break-up of the USSR, countries such as Russia, Ukraine generally and neighbouring FSU states have all become active arenas for foreign initiatives among the local Jewish population, who may have forgotten, may have never learned or may have abandoned their Jewish traditions under the Soviet modernisation project. As Golbert has observed of Jewish youth in Kiev, Ukraine's capital, the effect has been the 'remaking of cultural identities and allegiances from a wide range of old

Figure 2.1. Jewish men carrying Torah scrolls on Pushkin Street during the holiday of Lag B'Omer

and new cultural models emanating both from within and outside the geohistorical borders of Ukraine' (2001: 713).

Today Jewish life is a visible part of the city's identity, from Odessa's kosher restaurants to the sight of traditionally dressed religious families, readily available Jewish newspapers, street signs along the main road directing drivers to the city's two main synagogues and public manifestations of Jewish religious festivals and life cycle ceremonies.

During important Jewish holidays religious objects such as *sukkah* [13] and *hanukkiyah*[14] can be seen in prominent areas of the city. As Hann points out, the visible display of religion and its openness to transnational influences, now seen across post-Soviet states, is very much a new phenomenon (2006: 2).[15] In Odessa, the public display of Jewish culture and the visibility of Jewish religious practices constitute one of the major transformations in the Jewish life of the city. Yet the altered conditions of organised Jewish life are at times met with mixed emotions by Odessan Jews, some of whom fear that the Jewish character of their city is not being revived but rather altered in a way that is detrimentally shifting the forms of sociality between Jews themselves and between Jews and others.

The role of Jewish religious organisations

At present, Odessa is home to three Jewish religious congregations: the two most prominent communities, Shomrey Shabos (part of the Hasidic Chabad–Lubavitch movement) and Tikva Or Sameach (a branch of Lithuanian Orthodoxy known as Litvaks),[16] are affiliated with Orthodox Judaism and are led by Israeli-born rabbis. The third and the smallest of the three, Temple Emanu–El, is affiliated with Reform Judaism and is led by a female Russian rabbi.[17] Relations between all three religious leaders are strained. Both Orthodox rabbis claim the status of Chief Rabbi of the city; they interact on very few occasions and take no part in joint projects with the Reform congregation. A common joke that circulates among observant Jews goes like this: 'How many synagogues does one Jew need? Three. One that is his, one that is not his and one that he will never go to.'

Each of the three synagogues holds Shabbat services and celebrations of Jewish holidays and life cycle rituals. They each sponsor their own youth clubs and a range of social activities and *Shabatons* (communal Shabbats), usually organised on the former premises of Soviet-built *dom otdykha* (holiday retreat centres). Among the programmes offered are Jewish summer camps where Jewish history and traditions are taught in an informal manner as part of daily activities. Additionally, the two Orthodox synagogues have their own (female and male) schools, a children's orphanage, a *heder* (junior rabbinic study), a *yeshiva* (senior rabbinic study), a *kollel* (postgraduate rabbinic study for married men), a *mikvah* (purifying bath) and a university whose curriculum includes a combination of religious and secular subjects. Other formal education programmes, sponsored by Student Union of Torah Alliance for Russian Speakers (STARS), are organised on the premises or in private homes of Israeli emissaries where enrolment in and attendance at STARS is encouraged by a monthly stipend of US$75 paid to the students. The two orthodox synagogues each publish a weekly newspaper (in Russian), distributed at no cost at the synagogue or through subscription, and sponsor an hour-long television programme dedicated to Jewish lessons, which runs weekly on two different local channels.

Despite the historical stronghold of Reform Judaism associated predominantly with the Brody Synagogue in pre-Revolutionary Odessa, today the Reform religious movement represents the smallest segment of religiously affiliated Jews. The people I met at the Reform congregation Emanu–El were just as new to Judaism as those who I met in Orthodox settings. A recently opened kindergarten, located on the outskirts of the city, is the community's first attempt to organise formal education facilities.[18]

In line with the rest of the services supported by religious leadership, local Jews are invited to dine in one of the two kosher restaurants in the city and shop in the adjacent kosher grocery stores, which carry an inventory of Israeli and local products. On occasions when members of the local Jewry decide to have a kosher meal for a life celebration, I was told that reducedcost catering was provided by the rabbis as a reward for their good

deed. Advertisements for Jewish (not necessarily kosher) cuisine can also be found displayed around the city centre. The local *Chevra Kadisha* (burial society) affiliated with the two Orthodox communities owns a separate plot of land where only *halakhic* Jews (see section below) are allowed burial conducted in accordance with the traditional Jewish procedure.

Jewish schools are regarded by Jews and non-Jews alike as having a strong academic curriculum, with proper meals and pastoral care for their students. Similarly the Jewish universities are considered good academic institutions. Jewish summer camps are also attractive because of their extremely low cost and high level of organisation and activity, as well as the opportunity to encounter a foreign (usually Israeli) culture. Other resources provided by Jewish religious organisations go some way towards meeting the daily needs of those who cannot secure them independently, offering subsidised food, medicine and homecare, which could not be guaranteed by the state. Other means of assistance, particularly to the elderly, include a social agenda of organised events, cultural gatherings and groups. All these highly valued amenities are conditional on membership of the relevant religious organisation. For the middle and younger generations, privilege is also embedded in rites of passage ceremonies and the teaching of a sacred history, Hebrew language and rituals, which are guaranteed to community members only. This sense of exclusivity is a 'perk' that young people sometimes mentioned. Affordable, often free, travel abroad (usually to Israel and sometimes the United States) was also considered a bonus.[19]

Many of these benefits (although not travel) were previously part of the Soviet state welfare programme, which has not been fully replaced with a Ukrainian state system of social services, thus leaving many ex-Soviet citizens without essential or appropriate resources. Faith-based organisations (especially those linked to the West) have played a paramount role in this transition as they secure specific benefits for their congregants and a general sense of security.[20]

One of the unfortunate by-products of this generous provision of resources to Jews under the auspices of international Jewish organisations is that it has arguably contributed to a new wave of anti-Jewish sentiments, and even grass-roots anti-Semitic slurs.[21] Evidently this is part of a wider phenomenon in which economic and social distinctions and imbalances within Odessan society are demarcating ethnic differences and social hierarchies. I did myself occasionally hear non-Jewish Odessans express envy of Jews' travel and emigration opportunities, even the possibility of European or Israeli citizenship. An important legacy from the Soviet era is the socialist assumption of social justice in which the welfare system provided for all on equal terms (Kotkin 1995: 152). Consciously or not, this functions as a backdrop of expectations and everyday reality that conditions today's sense of inequality. It seems that being a Jew has become a privileged status, no longer an undesirable identity that one has whether or not one wants it (Markowitz 1993: 159).

The rule of *halakhah*

The *halakhah* definition of being a Jew was virtually unknown in the Soviet Union. For the most part, religious associations played little, if any, part in one's Jewish orientation and Jewish identity carried a secular definition as being the ethnicity / nationality inscribed in one's Soviet internal passport (Chlenov 1994: 133).[22] While acceptance into the Orthodox community and institutions is strictly defined by the *halakhah,* which recognises a Jew as one born to a Jewish mother (or properly converted to Judaism), Jewish 'nationality' under the Soviet definition recognised descent through either parent. So the introduction of a religiously derived Jewish identity by Odessa's Orthodox leadership has brought an unfamiliar twist to local perceptions of Jewishness, and a new sense of uncertainty. Many people's self-identification as Jewish is now under question or at least seen as requiring proof. Given previous state manipulation of ethnic, religious and national categories in the USSR, religious emissaries feel it necessary to check who is 'really' Jewish. *Halakhic* status is usually affirmed by one's passport and birth certificate or the appropriate documents of one's mother or maternal grandmother, where Jewish 'nationality' would be shown. The old Jewish passport identification is reviewed carefully in each case to avoid cases of forged documents. Personal dossiers, compiled in cases where a person has no documents at all (usually as a result of the Second World War events, including evacuation), are scrupulously checked and sometimes even sent to Israel for final consultation. Documents showing one's Jewish descent are essential for emigration, admission to religious Jewish schools and many Jewish clubs, social and economic benefits, subsidised travel to Israel and more.

Many elderly informants spoke to me of their distaste at having to present their documents in order to prove themselves as Jewish. However, Israeli emissaries insisted that such checks were essential and told me of cases where documents had been forged in applications to their schools and universities. In fact, such stories were often presented in a positive light and described as 'the best advertisements for the Jewish community'. As one congregant of the Tikva Or Sameach Jewish school explained, 'Back in the old days, people tried to forge their documents to hide their Jewish identity and now they forge them to create one'.

Jewish education

Education has become a sensitive topic among Odessa's Jewish population. Here are the issues as seen through the eyes of Viacheslav, a man in his early sixties who, during the late Soviet period and in the early 1990s, ran a youth club, which he started as a public mathematics tutorial but later saw evolve, with his support, into a 'hang out of intellectual youth'. It has been some ten

years since his club ceased to operate and Viacheslav proudly identifies himself as the only member left. (Currently, he gives private maths lessons to students and does a number of odd jobs that keep him entertained.)

Viacheslav seldom initiated discussions of his own or other people's Jewishness, although he responded to my many questions about Jewish life in the city. On the many occasions when we discussed the education system in Odessa – a topic that interested him very much – he despaired of the general level of schooling in the city, which he described as 'shameful', a system riddled with bribes and corruption and underfunded by the state. It was in that context that Viacheslav talked about Jewish schools that provided separate education for Jews. For all their high educational standards, he saw such segregation in Odessa's schools as undermining fair competition among children from different backgrounds and reducing diversity among students. 'It used to be the case that everyone in Odessa had at least one Jew in their class, they knew what Jews looked like and who they were through either close or even distant interaction with them.' Describing his own classroom as a child, Viacheslav spoke of his Ukrainian, Albanian and Greek friends.[23] 'Today,' he continued, 'Russian and Ukrainian children grow up distanced from Jewish children as the tendency of sending Jewish children to Jewish schools rises in the city.' According to Viacheslav, both Jews and non-Jews will suffer from this mutual lack of contact. Eroding the city's multinational character will ultimately lead to these children seeing each other as fundamentally 'different'. 'In my club,' he continued, 'no one asked each other and no one cared if the others were Jewish. We were all interested in maths and problem solving. We came together because of our interests, not because of a superficial tie based on our nationality.' He was also worried about the curriculum in Jewish schools, where, he believed, there was little teaching on *Odesika* (Odessan history and culture).[24] 'What matters in these schools,' he proclaimed, 'is that Jews are living as religious Jews, be it here or elsewhere – to them it's all the same.'

Viacheslav's account of the past, with its atmosphere of classroom cohesion between students of mixed background, may be somewhat romanticised. Certainly, as an account of secular education in contemporary Odessa, it did not match what I was told by a number of younger people who explained that they had chosen to move to a Jewish school because they had been harassed as Jews whilst studying elsewhere (whether in state or private schools). Igor, a twenty-two-year-old computer engineer, told me that in one classroom discussion of religion, his teacher had not even mentioned Judaism and refused to do so even after he raised the subject. A number of other young people recalled being called *zhid* or *zhidovka* (a derogatory name for a Jew, male and female respectively) by their non-Jewish classmates in schools they had previously attended.

Aside from such conflict-related reasons for attending Jewish schools, Jewish students whom I met described their educational experiences at the Jewish schools as 'interesting,' 'new' and 'exciting.' Karina, a seventeen-year-old student at the Chabad girl's school, spoke of the excitement of

learning a new language (Hebrew), of being in a milieu that often included foreign teachers and of interacting with other students from abroad on their visits to Odessa. She welcomed the chance to learn about her religion and heritage and proudly spoke of herself as a Jew. While Viacheslav never mentioned the new transnational relations and solidarities forged in the classrooms of religious Jewish schools, for Karina and a number of other students I met, these were the features they especially valued. Living and studying in Odessa, many students at Jewish religious schools were engaging in communication with a large network of Jews overseas. Like the Ukrainian Jewish youth in Kiev, as described by Golbert, they were experiencing 'transnational orientations from home,' linked into transnational networks, relationships, institutions, experiences and lifestyles and without ever leaving home (2001: 713, 715). Beyond the transnational connections sustained by youths at home, an increasing number of Jewish students in Odessa are also taking part in various organised travel and education programs offered in Israel. These opportunities allow young Jewish Odessans to familiarise themselves with Israeli culture first hand.

Shifting Jewish values

Despite the enthusiasm of children attending the recently established Jewish schools, the feelings of their parents were sometimes at odds with the new ethos. I did not have a chance to interview Karina's parents, but a number of the local Jewry whose children or grandchildren attended Jewish schools, or were involved in other Jewish religiously based organisations, expressed mixed feelings, and at times concern, over the fact that – in the name of being Jewish – their children were being exposed to a quite different set of values from their own. The new focus of young Jews on principles of faith and religious practice was a not entirely welcome change. Some of the parents spoke of their children's home life and their Jewish education environments (including schools, camps, Jewish organised travel and other social programmes) as two different worlds. Major life choices concerning intermarriage, dietary laws, dress and other elements of Jewish self-expression were understood and dealt with in quite different, at times opposing, ways.

On one occasion my friend David took me to meet his grandmother for their regular tea. David, a newly observant Jew, did his best to evade her persistent questioning about his marriage plans but eventually said that he was waiting to meet a nice Jewish girl. In response, his grandmother said:

> You should want to marry someone because they are a good person, an intelligent person, a kind person but to marry someone just because they are Jewish, it's silly. Our family has so many nationalities in it, so many wonderful people who have helped me throughout my days. Must you upset me by this type of talk? … and why do you walk around with that

> funny hat [a *kippah*]? Must you tell everyone you're Jewish? 'That is exactly the point,' David answered.

Prior to becoming observant of the Jewish religious laws, David told me he had similar views to his grandmother, but he has since realised the importance of marrying someone Jewish and raising his children in a Jewish family.

The increasing isolation of contemporary Jewish life in Odessa from the wider social environments of the city was a point regularly made by Sveta, a local historian who had been involved in various Jewish projects since the early days of *perestroika*. She made an interesting analogy between the new ways of learning to be Jewish and learning a language:

> When people are fluent in a language, they can make up words, speak incorrectly, but they know when it becomes nonsense. When you're learning a new language you don't have the same comfort and security in your understanding of what you can and cannot say. This type of 'disloyalty' [to the rules] is unknown to many people today. A non-fluent speaker or a novice, similar to the newly observant Jews, is not as secure in his or her language skills and thus often relies on other authorities, such as books and the advice of the assumed-to-be-experts, to make their judgement. Previously, when Jews were exposed to various ways of being Jewish, they understood that their mischief did not take away their Jewishness. In other words, they were not any less Jewish having stepped outside Jewish Orthodox law – especially in Odessa, where Jews lived in a relatively liberal manner. Today, when Jewish education is for most part directed at bringing Jews out of assimilation into the religious Jewish world – thus stripping them of all that is condemned as non-Jewish – a stronger trend of strict observance follows.

Sveta cited many examples of young Jewish people whom she had met in her years of working for different Jewish initiatives, who now judged and valued their Jewishness on the basis of religious or traditional Jewish principles. She mocked the ostentatious behaviour that newly 'literate', rulebound young Jews were sometimes prone to display, such as refusing ever to step foot inside a church. Yet, Zeev Jabotinsky, a prominent Odessan Jewish writer and Zionist, had been happy to act as a witness at the Russian Orthodox wedding of one of his friends. For Sveta, it was obvious that a Jew does not lose his Jewishness by entering a church or gain it by entering a synagogue. Newly observant Jews, like new language learners, did not feel as comfortable in making such judgements, having only recently learnt of their Jewishness or finding their sense of Jewishness now abundant with new terminology, symbols and laws in which they were not yet fully fluent; they still lacked the authority of 'just knowing'. Herbert Gans observes similar contrasts between first- and second-generation Jews in the United States: 'The first-generation Jew had no need to decorate his house with Stars of

David or hang pictures of a rabbi on the wall in order to give a Jewish "feel" to his world, as many second-generation Jews do' (1956: 427).

Odessan Jews who adopt the new symbols and traditions frequently find themselves facing dilemmas about practices they had previously taken for granted. For one young Jewish family I often stayed with during my shorter visits to Odessa, the problem was whether to put up a New Year's tree, a Russian tradition they had both grown up with. According to Israeli teachers advising Seregya in his weekly classes at the synagogue on proper Jewish conduct at home, this tradition was 'Christian' and 'Soviet' but definitely 'not Jewish'. Lika thought that it would be strange not to follow a family tradition and could not understand Seregya's interpretation that it was 'wrong'. They spent many late nights in their kitchen debating the issues. At the point when I left Odessa, they had decided against the tree – but that they would nonetheless celebrate the holiday.

Sveta emphasised that the Jewish values prized and practised by today's Jewish youth are not embedded in knowing local Jewish history, art, literature and music, the works of Odessan Jewish artists who wrote in Russian, Yiddish and Hebrew and sought wider recognition of their talents. The notions of belonging to the Russian-speaking intelligentsia, of having an open orientation to the world and seeking to attain the highest level of education were no longer obvious secular markers of Jewish identity, as they were for self-aware Jews of her generation. This was not to say that contemporary Jewish youth in Odessa no longer espouse these values and aspirations but, she explained, they are no longer seen as markers of being a Jew. This old 'cosmopolitan' way of 'being' a Jew was now being displaced by the new, more potent associations between being Jewish and identifying with Judaism as a religion. However, it is also an inescapable fact that the cosmopolitan basis of Jewish identity was itself already radically undermined during the major period of Soviet rule when most of the Jewish religious, cultural, educational and Zionist institutions were closed, destroyed or banned.

In fact, Sveta expressed both approval of and concern about Jewish education. Whilst she welcomed the openness to learning and being able to explore explicitly Jewish topics in the post-Soviet environment, she was worried that such teachings would have an adverse effect on the way in which Jews related both to other Jews and to non-Jews. Odessa's presentday narrowing of inter-ethnic contact was another departure from the historical accomplishments of the city's unique cosmopolitan way of life. With the boundaries between ethno-religious groups becoming more concrete and, more importantly, with the rise in Ukrainian nationalism, Sveta believed that there was a perceptible increase in intolerance, as witnessed by outbreaks of anti-Semitism, such as the flyers that sometimes appeared in the city that blamed Jews for all the troubles of the country or the spraypainted swastikas sometimes found on the walls of old Odessan buildings.

It was notable that many Jewish Odessans of the Soviet era spoke in perhaps surprisingly favourable terms about the regime's policies of

secularisation and assimilation. These were accepted by many Jews and others as a modernising process that represented a move forward from the once segregated and backward Jewish way of life under the Russian Empire. From this perspective, the present-day religious revival appeared to be a step backwards. Also, in contrast to the usual image of the suppressed subjects of the Soviet regime, they valued the principles of equality and morality that they recognised in their Soviet days. Many Soviet inhabitants, as Kotkin notes, recognised the righteousness of socialist values even if they did not see them always actually applied in state practices (1995: 228).

Tatiana, a retired librarian and prominent member of the local intelligentsia whom I met in the last year of her life, claimed that Jews of her generation voluntarily and enthusiastically accepted Russification and assimilation, viewing these as the 'way forward' in their self-development. Slezkine explains that in the Soviet Union,

> Young Jews were not just learning Russian the same way they were learning Hebrew: they were learning Russian in order to replace Hebrew, as well as Yiddish, for good. Like German, Polish, or Hungarian in other high-culture areas, Russian had become the Hebrew of the secular world … If the Russian world stood for speech, knowledge, freedom and light, then the Jewish world represented silence, ignorance, bondage, and darkness. (2004: 128, 136)

Tatiana acknowledged the role of state authorities in these processes, but in her opinion this was secondary to the opportunities provided to the greater Jewish population to pursue a self-chosen path.[25] Speaking of Odessa, her home, she claimed that the city's distinctive history had played a significant role in the speed and degree to which Russian language and culture was absorbed by Jews and non-Jews alike. Tatiana argued that Jews in Odessa were historically much closer to Russian culture than to Jewish culture. Russian was 'the language that they spoke, the books that they read, the theatre they attended, the food they ate, the clothes they wore, and, on the whole, their philosophy of life or *mentalitet* [mentality]'. In her view, their identification with being Russian and Jewish (legally exclusive categories in the Soviet Union) was combined in their identification with the larger social class of Russian-speaking intelligentsia. As was the case for Viacheslav and his club, a 'hang out of intellectual youth', the ideal of belonging to the 'intelligentsia' was, Rapoport and Lomsky-Feder argue, central to the construction of the ethnic identity of many Russian Jews, a 'prism through which Jews consider and evaluate both themselves and others' (2002: 233). For Tatiana, members of the Jewish intelligentsia were 'cosmopolitan' almost by definition, since their circle of friends included many different nationalities and not only Jews. In such groups, relationships were based on purely personal interests and not loyalty to a specific religious or national group. Friendships formed in Soviet times, as she recalled, carried moral value and were not driven by economic interests, unlike today.[26] Sveta's

comments represent a rather extreme view of Soviet idealism that ignores much of the state-promoted anti-Jewish sentiments expressed in quotas and other means of discrimination that some Soviet Jews were exposed to. Yet other Odessans of her generation, who were more balanced in their view of the Soviet state, similarly lamented Soviet values and expressed a concern for the religious revival witnessed in their city.

Tatiana definitively rejected the claim of contemporary Jewish activists that they were restoring the lost or stolen treasures of Jewish life in Odessa. On the contrary, by speaking and acting against assimilation, these Jewish religious leaders were undoing the sophisticated past accomplishments of the city. She felt that today's Jewish religious leaders were moving the local Jewish population toward a religiously oriented Jewish identity and history based on values and processes foreign to their world (attending and making donations to the synagogue, observing Jewish traditions and rituals, the importance of marrying a Jewish spouse, learning Hebrew, receiving religious education, disaffiliation from Soviet secular holidays, etc.). However, reflecting on the new Jewish visibility, Tatiana did acknowledge that the state of harmony she so admired in Soviet Odessa was perhaps based more on hiding differences between ethno-religious groups than on true mutual acceptance.

The type of concerns expressed by Tatiana, Sveta and Viacheslav was found more frequently among the elderly and, to some degree, among the middle-aged. However, I also came across a number of young Jewish people who were opposed to contemporary Jewish community building because of the problem of ethnic separatism. Alex, a nineteen-year-old graphic designer, said that, despite his Jewish origins, he would not feel comfortable attending activities in a place especially created for Jews: 'I never ask my friends if they are Jewish or not and never really talk to them about my Jewish roots. If I suggested to them that we might attend something at the Jewish Cultural Centre, we would all start thinking about who is and who is not Jewish. No one has time for that in Odessa.' Katia, a student at Odessa University, chimed in, agreeing that Jewish programmes divide Jews from others. She described how, after attending a Jewish youth camp, she had returned feeling closer to her Jewish friends than others in her social network.

In contrast, others said that they automatically gravitated towards other Jews. Vitali, a recent returnee from Israel, said that Jewish institutions were a natural part of his life. They served the important purpose of bringing Jews together to guarantee their survival as an ethnicity, a religion and a people, and they offered good opportunities to meet a Jewish partner and later build a Jewish family.

Jewish Odessa in the view of returnees

Vitali was one of the migrants I met who, after spending four years in Israel, had returned to live in Odessa. After many visits home, he was now setting

up his own agricultural business together with his father, who had previous experience in the sector. Despite this commitment, Vitali described his stay in Odessa as 'indefinite'. Other Israeli returnees had a variety of reasons for choosing to return to the city, whether on a permanent, undefined or temporary basis, such as family loyalties, career development, the danger of living in the Middle East, and the improving economic and social prospects in the Ukraine. Opportunities attracting Israelis to Odessa also included the availability of posts in education or forms of community service.[27] For the most part, returnees come back from Israel, although some return from the United States, Germany, Australia and other locations.[28] The presence of returnees in Odessa, as elsewhere in the FSU, is a relatively new phenomenon but one that is gaining momentum and not only among immigrants who had difficulty adjusting to Israeli life or those who had seen Israel merely as a stepping stone to another, perhaps unreached, destination. Even those who had been well integrated into Israeli society are now seeking opportunities back home that will utilise the skills and knowledge gained abroad (Sapritsky 2006).

Throughout my interviews, meetings and interactions with returnees, I was keen to find out how their time abroad had shaped their views of Odessa's new ethnic and religious diversity and whether their sojourns abroad had had an effect on the type of relationships they forged with local Odessan Jews and others on their return. Whilst Vitali's time abroad clearly defined his perception of solidarity with other Jews in the city, other returnees had very different attitudes towards Odessa's new sense of itself as a place of Jewish belonging. For some, it took returning to Odessa, rather than moving to Israel, to develop a desire and a need to be in an organised Jewish community. Kostia, for instance, told me that it was not until a few years after his return to Odessa that he started to become more observant of Jewish religious laws and began regularly attending the synagogue, neither of which had been part of his daily routine in Israel. On his return, however, he found himself wanting to battle against Odessa's 'assimilationism': by observing the Jewish commandments (which he had not observed in Israel) he formed a link between his experience in Israel and his everyday life in Odessa. Other returnees made the same kind of point, although with a less observant pattern of affiliation. As Marat explained, 'In Israel I did not do anything Jewish, you don't need to. But when I came back I started doing little things with the community. Here I felt that it was nice to keep traditions.'

In some cases, however, returnees had a difficult time relating to the heightened sense of religiosity they now found in Odessa. Dina, a twentysix-year-old engineer who had recently moved back to Odessa to be closer to her family, spoke of her inability to reconnect with her Jewish friends who were now involved in Jewish organisations in the city: 'They became too Jewish for me. Although I am Jewish, we don't understand that to be the same thing. I think of myself as an Israeli, as an Odessan and then as Jewish. For them it's the other way around.' At the age of fifteen she had emigrated to Israel,

leaving her sister and parents behind in Odessa. Before the move, she had been very involved in the Jewish life of the city. However, during her time in Israel, her passion for being an active Jew had slowly faded. As Dina saw it, when you move to 'Zion', acting out your Jewishness no longer seems important. Returning to Odessa, she had not opted to rekindle her old connections with Odessa's Jewish circles. Nothing about the religious world struck a chord with her present Jewish identification. The new outlook she had adopted abroad now made 'stay back' Jews seem 'too Jewish', 'narrow and old fashioned'.[29] Similarly, many other returnees describe Odessa as a place known and at the same time unknown. Writing about the experience of homecomings more generally, Stephansson (2004: 4) points out how, for many returnees, in the course of their protracted absence their home had inevitably undergone changes and they too had been exposed to new realities and adopted new habits. In the case of Odessa's returnees, for some this made living in Odessa interesting, for others difficult to cope with.

Genady, a business entrepreneur who moved back to Odessa with his wife and two children after spending eleven years in the city of Ashdot in Israel, is someone I was introduced to at the Jewish Cultural Centre, Migdal, where a number of returnees came to practise their Hebrew and find out about programmes for their children. When we met some two months into his stay, Genady told me about an incident in which a teacher on the after-school programme had complained about his children's lack of attention in the Jewish traditions and religion class. Genady's response to the teacher had been that, in Israel, many immigrants do not interact with the religious community, from which, as he described it, they are often ostracised. Although his children had grown up in Israel celebrating the Jewish calendar as a state-initiated agenda, he did not accept that Judaism had to become a crucial part of their Jewish identity. In his view, Odessa, his native place, had never been a religious city and he found the recent changes in local Jewish attitudes altogether out of character. Jewish educators seeking to ensure the survival of a Jewish culture and perpetuating traditional Judaism embodied in religious form are committed to an endeavour that is of little importance to him or his children. He is happy for his children to be raised in a secular Jewish environment, such as he had come to know in Israel but he saw the imposition of more religious codes as infringing his level of accepted Jewish practices.

Another effect of spending time in Israel was that some returnees had new views about Odessa's Arab minority. A number of the Israeli students I met at the Odessa Medical Institute felt a close connection with their Arab classmates, being fellow international students and sharing a partiality for Turkish cuisine as the next best thing to their Middle Eastern favourite dishes. Such close relations with Arab students was something many had not experienced in their previous Russian or Israeli environments but now were able to build in the context of an international group of foreign students in Odessa. Some returnees, however, found it difficult to work with local Arab residents. Nathaniel attributed his reservations to personal issues with locals

in Ramat Gan, Israel, and his experience of a terrorist attack. 'Before going to Israel,' he explained, 'my best friend in Odessa was a young Arab boy. They used to come here and bring back a lot of goods that I would buy and sell on for better prices. I knew them all. Now if you ask me to do something with Arabs, I would think twice.' Working as a director of a construction company, Nathaniel said that he was more at ease dealing with a 'European mentality' rather than a 'Middle Eastern' one, which, according to him, meant a lack of punctuality, reliability and trust.

While some returnees arrive back in Odessa with a heightened sense of Jewishness or develop stronger attachments to Jewish life on their return, others prefer to remain on the periphery of Jewish activity in the city. The issue of Jewish and Arab relations remains in question. Some of the scenarios of sociality that I witnessed in Odessa offer some hope, while other cases are less promising.

Conclusion

This chapter has described some of the changed orientations of post–Soviet Odessa's Jewish population as it has been affected by mass emigration, the influx of international Jewish religious emissaries, primarily from the United States and Israel, and the presence of returnees. It has focused especially on the phenomena of Jewish religious revival in Odessa, manifest in the new visibility of Judaism throughout the city, the mushrooming of new Jewish religious institutions and interventions, not least in the field of education, and a sharpening of boundaries between Jews and non-Jews.
This involves both social ruptures and new solidarities and networks.

The ethnographic material presented here has revealed a significantly varied range of ways that Odessan Jews, young and old, negotiate a path through competing definitions of what it is to be a Jew. Religious practices were contested, welcomed by some as offering certainty and support, while rejected by others as alien to the ethos of the city.

The backdrop to all these interactions is Odessa's past as a famously cosmopolitan city, a cosmopolitanism that stretches back to its days as a free port, includes a rich history of local Jewish and non-Jewish artists and writers and, for some at least, also encompasses the Soviet era with its Russian intellectuals, modernisation and principles (and at least partial provision) of equal welfare for all. Even if this cosmopolitanism has been assaulted at times by anti-Semitic outbursts in the city's history, for many of the city's Jewish inhabitants its heritage frames the issues surrounding contemporary developments. For the most 'cosmopolitan' aspect of Odessa has always been, precisely, its Jewishness – a distinctive non-exclusive Jewishness evinced most strongly in adopting values, ideals and a way of life that was largely liberal, culturally eclectic and open to mixing between Jews and others.

Can the new religious mentality be in turn absorbed within that evocation of cosmopolitan tolerance and liberalism? For some, especially children and young people, the new religiosity offers the excitement of international links with Jews in other countries. It means crossing borders (even without leaving home), which might indeed be seen as partaking in the openness so valued in the notion of cosmopolitanism. Or is this very border-crossing merely a transnational parochialism, to be viewed as a sad decline in the city's cosmopolitan heritage? From this perspective, largely expressed by the older generations, the new models of Jewishness adopted by many of Odessa's Jewry under the auspices of the international religious emissaries are narrow and isolationist. Religiously based Jewish identity segments Jews from the wider social and cultural environment of the city and divides the Jewish population itself as to who is a 'real' Jew. Current projects of Jewish revival are, in this view, extinguishing what remains of Odessa's distinctive and Jewish cosmopolitan past by their aspirations to make Jews feel and act more Jewish and by their efforts to selectively strengthen their ties with other Jews. What is indisputable is that altogether new modes of sociality are emerging, quite different from the pre-Revolutionary and Soviet Odessan practices whose loss is lamented by the older generations of Jews.

At the same time Odessa is being transformed in other ways. Economic and employment opportunities are expanding, while the state struggles, so far unsuccessfully, to replace the levels of welfare and educational provision provided in the Soviet era. The way in which separate Jewish schools are seen is, in part, affected by their high academic quality compared to the available state or private facilities. Equally, elderly Jews cannot but appreciate the services provided to them as members of religious organisations. And, in the face of the state's relentless Ukrainisation policy (only alluded to here), Jewish identity provides a point of resistance. On a more fearful note, the new visibility and benefits accruing to Odessa's Jews risks the envious attention of re-emerging anti-Semitism.

Writing about Odessa's Jews, I have made an attempt to capture the complexities and ambiguities that arise within one of the city's ethno-religious groups confronted with changes in their identification, education, social status and system of beliefs and practices. Like other ethnic and religious minorities in the city, Jews are redefining themselves in their new socioeconomic and political environs both as individuals and as members of a distinct group whose boundaries have become more pronounced. This challenge may possibly set off further intra- and inter-group conflict, or it may lead to a new phase in Odessa's ethnic and religious coexistence, with different urban groups accepting one another on the basis of their distinct traits and all sharing a sense of belonging to the highly distinctive place that is Odessa. I suspect that improved economic and political conditions in Odessa and Ukraine more widely would be a determining factor in enhancing social cohesion and that the reverse would cause further social turmoil. Within the Jewish community it is apparent that new Jewish religious orientations have been partially absorbed into Odessa's social

fabric but it is possibly too early to tell how influential they will be for the future generations and whether their direction will continue to be set by Orthodox Judaism and foreign-based sponsorship.

Notes

1. I want to suggest that the term 'Jewish', as used by most Odessans to describe their city, does not literally mean that only Jews live there or that Jews dominate the place in any significant shape or form (see Karakina 2007: 7). Rather, this seeming stereotype stands in for other ways of expressing what distinguishes Odessa, notably 'cosmopolitan', 'tolerant' and 'international' – which the historic and continuing presence of Jews (as an accepted ethnic and religious minority) guarantees and, to some degree, stands to define. Understood this way, as a metonym of the city's famous attributes, the stereotype of Odessa as a 'Jewish' city does not abolish or overwrite its other characteristics (or inhabitants).
2. The ethnographic material presented in this chapter was collected in Odessa during fieldwork carried out from October 2005 to January 2007 and again in September 2007. The methods used ranged from participant observation and informal interviews to focus groups with Odessa's youth and life histories gathered among the elderly Jewish population. This research was funded by the VIII Research Scholar Program from the American Councils for International Education and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture.
3. Although various Jewish institutions are involved in Odessa's contemporary development, this chapter will mainly focus on religious congregations, organisations and religious doctrine.
4. Herlihy (1986: 241–42) notes that, according to the 1897 city census, over 40 per cent of the city's population adhered to non-Orthodox faiths. This division of Odessa's population by religious belief clearly represented its cosmopolitan character.
5. An area designated for Jewish residence in the Russian Empire, which was officially constituted in 1835 and lasted until 1917.
6. As Zipperstein (1986: 86)) highlights, Odessa's Jewish affairs from 1860 to 1888 were for the most part controlled by the city's Chief Rabbi, Aryeh Schwabacher, a German Jew who did not speak Russian or Yiddish.
7. Mathijs Pelkmans' edited volume, *Conversion After Socialism*, focused predominantly on Christian and Muslim conversions, similarly challenges the 'problematic notion that religious life after socialism can be characterized as a revival of repressed religious tradition' (Pelkmans 2009: 2). As Pelkmans rightly points out, 'Religion served new needs and was linked to new imaginaries' (2009: 2).
8. Richardson points out that Odessans consider the distinctiveness of their city and its citizens to be the result of the mixing of people of different nationalities. This is viewed as the source of the beauty of the city's women, the tolerance among its citizens, its tasty cuisine and its dialect, which combines aspects of Russian, Ukrainian, Yiddish as well as other European languages (2004: 3).
9. Chabad Lubavitch is a transnational Hasidic movement engaged in worldwide outreach, dispatching thousands of *shlihim* (emissaries) to university campuses,

major cities and some of the most remote places in the world. Among others, see Fishkoff (2003) for an entertaining and in-depth description of the Chabad Lubavitch movement.

10. http://epyc.yivo.org/content/19_3.php, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.
11. I am aware that the Jewish population in Odessa is by no means undivided in its views on the developments said to represent them or in their understandings of what is recognised as 'Odessan' today. Indeed, it is questionable how far one can generalise about any continuing Soviet imprint on the thought and behaviour of Odessa's Jews when talking about the youth and children who have grown up influenced not only by the history and experience of their parents and grandparents but also amidst new trends of post-Soviet culture. As Horwitz notes, '[t]he growth of at least two generations of Jewish youth who have experienced open celebrations of Jewish holidays, attendance at Jewish schools, and an environment of open, public Jewish activity has produced a Jewish youth quite different in attitudes and sensibilities from its parents' (2003: 124).
12. The Museum of History of Odessa's Jews states that there were 65,000 Jews in the city in 1989, while statistics provided by the city's mayor, Eduard Gurvits, give the figure as 90,000 for the same year. These official statistics are highly debated (as are the figures on the numbers of Jews in Ukraine as a whole, where estimates vary from 250,000 to 500,000). A mere 12,380 Jews are registered as

    such on the official city census collected in 2005: see http://www.misto.odessa.ua/index.php?u=gorod/stat (last viewed on 25 February 2011). However, Jewish scholars and leaders of various communities argue that the actual figures are two or even three times more than that figure: see http://tikvaodessa.org/Page/Content.aspx?page=about/odessa_community (last viewed on 25 February 2011). In their view, many of the city's Jews do not want to be registered as Jews any longer, or regard Jewishness as one of their identifications but choose to mark their allegiance with their nation state or their language. I myself met a number of Jewish residents who, despite their self-proclaimed Jewish identity, felt it more 'appropriate' to label themselves as Ukrainian or Russian in official documents.
13. Constructed for the seven-day holiday of *Sukkoth*, a *sukkah* is a ritual outdoor dwelling (booth or hut) in which Jews take meals and occasionally sleep.
14. A *hanukkiyah*, also known as a *menorah*, is a special candelabra used for the lighting of the candles during the festival of *Hanukhah*.
15. In the Marxist-Leninist ideology, religion was the 'opiate of the people' and approached as irrational superstition and potentially dangerous. 'Proselytizing and religious education in schools were prohibited and any display of religious commitment could prejudice not only one's own job but also the position and prospects of a wider circle of relatives and friends' (Hann 2006: 2).
16. Litvaks are traditionally followers of Lithuanian Jewish Orthodoxy, which can be traced to the late thirteenth century. Historically Lithuanian Orthodoxy was marked by concentration on highly intellectual *Talmud* study. Litvaks are characterised as being more dogmatic and authoritarian than other branches of Ashkenazi Jewry. The movement is often closely related to the teachings of

Rabbi Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman of Vilnius, known as the 'Vilna Goan', who strongly opposed the development of Hasidim in Eastern Europe.

17. In addition, the leaders of the organisation Jews for Jesus – which operates mostly underground – claim that it is officially registered as an institution of Jewish activity, although it is not recognised as such by other Jewish religious leaders.
18. Possibly due to the late arrival of the Reform Congregation in post-Soviet Odessa (2001), insufficient funds, less aggressive tactics, and a weaker infrastructure of services and programmes, Reform Judaism is not nearly as widespread today in the city as is Jewish Orthodoxy.
19. Odessa also has a number of Jewish secular and Zionist organisations, which provide programmes and aid to the local Jewish population. Among the most popular are The Jewish Agency (otherwise known as Sokhnut) and the Israeli Cultural Centre, both of which function as education centres for potential Israeli immigrants and also those interested in Israeli culture, political affairs, study abroad programmes or free Hebrew lessons. The Israeli Cultural Centre also bears the responsibility for reviewing the documentation of Jewish descent necessary for emigration or subsidised travel to Israel. Unlike the religiously oriented centres, these institutions hold Israel, rather than religious observance, at the heart of a person's Jewish identification – this is expressed most vividly in the act of *aliyah* (emigration to Israel). Other organisations include the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (Joint), which sponsors the Club for Elderly Jews, Gmilus Hessed (recently renamed Shaarey Zion), the Jewish Community Centre Migdal (and all of its programmes, including the Early Child Development Centre, Mazl Tov, and the Museum of History of Odessa Jews), World ORT (which finances the public Jewish school number 94), the Jewish Library, the Association of Former Ghetto Prisoners, the Jewish Learning Centre and Publication Moria, the athletic organisation Makkabi-Pivden, and a Student Cultural Centre, Hillel.
20. See Caldwell (2008) for a comparative discussion of Christian-based welfare in the FSU.
21. On a few occasions I heard Odessans of non-Jewish descent complaining about their Jewish neighbours receiving food and clothes packages and also financial support from Jewish centres where no such benefits would be available to them. Similarly, non-Jewish concentration camp survivors (whom I met under different circumstances when I was working as a translator) were highly aggrieved by the fact that Jewish ex-prisoners were receiving higher reparations from the German government than they were themselves.
22. A child born to two Jewish parents was automatically registered as a Jew in his or her documents. For children of mixed marriages, the option of being registered as a Jew remained open as they could choose to take up either their mother's or father's nationality. Gizwitz (2001: 4) points out that, due to the high percentage of intermarriage among Soviet Jews (estimated at 70-80 per cent), the number of 'full' Jews in relation to the overall Jewish population is relatively small. As one of the Orthodox rabbis told me, 'If you meet a Jew whose parents are both Jewish it is probably an accident'.
23. Viacheslav's account echoed many other stories that lament the loss of the cosmopolitan character of the city.

24. Odessa currently has three different Jewish school structures, two of which are sponsored by the Orthodox congregations; the third is a state school run by World ORT. In our conversation Viacheslav primarily concentrated on the synagogue-sponsored schools in which he knew a number of students.
25. Terry Martin (2001: 428) draws attention to the fact that the Russian language was also promoted as 'public propaganda' in a series of Soviet newspaper articles, one of which reads 'The great and mighty Russian language, the language of Lenin and Stalin, Pushkin and Gorky, Tolstoi and Belinskii, is profoundly dear to all citizens of the USSR, and is studied with love by children and adults … [which shows] the exclusive interest of all nationalities to the study of the language of the great Russian people, first among equals in the fraternity family of the peoples of the USSR'.
26. See Patico (2005: 484) where she provides a similar account of how local residents of St Petersburg in the late 1990s felt the decline of sociality and the increasing power of money in their personal affairs.
27. A small number of returnees are affiliated with one of the two Orthodox movements in the city and the local branch of Sokhnut. Employed by their respective organisations, they usually relocate to the city for a limited duration of one or two years.
28. This trend can possibly be explained by the fact that migration to the United States and Germany usually involved inter-generational families rather than individual Jewish young people or young couples, as was frequently the case with migration to Israel (Goldbert 2001: 716–17). The low frequency of returns from the United States and Australia can also partially be explained by the distance and the cost of travel. While visits from Germany are very common, permanent returns occur less frequently with European citizens.
29. Similarly Long and Oxfeld (2004) point out that 'as the act of returning unfolds, the specific experiences often contrast with the returnee's original dreams' (2004: 10). In the same book Gmelch describes how Barbadian returnees 'feel that their own interests are more cosmopolitan and transcend [those of] the local community; the place now appears as "narrow"' (2004: 213).

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