The New Wave of Russian-Jewish
(Trans-national and Trans-generic) Cultural Production
December 4–5, 2014
Columbia University

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4
6:30-9:30

Davis Auditorium (located just to the right of the main campus entrance to the Schapiro Center—see http://apam.columbia.edu/directions-davis-auditorium-cepsr )

6:30 PM: Greetings, Alan Timberlake, Director, East Central European Center

6:40 PM–8:30 PM: Readings and Conversation
Authors Anya Ulinich and Lara Vapnyar read from their new novels Lena Finkle's Magic Barrel and The Smell of Pine, in conversation with Anna Katsnelson.

8:30 PM–9:30 PM: Reception

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5
9:00 AM-11:30 AM: PANEL A
Room 503 Hamilton Hall

Chair: Olga Gershenson, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Anna Fishzon, Duke University
“Queer Temporality, Russian-American Fiction, and the Specter of Soviet Childhood”

Nataša Milas, Yale University
“Maturing Into Non-Fiction: Gary Shteyngart's Little Failure and Aleksandr Hemon's The Book of My Lives”

Margarita Levantovskya, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
“’Israel Isn’t Really My Country, New York Is:’ Constructing Home in Russian-American Fiction”

Sasha Senderovich, University of Colorado, Boulder
“Soviet Jews, Re-Imagined: Russian American Jewish Writers and the Critique of Self-Orientalization”

Nyusya Milman-Miller, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
“’To Hell and Back::: The Theme of Purgatory in David Bezmozgis’ The Free World”
11.30 AM-1.30 PM: Lunch Break

1.30PM-4:00 PM: Panel B
Room 503 Hamilton Hall

Chair: Edward Kasinec, Columbia University

Jeffrey Taylor, SUNY Purchase
“The Post-Soviet Poetics of Regina Spektor”

Anna Katsnelson, Medgar Evers College
“Identity and Pictorial Representation in the First Russian-Jewish Graphic Novel”

Elizaveta Mankovskaya, Princeton University
“How Michael Idov Became a Russian: Ground Up in Russia”

Jesper Reddig, Munster University
“Re-Negotiating the Americanization of Tevye: Intertextuality and Meta-Fiction in Nadia Kalman's The Cosmopolitans”

Julia Kolchinsky Dasbach, University of Pennsylvania
“The Dancing ‘Storyteller’: Situating Ilya Kaminsky’s Collection Dancing in Odessa as Poetry of Inherited Witness”

Organizers: Dr. Alan Timberlake and Dr. Anna Katsnelson

Sponsors: This project is made possible by the local support of The Harriman Institute and East Central European Center ECEC. The organizers are especially grateful for the grant support of COJECO BluePrint Fellowship funded by the UJA-Federation of New York and Genesis Philanthropy Group.

The present conference grew out of two summer institutes supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities on “America’s Russian-Speaking Immigrants and Refugees: 20th Century Migration and Memory” (Columbia University, June 2013) and “America’s East Central Europeans: Migration and Memory” (Columbia University, June 2014).
**BIOS**

**Anna Fishzon** is a Postdoctoral Fellow in Women’s Studies at Duke University. As Assistant Professor of History at Williams College she taught courses on European cultural history, Stalinism, the history of fashion, nineteenth-century Russian intellectual history, and camp. Anna received a Ph.D. from Columbia University in history and a B.A. from Duke University in history and Russian. She is the author of *Fandom, Authenticity, and Opera: Mad Acts and Letter Scenes in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), as well as articles on sound recording and celebrity. Her current book project and articles (under review) consider late-Soviet temporality and the queerness of Brezhnev-era childhood. She is also editing a volume of conference proceedings from *Worlds of Wonder: the Queerness of Childhood* with Anastasia Kayiatos. In Fall 2013, Anna began training at the Institute for Psychoanalytic Training and Research in New York. When not attending conferences, reading psychoanalysis, and watching Soviet cartoons, she is the co-host of the podcasts New Books in Psychoanalysis and New Books in Russian and Eurasian Studies.

**Olga Gershenson** is Professor of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She got her B.A. in Russia, her M.A. in Israel, and her Ph.D. in the US. Her personal geography parallels her academic path tracking Russian-Jewish culture at home and abroad. For years she followed Russian immigrant cultural production in Israel: she published *Gesher: Russian Theater in Israel* (2005) about a unique bilingual theater in Tel Aviv, and a series of articles about Russian-Israeli cinema. Then she detoured into studying gender and power relations, and published the collection *Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender* (2009). Back on her Russian-Jewish track, she has recently published a book about the unknown, forgotten, or banned Holocaust films in the Soviet Union, *The Phantom Holocaust: Soviet Cinema and Jewish Catastrophe* (2013). Olga Gershenson teaches courses on Jewish cultural studies, such as *Cinema of the Holocaust or Israeli and Palestinian Popular Cultures.* She has a lively lecture schedule at universities, film festivals, and other cultural events.

**Edward Kasinec** holds graduate degrees from Columbia University (M.A., 1968, M.Phil., 1979), and Simmons College (M.L.S., 1976). In addition Kasinec has been awarded a Certificate in Appraisal Studies (Fine and Decorative Arts, 2010) from New York University. His professional career includes service as Reference Librarian/Archivist for the Harvard University Library and the Ukrainian Research Institute Library (1973-80); Librarian for Slavic Collections, University of California, Berkeley, Library (1980-84); and Curator, Slavic and Baltic Division, The New York Public Library (1984-2009; 2009-2011, as Staff Advisor to the Exhibitions Program). He presently holds an appointment as a Staff Associate, Harriman Institute, Columbia University. Kasinec has published more than two hundred refereed articles and books and has been acknowledged in equally as many academic publications.

**Anna Katsnelson** earned her Ph.D. in comparative literature in 2011 from the University of Texas, Austin, specializing in twentieth-century American, Brazilian, and Russian literature and drama. She teaches at Medgar Evers College, CUNY. Her current project
"Writing the Fourth Wave: Russian-American Immigrant Fiction" looks at contemporary immigrant writers from the former Soviet republics. Her research is funded by a 2013-14 COJECO BluePrint Fellowship. In 2007-8 Anna was a Fulbright Scholar to Brazil, where she worked on her dissertation. Her dissertation research, now a book manuscript titled *Elite Jews: Ethnic Passing across the Jewish Literary Diaspora*, is an interdisciplinary, transnational study that shows that sociological identification with the hegemonic group and nativist influences in the United States, Brazil, and the USSR led a number of ethnically Jewish writers to create a literature completely devoid of ethnic markers. Anna is also a published travel writer. Her work has been published by Fodor’s and the Time Out Group; she edited, wrote, and photographed the travel guidebook *Time Out São Paulo* (Time Out Group: London, 2009).

**Julia Kolchinsky Dasbach** emigrated as a Jewish refugee from Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, in 1993. She holds an MFA in Poetry from the University of Oregon and is in the University of Pennsylvania’s Comparative Literature Ph.D. program. Julia’s poetry has appeared in *Tupelo Quarterly, Guernica, Nashville Review*, and *Consequence Magazine*, among others journals. Her manuscript, *The Bear Who Ate the Stars*, won the *Split Lip Magazine’s* Uppercut Chapbook Award, and is forthcoming from *Split Lip* Press this fall. She was most recently runner-up in *Southern Humanities Review’s* 2014 Auburn Witness Poetry. Julia is the editor-in-chief of *Construction Magazine*.

**Margarita Levantovskaya** is Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where she teaches courses in Russian, translation and Jewish studies. Her research interests lie in the diasporic identities of Russian-speaking Jews in the Soviet Union and after its collapse. She is currently at work on a book project titled *Rootless Cosmopolitans: The Culture of the Soviet-Jewish Diaspora*.

**Elizaveta Mankovskaya**, Ph.D. student in the Slavic Department at Princeton University, received her M.A. in Russian contemporary literature (Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russia, 2014), specialist degree (BA+MA) in comparative literature (Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russia, 2012). Scholarly interests: classic Russian and contemporary novel, Russian diaspora, Russian and American popular culture, gender studies, film and television.

**Nataša Milas** is a Ph.D. candidate at Yale University in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. Her research and teaching interests include Russian and Eastern European émigré literature, Yugoslav literature and film, and literary translation. Nataša has recently guest edited a Bosnian issue of the literary journal *Absinthe* and co-edited a special issue of the film journal *Kino Kultura* dedicated to Bosnian cinema. In the summer of 2014 Nataša participated in the NEH Summer Institute at Columbia University, “America’s East Central Europeans: Migrations and Memory.” Nataša’s writing has appeared in *In Contrast: Croatian Film Today, Kino Kultura*, and *Slavic and East European Journal*.

**Nyusya Milman-Miller** is an Associate Professor of Russian in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State
University. A native of Moscow, she received her undergraduate degree from the Moscow State Pedagogical University, specializing in Russian language and literature. After her emigration to the US in 1981, she continued her literary studies and earned a Ph.D in Slavic languages and literatures from the University of Michigan. Over the past two decades, she has directed Russian language programs at the University of Michigan and Indiana University, and is currently the Director of the Russian Program at Virginia Tech. Her main publications include the first monograph on the prose of Lyudmila Petrushevskaya Читая Петрушевскую: взгляд из за океана (St. Petersburg, 1997); the textbook Business Russian: Cultural Approach (ACTR & Kendall Hunt, 1996), and a CD-ROM Russian for Business and Pleasure (University of Michigan Press, 2002). Over the last five years she has dedicated her research to the prose of the young generation of Russian-Jewish Americans, with special attention to David Bezmozgis, Gary Shteyngart and Lara Vapnyar. She is working on a manuscript with the working title “New Jews from the Old Country.”

**Jesper Reddig** holds M.A. degrees in English and philosophy from Münster University, Germany, and is a member of Münster’s graduate school Practices of Literature. Having pursued his (under)graduate studies in Münster, Montreal, and Vienna, he recently defended his doctoral thesis on “Performative Selves: The Americanization of Post-Soviet Jewish Women Writers.” Between 2006 and 2010, Jesper worked as a student and research assistant at the chair of American studies in Münster, where he taught courses on Jewish American literature, before earning a Ph.D. scholarship from the Heinrich Böll Foundation. He was a visiting student at the Rackham Graduate School, University of Michigan, in 2012, and he is also a long-term editorial assistant at the Forum for European Contributions to African-American Studies (FORECAAST). His first published article is on Gary Shteyngart.

**Sasha Senderovich** is Assistant Professor of Russian Studies and Jewish Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder. He holds a Ph.D. from the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University (2010). His published work includes articles on Russian-Jewish writers Dovid Bergelson and Isaac Babel, a critical introduction and notes to the English-language translation of Moyshe Kulbak’s Soviet Yiddish novel The Zelmenyaners: A Family Saga (Yale University Press, 2013), and a forthcoming article on contemporary Anglophone fiction by Russian Jewish émigré authors in the United States in The Edinburgh Companion to Modern Jewish Fiction (Edinburgh University Press, 2015). He is currently working on his book manuscript, The Red Promised Land: Jewish Mobility in Soviet Culture. In addition to his scholarship, Sasha has also published journalism, mainly on contemporary Russian-Jewish literature and culture, in Tablet, Lilith, The Forward, New York Times, New Yorker magazine’s Page-Turner blog, and New Republic. Before joining the faculty at CU Boulder, Sasha was a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for the Humanities at Tufts University, a Visiting Assistant Professor of Russian and East European Studies at Lafayette College, and the Aresty Visiting Scholar in Jewish Studies at Rutgers University. In addition to teaching university students, Sasha has enjoyed giving talks and classes for the wider public, particularly on different issues in Russian Jewish literature, cinema, and culture, at such venues as Limmud FSU in New Jersey; the Great Jewish Books program for high
school students in Amherst, Mass; the Jewish Community Library of San Francisco; the Rutgers-New Jersey, the Boston, and the Boulder, CO Jewish Film festivals; and the Boulder, CO Jewish Community Center. His journalism and scholarship can be found on his website, www.sashasenderovich.com

Jeffrey Taylor graduated from Oberlin College in 1990 with a degree in Literature and Government and immediately joined the US Peace Corps in Hungary, where he taught English in a secondary school. He received a Rotary Scholarship to attend the Central European University (CEU) and earned an M.A. in History. In 2011 Taylor received his Ph.D. from CEU in comparative central and east European history, having written his dissertation on the history of Hungarian art market, which was published by Helena History Press as In Search of the Budapest Secession: The Artist Proletariat and Modernism’s Rise in the Hungarian Art Market, 1800-1914. In 2011, he was offered the position of assistant professor of arts management at SUNY Purchase and returned to the US after 21 years abroad.