



NATALIA IVASHKEVICH

Hochschule für Jüdische Studien (Heidelberg, Germany)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6741-0641>

## The role of the Stranger in Jewish Literature: Exploring Efraim Sevela's "Righteous" and "The Informant" through Georg Simmel's Theory

**Summary:** In his short stories, "Righteous" and "The Informant", Sevela explores the theme of being an outsider in the society, a recurring motif in Jewish literature. This literary exploration aligns Sevela with well-known Jewish authors like Franz Kafka and Philipp Roth, who also grapple with the elaborateness of being an outsider. Georg Simmel's theoretical framework on "the stranger" helps us understand Sevela's characters. Simmel suggests that strangers have a unique social position, being both a part of and apart from the society. How strangers are treated reflects broader social and ethical concerns. Accepting strangers fosters unity while rejecting them can lead to conflict. Sevela uses various markers to highlight an outsider within the society, with physical appearance playing a prominent role. Jankowski's analysis of the characters' feelings within the society reveals an inner conflict about official inclusion while feeling like outsiders. Drawing from personal experiences, Sevela sheds light on the broader struggles of Soviet Jews adapting to new environments. Sevela's autobiographical novel, "Farewell Israel," provides insights into his own transformation into a cosmopolitan outsider due to state-sponsored antisemitism. Collectively, these texts highlight the subtle exploration of the outsider's identity in Sevela's works. Whether viewed through Simmel's sociological lens, Jankowski's analysis of inner conflict, or Sevela's personal reflections, the theme resonates with universal human struggles of displacement, identity, and the quest for belonging. In Sevela's narrative, the outsider becomes a symbol of hope, kindness, and compassion — a potential catalyst for positive change in a world shadowed by darkness.

**Keywords:** Sevela, Simmel, stranger, soviet Jew

ROLA OBCEGO W LITERATURZE ŻYDOWSKIEJ: ANALIZA OPOWIAŃ EFRAIMA SIEWIEŁY *SPRAWIEDLIWI* I *DONOSICIEL* W ŚWIETLE TEORII GEORGA SIMMELA

**Streszczenie:** W swoich opowiadaniach *Sprawiedliwi* i *Donosiciel* Efraim Siewieła eksploruje motyw bycia outsiderem w społeczeństwie, który jest często powracającym tematem w literaturze żydowskiej. Ta literacka eksploracja łączy Siewiełę z uznanymi autorami żydowskimi takimi, jak Franz Kafka i Philip Roth, którzy również zmagali się z tematyką bycia obcym. Teoretyczny model „obcego” Georga Simmela pomaga zrozumieć postaci stworzone przez Siewiełę. Simmel sugeruje, że obcy zajmuje unikalną pozycję społeczną, będąc jednocześnie częścią i poza społeczeństwem. Sposób traktowania obcych odzwierciedla szersze problemy społeczne i etyczne. Akceptacja obcych sprzyja jedności, podczas gdy ich odrzucenie może prowadzić do konfliktu. Siewieła wykorzystuje różne środki, aby podkreślić pozycję outsidera w społeczeństwie, przy czym wygląd fizyczny odgrywa ważną rolę. Analiza uczuć bohaterów przeprowadzona przez Jankowskiego ujawnia wewnętrzny konflikt między oficjalnym poczuciem przynależności, a subiektywnym doświadczeniem wyobcowania. Opierając się na własnych doświadczeniach, Siewieła rzuca światło na szersze problemy radzenia sobie żydowskich emigrantów ze Związku Radzieckiego w nowych środowiskach. Autobiograficzna powieść Siewieły *Pożegnanie Izraela* dostarcza wglądu we własną transformację w kosmopolitycznego outsidera w wyniku państwowego antyse-

mytizmu. Łącznie te teksty podkreślają subtelną eksplorację tożsamości outsidera w twórczości Siewiely. Niezależnie od tego, czy patrzymy przez soczewkę socjologiczną Simmela, analizę wewnętrznego konfliktu Jankowskiego czy osobiste refleksje Siewiely, temat ten rezonuje z uniwersalnymi ludzkimi problemami wyobcowania, tożsamości i poszukiwania przynależności. W narracji Siewiely outsider staje się symbolem nadziei, dobroci i współczucia - potencjalnym katalizatorem pozytywnej zmiany w świecie zacienionym przez ciemność.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Siewiela, Simmel, outsider, socjologia, sowieccy Żydzi

#### РОЛЬ ЧУЖАКА В ЕВРЕЙСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ: ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ РАССКАЗОВ ЭФРАИМА СЕВЕЛЫ ПРАВЕДНИК И ИНФОРМАНТ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ТЕОРИИ ГЕОРГА ЗИММЕЛЯ

**Резюме:** В своих рассказах Праведник и Информант Севела исследует тему чужого в обществе, что является важным мотивом в еврейской литературе. Это литературное исследование сближает Севелу с известными еврейскими авторами, такими как Франц Кафка и Филип Рот, которые также освещают сложности чужого статуса. Теоретическая концепция Георга Зиммеля о «чужаке» помогает нам разобраться в персонажах Севелы. Зиммель утверждает, что чужие занимают уникальную социальную позицию, одновременно являясь частью общества и в то же время отличаясь от него. Как общество взаимодействует с чужими отражая более широкие социальные и этические вопросы. Принятие чужих способствует единству, в то время как их отвержение может привести к конфликтам. Севела использует различные символы, чтобы акцентировать позицию чужака в обществе, при этом внешность играет ключевую роль. Анализ Янковского чувств персонажей в обществе показывает внутренний конфликт между официальным включением и чувством чужбины. Основываясь на личном опыте, Севела проливает свет на обширные проблемы советских евреев, адаптирующихся к новым условиям. Автобиографический роман Севелы Прощай Израиль дает понимание его собственного преобразования в космополитического чужака из-за государственного антисемитизма. Эти тексты вместе подчеркивают тонкое исследование идентичности чужака в произведениях Севелы. Будь то через социологическую перспективу Зиммеля, анализ внутреннего конфликта Янковского или личные размышления Севелы, тема соотносится с универсальной человеческой борьбой с вытеснением, идентичностью и поиском принадлежности. В рассказах Севелы чужак выступает символом надежды, доброты и сострадания — потенциальным катализатором положительных перемен в мире, омраченном тьмой.

**Ключевые слова:** Севела, Зиммель, чужак, социология, советские евреи

The stranger is a recurring character in Jewish literature, appearing in various contexts and serving multiple functions. Whether as a resident foreigner, a passing traveller, or an outsider seeking refuge, the stranger occupies a liminal space in Jewish society, both geographically and socially. Whether as a symbol of vulnerability, strength, or cultural hybridity, the stranger remains a powerful and resonant figure in Jewish literary traditions. Jewish authors have delved into the intricacies of feeling like an outsider, from Franz Kafka's literary works to Philipp Roth's novels or beyond. Efraim Sevela similarly addresses the identity of the stranger in his writings, portraying the difficulties of navigating two distinct worlds while attempting to reconcile past traditions with present realities. The subject of the stranger in his works takes on diverse forms. They could be a Soviet immigrant who feels lost and simultaneously excluded from the community, a frightened young soldier stationed beyond the front lines, or even an abandoned par-

rot. This article seeks to explore the complex role of the stranger in Jewish literature based on an example of two short stories by Efraim Sevela — *Праведник* and *Осведомитель*, in the context of Georg Simmel's theory of the stranger.

*Simmel's Theory on the "Fremdartige"*: According to Simmel, strangers occupy a unique position in social relations because they are simultaneously a part of and apart from the society. The treatment of strangers can reflect broader social and ethical concerns in the following ways:

1. Simmel's theory highlights the significance of welcoming and including strangers in the society. When strangers are accepted and treated respectfully, it can encourage a social unity and create a vaster community. However, if strangers are rejected or viewed with suspicion, it can result in social fragmentation and exclusion.
2. Simmel proposes that how a person treats strangers can demonstrate their relationship with the society in general. Those who are receptive to social changes and diverse communities may be more willing to welcome and respect strangers. On the other hand, those who hold traditional or conservative beliefs may tend to reject or discriminate strangers.
3. Ethics play a vital role in our social interactions according to Simmel's theory. The manner in which we treat unfamiliar people can indicate our ethical values and our dedication to treating others with honour and esteem. By being compassionate and understanding toward strangers, we can establish a more humane and ethical community.<sup>1</sup>

Georg Simmel believed that it is important to have social relations with people who are not a part of one's close social circle, and his theory on "the stranger" highlights this point. How strangers are treated can reflect wider ethical concerns about inclusion, the relationship between individuals and society, and the importance of ethical behaviour. Generally, it can be said that the stranger and society create two different groups, which can be named as "he/she/they/them" and "we". The separation between the stranger and the society further splits both groups.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Simmel G., *Exkurs über den Fremden*, in: Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1992, pp. 764-771.

<sup>2</sup> М.А. Полетаева, *Эволюция представлений о «чужом»*, «Культура культуры» 2020, № 2, <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/evolyutsiya-predstavleniy-o-chuzhom> [26.02.2024]

*Typology of "Fremdartiges" in Behavior:* The present narrative of the short story *Праведник* centers around Zenon, a protagonist originating from Poland, who had rescued a Jewish family during the Second World War and later was acknowledged as the righteous among the nations in Yad Vashem for his heroic deed. The central aspect revolves around how Zenon's heroism led to his stigmatization as an outsider in his own country, which made him feel like a stranger in his new home, Israel.

Georg Simmel's theory of the stranger emphasizes the importance of social interactions with individuals who are "outsiders" or not a part of one's immediate social circle.

The case of Zenon fits into Simmel's pattern of a stranger. In communist Poland, Zenon's heroism led to his stigmatization as a Zionist, which presented him as a potential wanderer. "[...] Его называли сионистом, прогнали из партии, уволили с работы. А потом намекнули, что в Польше ему делать нечего и пускай мотаает в свой Израиль."<sup>3</sup>

Sevela tackled the topic of stigmatization as Zionist, which he explored for example in his famous and contentious work *Farewell, Israel*. He argued that such labelling was merely a guise for state-sponsored antisemitism. "[...] прикрыв антисиионизмом самый заурядный антисемитизм, [...]"<sup>4</sup> This scenario presents an illustrative instance of the dynamic interplay between the individual and the society. State-sponsored antisemitism resulted in Zenon's alienation and marginalization, losing his status and becoming a pariah in his habitual environment. As a reasonable outcome, he moved with his wife to Eretz Israel.

Despite his recognition as a hero in Israel, he still feels like a stranger. Following the demise of his spouse, Zenon's sole tether to his recently adopted domicile was severed, rendering him unanchored from his new surroundings. He shifted his focus towards alcoholism and feelings of social isolation. Zenon gave up everything due to his addiction and ended up as a homeless individual. He committed his time exclusively to the activities within the Yad Vashem memorial, particularly showcasing his personal tree in the Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations to visitors and requesting for donations.

«В мою честь благодарные евреи посадили дерево в этой аллее. Назвали меня праведником. Вон моё дерево. Отсюда видно» [...] Он протягивал

<sup>3</sup> Э. Севела, *Праведник// Избранное*, Кристалл, Санкт-Петербург 1999, с. 785.

<sup>4</sup> Э. Севела, *Возраст Христа. Последние судороги неумирающего племени*, АСТ Москва, Москва 2008, с. 298.

свою панамку, и христиане-туристы, чтоб поскорее отвязаться от него, откупались деньгами в разной валюте.<sup>5</sup>

On occasion, he would end up drunkenly falling asleep in Memorial, and the staff members would keep watch over his slumber. Although it appeared that Zenon was treated with respect, he did not experience improved social cohesion with the wider society. There is no proof that he joined a new group or community, which has resulted in his current situation. Although his wife's death might have contributed to his collapse, it was not the only reason.

Sevela portrays Zenon's identity as a stranger not only through the events that led the protagonist to the current situation, but also through concise and accurate descriptions of him and his surroundings.

Зенон не выходит на Аллею праведников, когда там проводят в окружении полицейских официальную делегацию. Он отсиживается ниже деревьев на голом каменистом склоне холма. Таков его уговор с полицией. При делегациях не появляется.<sup>6</sup>

His inability to visit the Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations during official delegations already suggests something about his position in Israeli society. His place is the stony hill, outside of shade of trees. "Киббуцная панамка, из синих и белых клиньев, съехала ему на нос, прикрыв глаза от прямых лучей солнца."<sup>7</sup> In a final attempt to assimilate into his "new" society/environment, he wore his kibbutz panama hat. However, the hat's dangerous perch on his nose signifies the failure of his attempt. Zenon's alcohol addiction serves as another textual indicator of his sense of being an outsider. "В Израиле редко кто пьёт. И водка, да коньяк в еврейском государстве самые дешёвые в мире. Зенон стал пить, столько душа пожелает."<sup>8</sup>

The primary narrative of the short story *Осведомитель* centres on Arkadij, a Soviet Jew known for his unconventional Russian surname, Poluboyarov, acquired through marriage to Klava Poluboyarova. Notably, Arkadij made a decision to adopt his wife's surname instead of giving her his own, Perelman. He specializes in the art of retouching, particularly focusing on the enhancement and alteration of portraits depicting Soviet leaders. In an attempt to stand out, Arkadij poses as a KGB informant, hoping for attention. However, this backfires, making everyone avoid him.

<sup>5</sup> Э. Севела, *Праведник // Избранное*, Кристалл, Санкт-Петербург 1999, с. 784.

<sup>6</sup> Там же, с. 782.

<sup>7</sup> Там же, с. 782.

<sup>8</sup> Там же, с. 785.

Despite attracting some notice from the KGB, he is let go. Feeling rejected, he decides to move to the USA, arranging a fake marriage for money. During a layover in Italy, he tries the same attention-seeking tactic, this time pretending to be a CIA informant. Again, it leads to an isolation. Surprisingly, the CIA also overlooks his actions. He changes his plans and manages to head to the USA. Arkadij's story as a faux informant for the KGB and CIA, neatly aligns with a pattern observed by Georg Simmel. Throughout his life, Arkadij is constantly striving to be in the spotlight, using different methods to gain attention. "Он взял фамилию жены. [...] И стал Аркадий абсолютным русским человеком."<sup>9</sup> With changing his surname, the protagonist tries to adapt to his current environment in order to get more acceptance. But his passport and his appearance spoil his plans, marking him as a stranger in society. His attempt to integrate by pretending to be an agent of various security services proves unsuccessful. "Он старался произвести впечатление. И производил. Люди замыкались. Всячески нововили избегать его."<sup>10</sup> After being exposed by the KGB as a fake agent, things got worse for him. Not only did no one want anything to do with him, but he also began losing job opportunities. Arkadij, facing a situation similar to Zenon, began considering moving to the USA. Seeking support from the Jewish community, he was turned away due to his spoiled reputation as an informant. Despite his efforts to explain and redeem himself, he could not convince them. This led to his unsuccessful struggle for assistance.

Аркадий кинулся к евреям. [...] А евреи от него – враспынную. Осведомитель, мол. [...] Аркадий чуть не в слезах клянется, что это все выдумки, пустой треп. Сам на себя наговаривал по глупости. А ему не верят. Стараются держаться подальше.<sup>11</sup>

However, Arkadij was mostly left out because he talked too much. His false claims of being an informant for secret services worked against him. The rumour of him being an informant made him a pariah both inside and outside the Soviet Union, making it impossible for him to be welcomed in the new society abroad.

Это был конец. С таким жутким пятном в личном деле ни одна приличная страна его не примет. Даже Красный Китай. Его длинный болтливый язык, обернувшись вокруг непутевой головы, вонзил ядовитое жало в собственный затылок, [...].<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Э. Севела, *Осведомитель // Избранное*, Кристалл, Санкт-Петербург 1999, с. 752.

<sup>10</sup> Там же, с. 754.

<sup>11</sup> Там же, с. 757.

<sup>12</sup> Э. Севела, *Осведомитель Э. Севела, Осведомитель...*, с. 769.

Arkadij's situation goes beyond his personal choices and extends into deeper societal issues. As pointed out by Andrzej Jankowski, the *Petra Scandali* reflects a broader challenge in the assimilation of Soviet Jews within the Russian diaspora abroad. The story suggests that Arkadij's struggles might represent wider challenges faced by Soviet Jews as they adapt to new environments. Jankowski proposes that Arkadij's difficulties metaphorically capture the intricate complexities of assimilation within the Russian diaspora. In this context, the *Petra Scandali* emerges as a symbolic representation, shedding light on the broader struggles involved in the integration of Soviet Jews into foreign societies.<sup>13</sup> Like Agasfer, Arkadij is wandering in search of his own safe haven.

In Sevela's works, the theme of the stranger's identity is prevalent. The protagonists are frequently portrayed as strangers in various scenarios, which emphasizes the dominance of this theme throughout the works. Especially in his autobiographical novel *Farewell Israel*, many explicit and implicit allusions to this topic can be found. By recounting his memories, Sevela shares his own perspective on what it means to be a stranger. Through his sharp observations, he illustrates the complete metamorphosis of the Soviet citizen into a cosmopolitan stranger. Such metamorphosis was the result of state-sponsored antisemitism that was already well-known. In those difficult times, anyone who expressed unorthodox views was closely monitored. It was extremely hard to find a secure space to openly share their own thoughts and viewpoints. It felt like the past was not relevant anymore. There was a general sense of sadness and uncertainty about what the future will bring.

У нас уже не было прошлого, в будущее заглядывать – как в беспроблемную тьму глядеть. Оставалось только настоящее, вот этот день, этот час, пока ты ещё на свободе. Мы жили в каком-то призрачном, нереальном мире, как перед потопом, от которого спасения нет.<sup>14</sup>

He chose to leave his familiar environment where he had previously enjoyed a life of wealth. Only because he could not tolerate the hypocrisy of the Soviet government and become a stranger. Andrzej Jankowski, in his work *Проза Эфраима Севелы. Из истории русской литературы третьей эмигрантской волны*<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> А. Янковский, *Проза Эфраима Севелы. Из истории русской литературы третьей эмигрантской волны*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Świętokrzyskiej, Кельце 2004, с. 116.

<sup>14</sup> Э. Севела, *Возраст Христа. Последние судороги неумирающего племени*, АСТ Москва, Москва 2008, с. 51.

<sup>15</sup> А. Янковский, *Проза Эфраима Севелы...*

highlighted that this decision spotlighted a discrepancy between him and the Russian nation.

Для преуспевающего в материальном и профессионально-творческом отношении Севелы, который, как и другие представители привилегированной элиты, [...], решение покинуть «золотую клетку», в которой он жил вместе с семьей, было вызвано потерей веры в идеалы коммунизма и на практике означало не только разрыв с лицемерием и ханжеством советской власти, но и, в первую очередь, разрыв с русской нацией, среди которой он вырос и окреп.<sup>16</sup>

Efraim Sevela developed a deep sense of honesty and precision on this subject due to his own personal experiences. Sevelas' life took a different turn when he was just 15 years old. The devastating effects of the Second World War forced him to leave his home, beginning his journey of exile. He faced a series of difficult and fortunate events that led him to frequently change his places of residence until, at the age of 61, he was finally able to settle down.

In *Farewell Israel*, the author portrays several disturbing situations where other individuals faced alienation due to their wish "to swim against the stream". In the first chapter, titled *Бунт немых*, the author narrates the story of 24 Jews who courageously rebel against the oppressive system, aiming to secure permission to immigrate to Israel. In these dark times, it was an extraordinary occurrence. On February 24, 1971, these courageous individuals refused to leave the waiting room of the Supreme Soviet leader and persisted in their refusal until they were granted the necessary emigration allowances. Through sharp language, the author sketches several distinct situations that contribute to the stigmatization of dissenters. One of the scenes portrays the severe beating of Michail Gold by four men dressed identically, all because of his desire to emigrate. "Четыре фигуры в одинаковых пальто и шапках прошли по доскам, проложенным через канаву, и остановились рядом с ним."<sup>17</sup> By physically closing the gap between these "clones" and their victim, they further widened the moral divide. Consequently, Michail Gold found himself pushed away from a traditional soviet society. Their defiance against the higher authority gathered a negative perception. In another scene, Sašča Iwanow, the son of a Russian commander and a Jewish woman, discovers his Jewish heritage relatively late but welcomes it with pride. However, losing his job arises from the obstacle created by

<sup>16</sup> Там же, с. 181.

<sup>17</sup> Э. Севела, *Возраст Христа. Последние судороги неумирающего племени*, АСТ Москва, Москва 2008, с. 61.



his acknowledgment of his heritage to his potential journalism career. The government tries to block his plans to leave the country for Israel, where he hopes to escape judgment even for consuming Soviet bread. Sašča's determination to honour and preserve his heritage, much like Michail Gold's, leads to his alienation from Soviet society.

The Deputy Chairman made deliberate attempts to intimidate them using various threats, crystal clear labelling them as enemies of the state. These brave individuals, acting as strangers within this state, carried out their actions. However, the claims put forth by the Deputy Chairman served only to validate their status and aggravate the divide.

— Да вы знаете, что вы наделали? — повысил он голос. — На что вы замахнулись? Вы на Советскую власть замахнулись! Ясно? И наши законы за это строго карают. Без пощады. Я вам даю время одуматься отсюда подобру-поздорову. В противном случае — пеняйте на себя. Не покинете зал — вам будет очень плохо. Советская власть умеет расправляться с врагами.<sup>18</sup>

In both his fictional prose and autobiographical work, there are textual signals that describe the characters and their surroundings. These straightforward remarks not only offer metaphorical insights into the story, but also subtly steer the reader by revealing the character markers and social status of the individuals involved. In Sevela's life, there was an significant episode that illustrated his initial experience with the harsh reality of Soviet antisemitism. Immediately upon obtaining his university degree, Efraim Sevela secured his initial position as a journalist in the editorial office of the newspaper *Зоря* in Brest. It was during this time that the hunt for "evil cosmopolitanism" reached its zenith within the Soviet society. Victims were identified and publicly condemned by the notorious "comrade judgement committee." "Я сидел в глубине зала, смотрел на сцену и не верил своим глазам. Происходило что-то невероятное."<sup>19</sup> However, the trial did not go as planned. One of the accused individuals turned out to be Armenian instead of Jewish, leading to their removal from the proceedings. Sevela had a unique reaction to this surprising twist. Viewing the situation through the eyes of a creator, he recognized the inherent absurdity of the whole situation, resulting in bursts of laughter. His response captured everyone's attention. On that unfortunate day, he donned a white T-shirt bearing the inscription "Oklahoma", a generous donation from an international organization.

<sup>18</sup> Там же, с. 71.

<sup>19</sup> Там же, с. 85.

“Эта майка подействовала на Егорова, как красная тряпка на быка.”<sup>20</sup> Sevela was immediately accused of being a cosmopolitan, labelled as someone “without kith or kin”. This situation bears numerous symbolic labels that depict the author as being different, as an outsider among the crowd. His attire, his reaction to the situation, and the behaviour of others all indicate his dissenting nature — the characteristics of a stranger.

Here, we can clearly observe the division of society into two groups, “we” and “they.” The tension between “us” and “them” can sometimes lead to outbursts, as seen in the situation above. However, we should always remember that, in reality, the difference between the “we” and “they” groups can be minimal or even exist only in imagination. The degree of dislike towards “them” is influenced by the presence and effectiveness of the “we” group.

*The Appearance as a Stylistic Device:* In general, Sevela employs numerous markers that highlight the presence of ‘the stranger’ within society. The most prominent marker is the appearance of the protagonists. “Одним словом, ничего особенного... если бы не нос. [...] Такой нос даже у самого миролюбивого нееврея вызывал зуд в ладонях [...]”<sup>21</sup> „Похожий на цыгана, вся голова в колечках черных волос. Нос с горбинкой. Орлиный. И белые-белые зубы.”<sup>22</sup> „А взял он в жены чужую женщину, низенькую, черноволосую, с заросшим лбом.”<sup>23</sup> The following three short sentences from the short story *Праведник* sound like a verdict on Zenon’s nature. “У Зенона нееврейское лицо. Он — поляк. Чистокровный.”<sup>24</sup> By utilizing such an epithet to describe the protagonist’s external features, Sevela emphasizes the distinctions of Zenon within his surroundings. The author’s description of Arkadij’s appearance from another short story *Осведомитель* hints at reasons why the protagonist may be perceived as an outsider in society. His physical attributes suggest a potential source of alienation within the social context.

Он был довольно высок, но сутул. Толстогуб и длиннонос. И, в довершение ко всему, на верхней губе у него торчала бородавка довольно значительных размеров, ис таким украшением нужно было обладать большой дозой мужества, чтобы отважиться протянуть свои губы даже для поцелуя.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Там же, с. 86.

<sup>21</sup> Э. Севела, *Моя Цацкес — знаменосец // Избранное*, Кристалл, Санкт-Петербург 1999, с. 562.

<sup>22</sup> Э. Севела, *Белые ночи // Избранное*, Кристалл, Санкт-Петербург 1999, с. 735.

<sup>23</sup> Э. Севела, *Почему нет рая на земле // Избранное*, Кристалл, Санкт-Петербург 1999, с. 35.

<sup>24</sup> Э. Севела, *Праведник // Избранное*, Кристалл, Санкт-Петербург 1999, с. 782.

<sup>25</sup> Э. Севела, *Осведомитель...*, с. 753.

Nationality and social status serve as secondary markers, although it is crucial not to overlook their significance within the context of the plot.

The urge to return to a lost paradise, illustrated by Zenon and Arkadij, falls apart bit by bit. Even though both eventually reach Israel and the USA, they do not find the happiness they had expected. They were outsiders in their home society and failed to find acceptance in their new surroundings. The mythical paradise remained an unreachable destination for them.

As another marker, the author presents the feelings of the protagonists within society. As highlighted by Andrzej Jankowski in his work, the protagonist experiences an inner dissonance about how to be officially a part of society but still feel like a stranger within it.

Ее неотъемлемым компонентом является акцент на том внутреннем шоке, который испытывает герой, когда в той или иной ситуации чувствует, что в многонациональной стране, где каждый каждому якобы «друг, товарищ и брат», он все-таки — другой и, в значительной степени — изгой.<sup>26</sup>

Efraim Sevela not only used various markers of the stranger in his works, but also implemented these in his movies. In most of the cases, he depicts the alienation of the protagonists based on their visual appearance, highlighting the stark differences between them and their environment. However, in some scenes, the visual appearance, coupled with specific contexts, also plays an allegorical role. For instance, in his renowned movie *Lullaby*, during the sequence featuring Jews just before their execution, we encounter a mother with a small child dressed like the famous Sistine Madonna by Raphael. This touching contrast serves as a powerful commentary on the fragility of innocence in the face of harsh realities. Sevela skilfully uses visual symbolism that deepens the narrative layers, inviting viewers to reflect on the deep effects of societal alienation and how people can stay strong in difficult times.

In conclusion, the stranger plays a significant role in Efraim Sevela's works. They represent hope, kindness, and compassion in a world filled with darkness, and they emphasize the importance of human connections and recognizing the humanity in each other. Although Zenon exhibits profound dissatisfaction with his existence, the treatment he received from his surroundings and its denizens provides a glimmer of hope in this sphere. Arkadij also carries a glimmer of hope for acceptance. However, due to his personal actions, he was denied acceptance by others. It is a common

<sup>26</sup> А. Янковский, *Проза Эфраима Севела...*, с. 52.

observation that the protagonist shares similarities with the creator, and this is evident in both short stories. Zenon, to some extent, reflects the author's own experiences. Both protagonists, Zenon and Arkadij, along with the author, left their homeland and set out on a quest to find a new one. Zenon chose to remain in Israel as an outsider, a foreigner, of his own intention (will), while Arkadij pursued the American dream. During Efraim Sevela's wandering and travels through multiple countries, he eventually returned to the place where his search began. By going back to his home country, he found his inner peace and eventually rediscovered his sense of belonging to his old/new motherland. Zenon's decision to stay in Israel as an outsider reflects his search for a place where he can and wants to truly belong. Arkadij's decision to go to the USA reflects his desire to seek a sense of belonging in the international community, where he hopes to begin a new life. The author, along with both protagonists, faced the challenge of leaving their familiar surroundings and wandering into the unknown, all-in search of a fresh sense of identity and purpose. Through the characters of Zenon and Arkadij, Sevela dives into themes of identity, cultural assimilation, and the universal desire for acceptance. Zenon's struggle to find his place in a foreign land reflects the broader human experience of searching for a sense of belonging. Sevela explores the uncertainty between keeping one's cultural heritage and integrating into a new society, underlining the importance of recognizing the humanity in each other regardless of differences. However, we should not forget that adapting to a new environment and joining any social group, whether willingly or unwillingly, is a complex socio-psychological process that significantly influences a person's behaviour — and it is precisely this process that both protagonists failed to navigate successfully.

Ultimately, the stranger in Efraim Sevela's works symbolizes hope, kindness, and compassion. They represent the potential for a positive change in a world overshadowed by darkness and emphasize the significance of human connections. Drawing parallels between Zenon and the author himself, it becomes clear that Sevela incorporates the elements of his own experiences and reflections into his storytelling. By doing so, he explores themes of displacement, longing, and the search for belonging while also challenging societal prejudices and highlighting the transformative power of empathy and acceptance.

## References

- Янковский, А., *Проза Эфраима Севела. Из истории русской литературы третьей эмигрантской волны*, Akademia Świętokrzyska, Кельце 2004.
- Полетаева, М., *Эволюция представлений о «чужом»*. Культура культуры, no. 2 (2020): 95—102. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/evolyutsiya-predstavleniy-o-chuzhom>
- Севела, Э., *Избранное*, Кристалл, Санкт-Петербург 1999.
- Севела, Э., *Возраст Христа. Последние судороги неумирающего племени*, АСТ Москва, Москва 2008.
- Simmel, G., *Exkurs über den Fremden*, in *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1992.