



Illinois Wesleyan University
Digital Commons @ IWU

John Wesley Powell Student Research
Conference

2011, 22nd Annual JWP Conference

Apr 9th, 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Narratives of Fear and Shame: Jewish Childhood in Soviet and Post-Soviet Life Writing

Rosa Kleinman
Illinois Wesleyan University

Marina Balina, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc>



Part of the [Modern Literature Commons](#)

Kleinman, Rosa and Balina, Faculty Advisor, Marina, "Narratives of Fear and Shame: Jewish Childhood in Soviet and Post-Soviet Life Writing" (2011). *John Wesley Powell Student Research Conference*. 3.

<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc/2011/oralpres6/3>

This Event is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

Oral Presentation O6.3

**NARRATIVES OF FEAR AND SHAME: JEWISH CHILDHOOD IN SOVIET
AND POST-SOVIET LIFE WRITING**

Rosa Kleinman and Marina Balina*

Modern and Classical Languages and Literature Department, Illinois Wesleyan University

This presentation will examine the childhood recollections of Russian/Soviet-Jewish authors Samuil Marshak and Dina Rubina. When Marshak recollected his pre-revolutionary childhood experience in his 1961 narrative, he was forced to write his memoirs from the Soviet vantage point, emulating the anti-childhood model of poverty, neglect, and unhappiness established in Maxim Gorky's childhood reminiscences. Marshak's task of writing about his childhood in happy terms was further complicated by the fact that he was Jewish. Anti-semitism, though officially condemned by the Soviet government, was still strong in the 1960s when Marshak wrote his memoir. His solution was to omit large sections of his narrative related to his Jewish experience, leaving conspicuous gaps for the compassionate reader to fill in. In contrast to Marshak, Dina Rubina wrote about her Jewish experience in the 1990s, purposely positioning her Jewishness at the center of her Soviet childhood recollections. Writing about her Soviet experience in post-Soviet times, however, allowed Rubina the freedom to reveal the necessary details of her childhood without forcing them through the anti-childhood filter. These different narrative approaches provide a complicated identity map which reveals the continued complexity and sensitivity of Russian-Jewish quest for self-identity.