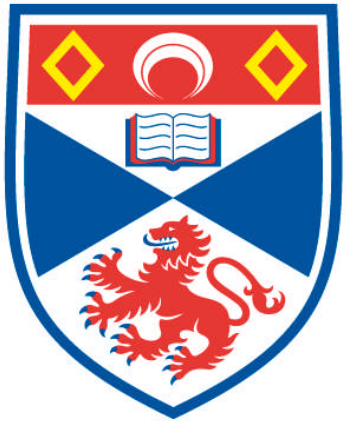
RUSSIANS ABROAD IN POSTCOMMUNIST CINEMA

Lars Lyngsgaard Fjord Kristensen

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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Russians Abroad in Postcommunist Cinema

Lars Lyngsgaard Fjord Kristensen

Submitted to the University of St Andrews for
the Degree of PhD in Film Studies

18 September 2009

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Abstract

This study seeks to analyse cinematic representations of Russian characters that are portrayed as existing outside the Russian Federation, or 'abroad', by focusing on postcommunist cinema and the way it depicts the changing identities that occurred with the fall of the Soviet Union. The assertion of the thesis is that by depicting Russian characters abroad, filmmakers and their films are able to express, or comment on, global issues – such as labour migration, female prostitution, transnational crime and human trafficking, which have risen since the fall of communism. Examining the prevailing discourses (economic, social and political) concerning issues of migration and cross-border travel, the thesis identifies how the cultural capital of Russians traveling abroad comes under scrutiny from receiving countries.

The range of films examined spans more than ten years of filmmaking and the study includes an examination of diverse contemporary filmmakers: Nikita Mikhalkov, Aleskei Balabanov, Yuri Mamin, Sergei Bodrov, Leonid Gorovets, Arik Kaplun, Pawel Pawlikowski, and Lukas Moodysson. These filmmakers and their films are selected from various cinematic contexts and filmmaking practices that are considered postcommunist. By asking the questions – who is speaking?, what is said? and to whom is it said? – the investigation is able to reveal the genre conventions, mode of address and specific ideological concerns that underpin the construction of onscreen cinematic 'Russians abroad.'

The cross-cultural analysis is divided into three parts: first a consideration of Russian filmmakers and their onscreen characters abroad; then Russian transnational cinema, where the focus switches to the investigation of filmmakers who are either floating

freely between national film industries or producing films in diaspora; and, lastly, non-Russian cinema where the emphasis is on filmmakers who have no claims to Russian nationality but who nonetheless make Russian 'themed' films. The theoretical framework that upholds the analysis is drawn from cross-cultural studies, postcolonial studies and studies in cinematic representation.

Acknowledgement

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***

To my girls in Gothenburg – Jana, Stine and Mari.

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Framework of Study

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Framing the Study

It feels almost pointless to say that the fall of communism was a defining moment in the history of the 20th century. Pointless, because most writing on postcommunist cinema starts this way, making an equivalent statement nearly superfluous. Despite this, the end of communism is the catalyst for this study as well. However, it will argue that rather than being locally specific, the end of Soviet communism has entailed consequences that are globally far-reaching in scope. The end of communism spelled the end of the Soviet Russian-dominated Empire, which was categorised as a closed system in opposition to the West, where Marxist-Leninist ideology constituted the basis of all socio-political and economic structures, as well as cultural formation. When these structures were challenged (e.g. from the formation of Solidarnosc in Poland or Sajudis in Lithuania), the system fell apart and the Soviet Union could no longer exist. This resulted in the removal of the supranational Soviet identity (Homo-Sovieticus) and the formation of independent nations. However, former Soviet nations were also suddenly multinational states with large diasporas (in particular ethnic Russians), and former Soviet territory once more saw large population movements; people migrated internally or sought to move outwards to Western destinations. Furthermore, an empire had fallen and with it a whole way of understanding the geo-political situation; gone was the threat of the Red Army and the former Soviet republics were 'just' nation-states, neutralised and friendly. Ex-Soviets could travel freely and did so in large numbers, some just for a touristic peek abroad, others with an eye on migration and a life abroad. These new ex-Soviets abroad forced a change in the system of representation. New approaches had to be adopted to capture the fall

of communism, which had to include heightened features of transnationalism, such as diaspora formation, labour migration, brides-to-order, criminality and prostitution.

In the cinematic theme of Russians abroad, new approaches can be detected revealing new beliefs, values and ideals emphatic for the postcommunist era. Highly marked in cinema, the representation of post-Soviet Russians abroad is characterised by a new set of rules and framing devices that are in a constant process of formulation (i.e. they are never quite complete or in concordance). In other words, it is a process that constantly seeks to find its equilibrium, its symmetry and its rationale in a 'struggle' of representation, an argument over who is representing what and why. Cold War films about Russians abroad had their own master plot or narrative, but postcommunist films about Russians abroad are being formed according to different master narratives in which a new postcommunist geo-political constellation(s) can be consumed, confirmed, or indeed, contested.

The increase in cross-border travel after 1991 has led to definitions of postcommunism that are closely related to migration, to re-locating and re-settling, resulting from greater transnational mobility of people and the break up of the communist Second World. These processes of travel and issues of migration are vital to our understanding of the global postcommunist social space, and the cinema it produces. This study is about the construction of postcommunist images of Russians abroad and about the motives that inform this construction. It is about how the movement of people triggered by the end of communism is manifested in cinema, both in front of the camera and behind it. Therefore, the study has a dual objective –

on the one hand it focuses on the films (cinematic representation) and, on the other, on the filmmakers (as representing a variety of viewing positions).

Firstly, the objective is to account for the narration of on-screen characters of Russians outside the post-Soviet Russian Federation (defined as 'Russians abroad'); that is to account for these Russian characters' significance in the overall postcommunist global situation. How are these Russians represented in cinema? How are their representations constructed in terms of gender and race, and what are they meant to 'speak' about to viewers? Secondly, the task is to account for the different positions of the filmmakers that produce images of Russians abroad. What are their career trajectories, who are they narrating for, what film industries/companies are behind their films? How are the filmmakers part of the postcommunist condition, i.e. are they themselves transnational filmmakers or making films from exclusively national positions? Whether filmmakers take a migrational career path or not, work in one national film industry, in co-productions with others, or from a diasporic context are key issues in defining the people behind the on-screen representations of Russians abroad.

It will be revealed that each representation is derived from a specific position of narration, which in turn can be attached to a person, or persons, and thus forms a cinematic expression that is meant to comment upon, reflect or advocate certain views about the global context resulting from the postcommunist condition. It is the dialectics of these two aspects that informs the investigation.

The two tasks – tracing the movement of the filmmakers and their on-screen characters – are not exclusive to each other; rather they are mutually inclusive where the former informs the latter, and vice versa. The analysis of representations of Russians abroad is at the core of the study – not actual Russians abroad. It will argue that, depending on the position of the individual filmmaker, the depiction of Russians abroad corresponds to a set of characteristics that are informed by the postcommunist condition. When encountering a Russian abroad in cinema, a particular set of connotations are invoked: fallen geo-political status, social degradation, transnational criminality, prostitution, labour migration, ethnic migration, migration of skill sets, imperial militarism, mail-order marriages – all these diverse connotations are invoked to mark Russians abroad and to underline the cinematic context of the postcommunist condition. Narratives about Russians abroad are contradictory and conflicting, disperse and diffuse at the same time, but can be outlined in a postcommunist syncretism that ranges from voluntary union to violent rejection, from victim to victimiser, from raped to rapist, and from colonised to coloniser. However, in order to dissect, or understand, the syncretism, vital questions about the cinematic context and discourse need to be asked. What context is producing these representations? What filmmakers 'speak' through these films and what is being said?

Thus, this study is about how filmmakers shape representations of Russians abroad and about how these representations can be positioned in a cross-cultural syncretism, which seeks to highlight the postcommunist condition. The research question that frames this syncretism, and the study, is: *How are representations of Russians abroad constructed and formulated according to film practices?* By film practices I mean specific cinematic contexts, conventions and modes of address, which influence the

cinematic construction of Russians abroad in significant ways. Moreover, the fact that the research question is devoid of national specificities points to the cross-cultural aspect of the study.

1.1 Why the Cross-cultural Approach?

This study investigates representations of Russians abroad in a comparative system of expression, where each field is meant to highlight differences and similarities. But what is to be gained from such an elaborate cross-cultural system? Foremost, a greater understanding of postcommunist global dynamics is achieved, because, in schematic ways, it reveals how cinematic representations are formed according to power hierarchies, perceptions and perspectives. A discourse analysis of the social science tradition would be able to pick up the contradicting representation (Russian vs non-Russian representation), but would fail to illuminate the grey area between the two standpoints. The cross-cultural approach, on the other hand, will be sensitive to these formations, because it concentrates on the interactivity between people of different ethnic and national constellations. Furthermore, the cross-cultural approach is closer to the concerns of Film Studies with its preoccupation with transnational filmmaking. With a cross-cultural approach, the study is able to expose the postcommunist struggle of representation as more than just for or against depiction, black and white portrayals. The cross-cultural approach is deeply concerned with the formations of hybridity, intercultural relations, and transculturation as a result of movements of people across cultural boundaries. This study will argue, therefore, that postcommunist cinema is best understood when the manifestations of its various transnational forms are scrutinised. Whether looking at essential nationalistic or at

plural transnational formations, it is the pattern in these constructions to which the cross-cultural approach is attuned.

Post-Soviet Russian cinema, for example, has constantly been preoccupied with constructing and adjusting the image of the West. Although not uniform but diverse and plural in its formation, this is *one* expression in a cross-cultural pattern of how postcommunist changes have affected a common global outlook. In order to investigate the 'expression' of Russians abroad systematically, it is necessary to look at a variety of cinematic traditions, national or transnational, that have also been preoccupied with the representation of 'the Other'. Hence, this study is not about one national cinema, neither is it about transnational film solely. Its main effort is to reveal how cinematic expressions produced in a variety of contexts 'struggle' to represent the complex reality of postcommunism.

The representation of Russians abroad is investigated on two levels. Firstly, it explores the cinematic text, which is dealt with from the point of view of subject matter, genre and space. Geographical location is important here, because meaning is derived from the foreign space that Russian characters occupy. The cinematic space and genre reflects back on the actions of the characters and shifts the discourse of Russians abroad accordingly. In this configuration, a place like the Caucasus would imply a different range of references than places like Europe or the USA, and comedy portraits would differ from those found in action films. Secondly, cinematic context is investigated, as it highlights the all-important considerations related to the ideological position of the filmmaker, and the modes of production and reception respectively.

The study accounts for 'location' as the *position* of the filmmaker, by which is meant national origin, career trajectory, and current standing.

In order to position the dialectics of these diverse aspects, three modes of representation will be distinguished: self-representation, transnational representations, and representations by the Other. These modes of representation are not meant to perform as watertight barriers, but to steer the textual analysis according to the production context that forms the cinematic expression. The study will analyse the position of the people behind the films – directors and their projected audiences and mode of address – in order to carry out a cross-cultural analysis of the cinematic and textual expressions. The analysis is comparative and transnational rather than focussing on a given national cinema and its particular concerns. It is transnational while not excluding national concerns.

Thus, the study will:

(a) Examine films by Russian filmmakers who raise postcommunist concerns from within the Russian film industry and address predominantly Russian viewers. It will compare these representations to other national and transnational contexts. This is the subject of Part One of this study.

(b) Investigate the ways in which transnational cinema – where migrating Russian filmmakers are preoccupied with representing migrating Russians for mixed global audiences – defies traditional depictions that have sprung up within the national framework and develops a new, more dynamic, image of the Russian abroad. This is explored in Part Two.

(c) And, in Part Three, Look at the work of non-Russian filmmakers, whose concern is also the postcommunist condition as manifested in the exploits of Russians who have found themselves outside their country.

This triptych framework enables the incorporation of virtually all representations of Russians abroad in the postcommunist cinema. However, it would be futile to aim at such a totality. Instead, whereas the framework will outline an interpretative scheme that has the potential of being comprehensive, the textual material investigated within the study is more modest in scope.

2 Structure of the Study

The three subdivisions define to a large extent the structural make-up of the investigation and divide the analysis into three parts that are then broken down into subparts, in order to analyse different manifestations of 'Russians' abroad. Thus, the examination of the representations made by Russian filmmakers is divided into two chapters on genre: action/melodrama and comedies. The theme of Russians abroad in non-Russian cinema is split into the analysis of works by a British and a Swedish filmmaker. Inbetween these two parts, two chapters on transnational cinema deal with representations created outwith the frameworks of national cinemas (in co-productions and in the context of Russian diasporic cinema).

In temporal terms, the examination will incorporate films appearing between 1991 and the early 2000s. The criteria for the selection of films are based on the popularity of the films. Thus, the films chosen for analysis have to have been viewed widely nationally or transnationally, and have to have been critically debated. They have to

have endured a popular spell with audiences and/or to have raised critical debates in the context of societies where they have been shown or produced. In the case of transnational cinema, however, the study will consider films that do not seem to fit into the selected criteria: but then the question will be why this happens.

The first part of the analysis will look at representations of Russians abroad found in films made by Russian filmmakers. **Chapter 3** will examine Nikita Mikhalkov's *Urga, territoriya lyubvi*/*Urga, Territory of Love* (1991) and Aleksei Balabanov's *Brat 2*/*Brother 2* (2000), arguing that it is in films like these that the evolving expression of Russian nationalism can be located in the depiction of Russians abroad. These films stand apart from the film explored in **Chapter 4**, *Okno v Parizh*/*Window to Paris* (Yuri Mamin, 1994). Although not entirely free from the discourse of the Russian nation and national identity, it constructs the image of Russians abroad through a series of comedy situations that are structured around the contrast of cities like Paris and St Petersburg. As a comedy, this film offers a distinct take on Russians abroad. The study argues that the comedy serves here to facilitate a space where they can exist without having constantly to confront the issues of imperialism, chauvinism and race (which dominated the films analysed in Chapter 3).

The part on transnational representations is also subdivided into two chapters: Russian transnational cinema and Russian diasporic cinema. This approach foregrounds the importance of filmmakers' migratory paths and their careers. In transnational cinema, the migratory journeys are of particular importance, as these filmmakers have moved from one context to another and have therefore experienced a change in their creative standpoint. Thus, to capture this cinema, it is necessary to focus on the career

journeys while not losing sight of the representations found in the films. **Chapter 5** examines the career of Sergei Bodrov, who has risen to become one of the most prominent figures in Russian international co-productions. The chapter investigates how the transnational filmmaker enters a 'zone' of negotiation where representations of Russians abroad are constructed as a result of the co-operation with foreign producers. Four of Bodrov's films are selected for analysis here: *Belyi korol, krasnaya koroleva (Russkie)*/*White King, Red Queen (Russians)*(1992), *Kavkazkyi plennik*/*Prisoner of the Mountains* (1996), *The Quickie* (2001) and *Bear's Kiss* (2002). In the analysis, the study will show how the representation of Russians abroad is modelled and adjusted according to a 'transnational co-production' context where otherwise irrelevant considerations become paramount. The main assertion made through the investigation is that one must look at the level of development, pre-production, at the initial stages of filmmaking, and at the people backing the film in order to derive the meaning of their intended portrayal of Russians abroad. These representations are lacking explicit connection to the discourse on Russian nationalism and often undermine it. Rather, they are formed to be in accordance with general popular notions of how Russians are perceived internationally. In this regard, Bodrov will be viewed as translator, interpreter and authenticator.

In **Chapter 6**, the study continues the investigation of filmmakers in transnational contexts. Although no Russian funding is involved, Russian diasporic cinema is also involved with translating Russian values. Thus the approach of this chapter is the same as the previous one, with a strong emphasis on the filmmakers' career as bearing a significant imprint on the actual cinematic representation. The chapter will examine the example of two Russian-Israeli filmmakers and will show how the diasporic

context influences representations of Russians. The two films in focus are Leonid Gorovets' *Kafe v'limon*/*Coffee with Lemon* (1994) and Arik Kaplun's *Ha Chaverim Shel Yana*/*Yana's Friends* (1999). These two films will show that the representation of Russians abroad is largely governed by the specific discourse on the Russian Israeli Diaspora, pointing to a differentiation between Russian immigrants in Israel. In the portrayal of Russians in Israel, the investigation will find striking similarities with the Israeli cinematic discourse on the representation of Sephardi Jews.

The last part of the study will return to the investigation of cinematic contexts, highlighting portrayals of Russians abroad that arise from within a European context. Here too, the position of the filmmakers, who are not Russians but Europeans who comment on displaced Russian women, is important for the scope of on-screen representation of Russians abroad. Here, the national filmmaking context will be revealed as vital in the construction of the representations. Again, the investigation is divided into two parts. In **Chapter 7**, *Last Resort* (Pawel Pawlikowski, 2000) is viewed as a response to other cinematic representations of refugees; the portrayal of Russian single mother Tanya is regarded as an effort to reverse the victimization paradigm. The victim paradigm, on the other hand, is at the forefront of **Chapter 8**, which examines the Swedish film, *Lilja 4-ever*/*Lilya 4-ever* (Lukas Moodysson, 2002), where teenage Lilja is trafficked to Sweden for prostitution. Significant for this whole part of the examination is the fact that these two films have female characters in the lead roles, but also that both filmmakers lay no claim to speaking of a particular condition in the former communist countries. It is in these representations that one most clearly sees postcolonial features in the postcommunist condition. For the filmmakers, however, in these films the Russians abroad, and in particular Russian

women, have become the symbol of a global postcommunism that is trying to find alternatives to the ideology of unilateralism that has come to dominate the global discourse of the period.

3 Definitions

3.1 Who are the 'Russians Abroad'?

Firstly, it is important to distinguish ethnic Russians from the Russian nationality, which consists of many ethnic groups. In common practice, this diversity is rendered through the Russian language usage of *rossiiskii* and *russkii* to determine the people inhabiting the Russian Federation. While both words express that a person is Russian, the first, *rossiiskii*, connotes a multiethnic identity and the latter, *russkii*, an ethnic Russian identity. The distinction that this study will make is that which the characters themselves make. Thus, if the character is clearly defined by being Russian with references to a self-understanding as such, then that is enough to consider the character as part of the investigation. This is why the representations of single mother Tanya in *Last Resort* and the teenage Lilja in *Lilja 4-ever* are included in the analysis; they are clearly defined as Russians and define themselves on-screen as such. Coincidently, both characters are played by Russian actresses, but making the nationality of actors the parameter would exclude Evelyn Kaplun playing Yana in *Yana's Friends*, since she is an Israeli. Nationality is interchangeable and too narrow in designation. Therefore, it is far more precise to deal with how characters define themselves, because characters are simplified and cruder in order for audiences not to miss the point. Male characters are often more simplistically constructed than female ones, but again it is transnational cinema that makes an exception – Valery in *Coffee*

with Lemon is a male character who is uncertain about his allegiance to a particular nationality.

Secondly, ethnic Russians have white skin, which has been underlined from very early on in writings about Russia and Russians. Although whiteness does play a role in the representation of Russians abroad, it is more constructive to talk about national identity without grouping according to skin colour. In the formation of Russian national identity, both on-screen and off-screen, it is nationhood rather than race that plays the key role. For example, a filmmaker like Sergei Bodrov defines himself as Russian despite professing to feel more Asian than Russian.[1] Russian ethnicity is not constructed on appearance and skin colour, but rather internally through how one thinks of self. That said, Second World whiteness makes the region 'invisible' in black and white constellations produced by First and Third world discourse. For example, Eastern Europe becomes conflated with unified Europe, negating the difference of postcommunist Europe, and postcommunist Russia where Europe ends, which is either at the Russian border or somewhere in the Ural Mountains depending on one's viewpoint. What the issue of whiteness does point to is the fact that the postcommunist condition creates new divisions, while in the whiteness/blackness (First/Third World) constellation, Russians are still considered a part of the world's black spots (i.e. Third World). Contrary to the Baltic States, Russia is rarely a part of Eastern European invisible whiteness that melts into mainstream Europe. Rather Russia and Russians contain a visibility – their markedness, which is neither white nor black. This ambivalence is detectable in Russian narratives that aim at subverting

[1] See V. Pritulenko. "Sergei Bodrov: "Ya khotel cdelat' gumannuyu kartinu"." *Iskusstvo Kino*, no. 6 (1996): 11-15.

this white/black construction (in particular *Brother 2*). Overall, the Russian characters that will be dealt with have white skin, but are, because of their postcommunist identity, markedly different from other white Europeans despite sharing the same skin colour.

3.2 How is 'the abroad' defined?

In Russian, the word for 'abroad' is '*zarubezh'e*'. Russian also has '*zagranitsa*', indicating a foreign state or country, and which literally means 'beyond the border'. However, '*zarubezh'e*' is preferred when indicating motion abroad, e.g. in expressing the action of living abroad (*zhit' za rubezhom*). Thus, émigré literature becomes '*literatura zarubezh'ya'* (literature abroad), indicating the motion of writing and producing literature abroad. It is this 'abroad' that the study deals with; the actions and motion that Russians produce while abroad in cinema. This is important because 'the abroad' aimed at here is perceived from a Russian perspective; it is an abroad that is particular to Russia, because it describes Russia's foreign countries collectively. Thus, the Russian abroad is a space that has changed as a consequence of the postcommunist condition. The Russian foreign space dealt with here ranges from the USA, Europe and Israel, to Chechnya, Mongolia and China.

The first major event that overturned the concept of the abroad for Russians was the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. With Eastern and Central European nations disembarking the Warsaw Pact, this region, previously controlled entirely by the Russians, went from being 'brotherly friendly' to postcolonial 'adversarial'. The Russian foreign space, in this context, changed profoundly and the image of the Russian, respectively, slumped from being the 'big brother' among socialist countries

to becoming the defeated, limping sick man of Europe, out of touch with modernity and progress. The second event is, of course, the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself two years later, in 1991. With former Soviet republics forming independent post-Soviet nations, ethnic Russians from the republics suddenly found themselves living in territories now located outside Russia proper – and suddenly living in diaspora without ever having planned to do so. This situation entailed a new set of national concerns, which resulted in the creation of new narratives that Russia put forward in order to influence its new post-Soviet neighbours of the so-called 'near abroad'. On the one hand, this can be regarded as protecting their fellow ethnic group, yet from the perspective of former Soviet republics this has often been seen as extending a Russian imperial arm outwith the Russian nation. This clash of perspectives can again be seen reflected in the struggle of representation; imperial re-colonisation on the one side and defence of national interest on the other.

While the two newly found Russian 'abroads' – the former socialist allied territory and the post-Soviet 'near abroad' – underline the geographical and territorial changes in the postcommunist condition, they strongly point to the subversion of the old power hierarchy where Russians abroad were seen as the symbol of Soviet power. In the postcommunist condition, Russians abroad in these territories are being championed over the former satellite nationals conquering the former 'big brother' to re-assert national victory. In turn, in disputed territories such as Chechnya (Bodrov's *Prisoner of the Mountains*), narratives of Russians abroad are very much engrossed with actual Russian military intervention and the prolongation of older imperialist discourses. These are issues that need to be added to the overall postcommunist condition where the abroad, and in particular the Russian abroad, changed from one

set of understandings to another in which the framework reinvigorates political, economic and military power structures that are rooted in the Soviet and pre-Soviet Russian imperial past.

The third Russian 'abroad' that this study aims at describing lies in the West, which is the subject of the majority of the films (*Brother 2*, *Window to Paris*, *White King…*, *The Quickie*, *Bear's Kiss*, *Last Resort* and *Lilja 4-ever*). This is the classical Russian abroad, a person who has found him/herself in a completely foreign country, where his/her Russian identity is being tried and tested. This 'abroad' is extremely important in the postcommunist make-up, because it is in this space that Russians are confronted with the reality of their diminished geo-political status, lost power, and with the need to regain national stamina. Thus, in the postcommunist condition, the West becomes a postcolonial 'contact zone' where the struggle for representation is most clearly manifested.

4 Postcommunism/Postcolonialism

4.1 What is Postcommunism?

Russians abroad in postcommunist cinema are expressing ideas and ideals about how the fall of communism has shaped, and sharpened, the process of thinking globally. No other theme than narrating a post-Soviet Russian abroad has the ability to convey global changes resulting from the fall of communism. Thus, the postcommunist condition is a particular mindset where the end of world communism gives impetus to other actions. The cinematic narrative of Russians abroad is the epitome of this global postcommunist condition. But how can it be defined?

Postcommunism vacillates between concrete concepts and loosely defined notions. The concrete springs from the actual area that was communist – postcommunist economy, politics, or migration. These, and other issues, are informative of a concrete region and of the people that inhabit the postcommunist territory. However, postcommunism can also be view more globally. The effort here is to identify the spheres of life that are affected by postcommunism. What are the global repercussions of the disappearance of the Socialist Second World, if any? To what extent can one claim that 'Russians abroad' play a role in these global processes? Can one maintain that Russians' travelling abroad – from the wealthy tourist to the trafficked white slave – have turned into a specific symbol of the postcommunist condition? By their transnational endeavour, postcommunist Russians abroad stand for the concrete global result of the postcommunist world which emerged since the fall of the Soviet Union. The world outside the former socialist bloc has also been affected, which is most evident in the growing transnational movement of people through increased travel and migration. Thus, postcommunism incorporates the Socialist 'rest' – the First and the Third World – as well. Issues of travel and migration bring a transnational global dimension to postcommunism.

Russians abroad are part of a transnational postcommunist configuration that brings about its own migrational culture. Russian artists, writers, filmmakers, and the like have long influenced this migrational culture outside Russia, but it is in their postcommunist representation that they gain global significance. Russian migration, as with other postcommunist migration, is marked by a certain perception of how Russian immigrants are behaving. Russians are perceived as well-educated with a

cultural understanding that matches Westerners. However, they are also perceived to be conditioned by poverty resulting from the economic meltdown, which in turn produces economic migrants and transnational criminality. To account for this perception of Russians abroad, the study will invoke Pierre Bourdieu's term 'cultural capital' to examine the 'exchange' between Russians and the 'abroad' that receives them.[2] Cultural capital is the non-monetary capital that a person brings abroad and it consists of educational background, professional skills, and cultural understanding. Thus, all films considered in the course of this study depict a cultural capital exchange, where the postcommunist condition divides Russian travellers into good or bad (black or white) persons to the host country. There will therefore be a focused emphasis on sites where this negotiation takes place, which is often the modern airport (*Brother 2* and *Last Resort*), or the absence of this depiction (*Window to Paris, Lilja 4-ever* and *Yana's Friends*). The cultural baggage that Russians abroad bring with them is what marks them as desirable or undesirable for the host country, and therefore highlights a postcommunist system of perception. The term postcommunist is, on the one hand, global and transnational as a result of migrations from Russia, but on the other hand, can be concretely defined as a search for a new national space that can re-establish Russia's geo-political status.

In cinema, Russians abroad are an intrinsic part of what constitutes being postcommunist. They are by no means the only part or an exclusive feature of postcommunism, but a powerful tool in the scheme of representing what exactly is postcommunist. From the perspective of a transition (from communist to

[2] See Pierre Bourdieu. "The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J.E. Richardson, translated by Richard Nice, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986, 241-58.

postcommunist), the fall of communism constitutes a break in history, which is followed by large-scale changes. In cinema, these changes are manifested in a film industry that crumbled as state funds dried up, employees were dismissed as studios downscaled production, and filmmakers had to reposition their role as celebrated 'engineers of the soul.' However, the key issues in this transition from state governed filmmaking to market-orientated film production are, on the one hand, the dispersion of filmmakers into new territories (whether as emigrants, i.e. Leonid Gorovets, or as free-floating transnationals, i.e. Sergei Bodrov) and, on the other hand, the re-emergence of the state as a strong, powerful national(istic) player in cinema production (as seen in the productions of Nikita Mikhakov and Aleksei Balabanov). In the former, the postcommunist transnational movement of people is recognised on the level of the film industry, which means that postcommunist filmmakers not only had to navigate new economic markets but also new transnational contexts. The latter is a result of the formation of new national contexts, pointing towards postcommunist film production re-invigorating the old role of serving the state so that cinema is once again 'the most important art'.

This dual process is part of the postcommunist condition; there is a greater loosening of rigid definitions of the nation-state with greater travel and mobility on the part of the filmmaker, and an intensification of nationalism, which is part of a nation-building process. These two issues taken together lead to a postcommunist cinema that is, on the one hand, spreading its impact outwards through the mobility of individual people, but, on the other, centralising its efforts within the framework of national expressions by economic support for film production. Therefore, the postcommunist cinema that will be dealt with in this study has an inbuilt tension (or

struggle of representation) that is evident in the variety of expressions and production forms on the theme of Russians abroad.

4.2 Why invoke the Postcolonial?

If the Russians' status abroad has changed as a result of the postcommunist condition, then views on Russians abroad have also been altered in significant ways. These perceptions mirror how the postcommunist global 'sees' post-Soviet Russia and Russians, manifesting themselves in incommensurable representations, counter-hegemonic interpretations and modes of address, which can be attributed to a postcolonial condition as well. What, then, is the connection between the postcommunist and the postcolonial?

As mentioned above, the postcommunist condition is concrete in its geographical description and loose in its conceptual form, but this is also true for a postcolonial condition, where ex-colonial nations deal with a tangible system that manifests itself economically and socio-politically. On the other hand, and more loosely defined, ex-colonised diasporas make up the multicultural metropolis of ex-colonising countries. In a postcolonial condition migration and travel is as important a feature as combating neo-hegemonic and neo-colonial situations, which constitute a new colonial exploration and exploitation. Postcolonialism is accustomed to detect uneven perspectives that have resulted from decolonisation. In this regard, the postcommunist condition is concerned with uneven relations and conflicting perceptions resulting from the collapse of communism. This can be detected in a representational scheme that is incommensurably constructed; representations of Russians abroad viewed from a non-Russian perspective have no commonality with Russian ones. However, in a

postcommunist totality, these perspectives of Russians abroad become compatible, illuminating a global syncretism, a shared system of representation. The postcolonial manner of viewing and dissecting disparate representations, neo- and counter-hegemonic narratives and modes of expression will throw light on a postcommunist Russianness that is intrinsic to the depictions of Russians abroad. Postcolonialism is not a Theory of Everything (a term invoked by Slavoj Žižek),[3] nor is it a concept limited to ex-colonial regions; rather it is an approach that enables the structuring of perspectives, perceptions and expressions. A postcolonial investigation promises sensitivity to gender rendition and to the formation of various stereotypes. Likewise, the postcommunist investigation needs to be considerate to a variety of cultural formations and expressions. In that, the postcolonial and the postcommunist frameworks successfully complement each other. By employing a postcommunist framework in a way that is similar to a postcolonial framework the study passes no judgement. The object is not to look for misrepresentations of Russians abroad, but to find a system of representations that expresses ideas and ideals about a particular postcommunist condition by envisioning Russians abroad.

The focus that the study promotes is the postcolonial position that the onscreen characters can occupy. According to film theorist Robert Stam, there are four positions identifiable in a postcolonial system of representation, which can be borrowed to dissect expressions of Russians abroad. These positions are ex-colonised, ex-coloniser, ex-colonial settler and the displaced hybrid (Stam 2000). These positions correspond to a postcommunist condition where ex-colonised can be seen as

[3] See Slavoj Žižek. *The Fright of Real Tears: Krzysztof Kieslowski Between Theory and Post-Theory.* London: BFI Publiching, 2001.

the former communist subject, ex-coloniser as the former communist oppressor, ex-colonial settler as the former communist soldier/worker/administer abroad, and displaced hybrid as the former communist diaspora abroad. The films are likely to have characters that transgress this system, thus having more than one position in its expression. For example, *Brother 2* has at least three of the positions visually depicted, but *Urga* only one – the former communist settler. Furthermore, in *Brother 2*, characters can shift positions, e.g. being a displaced prostitute at the beginning of the story, but at the end, occupying the position of the postcommunist Russian subject returning home and rejecting ideas of displacement and hybridity. That said, these shifts in positions mean nothing, if the mode of address is not included, e.g. that a film such as *Brother 2* plays on a nationalistic discourse that addresses the home audience and thus has homecoming as part of its narrative resolution. Therefore, the mode of representation and the position of filmmakers lay the groundwork, or foundation, for analysing characters' movements in the postcommunist syncretism.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

1 A Survey of the Field

There are three academic fields and groups of scholarly writing that influence this study: Postcommunist Studies, Russian cinema and cross-cultural analysis. It is the aim of this literature review to account for development and progression within these fields. Furthermore, the aim is to stress where this study attempts to advance the thinking about postcommunist cinema and how to approach such a dynamic cinematic area.

1.1 Postcommunist Cultural Changes

Postcommunism is usually approached from the perspective of the socio-political and cultural development of the region that was previously under communist rule. Its exploration springs from several academic fields within the Social Sciences and the Arts and Humanities. The approach of the political scientist consists of detecting the building of democratic institutions, civic society, grass roots movements, electoral systems or political parties.

> "[Political scientists] treat the postcommunist region as a 'laboratory' in which to test propositions about political life, or as a virgin land in which entirely new forms of political organization may grow. In the case of postcommunist democratization (or its absence), they seek to draw lessons from the provisional 'outcomes' they observe in that domain (Breslauer 2001, 3-4)

While often assigned to a national field, e.g. Russia (Sakwa 2008),[1] postcommunist political and economic transitions are at times viewed as one field (Sakwa 1999). This study will apply a similar approach of intercultural thinking about postcommunism, because, in this line of thought, the particular (national) is placed in context of global considerations. Three study areas are worth highlighting: Anthropology, Cultural Studies and Gender Studies.

Anthropology has also marked the postcommunist transition as important (Lemon 2000, Pesman 2000). The anthropologist George Faraday surveys the Russian film industry from the perestroika period, thus revealing the changing conditions for artistic production with the intention "to examine the nature, background, and consequences of the revolution in the name of art that took place in May 1986" (Faraday 2000, 3). It is Faraday's contention that the artist, including the Soviet filmmakers, 'took' a creative autonomy, which fitted the Socialist cultural production, but failed miserably in a market orientated postcommunist capitalist industry. In short, filmmakers made films for art's own sake. While the scope of his account is interesting, Faraday's idea of cultural production is too narrow and not all films that were made in the postcommunist period were of intellectualist/elitist aspirations.[2]

[1] The account of the transition in television and mass media is preoccupied with the charting of cultural changes and their implications within the nation context. For example, Ellen Mickiewicz, *Changing Channels: Television and the Struggle for Power in Russia*, 2nd Edition (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1999) and Ivan Zasoursky, *Media and Power in Post-Soviet Russia* (New York & London: TNI/M.E. Sharpe, 2004).
[2] In regard to accounting for the Russian film industry, other accounts are preferred. See Birgit Beumers' article "Cinemarket, or the Russian Film Industry in 'Mission Possible'" in *Europe-Asia Studies* (July 1999: 871-896).

The relevance of anthropology, however, is best illustrated by studies that deal with diasporic identities (Laitin 1998, Kopnina 2005).[3] This approach underlines the changes on levels of culture, society and nation, and probes "the emergence of new asymmetrical power relations" in the postcommunist era (Berdahl 2000, 1).[4] In relation to postcommunist cultural formation, thinking postcommunism as a multi-national occurrence springs from the issues of migration. Postcommunist cultural producers (filmmakers, writers and artists) took immediate advantage of the opening of borders. While these cultural expressions do not originate from one national context, they do share commonalities. Andrew Wachtel indicates that literary and cultural expressions of postcommunism "are shared across all the former communist countries *including* Russia" (Wachtel 2006, 3, n3). Wachtel's emphasis, however, points at the asymmetrical power relations that were mentioned above, and it is a theme that will be developed in this study.

Cultural Studies scrutinises issues of identity change. The postcommunist transition from one identity to another makes the examination of postcommunism relevant to formations of cultural and national identities. Good examples of academic writing on identity changes can be found in the journals *New Formations* 22 (1994), edited by Greta Slobin, and *Discourse* 17.3 (1995), edited by Jane Gaines and Thomas Lahusen,

[3] Russian Diaspora has gained renewed interests from anthropology with the impact of postcommunist migration, whether it is in Northern Greece or Costa Rica. See Olga Demetriou, "Owing the Seed: The Discursive Economy of Sex Migration among Turkish-Speaking Moniority Urbanites in the Postsocialist Balkan Periphery," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 2006: 261-282 and Leila Rodriguez and Jeffry H. Cohen, "Generations and Motivations: Russian and other Former Soviet Immigrants in Costa Rica," *International Migration* , 2005: 147-165.

[4] The anthropological approach is not without an examination of the national particular, for example, Dale Pesman tracks the changes in the perception of the Russian's soul in Omsk. See Dale Pesman, *Russia and Soul* (Ichaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 2000).

and in book form, *Soviet Hieroglyphics* (1995), edited by Nancy Condee.[5] Here distinguished scholars edit essays on the changes that have occurred over the period of transition from communist dictatorship to democracy-in-the-making. The discovery of a specific postcommunist meaning is a general trend in these early publications. This strand of scholarship is advanced in later years by adding a greater historical perspective on the construction of cultural/national identities (Franklin and Widdis 2004) or on cultural transition in general (Kennedy 2002). In the latter case, the postcommunist transition is viewed historically in relation to other worldwide transitions (Kennedy 2002, 5).[6]

In Gender Studies, a strong critical stand is taken against the postcommunist condition and its regressive system of representation. A good example of this way of thinking is Ellen Berry's edited volume, *Postcommunist and the Body Politics* (1995), which deals with the specificities of postcommunist gender aspects. However, Berry notes that the majority of her contributors

> "identify cultural practices that *critique and propose alternatives* to [the] regressive new national scripts or that rework previous formulations and histories. These include efforts to construct alternative signifying practices and representational strategies" (Berry 1995, 6)(my emphasis).

The object of the writers in Berry's collection is to oppose the regressive cultural formation by critiquing the system of representation. While this is a trend in gender studies – lamenting the loss of the communist gender order (Stulhofer and Sandfort

[5] Svelana Boym has produced two monographs on the postcommunist cultural and identity changes, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (1994) and *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001). These both highly academic and personal accounts continue the tradition of examining what makes (post-Soviet) Russian cultural production particular and different to Western discourses.
[6] The influence of postcommunism in the range of identity studies should also be mentioned. The fact that national identities had to be thought of anew gives the postcommunist region vital fuel in the postmodern debates over the formation of identities. See Marian Kempny and Aldona Jawlowska, *Identities in Transformation: Postmodernity, Postcommunism, and Globalization* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2002).

2005, 5) – it fails to address why the regressive system is evoked in the first place, i.e. dealing with cultural industries that produce formulaic systems of representation. This investigation will avoid this by approaching representation from the perspective of creative industries. Still Berry's collection is nearer to this study's approach to postcommunism, because it emphasises the changing systems of representation according to socio-economic developments in the region. Even closer is the edited volume, *Transnational Feminism in Film and Media* (Marciniak, Imre and O`Healy 2007), where postcommunist concerns are narrated into global transnational feminism, questioning the global scope of transnational feminist studies when excluding Eastern Europe from the analysis (Marciniak 2007, 192). The former Second World becomes an "invisible" entity that is lacking in a global perspective.

It is within these three interchangeable methods of accounting for a postcommunist tradition – anthropology, cultural studies and gender studies – that this study will evolve. By examining the representations of Russians abroad, the aim is to speak of a larger condition that arises as the result of the end of communist rule in Eastern Europe. This is a shared experience, but also an experience that is asymmetrically shared and which reveals former uneven equalities that are at the foundation of cultural expression, which emerge throughout the region. Furthermore, the study will also advance the term 'postcommunist' by thinking of the postcommunist condition as having influence outside the region of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The fall of the Berlin Wall cannot be seen as affecting communist countries exclusively; rather it has a catalysing effect on globalisation as well. The

disappearance of the communist Second World[7] triggers a set of cultural changes, whose influence lies outside the particular region's transition from a socialist system to a democratised market system. Thus, the analysis presented here encompasses cultural changes, whose origins lie in the postcommunist world order, but whose impact is detected outside the geographical postcommunist area.

In framing postcommunist visual representation, the investigation makes headway into capturing the transnational aspects of postcommunist cinematic production without losing the distinctiveness of national contexts. Borrowing from anthropology opens up possibilities for the study of a specific cultural phenomenon by investigating unrelated contexts. In this regard, the study is influenced by theoretical thinking within Visual Anthropology, which explores the modes of representation of people and processes. In particular, visual anthropologists like Fadwa El Guindi (2004) or Richard Chalfen (1997, 2003, 2005), but also media scholar Keyan G. Tomaselli (1992, 2005, 2006), have been instrumental in understanding the dynamics of representation.[8]

Another source found useful outside postcommunist studies is the work of Swedish anthropologist Ulf Hannerz, who, while studying the production of foreign news,

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[7] The Second World is historically meant to include countries with communist rule and, in particular, the Soviet controlled sphere, i.e. the Warsaw Pact countries. In the postcommunist era, it is used in connection with discussion of First and Third World discourse, where the contested issues are the uneven hierarchy of economic and cultural power distribution and the effect that the fall of communism has had on the First and Third dynamic. It is in the latter context that the term is used in this study.

[8] The study makes no claim of be a study of an 'ethnographic Other.' The object is fiction as cultural production and hence has little resemblance to the filmmaking that Visual Anthropology produces. This field is superbly covered by distinguished scholars such as Faye Ginsburg, who has written extensively on "indigenous media" by Fourth World people. For example, see Faye Ginsburg, "Screen Memories: Resignifying the Traditional in Indigenous Media," in *Media Worlds: Anthropology on new Terrain*, edited by Faye Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod and Brian Larkin, 39-59 (Berkeley, California & London: University of California Press, 2002).

detected the creation of story lines in the relaying of foreign news (Hannerz 2004, 2).[9] Global story lines inform the way in which the foreign texts are read. In other words, the unfamiliar is made familiar through framing of the text within a 'global' understanding. However, "story lines may construct somewhat one-dimensional Others" (Hannerz 1998, 116). The end of communism signalled the loss of a global story line as a framing device and new ones had to be invented (Hannerz 1998, 122).[10] Bringing in Hannerz's story line reveals the transnational perspective in the analysis; texts are read according to master narratives and global story lines. Further evidence of this is found in Katerina Clark's *The Soviet Novel* (1981), where she detects a master plot in Socialist Realist novels. Just as the Soviet novel was a cultural phenomenon distinctively arising out of a particular ideological context, the films featuring the post-Soviet Russian abroad allow this investigation the possibility of speaking of this phenomenon as emerging out of *a* source, i.e. the postcommunist condition. The films of this investigation are popular cultural products that, like the Soviet novel, contain a formulaic construction that can be analysed as allegorical in relation to the large socio-political developments. Furthermore, just as the writer of Socialist Realist literature had to adhere to a certain language and syntax as "a ritual act" (Clark 1981, 13), the filmmakers of popular narratives of Russians abroad have

[9] Hannerz' thinking about transnationalism is evoked by Tim Bergfelder in his account of the popular European co-production. See Tim Bergfelder, "National, Transnational or Supranational Cinema?: Rethinking European Film Studies," *Media, Culture and Society* 27, no. 3 (2005): 315-31. In order to capture fully the significance of cinematic transnationalism, Bergfelder uses Hannerz's understanding of transnational readings, as it helps Bergfelder to pass beyond the national reading of a film as the original reading (326). Tim Bergfelder's article will be invoked again in part 3 on Russian transnational cinema.

[10] A new post-9/11 story line, you-are-either-with-us-or-against-us, is a narrative that provides sense in current foreign news reports. Hannerz has since developed another concept, which bears resemblance to the global story line. In a public lecture, Hannerz develops the concept of story lines further to geocultural scenarios (Ulf Hannerz, "The Geocultural Imagination: Culture Areas, Story Lines, Scenarios," *Emeriti Honorary Lecture* (University of California, Berkeley, 2006)).

to conform to generic convention and audience taste in order to get the film produced and distributed.

1.2 Scholarship on Russian National Cinema

As was seen in the previous section, the early 1990s revealed a renewed interest in the area of postcommunism, which is also the case with writings on Russian cinema. In particular, Soviet cinema had continued to hold its sway over Western audiences, but the opening of the communist bloc in the late 1980s was remarkable. Previously banned films were having belated premieres and film style, language and aesthetics were being re-examined, all of which drew the attention of audiences and critics.

Anna Lawton was the first to address this interest with her book on Glasnost cinema, *Kinoglasnost: Soviet Cinema in Our Time* (1992). Lawton examined 15 years of cinema production in the Soviet Union from 1976 to 1990 and it quickly became a cherished reference within the emerging field of Soviet and post-Soviet cinema.[11] What marked out Lawton's writing was the fact that she had an extensive knowledge of Russian sources, which was easier to come by in the latter years of Glasnost.[12] Furthermore, where Western writings on Soviet cinema had focused on auteur cinema (from Eisenstein to Tarkovsky), Lawton included popular films that had been

[11] Lawton's book replaced Jay Leyda's *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet film* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973), which was reprinted several times. Jay Leyda was an American filmmaker and political activist who translated the writings of Sergei Eisenstein. Another important book of this period was A.J. Liehm and M. Liehm, *The Most Important Art: Soviet and East European Film After 1945* (Berkley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980). The Liehms fled Czechoslovakia after the Soviet invasion in 1968 and taught film in the United States.

[12] This renewed access to archives and historical sources also ignited the film historians in the field of Soviet cinema, e.g. *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896-1939*, 2nd Edition (1994), ed. Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, trans. Richard Taylor (London & New York: Routledge, 1988) and *Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema*, ed. Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (London & New York: Routledge , 1991).

neglected beforehand. This development, paradoxically, signifies the shift from Film Studies (Leyda 1973, Liehm and Liehm 1980) to Russian language departments picking up the task of narrating Russian and Soviet cinema.

With the Soviet auteur relegated to the history books, it seems that the Film Studies interest died away – perhaps the particulars of a closed socialist cinema system was the attraction, and when that disappeared, post-Soviet cinema became 'just' another one among many national cinemas, not too different from others.[13] The last account emerging from the Film Studies perspective seems to be Michael Brashinsky's and Andrew Horton's edited collection of essays, *Russian Critics on the Cinema of Glasnost* (1994). However, as the title indicates, Brashinsky and Horton give Russian critics the chance to make their voice heard in the English language and hence continue the trend of discovering the insider's view. These publications from the early 1990s are part of the 'making sense' of a region in flux, where cultural changes occured overnight and where previously 'shelved' materials appeared daily. As such, this is not a revisionist rewriting of cinema histories. Rather, it is the attempt to use films as a way to access cultures in constant transformation.

The first publication in English, which exclusively addressed post-Soviet cinema, was Birgit Beumers' edited volume, *Russia on Reels* (1999). The book explores issues of post-Soviet national identity through the concept of 'the Russian Idea' and the contributors are leading Russian film academics and well-known Russian film critics.

[13] One can speculate that the end of communism gives the place for an apolitical cognitive approach to film, displacing the politically fuelled deconstructionism. The Sokal affair showed how easily exposed the leftist academia were to the accusation of suddenly being empty air and jargon mumble-jumble cronies. See the introduction in Slavoj Žižek's *The Fright of Real Tears: Krzysztof Kieslowski Between Theory and Post-Theory* (London: BFI Publiching, 2001), p4.

While this volume filled a gap since Lawton's *Kinoglasnost* in English-language writing on post-Soviet Russian cinema, it failed to render the field in a coherent way. It is not until recently that western scholars have sought to fill this void. David Gillespie's attempt in *Russian Cinema* (2003) is noteworthy. Saying that Russian cinema lies within the European cinematic tradition, Gillespie writes, "it has its own individual identity and ethos, factors driven and informed both by experience of the last 100 years, but also by perceived 'Russian' cultural values passed down primarily by its literature" (Gillespie 2003, 2). As is the tradition in the narration of national cinema, at the same time as picking out particularities, the scholar sees an adherence to an overall tradition (e.g. European cinema, as contrary to Hollywood or Asian cinema). What is remarkable about Gillespie's book is the huge number of films that he manages to compress thematically into just over 200 pages.

In Anna Lawton's return to the topic of post-Soviet Russian cinema in *Imaging Russia 2000: Film and Facts* (2004),[14] she exclusively focuses on post-Soviet Russian cinema. In Lawton's description, we have the perfect match of a historical account narrated through the eyes of an eyewitness. Lawton has talked to most people who are 'worth talking to' and seen, if not as much as Gillespie, most of what is worth seeing. Again, as Gillespie does, she divides her subject into thematic divisions such as city, landscapes and comedies, but Lawton has the structural change within the film industry as her objective. Where Gillespie and Lawton end their narration at the turn of the new millennium, Birgit Beumers follows up with the inclusion of the Putin era of cinema production (Beumers 2009). Beumers' book continues the rendering of a

[14] Furthermore Lawton also released in 2004 an expanded version of *Kinoglasnost*, entitled *Before the Fall*, which indicates the enduring status of *Kinoglasnost* in Russian cinema academia.

national cinematic history, but instead of accounting for this history thematically, it does so chronologically, singling out styles, aesthetics and conventions.[15]

In academic journals many prominent scholars explore the transition which befell Russian cinema in the 1990s. It suffices to mention a few of the best: Birgit Beumers' article in *Euro-Asian Studies* (1999) on the predicament of the post-Soviet Russian film industry, and Susan Larsen's in *Slavic Review* (2003) on the post-Soviet Russian blockbuster. In the former, Beumers surveys production output, audience attractions and genre filmmaking, saying that popular genre films were one option few post-Soviet Russian filmmakers took in the transition from the socialist production system to a capitalist one (Beumers 1999a) and, in the latter, Larsen deals with the rise of the mass audience and their preferred directors, Mikhalkov and Balabanov (Larsen 2003).[16] With regard to academic journals, this study cannot fail to mention the web-based quarterly periodical *KinoKultura*. Started by Birgit Beumers,[17] the site has now become the most influential publication in the field. Previously, language and literature journals were the periodicals to look out for, but with *KinoKultura* Soviet/Russian and post-Soviet cinema were given exclusive attention. In dealing with post-Soviet cinema, the site is pioneering, because where other publications failed to render cinema from the former Soviet republic (Soviet had solely become Russian cinema), *KinoKultura* dedicated special issues to, for example, Central Asia and Eastern European. The journal has a strong new Russian cinema inclination with

[15] In this regard, *The Cinema of Russia and The Former Soviet Union* should also be mentioned, which is edited by Birgit Beumers and in which various writers deal with 24 key films. See *The Cinema of Russia and the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Birgit Beumers (London: Wallflower Press, 2007).
[16] Another scholar in this regard is Peter I. Barta (2002, 2004, 2005), whose continuous interest in literary texts and films has revealed interesting aspects on issues of race, intertext and cultural interpretation.
[17] Vladimir Padunov was a co-editor until Summer 2008.

leading critics reviewing new films from Russia. In addition to these journal contributions there are the various companions: filmmakers' companions to Mikhalkov (Beumers 2005) and Muratova (Taubman 2005); the film companion to *Burnt by the Sun* (Beumers 2000c); and the East European and Russian cinema companion (Taylor, Wood, Graffy and Iordanova 2000). In the latter category of reference books should also be listed the Russian publication of *Noveishaya istoriya otetsestvennovo kino 1986-2000: Kinoslovar'*, edited by Liubov'Arkus (2001), which in three volumes deals with all the major filmmakers of the era (here the term 'filmmakers' is used in the literal sense of the word). This filmmakers' encyclopaedia is very useful, each entry providing major references, prizes won, educational information, etc. Its downside is that the writing is uneven, i.e. some articles are more useful than others, and that not everyone is included. Leonid Gorovets, for example, is not included in the volume.

Common for these writings is the context of national cinema, which means that typically they are thematically constructed to give information about particular national features. While this study is also built thematically on Russians abroad, it diverts from this established discourse through its theoretical framing, which includes examples from non-Russian cinema. By working from a transnational perspective this project pushes forward the academic discourse on post-Soviet Russian cinema, and in this regard the study relates better to the framework of Yana Hashamova's *Pride and Panic: Russian Imaging of the West in Post-Soviet Russian Cinema* (2007). Approaching her topic from the viewpoint of psychoanalysis, Hashamova examines the way the West is portrayed in contemporary Russian cinema, but focuses her

analysis exclusively on Russian cinematic production.[18] Another book that relates to the project at hand is the edited volume, *Insiders and Outsiders in Russian Cinema* (Norris and Torlone 2008).[19] This volume deals with images of self and Other in Russian and Soviet cinema, taking the stand that through the construction of self and Other one can detect what it meant/s to be Soviet or Russian (Norris and Torlone 2008, x). In short, the films are analysed as images of Russian nationhood. While such studies are informative for the project at hand, the identity discourse is taken a step further by including transnational and non-Russian images. Images of self and Other are important in a discourse on Russian national identity, but the cinematic discourse of post-Soviet Russians is not fully dealt with before the construction of images *by* the other are included in the analysis. To do this, the investigation will have to draw heavily on studies of representation in cinema.

1.3 Cross-Cultural Representation and Cinema

National cinema has been cross-examined over the last 20 or so years by various scholars, but in particular by Andrew Higson (1989, 2000). Lately, though, the concept of national cinema has been subjected to scrutiny from a transnational perspective. With regard to cinematic transnationalism, it is worth highlighting Mette Hjort's writing on Nordic cinema (1996, 2000, 2005). However, Hjort's template for a transnational analysis within the Nordic context also reveals it limitations by staying

[18] One film that Hashamova deals with sits uneasily in her framework. *The Quickie* by Sergei Bodrov is included in the analysis without pointing to its status as a European co-production. This film will be dealt with here as a transnational Russian production in chapter 5.
[19] It is edited by historian Stephen Norris and classicist Zara Torlone, both at Miami University, Ohio. The volume signals the return of the historian to the field of Russian cinema, but a historian whose object is to comment on the use of history in the contemporary field, replacing the use of film to comment on past time. For example, Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917-1953* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

inside a seemingly culturally homogenous area, which the context of Russians abroad is not.[20] Although engaging with Hjort's notions of transnationalism, the study will also divert by emphasising what is particular to Russian cross-cultural representation. The issues at stake here are how best to account for the dynamic cultural production that filmmaking is and always has been. How do we frame cinema production with cross-border movement of people, goods and ideas? Cross-cultural representation is closely connected to the concerns of transnationalism; both approaches relate to issues of movement of people and products. However, where the transnational relates specifically to nationhood and identity, then the cross-cultural analysis looks at artistic production from more than one culture. The cross-cultural approach acknowledges multiculturalism in the process of forming representation and it recognises this process as a 'struggle' of representation, i.e. the inbuilt tension in every cross-cultural representation. The topics of cross-cultural studies are diaspora narratives, comparative analysis and data collection from dissimilar societies. All of these themes will be included in this study: Russian diasporic filmmaking in Israel, the comparison of Russian and non-Russian representations of Russians abroad, and the linking of dissimilar contexts narrating the same postcommunist phenomenon. Cross-cultural thinking is influenced by the writings of Edward Saïd, who from a position of comparative literature critiqued the construction of the West and the Orient. This resulted in the attention given to popular culture, film and mass media with regard to comparative analysis, the development of a transnational framework of looking at representation, and the dismissal of the culturist's homogeneous, essential groupings according to languages, customs, institutions and self-identifications

[20] Often this apparently homogenous region of the Nordic countries is contested with the intrusion of the Russian traveller – an issue that will be expanded in the final chapter of this study.

(Shohat and Stam 1994). As Dina Iordanova has shown, the culturist's approach lacks references to economic and political divisions that are cross-cultural and transnational by definition (Iordanova 2001, 33-52).

Scholarly attention is beginning to account for the transnational Russian aspect of diasporic cinema (Gershenson and Hudson 2007, Gershenson 2008). Most of these accounts dealing with Russian-Israeli cinema make use of the most prominent writer in the field of exilic and diasporic cinema, Hamid Naficy (1999, 2001). For example, Avi Santo (2005) examines three 'Russian-speaking' (people from the former Soviet Union) films and the creation of a post-Soviet 'subsociety' within Israel. In finding the particularities of Russian diasporic cinema, these accounts of Russian-Israeli cinema also leave room for improvement. This cinema needs to be examined in relation to the larger picture of Russians abroad and in relation to gender, ethnicity and identity. The latter is of particular interest in the Israeli context, as here the Russian national identity is interfaced with Jewish identity, an identity that has, according to John Durhan Peters, been built on the notion of Diaspora (Peters 1999). This project will uphold and add these well-crafted arguments, but see them in the larger syncretism of representation that includes the essential nationalistic narratives.

From a postcolonial perspective, at the heart of the colonial paradigm are issues of representation (who is representing whom and why?). As Laura U. Marks asserts, "postcolonial stories must be told both by sympathetic people from colonizing countries […] and by the colonized" (Marks 2000, 56-7). Marks is pointing to the fact that diasporic narratives are not enough to create a 'whole' image. However, Marks' 'sympathetic people' leaves room for manoeuvre. What is it that makes these people

sympathetic? What are the reasons for Pawlikowski and Moodysson to make narratives about Russians abroad? These are issues that will be dealt with in the last part of the study, but the question could also be directed at the Russian filmmakers, Mikhalkov and Balabanov. The postcolonial perspective is also sensitive to nationalistic self-imaging, on which Franz Fanon writes extensively (Fanon 1970, 2004). Fanon's writing on national revival after decolonisation has influenced this study with regard to the Russian nationalistic image of Russians abroad.[21] Moreover, Robert Stam's contextualisation of Fanon's writings and the postcolonial image has been revealing in particular for both the positions of the filmmaker, and the postcolonial syncretism that structures the on-screen characters (Stam, 2000, 2003). That said, while the postcolonial perspective has helped in carving out the postcommunist space, it is with the cinematic image of Russians abroad that the investigation is concerned. Therefore, Richard Dyer's classic 1993 analysis of the cinematic stereotype can also be invoked in connection with these matters. Dyer asserts that stereotyping is a process of ordering 'the World' or expressing one's own set of values and beliefs. The cinematic principles of narrating Russians abroad are part of popular culture's stereotypic image in-the-making, which thrives on making sense of the postcommunist world. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam also see the stereotype as different from misrepresentation; they say of the stereotype that "the issue is less one of fidelity to a pre-existing truth or reality than one of a specific *orchestration* of ideological discourses and communitarian perspective" (Shohat and

[21] Other texts on postcolonialism and postcommunism can be found in David Chioni Moore, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet: Towards a Global Postcolonial Critique," *PMLA* 116, no. 1 (2001): 111-128. See also the discussion on *ARTMargins*, Ekaterina Degot, "How to Qualify for Postcolonial Discourse," *ARTMargins: Contemporary Central and Eastern Europen Visual Culture*, 2001 and Margaret Dikovitskaya, "A Response to Ekaterina Dyogot's Article: Does Russia Qualify for Postcolonial Discourse?," *ARTMargins: Contemporary Central and Eastern Europen Visual Culture*, 2002. A whole issues of the journal *Ulbandus: The Slavic Review of Columbia University* (Vol 7, 2003) was devoted to the issue of postcolonialism and post-Soviet Russia.

Stam 1994, 180)(my emphasis). It is this 'orchestration' that is informative for the analysis conducted here.

While the postcommunist cultural changes were touched upon above, it is important in the context of cross-cultural representation to highlight the work of Ewa Mazierska, Katarzyna Marciniak, Anikó Imre and Dina Iordanova, who have dealt with these issues in regard to cinema and its particularities to postcommunism. While Marciniak takes on alienhood, exile and abjection in film and literature in a US context (Marciniak 2006), Imre makes an important contribution with a postcolonial analysis of Hungarians travelling to Europe in two films by Istvan Szabó, where she deals with the inferiority felt by the postcommunist subject (Imre 1999). Mazierska explores postcommunist modes of travel in Czech and Polish films (Mazierska 2004) and in the broader definition of European cinema (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006). While the inclusion of Central and Eastern European films is justified within the European cinematic space, the Russian travelling abroad carries a different cross-cultural baggage, which forces the post-Soviet Russian to re-imagine his/herself. This is acknowledged fully by Dina Iordanova in her account of Russians in East European cinema (Iordanova 2000). In the article, Iordanova charts how post-Soviet Russians are portrayed as having fallen from power. The fascination with female immigrants, but at the same time the affectionate portrayals of the former master race (e.g. *Bolshe Vita*, 1996, Ibolya Fekete), makes Russians the 'beast just killed.'

The Soviet Union has its own history of cross-cultural representation, which, in particular, is evident in the cultural exchange with the US. Natalia Noussinova deals with Russian filmmakers in the US in early cinema (Noussinova 1996), while Harlow

Robinson's work (2007) on the Hollywood musical genre and its use of Russian music and themes is worth mentioning in connection to cross-culturalism.[22] These historical accounts will not constitute essential readings and also excluded are writings on the intercultural movement of star, such as *Journeys of Desire* (Phillips and Vincendeau 2006). This study surpasses these historical cross-cultural accounts by virtue of focusing on the post-Soviet Russian travelling abroad. Hence the project will not engage in the historical discourse of cross-cultural representation, but will use these writings as evocative for making a contemporary analysis of transnational, cross-cultural post-Soviet cinema production. Instead, inspiration is sought from another approach to cross-cultural representation.

In the historian's approach to the post-Soviet impact on national identities, two works stand out: Larry Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe* (1994) and Iver Neumann's *Uses of the Other* (1999). Wolff contemplates the fact that "the iron curtain is gone and yet the shadow persists" (Wolff 1994, 3), and then goes on to trace how Eastern Europe has been formed as Europe's orient since the Renaissance. Neumann writes in a similar vein on how European identity formation has constructed the Russian, as well as the Turkish Other, as an important element of forging an internally coherent European identity. In this European construction, the Russians are placed as learners (Neumann 1999, 164): still barbaric and savage (e.g. the image of the Russian bear) but having the potential of 'becoming' a civilised nation. Neumann's self/Other nexus in identity formation is revealing in the context of this study, because Russians, when

[22] Brian D. Harvey's (2005) research on the Hollywood-Soviet connection should also be mentioned under this category.

travelling abroad, are confronted with otherness and the need to re-imagine themselves in the postcommunist context.

Classic film studies texts on representation are also important to bear in mind (e.g. Bhabha 1983), because they have greatly influenced the cinematic discourse on issues of race, gender and sexuality. However, this analysis stays within the dominant cultural context such as classic Hollywood productions, or the representation of the Soviet Russian Other in Hollywood (Strada and Troper 1997). These texts avoid facing cross-contextual analysis, where the same cultural phenomenon is compared to other (national) contexts. This study attempts to open up the question of cross-cultural representation by comparing the representations from different contextual viewpoints. Richard Dyer is again helpful, showing that the key tool in dissecting representation lies in the introduction of both "sociological concerns (how the stereotypes function in social thought) and the specific aesthetic concerns (how stereotypes function in fiction)" (Dyer 1993, 11). This study needs to get hold of particular social thoughts, or cinematic discourses, that inform the functional level of the fiction. The stereotype is not only levelled at the representation of the Other, as in European representations of Russians abroad, but also revealed in the representation of selves, i.e. Russians abroad in Russian cinema. This in turn echoes Mary Louise Pratt's classic term "auto-ethnographic," in which dominant forms of representation/stereotypes are built into narratives that are meant to appeal to both native and non-native consumers of the text (Pratt 1992, 7). However, what connects their different context of formation is the postcommunist condition, which will be accounted for as similar to a postcolonial condition.

Colonialism and representation has been interfaced since the early days of studying films, e.g. in Robert Stam's and Louise Spence's anti-colonialist deconstruction of colonial cinema forms (Stam and Spence 1983). Also Homi Bhabha sees the colonialist discourse effecting the formation of the stereotype. That said, for Bhabha the danger of deconstructing the stereotype lies in the fact that it becomes a fixed point of referencing. "These are theoretical strategies that are necessary to combat 'ethnocentrism' but they cannot, of themselves, unreconstructed, represent that otherness" (Bhabha 1983, 22). Although Bhabha's criticism is valid, the object of this study is not exclusively to examine Russian otherness, but rather to map the representations of Russians abroad through different cinematic discourses.

In Film Studies, these discourses on cross-cultural representation evolve into examinations of national identities, which are highly influenced by the postcommunist condition. In *Screening Europe* from 1992, both Ien Ang and Stuart Hall make the effort of comprehending a new postcommunist Europe triggered by the fall of the Berlin Wall. Ang talks of a failed postcoloniality in European cinema, which has forged European filmmakers through the active demarcation of self in relation to others (Ang 1992, 23). The time at which Ang makes this assertion is revealing, in that the disappearance of the communist Other forces a re-imaging of European identity and of what constitutes being a postcommunist European. Stuart Hall has more foresight when he constructs Eastern Europe as the new margin of Europe, saying that the further one advances into Eastern Europe, "the more [Europe] threatens to mutate into something else" (Hall 1992, 46). What is this 'something else' and what do Russians abroad invoke regarding this European 'mutation'? This is highly important to this study. Europe needs to find new margins and its centre again

(Mazierska 2001), and in this process Russia plays an ever-increasing role in defining what Europe is not.

It is with Central and Eastern European inclusion into a core Europe that the question of national identities comes to the fore in Film Studies (Petrie 2004, McLoone 2001, MacKenzie 2004).[23] Some film scholars within Eastern European studies follow this trend of narrating national cinema according to the nation-state (Haltof 2002). Others, far more influential for this study, are scholars who seek a common reality for Central and Eastern Europeans and their cinema. The first film scholar to explore this avenue was Dina Iordanova, who in her work examines the film industry's development in terms of structure, style and narrative themes, asserting that a transnational framework

> allows us to reveal leading stylistic or narrative trends, and other general aspects […] in a region that has an extensive shared history and parallels in their social, political, economic and cultural backgrounds [which] prevail over the differences (in language, ethnicity and religion)" (Iordanova 2003, 12).

Iordanova approaches the cinema of Eastern Europe just as the other film scholars are approaching other cinema regions. Other film scholars take this up; Anikó Imre edits a volume on Eastern European Cinema, saying, "postsocialist film cultures offer unique opportunities to study the role that visual media play in a monumental cultural shift of global significance" (Imre 2005, xvii). Ewa Mazierska (together with Laura Rascaroli) writes Eastern Europe (including Russia) into a search for a core European

[23] A Deluezian perspective is starting to emerge with national identity as its main target. For example, David Martin-Jones constructs a model of crisis in various national identities around the urge to make parallel narratives, which are then conceived within the framework of Delueze's writing. See David Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity: Narrative Time in National Contexts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006). One way of seeing this is to view positions from which an alternative model of the national can be narrated; a 'minoritanian' position that resembles the "becoming woman image", which resists the national dominate hegemony. See Serazer Pekerman, "Framed Intimacy of the 'becoming women': The Representation of the Mutilated Body in Ousmane Sembene's Moolaade." In *Expressions of the Body: Representations in African Text and Image*. Ed Charlotte Baker. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009.

identity through the theme of the city (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003) and through the travel genre (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006). The postcommunist condition is important in these writings, arguing that the fall of communism in Europe triggers shifts in, and perceptions of, the movement of people, ideas, and products on a global scale. In this regard, these scholars seek theoretical frameworks (postmodernist, postcolonialist, feminist, queer theory, etc.) that allow them to make cross-cultural assertions, which is precisely what is intended here. This study will employ postcolonial discourse because it forcefully manages to speak of the totality of a globalisation that is affected by postcommunism. Postcolonialism can effectively deal with a cross-contextual, transnational analysis of how postcommunist power relations form modern globalisation. In other words, the system of cross-cultural representations of Russians abroad is best described as a postcolonial system.

Part 1: Russian Cinema

Filmmakers Representing Selves

The question that will be answered over the next two chapters, is the question of Russian filmmakers portraying Russians. This part, the first of the textual analysis, deals with self-representation; that is, Russians making films about Russians abroad. The first chapter brings to the fore the work of two of the most discussed Russian filmmakers from the post-Soviet era: Nikita Mikhalkov and Aleksei Balabanov, and the second chapter deals with comedy and the hugely popular film *Window to Paris*. Although the approach in the second chapter tackles genre and not the filmmakers, the analysis will also focus on Yuri Mamin, the filmmaker behind *Window to Paris*. Thus, while the first chapter deals with Russian nationalistic expressions that are particular to the postcommunist era, the second part establishes comedy as the most 'adequate' in representing Russians abroad.

Nationalism in the Soviet republics led to the most threatening challenge to the Soviet Union and saw repeated demands for the right to self-determination. But Russian nationalism is to be distinguished from the nationalism in the Soviet republics and Eastern Europe, because the latter "all had 'Russians as communists' to serve them well in developing a common reconstruction of identity" (Laitin 1998, 313). Russian nationhood eschews a 'natural' liberation from communist rule, because Russians are the standard-bearers of the empire; they are the "empire-upholders" and the colonisers within the empire (Suny and Martin 2001, 3). Thus, the aspirations of Russians for an independent (postcolonial) statehood were directed towards the communist (neo-colonial) ideology. During Glasnost and Perestroika nationalist sentiments surfaced

saying that Russians had been treated unfairly in the 'affirmative action empire' of the Soviet Union (Martin 2001, 78).[1] The persistence of nationalism can be seen as following from the strong imperialism that existed under the ruling communist system (Mestrovic 1994, 57).[2] The socialist ideology could not uproot nationalism as intended, but merely kept it under the lid. With communist ideology gone, Russian nationalism came into full view. Whereas in the first chapter we will detect the notion of cinema as a weapon in a nationalistic fight-back against the neo-colonial influence of the West, then in the second chapter we will chiefly see satire as the weapon that forcefully comments on the postcommunist condition. As Yuri Mamin has said, "Cinema is my weapon, both for defence and attack" (Lawton 2004, 268).

The Soviet film industry saw huge changes as a consequence of the fall of communism. It has been a vertically integrated industry where the state had a grip on every stage in the production, distribution and exhibition of films and employed thousands of workers (Iordanova 2003, 27). Under this system of film production, the state had tight control over every part of the process; scripts had to be approved and the end product was subject to scrutiny before the film was released in theatres. As long as one conformed to the 'guidelines' of Socialist Realism, filmmakers had great economic and human resources at their disposal. The films ranged from run-of-the-mill politically correct productions to art films that were released in limited numbers of prints, but nonetheless produced and distributed. Films that did not pass the

[1] For a country like the Soviet Union, the question of nationality has always been problematic. Both Lenin and Stalin have addressed this issue through their writing. For example, Lenin turned to the question in the 1914 article, 'The Right of Nations to Self-Determination.'

[2] One factor of discontent with the communist system was being voiced through nationalistic rhetoric, which very much had anticommunist slants. See Aleksandar Pavkovic, Halyna Koscharsky and Adam Czarnota, *Nationalism and Postcommunism: A Collection of Essays*, edited by Aleksandar Pavkovic, Halyna Koscharsky and Adam Czarnota (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1995).

censor's desk were not released at all, and were instead referred to as banned or shelved films. This system began to crumble as the economic situation deteriorated and state funds dried up. In the late 80s and early 90s, more and more filmmakers began to make co-productions with foreign companies and, once the economy slowed down, the studio system fell apart completely. Times were changing and Russian filmmakers had to reformulate their vocation, from serving the state to serving new masters: popular taste and foreign producers.

The three filmmakers that we will concentrate on are, in their different ways, symbolic of the transition that Russian cinema went through during the early 1990s. While Mikhalkov rose out of Mosfilm in Moscow to become one of the most influential filmmakers of the postcommunist era with his own studio, Mamin and Balabanov hail from Lenfilm in St Petersburg with different postcommunist trajectories. While Mamin (b 1946) is emblematic of an older generation of filmmakers who have struggled to continue their success of the 1990s, Balabanov is representative of a younger generation that became stars in the postcommunist era. Balabanov started out making art-house films, but turned 'popular' in the mid-90s, co-founding STV, one of the leading independent film companies today.

The films too are very different, but in each way iconic for the era. Mikhalkov's *Urga* was made in 1991 at the very beginning of the postcommunist period, when foreign producers were involved in epic scale filming. Mamin's film, *Window to Paris* (1994), follows suit by also being a co-production, but downgrades the epic and finds its viewers through comedy. Lastly, we have Balabanov's *Brother 2* (2000), an action

film that ignited the film industry and which is only concerned with emulating the blockbuster film. Coincidently, these three cinematic representations of Russians abroad form a tri-continental approach to the feat of venturing outside Russia; *Urga* explores the Asian connection, *Okno…* the European and *Brat 2* tackles the relationship with North America.[3]

That the focus is on these three films and their makers will obviously have its limitations with regard to encompassing a whole cinematic field. However, the aim here is to highlight a trope in postcommunist Russian cinema, namely self-reflexive examples of Russian representations of Russians abroad. Therefore, the theme of 'the abroad' in connection to the older Soviet abroad, as seen with our example of *Urga*, could as well have been highlighted with different filmmakers and different films; e.g. Aleksandr Sokurov's *Dni zatmeniya/Day of Eclipse* (1988) tackles the Russian encounter with displacement in Central Asia and Karen Shakhnazarov's *American Daughter* (*Amerikanskaya doch'*, 1995) with the USA. However, these stand apart from the nationalist discourse, which Mikhalkov and Balabanov, in particular, have revealed. Thus we could have opted to analyse Russians abroad in *Voina*/*War* (2002) by Balabanov, which equally has a Russian nationalistic rhetoric but set in the Caucasus.[4] In comedies, we could have opted for a number of choices. The texts chosen (*Urga*, *Brat 2* and *Okno…*) will correspond to our theoretical framework by fitting into the postcolonial positions we set up in the opening part.

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[3] This by no means indicates that these are the only places that preoccupy Russian cinema. However, the study has found no actual evidence of Latin America or Africa being evoked in the plot of popular Russian film. To detect these continental influences, one should look to television and the influences of the tele-novella, or African filmmakers who have taken their film education in Moscow, e.g. Abderrahmane Sissako.

[4] The study will examine Russians in the Caucasus with *Prisoner of the Mountains* in chapter 5.

Chapter 3: Russians Abroad in Drama Fiction

1 Introduction to Filmmakers

Although both Nikita Mikhalkov and Aleksei Balabanov have experience of filmmaking during the Soviet era – with Mikhalkov by far the more experienced of the two in this regard – it is with these two that the transition into the post-Soviet era is marked. Furthermore, they are Russian filmmakers who construct narratives of 'Russians abroad' first and foremost with Russian audiences in mind and who speak about post-Soviet Russian concerns and values. However, this is more explicit in the case of Balabanov and *Brother 2*, than with Nikita Mikhalkov and *Urga*, which is a co-production with two French film companies, Caméra One and Hachette Première (the thesis will return to the issues of transnational co-production in chapter 5). Mikhalkov's film is known outside Russian as *Close to Eden* or *Territory of Love*; it travelled abroad to festivals as *Urga*. However, as part of the promotion of the DVD version, a sub-clause was appended to the Russian title of the film, Territory of Love. Thus, *Urga, Territory of Love* is the preferred title used by critics, e.g. Lawton refers to the film as *Urga, Land of Love* (Lawton 177). The sub-clause will be an important element of the analysis and is hence included here. Despite the fact that *Urga* is a co-production, the analysis will show how the film addresses anxieties that are particular to Russian audiences and a postcommunist Russian reality. In this way, both films highlight a particular Russian postcoloniality that springs from the postcommunist reality, in which the fall of communism has carved out new positions for Russians.

Nikita Mikhalkov's and Aleksei Balabanov's films reveal both how diverse post-Soviet Russian cinema has become, but also how the two filmmakers have come

together in recent years. In the latter regard, the films like *Zhmurki*/*Blindman's Bluff* (2005) and *Mne ne bol'no*/*It Doesn't Hurt Me* (2006) where Mikhalkov is engaged in important parts as an actor. Things were different in the mid-1990s when the two filmmakers clashed over matters of violence and national identity in post-Soviet Russian cinema.[1] Along with their popularity with viewers, this coming together on how to represent Russian heroism and national unity forms the first reason for choosing these two filmmakers and their films. The chord the two have struck informs shared affinities and mutual respect, illustrating their shared ideological ground, despite their stylistic differences. The second reason lies in the fact that these two filmmakers have strong feelings for and against Western values and, in particular, concerning Western cultural influence. However, these concerns, or animosities, manifest themselves differently in the two directors, a difference which can be detected in their social backgrounds. Where Mikhalkov, coming from the centre and of an aristocratic/intelligentsia blood line (Beumers 2005, 3), seeks to assert Russia's greatness in the Eastern Slavophil tradition, Balabanov, being from the provinces, is less infatuated by the romantic idea of a Russian Holy Grail being buried in Siberia. This is reflected in the setting of the two films, Mikhalkov's in the North-East of China, and Balabanov's in the US. However, as will be pointed out, both films show the following: that Russia has a unique place in the geopolitically changed postcommunist era.

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[1] In a speech delivered at the Filmmakers' Union extraordinary congress in 1998, Mikhalkov, the Chairman of the Union, deplored the level of violence in recent Russian films. He commented, "a badly made, empty film provokes anger and vexation. But if a film lacking creative principles and artistic compassion loses touch with its roots, but is made competently, professionally and skilfully, then it is even more painful and frightening, because the talent, intelligence and potential of many young directors are directed towards evil and destruction." See Nikita Mikhalkov, "The Function of a National Cinema," in *Russia on Reels: The Russian Idea in Post-Soviet Cinema*, ed. Birgit Beumers, 50-53 (London: I.B.Tauris, 1999), p 51. Many saw this as an attack on, in particular, Balabanov and his first instalment of *Brat*, which had premiered a year earlier.

For now it suffices to mention that these two filmmakers usually have been the focus of attention whenever post-Soviet Russian cinema has been on the agenda for film scholars and critics alike. Mikhalkov and Balabanov became the first post-Soviet Russian blockbuster filmmakers, who, throughout the mid-1990s and well into the new millennium, could draw in audiences by their names alone. As such, they act here as representatives for a cinema that is self-representational and which has the aim of speaking to largely Russian audiences. These two filmmakers want to make popular films that do not lack quality, while at the same time infusing their films with strong ideological views. They want to, on the one hand, push the viewers in one particular direction, but on the other, also to push their films in a direction of popular sentiments. In other words, they want to influence the political agenda, at the same time as they are locating popular flows. Although the context in which they emerge is just as significant for the new postcommunist condition, it is their films that will be the primary focus, because their representations of Russians abroad constitute a vital component in the jigsaw of this thesis. Moreover, they are the filmmakers who have successfully managed to negotiate the crumbling Soviet film industry of the 1990s, when the industry plummeted to Second World War levels in terms of the numbers of films produced.[2]

[2] 1996 was the low point with only 28 films released. See Birgit Beumers (ed), *Russia on Reels: The Russian Idea in Post-Soviet Cinema* (London & New York: I.B.Tauris, 1999), p3.

Both Mikhalkov, who was well established in the Soviet period, and Balabanov, who started filmmaking as the Soviet Empire fell, were popular filmmakers of the pre-*Night Watch* (Bekmambetov, 2004) era. As Birgit Beumers asserts,

> The resurgence of the blockbuster comes only in 1998 with Aleksei Balabanov's *Brother* and *Brother 2*, and Nikita Mikhalkov's *Sibirskii tsiriul'nik* [The Barber of Siberia], which re-envision the hero and reconceptualise moral values in the new Russia. Through a historical drama, Mikhalkov's large-budget film highlights Russia's national values and moral virtues. By contrast, Balabanov is moving away from his auteur status towards the mass audience (Beumers 2003, 444).

Mikhalkov and Balabanov represent a post-Soviet Russian cinema that was accepted by a wide audience and therefore managed to strike a chord on general sentiment, values and ideas in the public sphere. With regard to genre, the two films are constructed according to formulas that have resonance in the past and present. While *Urga* is built on the tradition of melodrama, *Brother 2* is created on the pattern of action drama, which was rarely seen in Soviet cinema.[3] However, they both seek to reach popular audiences by employing genres familiar to viewers. Thus, the films are chosen, because they have resonance with the viewers and because the filmmakers have strongly influenced the direction of popular Russian cinematic expression. The films are perfect expressions that can be examined according to the postcolonial paradigm, revealing how their representations of Russians abroad are constructed.

The investigation will start with Nikita Mikhalkov and his film, *Urga, the Territory of Love*, because Mikhalkov nicely fits in as a filmmaker who has managed to cross over from the Soviet film industry to the post-Soviet Russian one. Mikhalkov's *Urga* is to

[3] With regard to the action film, it is worth mentioning the popular *Piraty XX veka*/*Pirates of the 20th Century* (Boris Durov, 1979), which also has Soviet Russians abroad fighting international criminals, who seek to steal a cargo of morphine.

be considered a transitional film that marks the filmmaker's search for popular audiences. The film becomes a turning point in Mikhalkov's filmmaking. Beumers writes, "from this point onward, [his] films would be classified as commercial kitsch (kliukva) for export only" by the Russian home critics (Beumers 2005, 97).[4] Mikhalkov's response to the accusation of making kitsch was to hit back at the critics and audiences.

> Loathesome and godless, we have lost the will to live, and in particular, the respect for things – the past, the present, and our selves… But then Russia appears [in my films] full-blooded and beautiful… And the talk about kitsch begins, about the fact that Mikhalkov has made a film for foreigners… Yes, [I have catered] for foreigners. For one hundred million foreigners living in my country, who do not know its culture, its history, and – most importantly – who do not love it (Arkus 1999, 89).

Mikhalkov's project, crystallised in *The Barber of Siberia* (1999), is to glorify what has been left behind, or lost, in the dark images of Russia's postcommunist transition. Thus, *Urga* in this study constitutes an early attempt to unearth Russia's past to construct a new post-Soviet Russian national identity, a glorious (imperial) past that will ignite and renew the love of the country. In other words, it is a pre-articulation of the postcommunist condition, of the end of Empire. This will be followed by Aleksei Balabanov, who, as 'the new kid on the block', rises to the forefront of post-Soviet Russian cinematic production in the late 1990s. While Balabanov's first *Brat*/*Brother* (1997) signifies the arrival of a new Russian cinema and a new Russian hero(ism), the follow-up, *Brother 2*, is equally a milestone, if of a different kind than its predecessor. What links *Urga* and *Brother 2* and their makers are the concerns of colonialism: the colonialism that the Russian Empire instigated and the (neo-) colonial influence of Western hegemonies that holds sway over post-Soviet Russia. Both these two quite

[4] Birgit Beumers aptly points to *Urga* as the film that completely alienates Mikhalkov from his home colleagues and critics.

different features of colonialism inform the films that will be analysed, because, it could be argued that they are two sides of the same coin. It can be called Eurasianism, Slavophilia, or anti-Eurocentrism, but the bottom line is that the 'coin' hails Russia as different from, on the one hand, the West and, on the other, the East and Asia.

2 *Urga*

Director Nikita Mikhalkov, Script Rustam Ibragimbekov, Caméra One, Hachette Première, Studio TriTe, France, Russia, 1991.

Sergei is a middle-aged Russian who lives abroad with wife and daughter. He is a truck driver working in an industrial Northern Chinese town. Driving through the steppes one day, he crashes his truck into a river. He finds help in Gombo, a Mongolian living off the land with his wife Pagma, their three children and Gombo's mother. After a night in Gombo's hut, Sergei takes Gombo with him into town; Gombo needs to get condoms as his wife refuses to have more kids (they are too expensive). While in town, Sergei and Gombo meet up at the local disco, where a drunken Sergei gets up on stage and sings the song, 'On the Hills of Manchuria,' which he has tattooed on his back. Sergei is escorted away by the police, but Gombo frees him from jail. On his way back home, Gombo dreams that he encounters a warrior dressed as Genghis Khan, who has been summoned by Gombo's wife. Khan questions Gombo's purchases that he has made in town: a bicycle, a TV set and tinned food. While a Rambo film is playing on the TV, Khan's hordes spear the TV, they easily over take the bike, and when Sergei turns up, they torch his truck. But

Gombo returns with a whole TV, on which he can flick between two channels, once he gets it to work. Gombo's wife is not happy with the TV, and lures Gombo outside by getting the Urga out, meaning that she has consented to have a child. The end of the film has the child narrating the story from the future.

2.1 Production and Reception History of *Urga*

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, *Urga* was a co-production between two French film companies and Mikhalkov's own film studio, TriTe.[5] The film was well received on the international festival circuit, winning the Golden Lion at Venice International Film Festival in its year of release. Subsequently, in 1993, the film won a Felix at the European Film Academy, got nominated for best foreign film at both the US Academy Awards and the French Césars, and won best director at the Russian Nika awards. Despite this international recognition and despite being a transnational co-production, the film is analysed here as part of the mode of self-representation. According to the filmmaker, "*Urga* was virtually unshown in Russia" on its release (Faraday 2000, 191). For these films of the early 1990s, Nikita Mikhalkov had to go on a self-promotion tour in order to get the films screened and to reduce piracy, because at this point in time the 'normal' (Soviet) distribution system was almost absent. However, despite *Urga*'s transitional release pattern, it has subsequently been aired on television and was circulated in pirated copies, which were the main viewing

[5] TriTe (three Ts: standing for trud, tovarishchestvo, tvorchestvo [work, comradeship, creativity]) was at this stage in its infancy having made one film previously, *Avtostop*/*Hitchhike* (1990), which was co-produced with Italian Gramma Film and also penned by Rustam Ibragimbekov. Mikhalkov's TriTe has since risen to considerable notoriety as the largest Russian film studio to emerge outwith the old Soviet studios. At present TriTe handles large cinematic productions, both homegrown and foreign.

forms for Russian cinema during this period, and therefore the film has become familiar to Russian audiences.

What is interesting about *Urga*'s reception is that it crosses over as a culturally 'unmarked' film: no single nation or culture can claim the film as theirs, as being explicitly about their nation and culture. Culturally, the film hangs in a transnational no-man's land, being neither Chinese, Mongolian nor completely Russian. This specific feature of the film is important to bear in mind when the perspective of the Russian abroad is highlighted, because it is precisely with this apparent load of unfixed natural affiliation that the film makes its most pertinent nationalist points. Scriptwriter Rustam Ibragimbekov, who will be dealt with later, and director Mikhalkov put together a story that fuses three cultural contexts, of which the Russian, a seemingly secondary character, is, in fact, the primary concern. It is through looking at this Russian abroad that the investigation can classify the text under the category of self-representation.

Interestingly, it is only the Russian critics that pick up on the Russian military connotation in the film (as implicitly seen through the song that Sergei sings, which commemorates the dead Russian soldiers of the Russo-Japanese War, 1905). M. Ivanov writes that the military connotations are there, "as if reminding us about who we were in order to remember that we should know where we are heading" (Ivanov). For the Russian viewer the issues of remembrance and the fallen soldiers take precedence in local Russian spectatorship, but they are neglected and overlooked elsewhere, including the Western festivals. Western film scholars on Russian cinema

support the view of the film that Mikhalkov's underlining of Russian military historical presences in the region imbues the film with nationalist sentiments (Faraday 2000, 188; Beumers 2005, 93-98). Following these critics, this study will examine the Russian character, but further emphasise the setting and mise-en-scene as constructing the Russian abroad as the safeguard of traditional Eastern values and views of life. The film is classified within Soviet and Russian cinema as an ethnographic drama (Segida and Zemlyanukhin 2001) and, before moving to the analysis of *Urga*, it is important to mention that Aleksei Balabanov has also made a contribution to this peculiar Russian/Soviet genre with *Reka*/*The River* (2002). While this genre purports to take the viewpoint of the indigenous people that are portrayed in the film, it does on the other hand flag issues of colonial, and postcolonial, sentiments (Kristensen 2004).

2.2 Different Territories of Love

The extraordinary point about *Urga* is that it is exclusively set on foreign territory in Northern China, an approach quite exceptional in Russian cinema and only justified through the inclusion of a Russian abroad. Besides the few Russian characters, the film mainly has a Mongolian cast (Beumers 2005, 93). But it is with Sergei that the investigation is concerned. He lives with his family in a small Chinese industrial town where he has, it is assumed, contractual work in the oil industry. He is representative of a Soviet Russian social class, which were sent abroad on work to help with the construction of Socialism in other brotherly countries. In the postcolonial syncretism, he is somewhere in-between coloniser and colonial settler, for whom 'abroad' has become home. Sergei is a truck driver, not highly educated nor a bearer of any

obvious cultural capital. The truck is of an older date, the front window is broken and it is clearly recognised by Russian spectators as a Soviet brand, GAZ-51 (Rouland 2007, 12), despite the Chinese characters written on its doors and the sides of the truck bed. A frontal shot of Sergei in the truck shows him wearing goggles because of the broken front window, but these glasses are also the first of several pointers to military machinery, in particular tanks. This is a theme that follows Sergei in the first part of the film. Also worth mentioning is the music playing from his truck radio, which is played on maximum volume in order to keep him awake.[6] At first it is Chinese opera music, but Sergei drifts off and he changes the music to Wagner's opera *Lohengrin* (Beumers 2005, 93), which, significantly, is neither Russian nor Chinese, but profoundly European. This neatly sets up the frame of Sergei as from outside the East and the West, but located in-between the two poles, just as are the native Mongolians in the film.

While the film is not set in Mongolia, Russia's role in this region is significant. Mongolia gained independence from China in 1911 with Russian help and the close relation continued after 1924 when Mongolia was pronounced a People's Republic under communist rule. The Sino-Russian conflict led to Mongolia siding with the Russians, despite their apparently closer affinities – in terms of trade and shared historical past – with their Chinese neighbours. None of the music-positions, East or

[6] In the colonial discourse, the radio holds a significant place and, in particular, for the colonial settler. Fanon writes on the French broadcasting of Radio-Alger, that "it gives [the settler] the feeling that colonial society is a living and palpitating reality, with its festivities, its traditions eager to establish themselves, its progress, its taking root. [I]t is the only link with other cities, with Algiers, with the metropolis, with the world of the civilized." See Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1970), p55. See also Brian Larkin. *Signal and Noice: Media, Infrastucture, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008, p48-72.

West, can keep Sergei awake and he dozes off with the consequence that he veers towards a cliff over a river. The truck stays on the cliff and Sergei, now wide awake, counts himself lucky. He wanders away from the truck dancing and screaming, and he begins to perform an army attack, simulating machine-gun noises, again connoting his army affiliations. Stumbling over a decaying corpse in the high grass, Sergei runs horrified back to his truck to drive off, but instead of reversing from the cliff edge, he drives the truck fully into the river. In other words, if Sergei is seen as a military colonial subject advancing on the pristine steppes of the East, then when faced with the barbarism (as he sees it) of the corpse, he tries to retreat. However, despite his efforts, he is doomed to engage with the Other. The retreat from the Chinese battlefield was one of the causes of Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese war (1904-05). Sergei has tattooed the name of a Russian song 'On the Hills of Manchuria' and its score covering the whole of his back. The song celebrates the soldiers that fell in Russo-Japanese war and, in particular, in the battle of Mukden where some 110,000 Russian soldiers died.

In the film, these connotations of Russian military, naivety and the cultural gap are continued when Sergei arrives at Gombo's hut (iurta). Firstly when Sergei takes off his shirt to wash himself, he reveals a torso with many army tattoos. Sergei explains that he was in the army band and that he was young and foolish. Gombo's son looks at them flabbergasted. However, it is Sergei who is equally stunned when, in honour of Sergei, Gombo kills a sheep for dinner. Moreover, in this scene, where Gombo kills, skins and dismembers the sheep, viewers are positioned with Sergei, looking on at the slaughter. This reinforces the spectator identification as non-Mongolian, but

rather as Western/Russian ethnographers. At first, Sergei refuses to partake in the eating, but he eventually complies and eats the food on offer with relish. Well into the meal and after a couple of '*Russkie obychai*' (Russian customs), i.e. toasts, Sergei jokingly makes an army honour gesture to Buyin, Gombo's son, but the little boy refuses to do the same in return. Instead, Buyin puts a finger to his head, turning it, by which he indicates that Sergei is an (crazy) idiot. The representation of the Russian abroad in Sergei is meant to infuse a comic element into a simple man who by mistake has landed in this family home. Or, as Beumers asserts, Sergei is "a kind of Soviet popular prototype with his steel teeth, tattoos, poor speech and no manners, [but] he behaves in a way that suggests his assumed superiority" (Beumers 2005, 94). Sergei is simply out of place in the tent and seems brash, intrusive and foreign, but nonetheless feels a (Western) superiority to his environs. The superiority is expressed through his ignorance rather than his morality; Sergei leaves the spectator with no inkling that he is interested in understanding the daily lives of Mongols in China. That said, the military connotations that are attached to Sergei point in the direction of a less innocent Russian presence in this 'near abroad' territory, because they embed the story with the colonial sentiment of a 'barbaric,' pristine society that is not explicit within the narrative, but visible from Sergei's tattoos. The image that follows Sergei's comic dinner and his tears when Gombo's daughter plays the accordion, is a pan shot of the moon,over the steppes to a zoom in on Sergei's truck, stuck in the river. In conjunction with the military references, this becomes an image of Russian colonial adventure gone wrong, or, at least, a failed intrusion of 'Western' Soviet civilisation. Sergei's old-style truck and his own low cultural capital suggest this failed colonial endeavour.

The next morning, Sergei drives Gombo and his two horses into town on the back of the resurrected truck. While Gombo tries to buy condoms, Sergei returns to his wife after a long absence, and while Sergei's daughter waits outside the door for the adults to finish their reunion, she recites a Russian poem. Back on the steppes, Buyin catches a dragonfly and amazes Pagma and his sister, which emulates Gombo in the opening scene. These juxtapositions create opposite worlds; however, it is Buyin that finds his way back to nature and its wonders. Sergei, on the other hand, gets the reply from his wife: 'What are we doing here?' At the same time as this hanging question, the camera pans to the windowsill and a miniature of a Russian Orthodox church. This image is repeated later at a gathering at the local disco. At the disco, Sergei is again drinking and this time not only with Gombo, but also with a Russian compatriot. The two Russians have lost the connection of their history; they are unable to remember the names of their ancestors, which ignites Sergei's desire to sing his tattooed song. The music fades into a non-diegetic Russian balalaika playing the music of the song and, as Sergei walks away, the melody disappears leaving only the beat left (identical to a heartbeat). Sergei pushes the doors open (resembling western saloon doors) and he gets a vision of black and white footage from a war torn building on a barren landscape. Michael Rouland interprets this barren land as Sergei's grandfather's burnt-out house and his battle in Manchuria (Rouland 2007, 13). A more adequate interpretation, however, would be to see this vision as an expression of a collective memory image that stands for the war as a whole and not just the individual. This purported collected memory of the war refers to a situation where Russia lost (to the Japanese), thus making direct parallels to the current losing streak in the nation's fate.

Sergei mounts the stage and takes off his shirt to the amusement of the crowd. The spectators of the film expect Sergei to embarrass himself yet again. However, he just asks the band to play the music notes on his back. Then he starts to sing 'his' song, 'On the Hills of Manchuria,' which was written to commemorate the fallen Russian soldiers at the battle of Mukden.[7] As he starts, the band begins to pick up the tune and the crowd begins to dance again. The further Sergei gets into his song, the further he leaves the disco and enters 'his own world,' a change that is reinforced by the intercutting of a snow-ridden landscape with a Russian church on a hilltop. Again, it is a pan shot which zooms in on the church as the music fades to a single accordion with the added sound of the wind and the shriek of a lone crow. This is Sergei's projection of the nostalgic homeland, but also the projection of both the protagonist's and the filmmaker's commemoration of all the soldiers that perished in the Russo-Japanese War and whose souls now rest in foreign lands. Thus, the title of the film and, in particular, its added sub-clause, *Territory of Love*, is ambiguous as it can also be attached to the soldiers who died for their beloved Russian homeland,[8] and not just to the love story of Pagma and Gombo, which is at the centre of the film.

Another film popular with the Russian audiences, and which also features similar projections of the homeland from abroad, is *Beloe solntse pustyni*/*White sun of the Desert* (1970) by Vladimir Motyl. Motyl's film was also co-written with Rustam

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[7] The song is still very popular, but has lost some of it connection to the somewhat forgotten war that it commemorates. That said, it is still remembered within the army as not forgetting the soldiers that fell for the country. This is why Sergei has it tattooed on his back; it is the imprint of his military service. It should be mentioned that the song also features in Sergei Bodrov's film, *Prisoner of the Mountains* (1996), which will be dealt with in chapter 5.

[8] The horror of Sergei stumbling on the dead corpse of Gombo's relative earlier in the film could be the subconscious discovery of the reality of this war; ironically, a war that is tattooed on his back, but with which a direct connection is never made. In turn, this could be the horror of colonialism that he sees, as the horror identified in Conrad's novel, *The Heart of Darkness*.

Ibragimbekov who is one of the leading scriptwriters in Soviet cinema. *White Sun of the Desert* is a Soviet 'Western' (or, rather, an 'Eastern') where a Red Army soldier is defending a new Soviet outpost in Central Asia. However, there are significant differences in these projections of the longing for homeland, because Motyl's main character Sukhov 'visualises' the intercut images of a voluptuous woman in a green meadow. In Mikhalkov's film, the link between the character and his projections is less obvious: it cannot for certain be said that the two images of the Orthodox Church on the snowy hill are direct visions of Sergei, which therefore makes these projections more a desire on the account of the filmmaker than his character. This ties in with Mikhalkov's ideological outlook, where imperial Russian values, ideals and ethics are thought to be lost in contemporary life. This is in line with most writing on the filmmaker Mikhalkov (Larsen 2003, 511) and, in particular, that by Birgit Beumers in various publications. In her book on Mikhalkov, Beumers questions throughout his nostalgic view of the past, arguing that "Mikhalkov performs a shift from a nostalgia of a past that is openly constructed as myth to a past that pretends to be authentic" (Beumers 2005, 2). However, despite *Urga* undoubtedly falling in line with other Mikhalkov films where the past is constructed as a source of recovery for Russian values – as seen in *Utomlyonnye* solntsem /*Burnt by the Sun* (1994) and *Sibirskii tsiriul'nik*/*The Barber of Siberia* (1998) –in this context, *Urga* and its connotations of the war with Japan are viewed as an emotional eye-opener for what Russia has lost during Soviet modernisation. This is again in line with Rouland's conclusion; "this is not Russian rule of Mongolians, rather Russia can still learn from the steppe and harness its heritage of power of Eurasia" (Rouland 2007, 16).

Moreover, the film is constructed from the point of view of the Russian settler in the near abroad. As with many ethnic Russians living in the Soviet republics the late 1980s and the early 1990s, these were unsettling times where everything was up in the air. If the Soviet empire would fall, what would happen to generations of ethnic Russians living in the newly liberated national states of the Baltic, Central Asia, and the Caucasus? This is the concern addressed in *Urga* by the representation of Sergei and his 'memory' imprinted on his back. Through explicit reference to Sergei's and his compatriots' presence in China, the viewers, and in particular the Russian 'home' viewers, are to question the feasibility of the Russian settler in changing times. Mikhalkov, the filmmaker, partly answers this question by infusing Sergei into the closing scene of his film. The settler has a legitimate claim to be present in the near abroad. The return 'home' is not an option for the filmmaker, Nikita Mikhalkov, and his character Sergei, who together establish the naturalisation of the Russian settler by inserting the Russian male abroad into the last image of the film. Hence, it is necessary to examine the ending of *Urga* more closely.

2.3 Sergei Stays Right until the End

Having dealt with the scenes of Sergei's/Mikhalkov's projected collective memory, then it is also necessary to account for Gombo's dream sequence, in which Pagma suddenly appears in her traditional Mongolian dress with Genghis Khan. In this image there is a reverse of "Russia's sensitivity with the Mongol yoke" (Rouland 2007, 15), which is usually associated with the harsh taxation of the Horde and the fact that Russia sacrificed herself thereby saving the Europeans from oppression. Here, similar to Mikhalkov's idea of resurrecting post-Soviet Russia, Genghis Khan rejects

(foreign) modernist interventions and ridicules Gombo for his desire to be modern. This is not only Gombo who is being taught a lesson, but also the Russians. The bicycle proves to be no match for the horse and, while showing the clip from *Rambo III* (Peter McDonald, 1988)(in which Rambo beats the Mujahedeen(s) in a horse game), the TV set is destroyed with a lance.

The reference to Sylvester Stallone is also made at the opening of the film, as Gombo's drunken horse-riding neighbour brings a poster of Stallone as Lieutenant Marion 'Cobra' Cobretti in *Cobra* (George P. Cosmatos, 1986). The neighbour claims it to be a picture of his brother in America. The references to Rambo are infused with US imperialistic sentiments. On a more intertextual and family related level, the whole reference to Stallone could also be seen as a strong nod towards Mikhalkov's brother, Andrei Konchalovsky, who made the Hollywood film *Tango and Cash* (1989), which stars Stallone in one of the leading roles.[9] Obviously, the reference is to Western commodities, and in particular to a US influx of Hollywood-style values. The bicycle, on the other hand, refers to the Chinese influence. This lays the frame of ethnic Mongolia being positioned in the middle, in between two powerful forces that affect its identity. These images are complicated with the arrival of Sergei to this dream-meditative scene, but as with the other material goods, Sergei's truck is sunk into the valley while on fire, thus recognising its 'Western' intrusive features, Chinese or Soviet. However, Sergei is reunited with Gombo when ridiculed, because he too is

[9] For an analysis of the two brothers' view on history, see David Gillespie, "Reconfiguring the Past: The Return of History in Recent Russian Film," *New Cinemas* 1.1 (2002): 14-23). Also Michael Rouland points out the connection between Stallone and Konchalovsky. See Michael Rouland. "Images of Eurasia: Conceptualizing Central Eurasia through Film." *2007 Soyuz Symposium.* University of Princeton. 12 Apr 2007, p15.

rolled into a carpet and dragged across the fields. Bringing them together emphasises that both have lost touch with their ancestors; both have been disconnected from their (shared?) past – Gombo from his Mongolian ancestors, and Sergei from his pre-Soviet military men who died for their country.

Another way in which Gombo's and Sergei's shared marginality can be detected, is when Gombo arrives back home and sets up the TV that he has bought. It seems that Gombo has two channels to choose from, and on one there is a meeting in front of the White House in Washington DC between Gorbachev and Bush Sr. On the other channel, however, a people-of-the-street singing program is broadcast from Beijing,[10] which again points in the shift of political power to the south. In one of the shots of the Chinese programme, viewers are again reminded of another foreign cultural object in the tent: the poster of Sylvester Stallone in *Cobra*, which reinforces the dual cultural powers present in the worlds of Sergei and Gombo. The two powerful capitals, Washington and Beijing, not only spell out their authority over Mongolian Gombo and his family as they watch the programs, but the two cities also flank the Russian Sergei, who later arrives at the hut. It is in this context that the friendship between Gombo and Sergei should be seen, because it is here that they share values of in-betweenness, and for both the rejection of the power centres, the Chinese as well as the US, is vital for their survival. It is through the Mongolians that the liminal position of the Russian abroad can be detected, because in the film's postcommunist representation, Sergei is not the powerful big brother any more. Rather, he has been reduced to service alongside his fellow Soviet compatriots in between two versions of

[10] A special thanks to Ruby Cheung for pointing this out.

postcommunism, Americans as Cold War winners and China as the defender of a dying ideology. This is enforced by the film's conclusion.

As the film draws to its conclusion with Gombo and Pagma making love in the fields under the 'protection' of the Urga, which is a long stick onto which is tied a cloth. The Urga signals to the surrounding people that the couple would like to be left alone. However, because the 'territory of love' is not only dedicated to the Mongolians but is also shared by the dead Russian soldiers, as seen earlier, the Urga sign of 'leave-us-alone' can also be seen as a Russian sign, saying leave our soldiers alone – do not try to take this land from us. This is reinforced by having Sergei sing 'On the Hills of Manchuria' with his shirt up so that Gombo's daughter can play the tune on her accordion.

The Urga planted in the field turns into a smoking chimney. Over this image Gombo's fourth child, Temujin, the birth name of Genghis Khan, narrates that where the Urga once stood now stands this chimney, which he can see from the window of his flat in the house where he lives. He works at a gas station;[11] he is married but has no children yet and loves to travel. Last year they were at the Baikal where there once was a lake and the Russians once lived. This year they want to go to Los Angeles – to see the Japanese. This last voice-over of Temujin positions the film in a future context and purports that Japanese live in the US and non-Russians live in the Far East of Russia, thus hinting at a turning world where power structures change. For the

[11] Beumers translates it as a petrol-refinery. See Birgit Beumers, *Nikita Mikhalkov: Between Nostalgia and Nationalism*, The Filmmakers' Companion (London, New York : I.B.Tauris, 2005), p 95.

Russian viewer the voice-over is more importantly presented by the filmmaker, Nikita Mikhalkov, who 'translates' the Mongolian dialogue,[12] thus, seemingly implying that if this evolution, Mongolian or Russian, is accepted, ideals may be lost and the profound linkage to mother Russia – gone forever.

2.4 *Urga* in a (Post-)Colonial Perspective

The closing image of Sergei, the Russian settler, sitting on the grass steppes of Mongolia, singing the song imprinted on his back accompanied on the accordion by Burma, Gombo's daughter is important, because it installs the Russian abroad as an intrinsic part of the post-Soviet near abroad, where their future was in question. When Sergei returns to his wife, she asks a (rhetorical) question that is never answered: why are we here? The answer seems to come from the filmmaker, saying that we (Russians) are here because of our honourable imperial past, when we defended the Mongols from the Japanese, and that we are not only a natural part of this abroad, but should also claim a leading role. This glosses over the guilt of colonialism, which is often part of a settler narrative,[13] and instead narrates Russian imperialists, through the Russian settler, as protectors of humanistic values and ideas. Just as the settler narratives are ambiguous towards the colonial, so are *Urga* and Mikhalkov. Rouland asserts,

> The confrontation of these two worlds, the steppe and the modern world, serves as the milieu and message of a film about Russia's crisis with modernity at the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Eurasianist terms, they are also exaggerated moments in Russia's self-image: one of the power of the steppe, invoking the prestige of the Mongolian Empire, and the other

[12] This is the DVD version released in 2003 (http://www.videoguide.ru/card_film.asp?IDFilm=19322)
[13] This is what the film *La battaglia di Algeri*/*The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966) so well explained and subverted through its depiction of armed unrest.

> of the success of hyper-industrialisation and of campaigns to canvas Eurasia with road and train-tracks (Rouland 2007, 11).

In the context of this thesis, *Urga* is the settler film where the Russian protagonist signifies the in-betweennes of postcolonial settler, who is left behind, stranded in a foreign land that he/she once ruled/controlled. It is noteworthy that Russian Sergei does not even attempt to return to Russia. This is because the drama is constructed as a confirmation of the Russian's presence in the near abroad as natural and proper.

What is peculiar about this settler narrative is that the script for the film was co-written by Rustam Ibragimbekov, a prominent Soviet screenwriter who is Azeri by origin and was born in Baku, Azerbaijan. A scriptwriter who has come to embody a post-Soviet filmmaker's ability to float on the waters of postcommunist national cinemas, Ibragimbekov is behind several award-winning scripts written with Mikhalkov during the 1990s. The two have worked together on nearly every film project that Mikhalkov has initiated since the late 1980s, from *Avtostop* (1990) to *The Barber of Siberia* (1999) and the *Burnt by the Sun* films (1994 and 2007). However, Ibragimbekov was also the writer and producer of *Nomad* (2005), the Kazakh film, which was realised by Sergei Bodrov (I will return to *Nomad* in more detail later).[14] Within the post-Soviet Russian cinema, Ibragimbekov is associated with Russian 'Hollywood' filmmaking (Gorfunkel 2001, 449), in particular through Mikhalkov's films of the 1990s, but also through one of the first films that Ibragimbekov penned, *White Sun of the Desert*, which was mentioned earlier. Being Azeri and working within the Russian film industry gives Ibragimbekov a liminal yet advantaged

[14] It should also be mentioned that Russian Israeli filmmaker Arik Kaplun, whose film will be examined later, has a script-related partnership with Rustam Ibragimbekov.

position with regard to national identity; this liminality informs all of his work. Ibragimbekov tells Elena Stishova that he is "a person of two worlds – of the East and the West" (Stishova 2001, 12) and that the Eurasian idea can be transferred to a post-Soviet, postcolonial situation. He says,

> Here I am; three days of the week I am Asian, three days – European, but on Sunday, I reason that it is better walking where the border is. The border is in the blood, you see. The ability to not understand a clean notion of West or East is what defines us. Our Eurasian experience is a great richness (Stishova 2001, 20).

It is not difficult to see how Ibragimbekov's experience of border liminality infuses the ideology of *Urga* with the in-betweenness of its two major characters, Gombo and Sergei. However, Ibragimbekov cannot completely avoid accusations of partaking in a Russian national revival in the cinema of Mikhalkov. There is no question of Ibragimbekov adding to the dual perspective in *Urga* and his commitment to the same Eurasian idea that Mikhalkov cherishes. For Ibragimbekov, though, this idea constitutes a post-Soviet/postcolonial working relationship where real connection informs the older, colonial ties that were heralded under the banner of 'friendship of people' (*druzhba narodov*) during the Soviet period.

There is no nostalgic take on the Soviet period for Ibragimbekov. He says, "I have lived through very painful excessiveness and formality of the 'friendship of people,' which destroyed sincere friendship and informal connections that existed at the same time" (Stishova 2001, 12). The return of the Soviet international 'friendship,' which functioned on the level of Marxist-Leninism, is, thus, exposed by Ibragimbekov, who favours the emergence of new co-operations in post-Soviet cinema. Here, the former colonial connections are re-established in the formation of a postcolonial working

context, which brings together coloniser and colonised. The old colonial ties are not severed by the postcolonial condition; rather, the syncretism of the postcolonial and its unevenness are challenged and resolved within a new configuration of powers.

As far as the representation of Sergei is concerned, he stands in for the liminal space occupied by the postcolonial, but also for the fact that this Russian abroad has features of Imperialism (e.g. his ignorance/naivety) in relation to the Mongolians living in the Chinese borderlands. Both Gombo and Sergei are products of postcommunism, who, according to the film's director and scriptwriter, need to reject the power centres (US and China), thereby finding their roots: Gombo in Genghis Khan and Sergei, paradoxically, in Imperial Russia. Thus pre-Soviet values and ideas are put forward in the formation of a post-Soviet postcoloniality. The Soviet values are also important for the postcolonial subject, and these are on offer in the next film to be examined, Aleksei Balabanov's *Brother 2*, where the post-Soviet postcolonial is positioned more directly against the Imperial West, with no solution coming from the East.

3 *Brother 2*/*Brat 2*

Director/Scriptwriter Aleksei Balabanov, Producer Sergei Sel'yanov, STV, Russia, 2000

Danila is in Moscow where he meets Irina Saltykova, a beautiful pop singer. Danila's Moscow high life is, however, disturbed by the killing of his old war buddy, due to a pay dispute involving Mitia, a hockey player in the US. An American businessman,

Richard Mennis, has cheated Mitia (the twin brother of Danila's dead comrade) out of a transfer deal. In order to get even with the businessman, Danila and his brother, Viktor, board two separate planes to the US with fake documents. They land in the midst of older diasporas (Viktor in Chicago and Danila in New York), but these are either distrustful or on the pay roll of the Americans. Once in the US, the two fail to link up, and Danila is stranded in Chicago where he encounters the African-American TV presenter Lisa Jeffrey and the Russian-American prostitute Dasha. With the help of Dasha and by shooting everything that gets in his way, Danila manages to confront Mennis. He saves Dasha from her Black pimp and gets Mitia's money back. With the help of a white American truck driver, Ben, Danila leaves the US with Dasha dressed as VIPs. The reformed Dasha gives up her pursuit of happiness abroad for a life back home, but Danila's brother is taken by the police and remains abroad.

3.1 The Context of *Brother 2*

Balabanov's film is very different from *Urga. Brother 2* is a sequel. The first instalment of *Brother* (1997) had helped to improve the fortunes of the post-Soviet Russian film industry at a time of economic crisis thanks to its immense popularity with audiences. With its modest budget and tight (simplistic) narrative, *Brother* became a huge success and its hero, Danila Bagrov, was on everybody's lips. Danila was played by the young innocent-looking Sergei Bodrov Jr, who was an emerging star at the time, having starred in several films by his father, Sergei Bodrov (the investigation will return to Sergei Bodrov Sr and Jr later). The popularity of the character Danila came mostly because of his baby face prettiness, which contrasted with the ruthlessness of his killings, and because of Danila Bagrov's racist attitudes

towards people from the Caucasus ('Black ass') and towards Americans ('I'll cut their throats'). All this comes wrapped up in a Dostoevskian philosophical package. *Brother* is an early attempt at genre filmmaking, where an underworld is imbued with new Russian masculinities that are constructed on firm convictions and excessive violence. *Brother 2* takes the subject matter to new heights. Despite the divergence of contexts (*Urga* and *Brother 2*), there is a similarity that is worth mentioning: where *Urga* rises out of the ashes of falling communism and the uncertainties that accompany it, *Brother 2* emerges out of the August 1998 economic crash that sent the Russian ruble into free fall, with millions of people losing their savings. In such a time of economic crisis, investing in a sequel to a popular film seems logical. In other words, there is a fiscal reason for the filmmakers' choice of material, since betting on the success of *Brother 2* was safer than bringing out untried material. That said, it is not an easy task to build on the success generated from a first hit and Balabanov's approach to securing success a second time around was to drive the narrative to the extreme.

Another way of seeing the monumental leap that was taken with *Brother 2* is to compare it to Karen Shakhnazarov's film *Amerikanskaya doch*/*American Daughter* (1995). In *American Daughter*, we encounter a small-time Russian musician, Aleksei, who travels to the US, aiming to take his 6-year-old daughter back to Russia to visit her Babushka. Aleksei's goal is not outrageous or extraordinary, and nobody feels threatened by his presence abroad. In this way, Aleksei differs from Danila in *Brother 2*, which has become the epitome of antagonistic Russian feelings against the US. Although *Brother 2* and *American Daughter* are produced within the same form of

representation and are ideologically concerned within the same postcolonial position of ex-colonised subjecthood, the two films diverge in their expression. As Evgenii Sules has noted (2007), the five years that seperate these two films reveal the mammoth step that Russia took in this period, from affectionately liking the Americans to openly hating them. However, what Balabanov's and Shakhnazarov's films have in common is the unflinching return narrative, which also exemplifies them as self-representational modes of expression.

3.2 Production and Reception History of *Brother 2*

Brother 2 arrives almost 10 years after *Urga* and therefore was released in a different context and in a different way. In the years that elapsed since *Urga* was made, Russian cinema was finding its feet after a crisis in production, which had seen a slump in film output and a nearly complete breakdown of the distribution system. By the time *Brother 2* emerges, the distribution system is back in place and Russian audiences are returning to the theatres to watch Russian films again.

In box office figures, the film beat not only Mikhalkov's *The Barber of Siberia* but also the American blockbusters of that year, including *Star Wars: Episode 1* (1999), *American Beauty* (1999) and *Gladiator* (2000). The film also garnered huge video sales. This indicates that popular Russian films resonated very well with the Russian audience. Other factors that made *Brother 2* into such a blockbuster were that STV, the production company behind the film, also released a *Brother 2* video game (*Brother: Back to America*). In this sense, "Balabanov's project about the Russian

brothers became the first wide-open (not to confuse with the popular) all-Russian film project" (Segida and Zemlyanukhin 2001, 14). *Brother 2* explored new ways of targeting its audience to be economically successful. Besides the video game, Susan Larsen emphasises the importance of the *Brother 2* website in STV's marketing of the film (Larsen 2003, 510). Apparently, at the time STV wanted to be the number one production company in Russia - as described by the company's director in an interview upon the release of *Brother 2*: "We want to beat all Russian records in video [sales] with *Brother 2*" (Sel'yanov 2000, 12).

That said, the critics were not that enthusiastic about the film; in fact, *Brother 2* managed to divide them completely. The main discussion of the film took place in the high-brow Russian cinema journal *Iskusstvo kino* with four articles in an autumn issue being generally negative, attacking it for turning Danila into a Don Quixote figure from the past (Sirivlya 2000, 26), for the muddled plot (Lipovetskii 2000, 55), for reviving the Soviet dichotomy of 'us' and 'them' (Mantsov 2000, 67) and for being modern propaganda (Dondurei 2000, 71). Very much the same view was taken by the Western critics. For example, to Andrew James Horton the film is a worrying departure from Balabanov's "quirky offbeat style", its portrayal of Black people and women is right-wing, nationalistic "or at least colonial" (A. J. Horton 2001). According to *Variety*'s reviewer, the film already loses its plot at Customs Control on entering the US, "climaxing with an ill-advised urban showdown" (Cockrell 2000, 30).

However, a few months after the film's release, *Iskusstvo kino* invited second-year film students to analyse it, and from this came a completely different view. Contrary to the idea that the modern Russian hero was dead, evidence emerges that "brother lived, brother lives and brother will live," and that the chance to identify with Danila was a major attraction for young Russian viewers (Gusyatinskii 2001, 30). A clear divide in opinion on Balabanov's film emerged. On the one hand, the establishment, critics were concerned with the return to the popular mainstream. As Horton remarks at the end of his review, "going mainstream has never looked so disturbing" (A. J. Horton 2001). On the other, the younger generation, who had grown up with the image of Danila Bagrov, were not so disturbed, and it was in this respect that Balabanov's mainstream film was equated with Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (Shchirolev 2001, 35). This is also observed by David Gillespie, "Balabanov's films [in particular *Brother* and *Brother 2*] are interesting as a cinematic development that turns away from the tradition of Soviet cinema and borrows heavily from modern Western films" (Gillespie 2003, 152).

What is clear from these reviews is that the film spoke in a different visual style than was expected from a post-Soviet Russian filmmaker and that it was in particular younger audiences who hailed the film and its ideological connotations. There were also reports in some of the reviews that the exhibition of the film in cinema theatres triggered racist comments from the audience, a fact that invites questions as to *Brother 2*'s purported postcoloniality.

3.3 The Question of Postcoloniality in *Brother 2*

A postcolonial perspective is fundamental to understanding *Brother 2* and to the understanding of Balabanov's views on post-Soviet Russia's new geopolitical desires and realities. The 'postcommunist postcolonial' is both recognized and rejected by the film. Arguably, this can be seen in comparison to another Eastern European filmmaker's work, István Szabó's. Anikó Imre analyses two films by Szabó, *Mephisto* (1981) and *Meeting Venus* (1991), according to the postcolonial inferiority complex, which she takes from Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) (Imre 1999, 405-422). It is Imre's claim that like Fanon's Black intellectual, the Eastern European intellectual, traveling to Western Europe, masquerades as a Western intellectual in order to resolve the tension of contempt for oneself as Eastern European. Although Imre's argument is multi-layered and contains many important assertions on issues of sexuality and gender, the focus will be on two scenes that she highlights in her article and which will reveal similarities and differences between Szabó's and Balabanov's films and their attitudes towards ethnicity and postcolonial power structures.

In *Mephisto*, the protagonist Höfgren (Klaus Maria Brandauer) has a mixed race lover, Juliette (Karin Boyd), who is also Höfgren's dance teacher. In Imre's opinion, the scene is embedded in a colonial discourse, "Juliette's eroticism [...] justifies Höfgen's wish to learn to act naturally from the most natural creature of all: the black woman" (Imre 1999, 413). While it is important to note the colonial discourse in Szabó's depiction as it can be related to Balabanov's, it is equally important to note that there is also an analogy in the icon of suffering, the Black woman, and the white male Eastern European artist. But where the Black woman's suffering is fixed and metaphorical, it is different to the suffering of the Eastern European intellectual,

which is reified and transparent. Danila strikes up a relationship with Lisa Jeffrey, the African-American TV presenter who accidentally runs down Danila with her car. She tries to drive him to a hospital, but Danila refuses. Lisa takes Danila to her apartment, where she again offers to get Danila a doctor, but he says that he is a doctor himself (this is the first time Danila acts out a desired cultural capital).[15] Danila goes to wash in the bathroom and the camera reveals a view of his bruised back side. [16] It is these same bruises that fascinate Lisa when she returns from her work as a television reporter. As she enters the flat, she is shown also on the small screen reporting from City Hall, and she remains on screen throughout this scene. She takes off her jacket and sits on the bed where Danila is lying on his stomach, sleeping. The bruises on his backside are clearly visible, but Lisa has to bend over the sleeping Danila to touch them. Danila wakes and, just as she is about to leave with an 'I'm sorry,' he grabs her. Lisa utters a reluctant 'no,' but Danila holds her back, saying 'what's the fuss' (*da, ladno*). Danila then pulls Lisa over himself and onto the bed, while physically rolling on top of her. The scene fades to black.

The fact that Danila conquers a woman of African-American origin could be read as similar to Höfgren's relationship to his lover, Juliette. But, where Höfgren learns from Juliette and his suffering is aligned with hers in *Mephisto*, Danila's conquest is a conquest *over* the Black woman. In this way Balabanov brings a colonial discourse to *Brother 2*. In particular, this colonial voice is heard from Dasha, who by the shore of

[15] Already in the first film, Danila expressed this desire of becoming a doctor. However, in *Brother 2*, this is taken as a fact several times by the Americans, i.e. they believe that Danila *is* a doctor.
[16] The beaten male body has been a symbol for Hollywood cinema since the 1980s in an attempt to 'heal' a masculine identity which has been subjected to beating from feminist ideals of what a man should be. This healing process reaches its high points in films like *Rambo* with Sylvester Stallone and *Die Hard* with Bruce Willis. See Susan Jeffords. *Hard Bodies: Hollywood masculinity in the Reagan Era.* New Brunswick, New York: Rutgers University Press, 1994

Lake Michigan says that Blacks assert power over whites because they are still in connection with nature.[17] Here is the same fixation on the stereotype, or obsessive representation, as was seen in Imre's argument.

One could argue that Balabanov is, or tries to be, balanced in spite of the presence of this colonial discourse. For example, Danila's conquest of Lisa Jeffrey is 'aligned' with the catch of Irina Saltykova. Although different, black/blond and American/Russian, they both have their own images projected in their living environment. They are portrayed similarly with indifference by Balabanov's camera, which has undoubtedly led to him being labelled a misogynist (A. J. Horton 2001). However, these alignments are crucial to the argument, because they show how the filmmaker sees the possible formation of postcommunist allegiances. Thus, sameness is found elsewhere: in the fact that the Metropol restaurant is to be found both in the US and in Russia; and in the fact that both taxi drivers are Russian, [18] who both uniformly agree on the opinion that Gorbachov sold out Russia, speaks volumes. Furthermore, and far more significantly, Danila, the all-Russian hero, is aligned not

[17] In relation to race discourse, *American Daughter* stands out from *Brat 2*: Aleksei's Black prison mate actually learns to speak some Russian and escapes with Aleksei when his daughter breaks into the jail by helicopter and flies them to Russia.

[18] A survey from 1991 stated that among the applicants for taxi licences in New York, the former Soviet Union was ranked fourth behind Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India as countries of origin. Of the 6.8% of ex-Soviet applicants, 3% were of Russian nationality. See Fidel F. Del Valle, "Who's Driving New York?: A Profile of Taxi Driver Applicants ," *Migration World* XXIII, no. 4 (1995): 12-15. This is an image that *Brother 2* confirms and rejects; it is recognised in the figure of the New York taxi driver, while at the same time refusing the idea of post-Soviet Russians as part of an occupation mainly reserved for people from the former Third World. The immigrant taxi driver is a recognisable character, appearing in both films and literature. Andrei Rogatchevski has accounted for its two literary representations in the form of a female Czech cab driver and a male Jewish Russian one. One of the commonalities in the two autobiographical writings is a racist attitude towards people of colour. However the Czech version "appears to be not entirely free of racist prejudice, [but] in comparison with Russians [it] perhaps displays a much more moderate version of it." See Andrei Rogatchevski, "Aliens in New York: Slavonic émigré Authors as Taxi Drivers," *Quadrivium: Festschrift [for] Prof W. Moskovich*, 2006: 245-57.

with a US minority, but with the white majority, in the form of white American truck driver, Ben Johnson, with whom Danila forms a close relationship. This alignment shows Balabanov's effort to depict Russians as equal to the Americans, the icons of the First World. The only problem is that this equality is not recognised by the First World, a fact that becomes clear when the border officials question Viktor at immigration control.

The emancipation of the colonial subject through the engagement with a white coloniser is something Fanon famously examined. Imre sees the same thing happening in Szabó's *Meeting Venus* (Imre 1999, 418). In *Brother 2*, the naturalisation into a Western man happens for Danila through the concurrence with the white male character, Ben Johnson. This is not a sexual relationship like the one in *Meeting Venus*, yet it does suggest that the postcolonial paradigm is also applicable to Russian cinema, as is works equally hard to close the gap between the West and the East. If Szabó's films support Imre's case for calling the Eastern European intellectuals the new European Blacks, who 'masquerade' in order to hide the inferiority of their Eastern Europeanness, then equally Balabanov's rejection of postcommunist Third World subjecthood can be viewed as a masquerading. In the masquerade of being proper First World subjects, the Bagrov brothers must emancipate themselves from the neo-colonial postcommunist system, which automatically designates them as Eastern Others. In this regard, the border crossing at the airport becomes particularly significant, because it is here that the Russian abroad is met with suspicion.

3.4 'Cultural Capital' and the Bagrovs Abroad

The Russian characters abroad in *Brother 2* include the Bagrov brothers – Danila and Viktor, the hockey player Mitia, and the prostitute Dasha. The latter two are part of an older Soviet Russian group of émigrés, represented also by the Jewish car dealer from Brighton Beach and by Ukrainian mob boys. Both Mitia and Dasha have made an informed choice of living abroad and thus they both have important functions in revealing the cultural capital paradigm. For Pierre Bourdieu, forms of capital are the underlying principles that regulate the social world, "it is what makes the games of society […] something other than simple games of chance" (Bourdieu 1986, 241). Ideas of cultural capital[19] govern perceptions as to who and what is desirable in a system of migration, which can be described as a social game or as a gift exchange. The gift exchange is "an exchange in and by which the agents strive to conceal the objective truth of the exchange, i.e. the calculation, which guarantees the equity of the exchange" (Bourdieu 1979, 22). However, the gift is also problematic when the exchange agreement is broken – the gift is rejected or no gift is offered at all. For Marc Augé, "the user of non-places [spaces of supermodernity, e.g. airports] is in *contractual relation* with it (or with the powers that govern it)" (Augé 1995, 101). Augé's contractual relation is similar to Bourdieu's gift exchange, which point to conflicts when the contract is broken.

Host countries judge Russians abroad according to their desired skills and what they can contribute at a given time, and Russians, in turn, are faced with the need to justify

[19] In the cultural capital of this study, cultural capital is used as an all-inclusive term that points to all three forms of capital. The capital that the Russian abroad is judged on is both symbolic, in the sense that it is marked by signs – the look and objects carried; and cultural, in the forms of education, skills and work experience.

the shortcomings of their post-Soviet skill-set in the face of a First-Third World dichotomy. It is essential to understand these issues when looking at the representation of Russians abroad in general and at Balabanov's depiction in particular, because it is about a strong ideologically-fuelled cinematic self-representation of a geopolitical system, which combats a postcommunist unipolar power structure. With quite explicit attention given to border crossings, *Brother 2* addresses the concern of post-Soviet Russians entering the exchange of cultural capital.

With respect to cultural capital, it is interesting to compare the two Bagrov brothers, because while they both arrive in the US with fake papers that give them desired professions – Viktor is a computer specialist and Danila a filmmaker – the skills which they put into effect in the host country, the US, are quite different. If examined individually, then Danila's skills as a hitman, which he has acquired in the army, directly continue his portrayal in the first instalment of the film. In *Brother*, Danila's ability to make weapons is revealed as an intrinsic part of the new Russian hero, who grows up in the new Russia and whose efforts to rise from the denigrating post-Soviet legacy are paramount. To Birgit Beumers this new hero belongs to "Russia's young generation hardened by the Chechen war" (Beumers 2000a, 24). To Julian Graffy, Danila is "a representative of a post-Soviet generation unexpectedly released from the cage of moral and social certainties" (Graffy 2000a, 44). The skills of constructing homemade weapons are brought along by Danila and prove vital in his quest for avenging the American exploitation of Russia and its resources. Furthermore, his propensity to kill forms a threat to the host country; it would be viewed as 'bad'

cultural capital. Hence the fraudulent papers which allow the two to cross the border. There is, though, one important difference in the two brothers' border crossing; Danila travels abroad only to return home, whereas Viktor travels to emigrate and does not return. Viktor's dubious moral and ethical standards[20] help him to 'fit' into the American society, to continue his criminal path. As he says, 'I like it here. All the power in the world is in America.' Danila's path is markedly different, because his 'criminality' (in the eyes of the host) is the 'truth' in the eyes of true Russians, both filmmaker and some viewers.

Let's take the scene where the brothers enter the United States.[21] In a restaurant, prior to leaving Moscow, Ilia, Danila's only surviving war-buddy, who has organised the tickets and forged passport, gives advice to Viktor and Danila: when they enter the USA, they should 'look confident and smile.' Viktor, on the other hand, when hearing that they are only meant to stay four days, asks 'why so short?' This is an early indication of Viktor's intention to remain in the US, which is again enforced by his last remark before leaving: 'freedom to Angela Davis!'[22] This ironic reference to communist rhetoric assigns Viktor a subversive place within the Soviet order. His desires and value system are not those of the postcommunist generation in Russia (epitomised by Danila), which explains why Viktor wants to stay in the US. Viktor

[20] Viktor betrayed Danila in the first film. But for the new Russuian hero, keeping the family together is paramount and Viktor is forgiven by Danila. Danila sent him home to their mother, where Viktor became a policeman; just as their deceased father was.
[21] Recalling Imre's analysis, when Szanto, in *Meeting Venus*, is encountered by immigration control at Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris, he is seen being examined with suspicion by the immigration and customs officials and Szanto comments in voice-over: 'Is it my face that irritates them? Or just the smell of Eastern Europe? They make me feel like a man entering a drawing room with dogshit on his shoe.' While in this scene it is the body of the protagonist that is spotted by the border officials as Eastern European, the artistic or intellectual mind of the protagonist is already – and has always been – universally Western.
[22] A reference to the American communist Angela Davis, who was imprisoned on charges of being involved in the killing of Judge Harold Haley by three members of the Black Panther movement.

suggests to a 'blind' affection for the US that Danila has discarded (chiefly while listening to Nautilus Pompilius's song 'Goodbye, America' [23]). With this in mind, Viktor is shown leaving Russian customs control and buying duty-free whiskey (an epitome of old-fashioned travel style), while Danila is directly shown on the plane to New York. He is sleeping with his Discman on while an announcement from the plane's steward is heard: 'We're starting the inflight. Information on filling out immigration forms can be found in your entry visas. It consists of two forms…'. This explicitly accentuates the migration system, to which Danila, of course, is oblivious.[24] Instead, Balabanov cuts to Viktor at immigration control. In this regard, Danila's passage through immigration control is far easier and less painful; Danila just replies that he is going to the New York Film Festival and gets a stamp.

Viktor's arrival is more important because it stands is contrast to Danila's obliviousness. The officer asks, 'what is the purpose of your stay in the United States?' Viktor, who does not speak any English, replies, 'What?' A translator arrives and asks the same question in Russian. This time Viktor replies, 'it's…a conference on new computer technologies,' as he has been told by the guy who forged his passport and visa. 'How long will you stay in the USA?' and 'where will you be

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[23] Nautilus' song became a symbol during Glasnost when it was written. At that point the song underlined the farewell to the Cold War hostile America and the hello to a real America, which had become reachable during Glasnost. However, it took on a whole new meaning when used in *Brother 2*. In particular, it features prominently in the end scene, when Dasha and Danilia fly home. For an account of the song's status, see Svetlana Boym, "From Russia with a Song: From Back in the USSR to Bye-Bye America ," *New Formations*, no. 22 (1994): 33-47. The song's connection to its Glasnost comtemporaries is explored by Marina Drozdova, who says, "a generation that lived on the sharp edge between romantic hopelessness and hopeless romanticism." Marina Drozdova, "A Dandy of the Postpunk Period or 'Goodbye America. Oh...'," in *Russian Critics on the Cinema of Glasnost*, 125-8 (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1994), p 125.

[24] It should be stressed that in Danila's and Dasha's return to Russia, they also avoid (national) identity scrutiny. In their exit from the US, they (again) perform as VIPs being driven to the airport by Ben Johnson in a flashy car and rushed through the controls. This bears resemblance to the 'escape' home performed in the film *Window to Paris* (1994) by Yuri Mamin, explored in the next chapter.

staying?', ask the immigration officials. To which Viktor confirms saying that 'it's all written there in the invitation.' The immigration officer gives the stamp and says, 'welcome to the United States.' Viktor, now in heavily accented English, replies, 'thank you very much' and as he smilingly walks off utters 'such morons' (*vot urody*). Viktor here calls the customs official freaks, implying that they are stupid because they could not find out about his real identity, and thereby maintaining superiority over the postcommunist hierarchy and his position as the First World's Other. This is where the airport space is most clearly revealed as a postcolonial space. Even though Viktor avoids the label of a tarnished labour migrant, which is reserved for the postcommunist Russian Others, it is nonetheless a recognition that such gradations exist for real.[25]

At the baggage claim, Viktor is scrutinised further. An official asks him, 'do you have lard (*salo*) or apples?' To which Viktor replies, 'don't they sell them here?' The first official responds, 'you don't understand. This is quarantine!' 'Are you ill?' is Viktor's reply and he is waved through. The comic situation is greatly helped by the performance of actor Viktor Sukhorukov. Sukhorukov emerged from the Leningrad comedy scene in the late 1980s to become one of Balabanov's favourite actors. Viktor, here, neutralises the potential of further scrutiny when asked about the fruits. With the naïve comic comment, the neo-colonial power situation is defused in order for the Russian to ridicule the power structures once again. In this way, the neo-colonial situation is acknowledged, but made to look foolish and is thereby overcome.

[25] The gender issue here is also important, because, as will be pointed out in part 3, female migration is judged from the sex worker's perspective. Due to his gender, this is something that Viktor is spared. Instead, he is suspected of transnational criminality, likely to be associated with organised trafficking.

It is this neo-colonial structure and the alleged American cultural imperialism that Balabanov tries to defeat by infusing the situation with comedy.[26]

3.5 More Russians Abroad: Marilyn/Dasha and Mitia

Mitia expresses no desire of aborting his hockey career and his commitment to Danila's and his twin brother's (nationalistic war) cause is unclear and doubtful. Instead he is wearing bright colours, has an expensive flat and is interested in the future income from his career when he is handed back his money by Danila. This suggests assimilation and integration into American society and being an ice-hockey star as an attractive Russian commodity.[27] It could even be asserted that Mitia's cultural capital is one that is viewed favourably in the labour migration system, which is underlined by the 'Russian' (Russian-speaking) players continuously coming to get Mitia when he meets Danila on the skating rink. The hockey players abroad could be viewed as the banal nationalism of a small nation, cherishing their homegrown products doing well in the US. Balabanov, however, is far more subtle than this, connoting Mitia's 'cowardly' interest in money rather than in 'truth.'

Nationalism thrives in newly emancipated states that seek to revert the neo-colonial processes, which have emerged after the colonial administration has left. This

[26] The scene in *Brother 2* bears resemblances to a scene in *Meeting Venus* when Szanto encounters with the West in Paris. However, where Szanto is passive and comments from the voice-over, Viktor is active in ridiculing the system.
[27] *Postmark Paradise* (Thompson E. Clay, 2000) equally has this discussion about the best hockey player and the all-American characters have troubles finding an American player to celebrate as the best. In the end, they land on a Russian player. This mirrors a discussion in Eddie Murphy's film, *Coming to America* (1988), where in a barber's shop they discuss sports legends and have trouble finding a white American boxer to counter the vast contingency of Black boxing champions.

courting of nationalism by the decolonised state is deeply contentious; it often leads to a bourgeois nationalist ideology, which is equally problematic. Here, the exploitation of class replaces the exploitation of the colonised, or what Frantz Fanon saw as narrow self-enslavement to capitalism.[28] Nationalism, according to Fanon, should promote a "would-be hegemonic form of national consciousness – a liberationist, anti-imperialist, nationalist internationalism" (Lazarus 1999, 162). The national project, in Fanon's mind, has the potential to become a vehicle for new international formations, which through the articulation and expression of resistance, creates changed social(ist) constellations (Lazarus 1999, 163). In accordance with this, Balabanov resists the neo-colonial system through the expression of nationalism, which allows him to claim that there is a 'truth' that can be articulated and valorised only through the rejection of the capitalist, hegemonic centre.

Returning to Mitia then, the perception of his treason lies in the fact that he has become successful abroad; he has accepted the bourgeois nationalism of exploitation and has abandoned resistance. In this criticism, the position of the filmmakers becomes paramount, because this is not a diasporic film that seeks to highlight a success story of how to become integrated into a host society. On the contrary, the expressed 'treason' of the emigrant comes from the 'home' country, Russia, and is therefore not likely to laud the shedding of a 'true' Russian identity in favour of a hybrid one.

[28] In the opening of Balabanov's film, there is mockery of the new Russian class of entrepreneurs. A heavy Russian man is shooting an advertisement spot, where he is reciting Pushkin without affection while staying by his massive jeep.

If Mitia is not excited by Danila's cause, then the same cannot be said for Dasha. We as spectators are introduced to Dasha when Danila enters Chicago in Ben Johnson's truck. They drive down a street where three African-American prostitutes are standing. When they stop at a red light, Dasha jumps into the truck and offers Danila a blow job for $35 and $10 for Ben to watch. Danila refuses and Dasha jumps down swearing in Russian. Danila immediately catches up with her and asks for her name. Dasha first replies 'Marilyn,' but when Danila keeps asking for her Russian name she replies 'Dasha.' Danila gives her a ten-dollar bill, but just as Ben and Danila drive off in the truck, Dasha's pimp arrives. He gets the bill from Dasha and hits her. Danila wants to stop the truck, but Ben tells him that this is the way pimps treat their prostitutes.

Danila's encounter with Dasha is significant on two accounts: firstly because throughout a good part of the narrative Danila searches for and finds Dasha, who becomes his 'sister'-in-arms, and, secondly, because Danila 'saves' Dasha from prostitution and, more importantly, from the grasp of the foreign land. After meeting Dasha, Danila obsessively goes looking for her. It becomes his mission, equally important to him as retrieving the money from Richard Mennis. Why is there such an urge to save this Russian prostitute, who is not as glamorous as Danila's conquests (Irina Saltykova and Lisa Jeffrey)? On the one hand, this could be seen as Danila's way into the criminal world where he can get the required weaponry for dealing with the American gangster. On the other hand, Dasha also represents the fallen Russian woman, who has, because of wrong actions (migration), been led into a foreign Sodom and Gomorra. Dasha 'needs' a guiding hand to be led back to the fold where

she 'belongs,' and Danila, of course, is the man who can do this. This is why the two, Dasha and Danila, click and form a bond. When the two enter Lisa Jeffrey's flat, she asks Dasha whether they are gangsters, upon which Dasha replies, 'no, we're Russians.' The bond of Dasha and Danila is not defined by a transnational brotherhood of crime, but one that is mostly cemented by their shared nationality. In this regard, it is highly significant that Dasha is de-gendered after her rescue from her African-American pimp by having her head cleanly shaven and by changing into a green boiler suit. In removing her attractiveness, the representation destroys her connotation as a prostitute; she is no longer the postcommunist female, trapped in the clothes that neo-colonial capitalism has made her wear. She has been liberated from her postcolonial condition. Together with male resistance to neo-colonial power structures, this is a female awakening to fight the American system of exploitation.

The shaven head, which marks Dasha out, is used in the final scene of the film, where she is on the plane back to Russia with Danila. Dasha asks the flight attendant for vodka, but he refuses on the ground that no drinking is allowed before take off. Dasha is not deterred by this saying, 'boy, you don't understand.' And while taking off her wig and showing her bald head, she says, 'bring us some vodka. We're flying home.' The steward replies, 'Oh, I see, I'll be right back.' The indication here is that she is severely ill and should therefore be granted a drink. The connection between the fallen woman and sickness suggests that 'émigré illness' can be healed, or at least reversed, by drinking vodka as a symbol of homecoming.

Something that cannot be healed is, however, the rape of Russian women in the snuff rape tapes that Richard Mennis deals in. He sells them in the US as an 'attractive' (cultural) commodity, as alluded to early in the film when Mennis has a meeting with Belkin, the Russian banker. We discover this when Danila goes to the Metro club to find Richard Mennis and settle the score with him. In the style of a videogame, Danila walks through the murky corridors of the American club shooting everybody he meets. Danila finally reaches Mennis' overweight accountant, who informs him that Mennis has left. However, on a small television screen a rape scene is played. This is a direct reference to Richard Mennis' business, all built, allegedly, on exploitation of weakened postcommunist Russians. The woman in the snuff-movie screams 'let me go' in Russian. Her rapists are also Russian, as they too speak in Russian, however, it all plays out as a 'foreign' rape, or rape for foreign consumption. It is with the violated woman that Danila (and audiences) identify. The camera shows Danila's point of view when he shoots the TV and thus puts an end to the onscreen rape scene.

The issues of space and spheres of contact are interconnected with how willing, or unwilling, the characters are in forming lasting cross-cultural relationships (Shohat and Stam 1994, 46). Agency and resistance are shown through actions of the characters, which are constructed by filmmakers off-screen. The postcolonial syncretism ranges from voluntary union between characters to involuntary violent rape. It is not a coincidence that in Balabanov's *Brother 2* a Russian woman is raped; it is the strongest reason one can give for his attempt to reverse the postcommunist neo-colonial power structure. Thus, the rape has a significant place in the film and in its effort to tell 'the truth' about exploitation in a unipolar world, which is ruled by

Americans and where Russians are relegated to a secondary role. It is not a fluke that the videos are produced for American consumption, because, as champion of the First World, the US is also, in the eyes of the exploited, the champion of the neo-colonial exploitation.[29]

Conclusion

In *Urga*, Sergei is the ex-colonial settler, who, like Gombo, is positioned in a no-man's land where powerful centres yield their influences. However, like the French *pieds noir*, Sergei is not free from carrying colonial connotations, as was seen with the performance of the song, 'On the Hills of Manchuria.' Sergei's military connotations point to pre-Soviet Russian imperialism, a choice that is particularly important when made by filmmaker like Mikhalkov, who advocates the rediscovery of a glorious Russian history.

This chapter has looked at the representation of Russians abroad in the work of a filmmaker who strongly desires to align post-Soviet Russians with the white American majority and their First World status, refusing to be 'degraded' to the position of Third World standing. Danila's avoidance of the American interrogation system; his blissfully sleeping through the immigration announcement, and then final dash through immigration control, together with Viktor's ridicule of the same border control system, all point to a refusal to accept the fallen status assigned to post-Soviet Russians by a hegemonic West. The Russians abroad in *Brother 2* are positioned as

[29] In *Voina*/*War* (2002) Balabanov also uses snuff videos, but this time it is the beheading of Russian soldiers captured on video and sold on a market in southern Caucasus. Balabanov denied accusations of making this up, saying that these videos exist and therefore merit inclusion into his film. This has not been done in the case of *Brother 2*, but it points towards exhibiting extremes or making extremes concrete for the wider audiences.

postcommunist postcolonial subjects who seek redemption by wreaking revenge upon the Americans. The postcolonial displaced diaspora is mocked, and instead the 'good' Russians return from abroad to their rightful home – Russia.

What has been explored in this chapter is the nationalistic reassertion of Russia's newly found space in relation to the West. Mikhalkov rejects Western civilisation and the alignment of values associated with the West by inserting his representation of Russianness as part of Russia's Eastern colonial past. Mikhalkov prefers to highlight Russia's unique position as neither Western nor Eastern, but rather the saviour of both West and East. Balabanov, on the other hand, asserts that Russians should be on an equal footing with the 'rest' of the First World.

Chapter 4: Russians Abroad in Comedies

1 Serious Comedies

As with *Urga*, this chapter will also venture into the late Soviet period in capturing the abroad in comedies. The reasons are twofold. Firstly, not only did the comedy genre constitute an important part of Soviet cinema (as did action and melodrama), but the comedy genre holds a key position in totalitarian societies. Secondly, the comedies were, and still are, the predominant genre in which travelling abroad is allowed, resulting in a prevalent convention of the genre that the protagonist(s) always returns home as a resolution to the film's plot. This convention, together with the satirical aim of the genre in laughing at Self (rather than at the Other), makes the comedy less antagonistic than the action drama or the melodrama that were examined in the previous chapter. Exile and migration are not commonly the themes that comedies deal with, but this is the case with Yuri Mamin's film *Okno v Parizh*/*Window to Paris* (1993).[1] The film makes explicit references to the dilemma of post-Soviet Russians travelling abroad.

The comedy film is as old as cinema itself, born out of a desire to make viewers laugh – and, as Noël Carroll asserts, "a case can be made that the first film was a comedy" (Carroll 1991, 25). Despite its long tradition and generic conventions, comedy is diverse and hard to define (Neale and Krutnik 1990, 10). Andrew Horton also has trouble defining the genre,

[1] The title is at times referred to a 'Window *on* Paris' due to ability of the Russian prefix 'v' to render both usages of to and on in English.

> In a real sense, any satirist, Soviet or otherwise, works within [a] double awareness of the need to suggest a 'but,' an alternative vision/perspective/reality. [However], satire is perhaps the slipperiest of genres, the one most misunderstood, abused, and in danger of falling into something else, be it pathos, bathos, self-pity, farce, or pure propaganda (Horton 1993b, 4).

The entertaining element of comedy makes the genre less dangerous, and according to some critics, even harmless. However, to view the comedy film as harmless entertainment would be a gross mistake, because comedy has a powerful ability to make us laugh at ourselves rather than at others.[2] The theoretical approach to the comedy genre varies from psychoanalysis (MacFadyen 2003, Neale and Krutnik 1990) to the Bakhtinian carnivalesque (Horton 1993b, Dobrenko 1996).

It is within the tradition of social satire under strong political restraints that Yuri Mamin emerges in the late 1990s as a maker of satirical films. Making political satire in the Soviet Union was a serious, and at times risky business.[3] However, as Yuri Mamin himself has noted in an interview,

> the comedy appears exactly when you make a serious film. Perhaps, it is just for me, but it connects with our comedy tradition: we regard the stupid situations, which we take the hero into, as absolutely serious (Malyukova 2005).

It is this particular Soviet/Russian tradition of social and political satire that will be brought to the forefront of this chapter. However, before accounting for this tradition, and the textual analysis of the film, the study will briefly outline the production values of Mamin's film and establish its mode of address and its targeted audiences.

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[2] Not many see Kazakh Borat as the butt of the jokes in Sacha Baron Cohen's film, *Borat*. Rather it is the Americans who are at the end of the stick. See Nancy Condee, "Borat's New Blackface," *KinoKultura*, no. 15 (January 2007).

[3] Seeing light humour in the most serious of (socialist) things was very problematic, as Aleksander Medvedkin experienced. See Emma Widdis, *Alexander Medvedkin*, The Filmmakers' Companion (London: I.B.Tauris, 2005) p103.

2 The Late Soviet Comedy

Comedies were an integrated part of Soviet cinema, just as they had been in the pre-Soviet cinema, but were also "the perennial sore spot of Soviet silent cinema" (Youngblood 1992, 74). It was only late in the stagnation period that the genre of Soviet comedy really took off with, in particular, three filmmakers: El'dar Ryazanov, Leonid Gaidai and Georgii Daneliya. While being individually different,[4] these three directors would become the pinnacles of Soviet comedy, ensuring huge viewer numbers for their films and dialogue and songs from their films were incorporated into everyday Soviet life. After the death of Stalin, social satire again began to make itself present in the film comedy (Gillespie 2003, 45) and this happens first of all in the filmmaking of Ryazanov.[5] Although the cinema of Ryazanov and Daneliya is extremely important for explaining the Soviet comedy genre, due to limited space, it will suffice to highlight only one Gaidai film to illustrate the abroad in comedies.

[4] For example, Alexander Prokhorov is of the opinion that "an attentive comparison between Gaidai's comedies and Ryazanov's satirical films can explain the former's outstanding popularity and the latter's more modest success." See Aleksandr Prokhorov, "Cinema of Attractions versus Narrative Cinema: Leonid Gaidai's Comedies and El'dar Riazanov's Satires of the 1960s," *Slavic Review* 62, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 455-472.

[5] His most well-know film, *Ironiia sudby ili s legkim parom!*/ *Irony of Fate or Enjoy your Bath!* (1975), has the leading protagonist, Zhenia, after a stag night drinking session in a bathhouse, end up in a flat similar to his own but in the wrong city. This subtle satire on the conformist Soviet society, where the building of houses was marked with sameness rather than individuality, was unthinkable in the Stalinist musical comedies of Aleksandrov. The street name and house number is the same, and even his door key works. The flat is soon to be revealed as the flat of Nadia, who finds Zhenia crashed out on her bed. The similarities in the comic situation with *Window to Paris* are striking. The study is indebted to Elisabetta Girelli for pointing this out, and will return to this later.

The Soviet abroad is revealed in Leonid Gaidai's *Brilliantovaya ruka*/*The Diamond Hand* (1969)[6], where the leading character travels on a cruise ship to the 'West.' The West is the 'Eastern City' of Istanbul [7] and the plot involves the leading character, Gorbunkov,[8] falling prey to contraband smugglers, who implant diamonds into the plaster on Gorbunkov's broken arm. Unaware, Gorbunkov travels back to the Soviet Union with the diamonds, and many of the gags lie in the smugglers' attempts to get their goods back from Gorbunkov's broken arm.[9] What makes this film interesting is the fact that travel is explicitly indicated in the film by seaports, custom control and tourist excursions, which can be linked to the postcolonial positioning of post-Soviet Russians abroad. On this level the film narrates a reality, which, although far from the reach of average people, shows the Soviet traveller as having a status outside the land of his/her own. Even Soviet Russians, who went abroad, did not avoid the kind of scrutiny that has seen Russians suspected of criminality or prostitution (as seen with Viktor entering the US in *Brother 2*). In fact, in the scene where Gorbunkov leaves the ship for the 'Eastern City,' he is subjected to interrogation by the customs official. However, the customs officer is bribed by the smugglers and mistakes Gorbunkov as being part of the plot.

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[6] The film "attracted seventy-six million viewers [and] was the most popular of 1969." See Julian Graffy, "Leonid Gaidai," in *The BFI Companion to Eastern European and Russian Cinema*, ed. Richard Taylor, Nancy Wood, Julian Graffy and Dina Iordanova, 81-2 (London: BFI Publishing, 2000).

[7] In fact, according to the Internet Movie Data Base, because of limited resources, Gaidai chose to shoot the scenes in Baku, Azerbaijan, which was, at the time, part of the Soviet Union. This highlights how the periphery of the Soviet Union was used in filmmaking as a "phony West", as Lawton asserts in connection to the Baltic Anna Lawton, *Imaging Russia 2000: Film and Facts* (Washington, DC.: New Academia Publishing, 2004), p 260. The 'phony West' points to a non-Russian Soviet space that could pass as foreign *mise en scene* to largely Russian viewers.

[8] Gorbunkov is played by the late Yuri Nikulin, who trained as a circus clown and starred in many of Gaidai's comedies together with Andrei Mironov. Jeanne Vronskaya, writing from the perspective of the early 1970s, considers rightly both Nikulin and Mironov as up-and-coming stars of the Soviet comedy. See Jeanne Vronskaya, *Young Soviet Film Makers* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1972), p 59.

[9] A similar plot line to Gaidai's film, but of a more recent date, is *Taiskii voyazh Stepanovicha/Stepanovits' Voyage to Thailand* (Maksim Voronkov, 2006), which also involves the chance of a lifetime of the 'little man' to travel abroad as a tourist.

This scene stands in contrast to the one dealt with in the previous chapter, where Danila's brother enters the United States. Although the two scenes share the comic in the customs situation (a Bakhtinian chronotope),[10] there are important differences in their ideological meanings. Where the scene in *Brother 2* subverts the postcommunist power hierarchy by making fun of this system, Gaidai in *The Diamond Hand* uses the situation for comic relief and both sides are shown to be stupid. Gorbunkov, a 'little' Soviet man, is uneasy with the situation in which he finds himself, but also the official is ridiculed for his wink, by which he wrongly suggests that he knows about Gorbunkov's affiliations. As Gillespie says,

> despite the fact that the vast majority of Soviet citizens at that time would never be offered a trip to the West, Gaidai has made a subtle film that provides the staple criticism of Western mores, but also, and more significantly, gently mocks the Soviet paranoia of the West (Gillespie 2003, 50).

The political connotations are explicit in *Brother 2*, while in *The Diamond Hand* they are reduced to gentle mocking. However, the difference apart, both films poke fun at the foreign West: Balabanov from a post-Soviet Russian neo-colonial perspective and Gaidai from the standpoint of official Soviet Marxist-Leninist ideology. In other words, while Balabanov swings with a one-edge sword (against neo-colonialism), Gaidai's sword has two edges, which are directed at both the foreign and the self; the comedy offers no consolation that the home is any better that the foreign land. In this way Gaidai's film beautifully sets up the parameters for the Soviet comedy and 'the abroad,' i.e. in the Soviet comedy the home, as well as the abroad, is equally mocked,

[10] "'Chronotope' (literally, 'time-space') is a mobile term which alludes to the way time and space are together conceived and represented". See Simon Dentith, *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), p 52.

whereby the targeted audience laughs in equal measure at themselves and at the foreigners. It is this comedy tradition that Yuri Mamin enters when he starts filmmaking at Lenfilm in the mid 1980s and quickly rises to become "one of the most important satirists in the former Soviet Union" (Horton 1993a, 138).

2.1 Yuri Mamin

Being educated in drama at the Institute of Theatre, Culture and Cinematography in Leningrad, Yuri Mamin started his professional career in theatre, where he became head of Students' Theatre at the Institute of Railway Engineers in Leningrad. Not a prestigious position, but one which nonetheless indicates Mamin to be a theatre person. In 1976 he started to work at Lenfilm Studios and in 1986 he made the short film *Prazdnik Neptuna*/*Neptune's Feast*, which won several awards. Michael Brashinsky calls it a "Formanesque" film, which has local party officials performing for a foreign delegation the traditional Russian feat of ice swimming (Brashinsky 1993, 60). Two years later, Mamin's first feature film was released. *Fontan*/*The Fountain* (1988) tells about an apartment block in Leningrad, which is on the verge of collapsing. Despite the tenants' hopes and dreams for the future, and attempts at holding the building together, the block crumbles in the end. The allegory to the Soviet Empire is explicit and not difficult to make.[11] This aside, the style of the film is Aesopian and "much more open and thus less 'between the lines,' a fact that is not necessarily completely positive for audiences used to enjoying the subversive pleasure of figuring out allusions and cleverly worked-out references" (Horton 1993a,

[11] Neither was this allegory missed in post-socialist transnational readings of the film, see Andrei Codrescu, "Quick Takes on Yuri Mamin's Fountain from the Perspective of a Romanian," *Inside Soviet Film Satire: Laughter with a Lash*, ed. Andrew Horton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 149-153.

143). *Fontan* underlines the situation in which Soviet satire and comedy found itself in the Glasnost period, where it was becoming increasingly difficult to laugh at the hardship of real life, and Andrew Horton suggests that *Fontan* failed to attract a mass audience (4 million)[12] because it was too close to the real (Horton 1993a, 143). This is important when the investigation makes the transition to the post-Soviet period and *Window to Paris*, because where Mamin's early filmmaking is closely linked to the social satire of his mentor El'dar Ryazanov, his commercial hit *Window to Paris* in the 1990s can be judged as similar to the slapstick of Leonid Gaidai. This is an important shift in cinematic style, which reflects the overall trend in post-Soviet Russian cinema, where there was a 'search' to find new audiences by making more audience-friendly films. For some this meant lowering the artistic expression of filmmaking, but for others this meant making good entertainment films, which were watched by people, and comedy came to play an important role in forming the definition of popular Russian cinema.

2.2 The Context of *Window to Paris*

Firstly, it is important to point out that Mamin's film, together with Aleksandr Rogozkhin's *Osobennosti Natsionalnoy okhoty*/*Percularities of the National Hunt* (1995),[13] was one of the first films in the post-Soviet era which managed to draw viewers in numbers similar to the ones of the Soviet period. Paradoxically, the comedy genre was not the chosen formula for post-Soviet Russian filmmakers trying

[12] 4 million is a respectable figure, but 40 million is closer to a popular film of Soviet Cinema.
[13] It should be noted that in the follow-up to Rogozhkin's film, *Osobennosti Natsionalnoy Rybalki*/*Pecularities of the National Fishing* (1998), the hunting party goes fishing by boat. They mistakenly travel to Finland; it is again a fluke journey, similar to Daniliia's *Passport* and Merab's travel to Israel, where the going abroad has the returning home as the prime goal from the outset.

to attract audiences. Birgit Beumers has researched cinema figures from the 1990s and says that

> Russian producers and filmmakers responded to audience taste with reluctance and some delay, producing instead mainly thrillers, action movies and melodramas: a search of new releases by genre classification show that only 10 comedies were produced in 1996, six in 1997 and none in 1998 (Beumers 1999a, 884).

The reason for this discrepancy lies in the general view of satire and comedy following the fall of communism. The force that Soviet comedy thrived on was the possibility of overturning the prevailing political order without subverting the system and the foundation from which it grew. This *raison d'etre* of Soviet comedy had disappeared along with the doctrines of socialist realism. What should be overturned in post-Soviet Russia? The new flourishing leaders? Another reason was that the old Soviet comedies were still hugely popular with viewers, and remain so today. This meant that it was not easy to make a genre transition from the old into the new political situation. This was far easier with thrillers and action movies. In comedy, it was not certain what should be mocked or what was in need of subversion in early post-Soviet Russia. Therefore, it is not surprising that slapstick elements are seen in the first earnest attempt to poke fun at themselves, because slapstick is safer and ideologically less dangerous. Mamin's *Window to Paris* was a "considerable success" (Lawton 2004, 268) during this transition period, when the funding system and the distribution system had collapsed completely. It is difficult to track the popularity of these early post-Soviet Russian films, since the industry was in chaos in those years. However, *Window to Paris* is believed to be a bigger success than Lawton's 'considerable,' because it has managed to remain imprinted on the minds of both critics and audiences. The film is still talked about today as a timely portrayal of the post-Soviet mindset during these years (Malyukova 2005).

3 *Okno v Parizh*/*Window to Paris*

Director Yuri Mamin; scriptwriter Juri Mamin, Arkadii Tigai and Vladimir Vardunas; Producers Guy Seligmann and Lavrentii Emrashili; companies Troitskii Most, La Sept Cinéma, Sodaperaga Productions and Fontaine S.A.R.L., 1993.

The plotline of *Window to Paris* is fairly simple. Nikolai Nikolaevich Chizhov (a.k.a. Kolya), a teacher of cultural education, travels to Paris through a magical window, which opens at certain points in history. Kolya is followed by his fellow flatmates, who also venture into the French capital. The film then tracks the encounter with the city of Paris from the various perspectives of the Russians. Kolya falls in love with Nicole – a Parisian girl living next door to the rooftop, his communalka co-habitants snatch whatever they can from the city, his brass band colleagues get lost and so too do his pupils, whom he has taken on a trip to Paris. When the children refuse to leave Paris, Kolya has to resort to his magic flute to lure them back to St Petersburg. The film ends with the Russians travelling home on a hijacked aeroplane.

There are three discourses in the film that need to be emphasised in connection with Russians abroad. Firstly, the magical window through which the characters 'travel' to Paris and back. Secondly, the discourse of the disparate Russians as they venture into the city: Kolya, the Gorokhov family and members of the brass band. And thirdly, the migration discourse that is given considerable space within the film and which centres

on the question of returning home. Before this, however, it is necessary to address the co-production issues of the film

3.1 Production and Reception History of *Window to Paris*

In the next chapter the study will deal more thoroughly with co-production and Russian transnational cinema, but just as with *Urga* in the previous chapter, this mode of production is encountered in *Window to Paris*. Although the film speaks exclusively, or at least largely, to a Russian audience and that, despite its mode of production, it still has a few transnational viewer strategies, including the casting of Agnès Soral, an actress who had already shown her comic talent in other films.[14] The presence of her name in the film's credits would make it marketable to French viewers. Mamin's film was released in several European countries,[15] including France where the co-producing film companies originate. These French film companies are: La Sept Cinéma Production Company, Sodaperaga Productions and Fontaine S.A.R.L. The important ones are the first two companies; the latter was a one-off company set up for the making of the film.[16] Sodaperaga Productions was formed by Guy Seligmann,[17] who is also credited as the producer of *Window to Paris*. La Sept

[14] Agnès Soral was nominated for French César awards for her supporting role in *Tchao pantin* (1993) by Claude Berri. Soral's official website writes, "she has proved however, whenever she has been given the chance, that she deserves much better. This is evident from the unrecognised *Après Après-demain* by Gérard Froz-Cotaz and *Window on Paris* by Yuri Mamin" Agnès Soral, *Présentation*, 08 09 2008 <http://pagesperso-orange.fr/jp.philippe/agnessoral/present.html>.
[15] The Lumiere Database has screenings of the film in three countries: Belgium, The Netherlands and Spain, the latter country having the most viewers (about 40,000). However, the database only starts in 1996 and *Window to Paris* was released in 1994 (in fact, even in 1993 in Russia), hence there are no figures for the French and German viewers.
[16] S.A.R.L. stands for Société à responsabillité limitée and the company made only *Window to Paris* .
[17] Guy Seligmann also produced Aleksei German's *Khrustalev, machinu!*/*Khrustalyov, My Car!* (1998) and Semyon Aranovich's *God sobaki*/*Year of a Dog* (1993)

Cinéma Production Company is a corporate part of the French-German ARTE Television Broadcast.[18]

Yuri Mamin would need these companies, and their financial backing, to create a film from a script, which partly takes place in Paris. Mamin and his Russian production company, Troitskii Most,[19] could have chosen to build a Paris set in St Petersburg, which is the case for the shooting of the two dream sequences, but instead chose to make a co-production. For some critics, this has consequences for the film's reception. For example, Christina Stojanova says of post-Soviet Russian filmmakers co-producing with French filmmakers,

> French producers seem to have a special affinity for Russia, and the films usually reflect this benevolent spirit of co-operation (*Burnt By the Sun, 1994* by Nikita Mikhalkov and *Window in Paris*, 1994 by J. Mamin). The co-production, however, has lost its exclusive status as the shortest cut to fame and glory, and is being treated for what it is -- an arduous business partnership (Stojanova 1998).

With regard to this thesis, there is nothing 'benevolent' in the making of *Window to Paris*, with the French producers seeing the film as profitable to their home markets and hence agreeing to participate. The casting of the French Agnès Soral indicates

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[18] ARTE was set up in the early 1990s establishing the foundations of a European Culture Channel. This stately level of establishment makes La Sept Cinéma international rather than transnational – thus referring to an "interstate treaty" that was signed in 1990 between the French Republic and the eleven German Länder. The mission of ARTE Cultural Channel, according to their website, "is to create and produce television programs of a cultural and international nature in the broadest sense, to be broadcast by itself or by other channels, via satellite or any other medium. These programs should aim to promote mutual understanding and unity among the peoples of Europe." ARTE, Structure, 08 09 2008 <http://archives.arte-tv.com/arteinfo/etext/general/struktur.html>.

[19] Founded 1989 and run by Igor Maslennikov, who directed the popular television series, *Zimnaya vishnya*/*Winter Cherries* (1985, 1990, 1995), which is a sort of Russian national Chronicle. Maslennikov's series has its female protagonist migrating to Los Angeles. She leaves behind the love of her life and they are only reunited in the third series, when she masterminds her lover's exit from Russia by letting him know that he is from aristocratic blood and has inherited a house in Belgium. Europe, here, is the midway meeting point for the two characters, which is neither the flashy US nor the dull doldrums of native Russia.

this. Another indicator that points towards Mamin initially scripting the film for Russian audiences is the fact that several important (Russian) scenes are omitted from the DVD version, which is marketed to non-Russian viewers.[20] For example, the scenes of the Russian émigré being taken back to St Petersburg, which are central to the Russian version, are deemed too nationally-specific for foreign viewers. This emphasises that for the non-Russian viewer there are scenes that do not make much sense. Also for the foreign critic the film is a rather dull play on national stereotypes (Maslin 1995). However, this investigation argues that the deleted scenes are of importance for the Russian viewer.

The co-production feature of the film is addressed in an issue of *Seans*, where the editors ask a dozen Russian filmmakers the question of whether they are for or against this production mode. The issue also carries a double review of *Window to Paris*, which well illustrates the film's significant Russian reception. Irina Pavlova is happy with Mamin's film, underlining that there exist two versions of the film, one for home viewers and one for distribution abroad. However, this does not tamper with the film's expression, rather it improves the cross-cultural recognition. According to Pavlova, "we understand the comic differently (therefore it has two versions) and we live differently (this is what the film is about)" (Pavlova 1994, 84). On the other hand, Karina Dobrotvorskaya points out that the film is ambiguous because of the fact that it is a co-production. She says that according to the film, "Russia is our country, and it depends on us to change it, to return from Paris. [But] there [France] is heaven, and here [Russia] is hell, there is the light, and here is darkness" (Dobrotvorskaya 1994,

[20] *Window to Paris* was released on DVD in Australia by Newline films and Hopsctch films.

85). Under these circumstances, Dobrotvorskaya would rather be in Paris: to see Paris and die, so to speak.

The two viewpoints cannot, though, deny the fact that at the time of production, the early 1990s, the Russian film industry was in dire straits in terms of funding, exhibition and studio facilities. This is not denied by the respondents in *Seans*, rather it becomes a question of whether one accepts the change this has entailed for filmmakers, films and audiences. On the back of Russian films that have become successful abroad,[21] the critics are asking whether something has been lost in the process. As Elena Plakhova notes, the filmmaker now has to speak English, have a foreign shooting location (e.g. Paris), know who is who in the European film industry, be able to shoot on themes of European values, and not least, understand that even a 'ten million dollar' project can be produced for a minimum of finances (Plakhova 1994, 2). As Plakhova aptly obverses, these co-productions were pointing to the future of Russian cinema, first addressing the need for finances, then turning to the issues that appeal to Russian audiences. In this way, *Window to Paris* is situated inbetween *Urga* and *Brother 2* in its production method. While not denying its intentions of appealing to the festival circuit (c.f. *Urga*), *Window to Paris* is trying to locate popular Russian audiences, which became identified with the post-Soviet blockbuster of *Brother 2*. Having noted the production difference, the theoretical

[21] Mikhalkov's *Burnt by the Sun* (1994) won an Academy Award for best foreign film, Pavel Lungin's *Luna Park* (1992) had been nominated at Cannes and Andrei Knochalovsky's *The Inner Circle* (1991) at Berlin. Aleksander Rogozhkin's *Zhizn s Idiotom*/*Living with an Idiot* (1993) won the KFN award at Rotterdam International Film Festival. These are all films that have been produced with Western film companies.

framework for analysing *Window to Paris* will be the same as with the previous chapter.

3.2 The Magic Window[22]

As already mentioned, travel abroad for the post-Soviet Russian entails a high level of scrutiny, where the Russian is faced with a loss of geopolitical status. In this light, it is significant that there are no negotiations of national selves in the border crossing in the film, at least not when leaving the Russian flat in St Petersburg for Paris, France. Leaving one country for another is often fraught with obstacles: passport control, luggage search and questions about one's purpose of travel, which scrutinize one's personal and national identity. While for the cosmopolitan traveller these obstacles are part of boring routines, for the post-Soviet Russian crossing national borders this can be an agonizing experience. Here post-Soviet Russians are confronted with their newly acquired Russian identity, which is suspected of transnational criminality or economic migration.

In *Window to Paris* this negotiation of a national identity is absent, as the characters 'travel' to Paris through a window leading straight out onto a Parisian rooftop. There are no physical and psychological obstacles in the form of border controls and difficult questions about one's purpose of travel, since the window is a twilight zone where the laws of physics are suspended. When Gorokhov enters the zone to show the

[22] The title of the film *Window to Paris* is a play on the window onto Europe, which was Peter the Great's "high-minded program of reforms" that sought to bring European values to Russia. See Anna Lawton, *Imaging Russia 2000: Film and Facts* (Washington, DC.: New Academia Publishing, 2004), p 269.

miracles of the closet to Kolya, he becomes wobbly and his voice deepens. A feeling of in-betweenness is created, emphasized even more when Kolya himself sticks his hand into the hole. It is a scene where the potential of transformation, the passage into an unknown and unexplored zone comes along with an apparent feeling of relief. There is no agony, no anxiety, only easy gliding through space. Furthermore, even when they travel home at the end of the film, the alleged 'agony' of postcommunist Russian travellers abroad is subverted by the use of comedy conventions. As they are stranded in Paris when the window closes on them before they return to the Russian side, they have to travel back by more conventional means. This results in hijacking a plane at Charles de Gaulle airport. Dressed up as a French brass band playing the French national anthem, the Russians walk through the airport without having to be confronted with issues of personal and national identity or purpose of travel. This feature of performing one's way through an airport in order to get home was also seen in Aleksei Balabanov's *Brother 2*. In *Window to Paris*, the hijacking refuses to acknowledge any obstacles of air travel. Here there are simply no negotiations of identity that would confront the characters of the film with a loss of geopolitical status. Importantly, where the action thriller (*Brother 2*) suggested a refusal of ever returning to the foreign, the comedy has the possibility of a return as the end result. This is suggested through the final images of the Russians trying to carve out a new loophole to Paris.

Transnational travel in *Window to Paris*, then, on the one hand negates issues of identity negotiations, which are a very real feature when crossing borders. On the other hand, however, this also makes the cultural clash more forthright, and the

comedy sharper, as no transformation takes place before the encounter in the foreign space. In other words, neither the Russians going to Paris nor French Nicole going to St Petersburg have gone through a transnational space that could consign the travellers to a definition of tourist, business or migration. The window closes the space between the two countries and cities, thus making a more direct comparison of the two entities and their increasing differences. In other words, there is no border control that needs to be negotiated. However, this does not mean that cultural capital is not examined in the context of being abroad in *Window to Paris.*

3.3 Different Russians, High and Low Culture

The cultural clash, which the film plays upon, of the post-Soviet Russian versus the French, is more nuanced, because the difference between the Russians that travel to Paris is of equal significance. The way in which the investigation will examine this difference is with cultural capital in mind. Cultural capital reveals difference and plays a vital part in the migration discourse, which is heard throughout the film.

One feature of cultural capital in *Window to Paris* is Kolya's skill of tuning pianos.[23] He compulsively takes out his tuning tool whenever he hears a piano key out of tune. He does so three times during the film and on one occasion he says, 'this is stronger than me' (*eto vyshe moikh sil*). This visual tool of Kolya's cultural capital is the evidence of his musical education and of his profession as a teacher. On the one hand, it is harmless when used in the right situation, but, on the other, the piano tuner

[23] The theme of the piano as high cultural capital is also used in the case of Russians abroad in *Kafe v'limon*/*Coffee with Lemon* (1994), by Leonid Gorovets, which will be dealt with in chapter 6.

becomes a threatening gun that can force a policeman out of his car when needed. In this sense Kolya's cultural capital can be transformed into a threatening weapon, which is also seen in Danila Bagrov, the hero of Balabanov's two *Brother* films. This cultural capital, the craftsmanship of Danila Bagrov, is turned into threatening killing tools. The difference between the two is that where Kolya's tuning tool never becomes an actual weapon, Danila's skills are put to use making actual weapons against his adversaries. Nonetheless, this emphasizes Russian cultural capital as something that could strike back when provoked or cornered. Taking this aside, then Kolya's musical talent gives him a prime position in the labour trading market, where he has a desired cultural capital that is needed in the foreign country. He is able to get a job as a concert pianist, but on realising that he has to play his part with no pants on, he quits. The analysis will return to this, but it underlines the position of Kolya as having something, high culture, to offer the country he travels to.

If Kolya has something to offer the Parisians, then so too has the Gorokhov family. However, this is quite different from the high art of classical music and valued skills which are the markers of Kolya's cultural capital. The Gorokhovs are parasites, turning the advantageous situation into a classical postcommunist Russian business endeavour where everything is sold or bought as long as it makes a profit. Thus the Gorokhov family is linked to the economists' concept of postcommunist 'rent-seekers,' where the transition economy allows for people to exploit the discrepancy between world market prices and postcommunist subsidized markets. In particular, this phenomenon was well known in the energy market – buying low priced, subsidized natural recourses at home and selling them abroad at world market prices (Åslund 2007). More important in the context here is that the Gorokhovs are non-

skilled workers with low-brow cultural capital. They are the little people; the simpletons. That said, when the women of the communalka are selling goods in the streets of Paris, they also have something desirable to foreigners. Samovars, matreshkas, scarves and wooden spoons are exchanged for the treasured foreign currency.[24] This points to a Russianness that is attractive and desirable in the foreign space and this is, of course, vital for self-representations to create an image of self as desirable – as attractive to the Other. Through this the film conveys to the post-Soviet Russian viewers that 'we have something that they desire and want from us.' Even the signs, announcing Glasnost and Perestroika of the Soviet past, attract the eye of the spectator as something recognizable and valuable. Paradoxically, the cultural objects and signs also point to Westerners' romantic view of the Soviet Russian Other, because the Russian knows these to be empty words promoted by a stumbling communist regime, and the cultural objects only consumed by tourists to Russia. It is, again, a banal nationalism that is on display – a nationalism where the consumer and provider are in mutual agreement over cultural and monetary value of the products. This is not the aggressive nationalism of Balabanov's film.

In another scene, Volodia, the Gorokhov father, holds a piano auction, proving their sturdiness by hammering them with a big stick. The Russians are making a spectacle, drawing the attention of the Parisians, with Russian goods that are valid to the foreigner. Again, however, the objects are culturally 'empty' (as are the words

[24] In Leonid Gaidai's spy comedy, *Na Deribasovskoi khoroshaia pogoda ili na Brighton Beach opiat' idut dozhdi*/*On Deribasovskaia the Weather is Fine, or, on Brighton Beach It's Raining Again* (1992), this exchange of cultural goods for foreign currency is also a method by which the leading character finances his stay in New York. This film depicts the Russian 'James Bond' character walking the Russian bazaar in Brighton Beach (a similar walk is performed by Danila Bagrov in *Brother 2*) where he enters a shop with tourist souvenirs and comes out with dollars in his hand.

Glasnost and Perestroika), since the pianos were obtained from the piano factory where Volodia works, but, in contrast to Kolya, Volodia cannot play these cultural objects. Therefore, the Gorokhovs' cultural capital (or object) is empty despite being desired by the foreigner. The selling carnival of the Gorokhovs is, on the one hand, a recognition of the greatness of Russian culture, but, on the other, also a realization that the capital on offer is hollow.

In contrast to this performability of Russian cultural capital is Fedya's communist speech. Some of the brass band members have gone astray, ever since their first visit to Paris while heavily intoxicated. Fedya, the party boss of the band, decides to pay the French Communist Party a visit and demands that the French Communists take them home. The speech, which is comprised of the rhetoric of the old Soviet, is not valued highly by the French and they applaud very modestly. It is clear from this that the Gorokhovs are managing much better than Fedya, the party boss, who possesses cultural capital that is outdated and undesired.[25] That said, these two representations of Russians abroad share the unquestioned desire to return home, which is again in contrast to Kolya and the children. Fedya and his brass band compatriots have the aim of returning from the moment they realize that they are abroad and the Gorokhovs never for a moment consider staying in Paris, but rather grab as much as possible with whatever means before the window closes again. Hence, the Gorokhovs cheat where they can and without moral scruples.[26] For example, Gorokhov completely outplays

[25] This is something that the study will return to in the next chapter when looking at Sergei Bodrov's *White King, Red Queen* (1992), where there is also a party boss who is at a loss over the transition and being in the foreign space.
[26] This is also a feature of the Russian Israeli film *Yana's Friends* (1999) by Arik Kaplun, which is included in the analysis of chapter 6.

the French musical box by playing Tchaikovsky's ballet, *Swan Lake*, on his box. Although cheating, he attracts more attention and is also subsequently driven from his spot for it. In the film there is a recurrent notion of music as cultural capital. This notion of high art and music as cultural capital is contrasted in the scene where Gorokhov, when selling his pianos, starts playing a simple tune and the women invite the male spectators to dance. This simple tune brings merriness to the Parisians. The irony is that this tune fades into the concerto that Kolya is playing at his audition for performing with his bare bottom in front of a nudist audience. In other words, where the simple tune of Gorokhov brings joy and happiness, Kolya's 'high' music becomes part of the perceived French decadence.

These diverse representations of Russians abroad would not go unnoticed for the Russian audiences. As Zhuravkina asserts,

> the spectator does not sense Mamin's ironic attitude towards the wishes of his characters for a better life. The state has not been able to do anything for them, and each of them tries to do something for himself, *relying on his education, intelligence and skills*. […] Its typical and easily recognisable characters and situations give a Russian audience much uncomfortable and frightening food for thought (Zhuravkina 1999, 109)(my emphasis).

The stratagem of the representations of Russians abroad illustrated in the film are: the old and outdated rhetoric of Fedya, the Gorokhov simpletons with their innovative and entrepreneurial spirit, and, finally, the well educated, high art representation of Kolya. These representations of Russians contrast each other, but also the foreign European French space.

The difference between the simple Russian and the decadent French cultural capital is, of course, most evident in the skills of Nicole, the French woman, whom the Russians terrorize. To the Russian viewer, she is the pinnacle of French bourgeoisie; her art is empty and the only uses of her installations are for the Russians to fall over. While this is a light hearted discourse of cultural difference, a more serious discourse of racial difference includes a French-African diaspora. When three *banlieusards* perform on the steps of the Basilique du Sacré Coeur (in Montmartre), they are offered no attention from either the camera or the Russians. Moments later they are robbed of their act by Kolya's school children, who attract the attention and applause through their performance, attention and applause that are denied to the three French youths.[27] In *Window to Paris*, the encounter with the French Blacks is also a feared encounter, as when Nicole is cutting off the fire ladder and Vera, mother Gorokhov, is stranded. She cannot get back to the flat and she starts screaming, not noticing that a French African is standing beside her. He asks her if she needs any help, which only makes her scream even more: 'take me back, Vova' (*voz'mi menya, Vova*).

While this latter encounter with the French-African diasporas amounts to little more than xenophobia on the part of the Russian simpletons, the act of the children in taking the position of the dancing *banlieusards* alludes to migration alongside other diasporic groups. As should be clear by now, possible migration is one of the main themes of the film. In particular, Kolya's transformation from being happy to depart from his native country to happily returning to it seems to be the message of the film.

[27] The outdoing of a native Black is also evident from the portrayal of Russians in exile in American cinema of the mid 80s. Both Robin Williams in *Moscow on the Hudson* (1984) and Mikhail Baryshnikov in *White Night* (1985) outperform their African-American counterparts in the hierarchy of ethnic minorities.

That Kolya is happy to leave Russia behind is evident when he and Gorokhov have trouble finding their way back to the window. Kolya happily utters, '*proshchai, Rodina!*' (Farewell, Motherland!), while Gorokhov looks very anxious. Moreover, this feeds into a migration discourse exhibited in self-representations of Russians abroad that underline the intellectual's desire for the foreign while for the 'little man' this is never an option.[28]

3.4 Migration

With regard to the migration discourse which runs throughout the film, Kolya's two dreams are important. In the first dream, Kolya wakes up in a skip to the accompaniment of Ravel's *Bolero*. His clothes are ragged, and another down-and-out bum climbs out of the skip with him. Then comes a cut to a paved street where it is raining and Kolya is picking frogs out of the gutter. This is Kolya's projected fear of migration – a tacit psychological fear of having to search the gutter for valuables (presumably to sell to restaurants) in order to survive. The second dream occurs after the children have disappeared and Kolya has fallen into a coma. In this dream, it is the children that are in rags and hungry, walking in a red-light district with dark alleys. The dream ends with a clown luring the children into a den with sexual drawings on the doorway. Here again the dream informs a future discourse of migration and prostitution, an issue that will be developed further later. These images are important psychological projections of a feared migration, or of a 'failed' migration, to France. In these dreams, cultural capital does not result in employment and social status. This

[28] Migration is never an option for Danila Bagrov in *Brother 2* and although he is not 'little' in this particular sense, neither is he an intellectual. Dasha, the prostitute saved by Danila, on the other hand, desired the foreign and immigrated during Glasnost, but realising her mistake returns home with Danila.

does not mean that cultural capital is not recognized or appreciated in the postcolonial migratory context, but that the perception of migration diverts depending on the viewpoints. Kolya's dream, just as Sergei's visions in *Urga*, is a perception of a life abroad, or of home in the case of Sergei.

One of the film's most famous scenes is that of the French émigré returning home to St Petersburg. This is a particularly Russian émigré discourse in that the emigrant idealizes his former home, but when faced with that home again, he rushes back to exile.[29] It should also be noted that the émigré is a friend of Kolya and therefore also possesses high-value cultural capital. The two met while studying music at the conservatoire, but Kolya stayed in the Soviet Union while the student friend migrated to France in the hope of finding greater appreciation of his skills. Kolya seeks his old friend in a restaurant, where he is playing violin to the dining guests. However, the friend has also had to lower his standards, just as is demanded of Kolya. The friend is playing violin with the bow between his legs, making an impression of a sexual act. As mentioned earlier, Kolya refuses to play a part in French decadence and declines his job offer. For Kolya it is impossible to transfer his skills to the European space, in the way that the émigré friend has done, because it will mean giving up on his high standards of cultural education that he teaches to his pupils. This leads to the issues of whether to stay in Paris or return home to Russia. Kolya's transformation has already been mentioned, but it is with the children that a discourse of migration is

[29] The painful experience of returning home is a salient feature of exile and diaspora cinema, as identified by Hamid Naficy in *Accented Cinema* (2001). *Window to Paris* is not part of exile and diasporic cinema, but this particular discourse on the imagined homeland can easily be located within accented cinema. Russian diaspora cinema will be dealt with in chapter 6, examining the Russian Israeli film, *Coffee with Lemon*. This film has the main character travelling back to Russia after emigration to Israel, only to realize that this was a mistake.

encountered, a discourse that has significance for this study. The children want to stay in Paris and Kolya makes a speech at the Basilique du Sacré Coeur with the Parisian rooftops in the background:

> You're right. You were born at the wrong time in a miserable, ruined country. But it is your [vasha] country. Can't you make it a better place? A lot of things depend on you, believe me. And you haven't even tried. Will you just shrug it [your country] off?

One of the children replies: 'And you?' 'I won't,' says Kolya. The film cuts to Nicole and Kolya says: 'Who said that I was staying?' Kolya takes out his rat-catcher flute and gets the children to follow him. The conundrums of this migration discourse are clear in Kolya's speech, which on the one hand says that migration is understandable, and, through the course of the film, very tangible, considering the state of the home country. On the other hand, there is a national idea that this is *your* country and that *your* country needs you to make it a better place. As part of the self-representation of Russians abroad it is not surprising that the second horn of this dilemma wins out and that migration is refused in favour of the return home. However, *Window to Paris* directly plays the first horn of the dilemma too by giving space to the children's arguments.

Kolya asks them what they will live on, and the children reply that they will dance in the streets and make money. Kolya goes on, 'but you will not always be sweet children,' to which the children reply that then they will work in McDonalds or clean floors. A blond girl, running her hand through her hair hinting at prostitution, says that a job will not be a problem. Another joins her with a flirtatious attitude, saying beauties are always in need. In the context of this research, these replies by the children belong to a real discourse on a possible economic migration and only the

issue of prostitution has the sinister connotation of exploitation. In this light, even Kolya's return and transformation is questioned, as he cannot convince the children to go back to Russia, but only by playing his flute can he lead them back.[30]

The final scene of the film, which sees Kolya, Volodia, and the brass band using tools to break through the wall – to get to Paris again – is the expression of real desire for economic migration, which has already been confronted physically and psychologically. Furthermore, the scene emphasizes the Russian desire for untroubled travel, a travel which can be condoned without having to lose oneself in identity negotiations or migration. Birgit Beumers calls this "building a castle in the air," projecting an image with no or little hold in the real world (Beumers 1999c, 80). Arguably, it could also be seen as a desire of Russians to travel abroad, to belong to Europe, but – and this has to be stressed – it is a desire for travel that negates the usual means of travel and thus avoids difficult border interrogations of national selves. As Anna Lawton points out, "as the camera pulls back, the wall is shown to be insurmountable – a solid brick barrier that fills the whole screen and dwarfs the men stubbornly pounding at its foundation" (Lawton 2004, 271). Lawton's wording confirms this study's view of the film. If the wall is seen as representing the negotiation of identity, or the difficult encounters of fallen national status, then the 'window,' which the characters are trying to (re)discover, is a way of avoiding this 'insurmountable wall' of national interrogation. Furthermore, in order to travel as

[30] The flute is an allegory to the Brothers Grimm story of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (Der Rattenfänger von Hamelin), which tells of a rat-catcher who was cheated of his wage after freeing the city of Hamelin of its rats. The Pied Piper was revenged one Sunday when people were in church, by playing his pipe, and luring all the children into a cave from which they never returned.

emancipated Russians, they have to break down or at least unsettle this wall. Thus the stubborn 'pounding at [the wall's] foundation' could be interpreted as trying to undermine a wall that, despite the fall of the Berlin wall, still inhibits Russians from travelling abroad freely. Finding the window, i.e. a magic formula, is the only way of travelling abroad for Russians without having to lose their selves, but to be both Russian *and* European. In their own image, Russians are Europeans, but the postcommunist process of travelling abroad does not recognise this. Thus, the magical window can be seen as the absence of a postcolonial masquerading of selves, which at the same time accounts for Russians among equals in the European space. This is where the postcolonial helps to interpret the self-representational image formations, because on the one hand, Russians see themselves as European and part of the First World, but, on the other, they are not recognized as such in postcommunist terms.

3.5 The Basis of a Love Story

The way in which Russians as Europeans are detected is in the relationship that Kolya forms with Nicole.[31] Recalling the postcolonial syncretism from the introduction, this love affair is the clearest example of the Russian abroad engaging with the foreigner on an entirely voluntary basis. Thus, *Window to Paris* exemplifies the case for the postcolonial alignment of representations. Kolya and Nicole are viewed as equal and there is no unevenness in their relationship. This is the basis of the love story where emotions are governing, rather than nationality and differences. However, it is necessary to point out that the portrayal arises from the self-representational mode and hence carries images that speak to home audiences. It is no coincidence, then, that

[31] Their names in themselves point to an affinity between the two; Kolya-Nikolai-Nicole.

it is a Russian male that attracts the foreign female. This can be seen as the continuation of the conquest of the female Other as detected in the previous chapter with Danila Bagrov's affair with Lisa Jeffreys. The difference is that where Danila's endeavour was motivated by supremacy, Kolya's is motivated by similarity; the love of two people knows no borders, national or cultural. Yana Hashamova asserts that

> the construction and unfolding of these Russian-western love and sexual relationships mirror challenges to the Russian national identity during the transition period in that they inevitably become entangled in the (gendered) desire of the Russian national identity for masculine dominance in the relationship (Hashamova 2006, 84).

What Hashamova is pointing out is the fact that often the relationship is that of the Russian male, who asserts his presence to the foreign female, who on the other hand has to submit to the Russian.[32] Since this is within the self-representation mode of production, i.e. Russian cinema, it should not come as a surprise to us. What should be picked up, though, is the fact that Kolya's representation is different to Danila's, and that the gender relationships in the self-representational mode are different to representation by the Other, which will be dealt with in the analysis of the films *Last Resort* and *Lilja 4-ever*.

This should frame Kolya's and Nicole's relationship as one of perceived sharing and mutual understanding, where the Russian male engages with the female Other.

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[32] One divergence from this trend is the Russian film *Frantsuz*/*The Frenchman* (Vera Storozheva, 2004), where a Frenchman falls in love with a Russian female. However, this film is in line with Russian cinema's fascination with the foreigner in Russia and his/her inability to comprehend, but affection for, the Russian soul. In this regard there is no better example that Mikhalkov's *Ochi* chernye/*Dark Eyes* (1986). *The Frenchman* is one of the films that Yana Hashamova focuses on, saying that it "emerges as a new beginning – a beginning which offers more chances for understanding and love between foreigners and Russians." See Yana Hashamova, *Pride and Panic, Russian Imaging of the West in Post-Soviet Russian Cinema* (Bristol & New York: Intellect, 2006), p 94. Although a fairytale Cinderella story, what is interesting in *The Frenchman* is the fact that the Russian woman leaves Russia in the end without connotations of treason to the national cause.

Hashamova points out that Kolya once "rescues" Nicole from imprisonment (Hashamova 2006, 86), which again points to the struggle for superiority in the postcolonial paradigm. However, this happens when Nicole is in Russia, having travelled through the window in pursuit of the Gorokhovs. Thus, Kolya's saving ability is functioning not abroad but at home. Instead, the film makes a reversal of the save-the-Russian-prostitute narrative, because once Nicole enters the backyard in St Petersburg, she is associated with prostitution. On the wall beside that door that she comes out of is the graffiti '*Khyi*' (cock) and the Russian Babushka, who takes her in, strips her of her clothes and gets her drunk, meaning to 'sell' her for prostitution. This is what Kolya's saving act is about – the exploitation of the Western woman. Implicit in the image is, of course, the same Russian self-assertion, as with *Brother 2*, that Russians can/should be considered among equals, as part of First World Europe. The relationship does not last. Kolya has to return to Russia with his children, but for Nicole the Russian way of life has already been tried and tested with acrimonious results and so she stays in Paris, waving goodbye to Kolya at the airport. Kolya gives up love and a life abroad for the return home, sacrificing himself for the betterment of his country.

As for Kolya's return home, Natasha Zhuravkina recognises the dilemma in which he stands, but underlines the homecoming as lifting "the film out of the mire of sordidness and lost hopes." And she continues, "perhaps, if [Kolya and the children] make a joint effort theirs is the ship that will sail into the future. Many of today's people are doomed to remain grounded" (Zhuravkina 1999, 109). A salient convention in the Russian 'going abroad' comedy is the return home, but Mamin

makes the offer of migration tangible by taking it seriously. Kolya's dreams, then, speak about real fears of migration, but also about real possibilities of economic migration. Kolya's own return home to Russia stems more from the conventions of the comedy genre and is less about a nationalistic message. When Kolya dreams of being down and out in Paris, he is actually identifying a present discourse concerning economic migration that has occurred since the fall of the Soviet Union. It concentrates on economic migration and prostitution as the main reasons for post-Soviet Russians to travel abroad. This makes *Window to Paris* correspond with a post-Soviet reality, but at the same time satirises this given reality. When asked about the everyday life spilling over into his films, Mamin replies,

> Sure. For example my wife returned home saying: 'You know what I have just seen? A quiet man walked in front of me. Suddenly he attacked a telephone booth, smashing it completely in a minute. Hatred poured out of him – and then he just walked on.' End of story. We inserted it in *Window to Paris* – a central scene in the film – and the booth smashing became a portrait of an era, of the 1990s (Malyukova 2005).

Mamin's reply illustrates that post-Soviet Russian satire has continued to incorporate the real into the films and if successful, as *Window to Paris* is, then the comedy confirms the mood of the time in which it emerges.

Conclusion

Returning to Christina Stojanova's criticism of the co-production. Stojanova has written,

> it cannot be otherwise, [because] these productions are expected to adapt trendy Western ideas to the radically different social mores and cultural climate in post-Communist countries. And the chances for a flop are much higher than for a success. It is enough to mention Y. Mamin's film *Window in Paris* (1995) and S. Bodrov' s *The Russians* (1992) as evidence of cultural incompatibility (Stojanova 1999).

While taking Stojanova's view into consideration, this investigation rather shows that Mamin's film is a successful co-production. Not because it manages to fuse two contexts, or apply a trendy Western idea, but because it forcefully speaks about real concerns and possibilities which were on the minds of its viewers. It has managed to deliver a discourse on migration that was on many people's lips in the early 1990s and that still bears evidence to a troubled time when spirits were high and the future looked bright after the turbulent period of Glasnost and Perestroika. It is a testimony to the film's durability that it is still talked about as capturing the mood of the time, e.g. when Mamin is interviewed for *Novaya Gazeta* (Malyukova 2005). This makes *Window to Paris* a perfect film to analyse with regard to the representation of Russians abroad, because the Russians abroad here constitute an important element in the migration discourse with the added convention of always returning home.

Stojanova's quotation above will also serve nicely for crossing over into the next chapter. Not only does it introduce the issues of co-productions that will be dealt with next, but also the filmmaker that will be examined, Sergei Bodrov. However, where the study disagrees with Stojanova on *Window to Paris*, it does agree with her on Bodrov's film, *White King, Red Queen (Russians)*: that this is a failed co-production. But why?

Part 2: Transnational Cinema

Representation by the 'Informer'

Russian transnational cinema gained particular significance in the post-Soviet period. This part of the thesis links Russian cinema with non-Russian cinema in that it deals with the co-operation of the Russian filmmakers and foreign film industries. As such it is in this part that the focus switches away from exploring representations created in fixed national contexts and ventures into the underexplored and elusive, yet immensely important area of the transnational. It is here where the most important contribution of this investigation lies: it engages in approaching cinematic texts and filmmakers who belong to the transnational mode of filmmaking as a separate category in the versatile field of cross-cultural representations.

This transnational type of filmmaking occupies an increasingly important place in contemporary cinema, especially when it comes down to intercultural communication. Films that are made in the 'twilight zone' of transnational financing and are not technically Russian but which are 'authored' by directors who hail from Russia and are held here to represent an insider's perspective to the country and its people. The question to be asked about such films is: whose view do they represent? Is it the view of their foreign financial backers, or the view of the Russian-born migrant filmmaker, or, most likely, the imaginary consensus of the transnational audience that backers and filmmaker work with?

When this type of film is being investigated, the career trajectory of the individual filmmaker becomes particularly important. Scrutinizing the migratory path of the

filmmaker could reveal important answers as to what messages may have been 'encoded' in the film by its creator, who is compelled to please a variety of sometimes conflicting agendas. The study will analyse two types of transnational career trajectories:

(a) the 'free-floating' mode where the Russian filmmaker works globally in a variety of transnational production set-ups (here illustrated on the example of Sergei Bodrov), and
(b) the 'transplantation' model where a Russian-born filmmaker migrates to another country and begins functioning in a new national context yet continues being concerned (with differing degrees of allegiance) with the potential reaction that the views on 'Russians abroad' found in his films would trigger.

The first chapter of this part of the thesis will take the perspective of one filmmaker, Sergei Bodrov. In the second chapter, the study will examine two Russian émigré filmmakers working in the context of Israeli cinema. These filmmakers will function as anthropological 'informers', the equivalent of the native, who, after being trained as a researcher, translates the object of study for the foreign ethnographer. It is the assertion of the first chapter that Bodrov's postcommunist co-productions are films in which representations of Russians abroad are altered significantly from the perspectives of Russian cinema and non-Russian cinema. The study will identify the working processes of co-production as the chief reason for this alteration.

In the chapter on Russian-Israeli cinema, the investigation will also concentrate on the career of the filmmaker as having significance for the film product. However, here it is different migratory paths that are compared: the nature of cinematic representation

of Russians abroad in part depends on which generation the filmmaker belongs to. As will be shown, differences in migratory paths are projected into the portrayal of Russians in Israel, a country that has seen nearly a million people arrive from the former Soviet Union since the late 1980s. The two filmmakers are Leonid Gorovets, who is a second wave immigrant (post-1991), and Arik Kaplun, who is from the first wave (1970s-1980s). In a similar way to Bodrov, they function as 'translators' or informers of Russian cultural values that arise from the diasporic situation. Thus the approach to the filmmakers and their films will be the same as for Bodrov; a strong emphasis on the autobiographic, which is used to reveal significance in the film's representations. That said, the chapter will also examine how Russians abroad are portrayed by a non-Russian film industry. Thus, it will anticipate part 3 in which the thesis will examine films with no Russian finance. The focus is exclusively on these Russian-Israeli filmmakers, who emerge from the context of Israeli cinema. The films, *Coffee with Lemon* (1994) and *Yana's Friends* (1999), were produced entirely with funding from the Israeli film industry, and although Russian funding was sought but not granted in both cases, this lack of Russian co-operation makes them stand apart from the transnational co-productions that are Bodrov's films.

The migration of European filmmakers to Hollywood is a common feature in the history of European cinema (Phillips and Vincendeau 2006), a feature that can also be extended to Soviet Russian cinema (Noussinova 1996, Robinson 2007). Hamid Naficy has pointed out that the nature of these migrations often shapes the cinematic output of the filmmaker in question (Naficy 2001). This part of the study is about the migrating filmmaker, but there are marked differences in the two forms of transnational filmmaking. Since Bodrov took advantage of post-Cold War

globalisation and travelled voluntarily, for professional and not necessarily for political reasons, Bodrov cannot be counted among the displaced or exilic filmmakers that Naficy discusses. This is easier with Gorovets and Kaplun, because it is with these filmmakers that associations of exilic and diasporic identities feature most clearly. Both Gorovets and Kaplun left the Soviet Union, although in different time periods, with the intention of settling in another country and assuming a new identity. Therefore, the latter two filmmakers' migratory travel differentiates from Bodrov's travel in that he remains free-floating between his US, Russian and Asian work places. However, if transnational cinema is defined through the production, distribution and reception of films and filmmakers across national borders in an era of globalisation (Iordanova 2007, 508), then both journeys, the voluntary and migratory, constitute a form of transnationalism that allow this study to examine how the 'informer' perspective has moulded the representation of Russians abroad.

The Velvet Revolution had reached its penultimate end, and throughout Eastern Europe the ruling communist parties were being abolished – except in the Soviet Union. This exodus from the communist bloc was not suddenly created, rather it was a continuation of a broad desire which had been seen most prominently in the case of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union. This emigration from the Soviet Union is characterised by two waves: the late 1960s to the early 1970s and the late 1970s to the late 1980s – with a third wave in the postcommunist era (Yengel' 2007, 172). The pressure mounted by the 'refuseniks' – Jews who were refused permission to leave the Soviet Union and who openly protested against this – in the mid 1970s after the first wave ended had left its mark on the authorities wanting to control the outflow of Socialist citizens. Therefore, when the pressure mounted again in the late 1980s, it

was not exclusively a Jewish problem, but very much a shared problem for the whole bloc of 'brotherly' Socialist countries.

In Russian transnational cinema, the most prominent figures are Pavel Lungin and Sergei Bodrov. However, while Lungin and Bodrov ventured outside to explore the opportunities on offer abroad, both have kept their connection with the Russian film industry, continuing to make films for both 'home' and 'abroad' markets. This free-floating transnational existence is characteristic of postcommunist migration and distinguishes it from Soviet emigration, which was determined as exile and the loss of a possible return to home. The latter form of migration is seen in the filmmaking of Andrei Konchalovsky or Boris Frumin, who both emigrated to the US before the postcommunist era. After 1991, both Konchalovsky and Frumin went back to make films in Russia. In the postcommunist transnational cultural production set-up, the national plays an important role and this is where Film Studies have made considerable ground.

Chapter 5: Russian Transnational Cinema

1 Russian Cinema and Co-Production

Sergei Bodrov is one of several filmmakers who left post-Soviet Russia and its crumbling film industry in the early 1990s in search of opportunities elsewhere. The move abroad can, of course, be understood in commercial terms: given the weakness of post-Soviet Russia's film industry, filmmakers had to explore new opportunities. Although Bodrov considers his job to be the production of popular films that are viewed by large audiences, his commercial sensibilities do not necessarily compromise his auteuristic qualities (Pritulenko 1996, 15). In fact, by looking at Bodrov as an *auteur*, by understanding his transnational work as having certain constant themes, Bodrov can be understood as a niche filmmaker operating in the global cinema market of the postcommunist period. While Bodrov can be understood simply as a filmmaker trying to take advantage of opportunities that come his way, be that in Russia or abroad, the themes of Russia and Russianness remain present in Bodrov's transnational co-productions.

In addition to the transnational nature of Bodrov's career in terms of his movement from the Soviet Union, to the USA via Europe, and back to Russia and Kazakhstan, this chapter will consider two forms of transnational filmmaking that feature in Bodrov's oeuvre. The first is the trans-European co-production (Bergfelder 2005, Eleftheriotis 2001, Jäckel 2003), which involves collaborations, cultural exchanges and funding practices, and where cultural translation, transfer and adaptation become the norms. The second is the emergence of transnational co-productions featuring resurgent film

industries from the former Soviet Union's postcommunist nations. Although Soviet cinema had a long history of co-productions among its then-communist states, it is a more recent phenomenon for postcommunist filmmakers to collaborate with Western producers, a phenomenon that became paramount in the early 1990s when the economic system of the Russian film industry fell apart. Co-operation with the West is important in helping to reignite the postcommunist film industries, but postcommunist transnational productions are also important in highlighting the hierarchies of postcommunist power that remain in this region, hierarchies that are not dissimilar to postcolonial power structures.

Before analysing the films, the study will track the career trajectory of the transnational filmmaker as well. This will give insights into the postcommunist system of co-production filmmaking, where mobility, flexibility, and the ability to compromise, are key to success. For Bodrov "commercial control can be comprehended: if you want to make expensive films, then you have to think about the audience that will have to pay for the tickets" (Bodrov 2007). This commercialism is part of the cinema of Bodrov, and, to a certain degree, shapes his films. Not leaving the on-screen representations out of the picture, it is necessary to chart the filmmaking career of Sergei Bodrov, pointing out meaningful assertions on the movement of the post-Soviet Russian filmmaker. This movement is governed by the success of previous projects, cinematic craftsmanship, and the 'desire' to work within a transnational setting (everybody from cast and crew to producer and cameraman). This desire can on the one hand be viewed as a postcolonial longing or, on the other, as postcommunist professionalism of modern filmmaking.

Both cases will be argued here, but this should not let the study lose sight of the uneven hierarchies that follow in the wake of postcommunist globalisation.

Thus, the goals of this chapter are two-fold: firstly, to establish how the cinematic capital of the filmmaker (in this case a director, but it could also be an actress, a cameraman or a set designer), informs the many twists and turns of a filmmaking career that functions on the level of ad-hoc filmmaking. Secondly, looking at the cinematic product, the study will be able to detect significant shifts in the representations of Russians abroad, precisely because of the switch to the transnational mode of production. The transnational co-production involves many vested interests that in turn shape the construction and meaning of the features Russians abroad. To achieve these two goals, this chapter is divided into three parts. The first part briefly examines Bodrov's emergence in the Soviet film industry and his later transnational career. The second part will look at the transnational co-production in the post-Soviet era, arguing that an established reputation like Bodrov's is vital for producing work in this system. And in the third part, four films by Bodrov will be analysed accentuating their different treatments of Russians abroad.[1]

[1] The study will include more than one film here, because it important that it designates a development in the portrayal of Russians abroad. It is in these four films that the study is most clearly able to detect a continuous development in the representations of Russians abroad.

2.1 The Career of Sergei Bodrov: 'At Home while Abroad'[2]

Sergei Bodrov, born in 1948, is from the city of Khabarovsk, situated near the border with North Korea, north of Vladivostok. He spent his childhood in Khabarovsk on the banks of the river Ussuri, moving to Moscow for his higher education. This underlines his Asian connections, a connection that Bodrov himself continues to stress. In an interview, he states, "I am interested in the eastern material (*faktura*), by which I mean the world, people, identity and nature" (Pritulenko 1996, 13). This draws attention to a worldview different from the European one, the European worldview having strongly influenced the western part of Russia, and instead points to Bodrov feeling more Asian than European – "I am more Asian. I have in me some far away Tartar blood which fortunately has proved to be strong" (Pritulenko 1996, 13). These words are significant for a filmmaker who will become a champion of the Central Asian transnational blockbuster. The Eurasian connection, Bodrov easily extends to Russia: "Overall, Russia appears to be more of an Asian country than a European one. The major part of the population lives in Asia, the larger part of the territory is in Asia, together with the oil. Human psychology is more oriented towards Asia" (Bodrov 2007, xvi). Even if this quotation could easily have come from Nikita Mikhalkov, Bodrov's Far East is markedly different from the Far East portrayed in *Urga*.

Sergei Bodrov graduated from the scriptwriting course at VGIK in 1974 and it is as a scriptwriter of popular film that Bodrov entered Soviet filmmaking as a professional, his work best exemplified by *Lyubimaya zhenshchina mekhanika Gavrilova*/*The Favourite*

[2] These are the words of anthropologist Bruce Grant, describing Andrei Bitov's 1992 version of *Prisoner of the Mountains*: "He is the epitome of the good Russian prisoner – at home while abroad." See Bruce Grant, "The Good Russian Prisoner: Naturalizing Violence in the Caucasus Mountains," *Cultural Anthropology* 20, no. 1 (2005): 39-67, p 52.

Woman of the Mechanic Gavrilov (Petr Todorovsky, 1981).[3] This film illustrates Bodrov's ability to create a tight narrative. The film is set over the course of a single day and the action takes place within limited space, which gives maximum (almost theatrical) room for the main actress to portray the character and to be influenced/reflected by the bystanders. This classical drama serves to illustrate Bodrov's skill in constructing narratives that allocate the star persona and the film industry's effort in the creation of popular melodrama on screen, which was an intrinsic part of Soviet filmmaking. In the preface to *The Cinema of Russia and the Former Soviet Union* (2007), Bodrov writes,

> the Soviet state spent money on film in order to reach the masses, but then that mechanism broke down, because nobody was interested in profit. The filmmaker would get a small bonus if his film had over 60 million spectators [...] In cinema, the director got nothing and the money went back to the state (Bodrov 2007, xiv).

Despite the non-profit aspect of directing, Bodrov then shifted to directing in the mid-1980s with the debut film *Neprofessionaly*/*Non-professionals* (1985), which was produced at Kazakh Film Studio and which revolves around three young members of a music ensemble who travel through rural Kazakhstan. The film that follows, *S.E.R/Freedom Is Paradise* (1989), also has the disparity of young Glasnost people at its centre. Although these films were topical (youth theme), they did not subvert the narrative structure that typified Soviet cinema at the time (Lawton 1992, 184). They are only implicitly ideological while being formulaic narratives. The latter film made Bodrov's name internationally recognisable as the film enjoyed exposure outside the

[3] The film starred the popular Soviet actress Lyudmila Gurchenko in a classical drama where she plays Rita who is about to marry a sailor called Gavrilov. Then Gavrilov fails to turn up at the registry office. Rita is poised on a bench outside the office where she encounters several people who in turn reflect on her own position. Rita even gets a stranger to stand-in for the absent Gavrilov in order not to lose face in front of family and friends. At the end of the day, Gavrilov phones Rita and tells her that he was detained at the police station the night before (the stag night), but it is too late now to sign the marriage papers and Gavrilov returns to his ship. All this is set in the context of the period of the Afghan war and the Moscow Olympics in 1980, which are both subtly hinted at.

Soviet Union. In particular it proved to be successful in the United States and was reviewed by the magazine *Film Quarterly*.[4] Although *Freedom Is Paradise* was the first film by Bodrov to travel outside the Soviet Union, it is important to recognise that both films are Soviet 'transnational' films, i.e. were produced in Kazakhstan but widely viewed across the Soviet Union. However, it is vital that the study picks up upon the status of the films within late Glasnost critical discourse, because what for Soviet audiences is deemed to be a play on broad popular viewers' sentiments (Lawton 1992, 184), is for foreign reviewers the particular, the understandable and the exotic. In other words, it is the good comprehensible storytelling that makes Bodrov's *Freedom Is Paradise* travel abroad.

With *Ya khotela uvidet angelov*/*I Wanted to See Angels* (1992), Bodrov began to work with foreign producers. [5] A petty criminal is hired to go to Moscow and settle a debt disagreement, which marks Bodrov's return "to the young generation and its degradation into the criminal underground, where personal happiness remains a dream" (Beumers 2000b, 31). Although the film indicates the start of Bodrov's co-operation with non-Russian producers and writers, the plot of the film is still confined within the borders of Soviet Russia. This changes with *White King, Red Queen* (1992), which is

[4] According to the reviewers, the narrative structure is developed in a "softly-spoken, unconventional way [...] which has more in common with 'picaresque' literature of the seventeenth century" than with the classical realistic narrative. See Brenda Bollag and Roland Posner, "Freedom Is Paradise," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (Fall 1990): 55-58, p 56.. While for these critics the realistic character of Sasha reminds them of Eisenstein and the principles of 'typage', for the connoisseur of Russian culture, Anna Lawton, the leading character "seems to have jumped out of the films of the 60s with all their endearing characters (*Ballad of a Soldier*, *Fate of Man*, and the like) or to have crossed the border from the movies of Italian neo-realism." See Anna Lawton, *Kinoglasnost: Soviet Cinema in Our Time* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p 184.

[5] *I Wanted to See Angels* is co-produced with US funding and signals the beginning of Bodrov's collaboration with his future wife, Carolyn Cavallero. They met in the United States in 1990 when Bodrov was showing one of his films. See Joan Dupont, "From Arizona, With Love from Russia," *International Herald Tribune*, July 2002.

one of the films to which the investigation will return for a detailed examination later. For now it will suffice to say that the film is a co-production of four film companies and that it depicts a Soviet delegation travelling to Geneva where they encounter a Russian-French émigré. Although the film had a brief existence on the festival circuit (for example, at the Montreal World Film Festival) (Plakhov 1992), it failed to make headway into wider distribution. This 'failure' of *White King, Red Queen* can explain why Bodrov was unable to start a new film project for the next four years. However, having moved to the Los Angeles region, Bodrov then found work in the Hollywood industry, which gives him a unique status in Russian cinema (Brashinsky 2001, 144). Although making a decent living from his work, Bodrov was unable to hit the big box office. Thus, Bodrov took on a film project at 'home,' *Kavkazskii plennik*/*Prisoner of the Mountains* (1996).

Prisoner of the Mountains was initiated, co-scripted and produced by Boris Giller, a Jewish media tycoon based in Alma-Aty, the former capital of Kazakhstan. The film itself will be examined later, but is important for the analysis and Bodrov's career, since the film gained a nomination from the US Academy Awards and its success reignited Bodrov's international filmmaking career.[6] Produced by Kazakh-Russian businessman Boris Giller and co-written by the Russian-Azeri scriptwriter Arif Aliyev, the film also stresses Bodrov's postcommunist links to Central Asia. The cinematic credentials that Bodrov gains are utilised in the next project, an American Hollywood production called

[6] An Oscar nomination, or better – a win, provides the cinematic credit (cinematic capital) to present in exchange for the trust of producers, investors and funding agencies. As Bodrov says himself, "I feel good that we got this nomination – it also helps with my next project." See Enrique Rivero, "Film Director to Attend Talk in Westlake," *Daily News (Los Angeles, CA)*, March 1997.

Running Free (1999), which tells about the survival of a horse in the Namibian desert.[7] The film did no harm to Bodrov's career as it managed to reach its lucrative cine-market of horse-crazed teenagers. *Running Free* has no reference to Russia or Russianness, but this changes with *The Quickie* (2001) that revolves around a retiring Russian gangster in California. The film, although exclusively on a Russo-American topic, is a co-production involving French, British and German companies and will play an important role in the investigation. However, *The Quickie* – together with Bodrov's next film, *Bear's Kiss* (2002) – signals a crisis period for the filmmaker. Both films were poorly received by the critics and viewers. The crisis was further accentuated by the death of his son, Sergei Bodrov Jr., who died in 2002 while shooting on location in Southern Russia. Bodrov's son starred in many of his films and was a huge celebrity in Russia (Trofimenkov 2003).

The Kazakh film project *Nomad* (2005), which was initially assigned to the Czech New Wave filmmaker Ivan Passer,[8] marked Bodrov's return to filmmaking. Mired by budget cuts, Passer left the project when a cheap Russian film crew was employed (Macnab 2006). Undoubtedly, Bodrov's former ties with the Kazakhfilm Studio were the reason for bringing Bodrov onto the project, which features an epic (hi)story of the birth of the Kazakh nation with an international cast. It is no coincidence that it is Bodrov, who was

[7] The film is narrated from the perspective of the horse and, as *The New York Times* review has it, "the plot blends a bit of 'Bambi' with a dollop of 'Lassie,' as the film's treatment of animals vacillates between cutesy Disney-style anthropomorphism and 'Born Free' exoticism." See A.O. Scott, "On Freedom Trail With a Talking Horse," *New York Times*, June 2000.

[8] Ivan passer is an émigré filmmaker who has been based in America since the late 1960s. Thus he is also a transnational filmmaker, but of another category than Bodrov. Passer migrated from Czechoslovakia in 1969 together with Milos Forman. While Passer has had difficulties in retaining the success from before migration, Forman has been the guiding light for the émigré filmmakers because of his ability to assimilate to American film production. It is worth mentioning that Milos Forman is listed as one of the executive producers on *Nomad*, which suggests that the film project was given to Passer due to his ties with Forman.

assigned to the project, which aimed at revitalising the Kazakh film industry.[9] By taking on board a filmmaker of international reknown like Bodrov, the film's backers (the President of Kazakhstan among them) hoped to gain international recognition. If Bodrov was a pioneer in the revival of the Kazakh film industry in the mid-1980s (Lawton 1992, 184), then it was equally hoped that Bodrov would do the same at the beginning of the new millennium with the production of *Nomad*. For various reasons, *Nomad* failed to reach its target foreign audience (Kazakh diaspora have, however, praised it), but it did infuse new life into Bodrov the filmmaker.

It seems that Bodrov now saw the potential for making epic cinema, and for the exportation of Eurasianness, because from the ashes of *Nomad* rose his next project, *Mongol* (2007), which is also a transnational project with multinational backers, an international cast and aimed at global audiences. Commercialism or artistic niche location? Whatever the reasons, with *Mongol*, Bodrov returns to working with European partners while retaining his Central Asian connections. Moreover, it has no state-supported finances, but instead individual producers coming together in the making of the film, which constitutes a significant shift from the production of *Nomad*. Contrary to *Nomad*, *Mongol* was well received by critics and audiences (but not by the Mongolian state or its viewers). It won a Nika for best Russian film, a nomination from the US Academy Awards, and had general distribution in a host of countries, which, since it

[9] The Russian-Israeli filmmaker, Arik Kaplun, who will be dealt with in the following chapter, told me that he too was in the loop of directors that could possibly take over from Ivan Passer. Arik Kaplun, interview by Lars Kristensen, *Conversation at Kaplun's Flat* , Tel Aviv (21 01 2007). This further signifies that the backers of *Nomad* searched for a filmmaker outside the Russian cinema industry, but one that would/could handle the later assigned 'cheaper' Russian crew.

had a quarter of the budget of *Nomad*, makes it a highly successful film in terms of production cost and audience reception.[10]

At the age of 60, Bodrov has re-gained the cinematic credentials (cultural capital) that is so vital for the transnational filmmaker in the exchange system of modern global cinema production. With the success of *Mongol* in the bag,[11] Bodrov can now move on to a new project of his choice, but in this volatile system, it only takes a miss or two to cast doubt over his entire filmmaking career. A few points that are necessary to take onboard: Firstly, the system of cultural capital exchange exists on a very real level of transnational filmmaking, which will be explored in depth in the next section on strategic movement within the cinema industry. Secondly, the fall of communism is the trigger for the rise in this mode of filmmaking. The postcommunist condition, which, as explained, is a shared postcolonial experience, triggers a flow of monetary capital that globally recognises no national borders. The postcommunist filmmaker is highly manoeuvrable in this condition, and much less confined to the national cinema context than the celebrated *auteur* of the communist era. Thirdly, the postcommunist region is increasingly becoming a source for the transnational filmmaker in the securing of funding, studio facilities, crew or cast, which underlines the professionalisation that the film industry of the region has undergone over the last 10-15 years.[12] With these three

[10] According to box office Mojo figures, *Mongol* grossed worldwide over 26 million dollars on theatre release only. It was in the top 20 of DVD rentals for the first two weeks of its release, which indicates its economic success. See http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=mongol.htm (06/04/09).
[11] *Mongol* was planned as a trilogy, but the success of the film has made Bodrov think twice and he is now hired to direct the Hollywood production on the life of Marco Polo, according to *The Hollywood Reporter*, 11 November 2008.
[12] As Bodrov states himself, "now a large amount of filmmakers are in a desperate situation; suddenly they have to go and ask somebody for money. Before they were given the money – with humiliation and long waiting, but they were given the money, which they did not have to return. In my respect – I am a person, for whom it is easy to receive and return the money. We are now living in a context where one expects people to return the money that is given to them. This is the right way; this is the professional

points in mind the study can proceed to the concerns of co-production and transnational filmmaking of the postcommunist era. In this case Bodrov is a unique example.

1.2 Transnational Co-Productions

1.2.1 Exile and Postcommunist Migration

In understanding the transnational free-floating of the postcommunist era, it is important not to forget that migration from the former Eastern bloc was of a different mould. Among the Russian filmmakers who migrated during Soviet times, are, for example, Boris Frumin and Andrei Konchalovsky. These filmmakers work within an 'accented mode' of production where the transnational productions is "born out of moments of autonomy that are ephemeral but sufficiently real, such as the liminality of exile" (Naficy 2001, 45). Where this informs the interstitial or artisan mode of cinematic production for the displaced filmmaker, the filmmaking of Sergei Bodrov points towards a different mode. Rather than autonomy and liminality of exile, Bodrov's trajectory is informed by voluntary mobility in working abroad. As Dina Iordanova states, post-Cold War European filmmakers "do not qualify as bona fide 'migrant' or 'diasporic', nor are they 'exilic' or 'intercultural' filmmakers, [but] more adequately described as 'transnationally mobile filmmakers'" (Iordanova 2009). These filmmakers' hallmark is that they have no obligation to one nation, compatriots, or diasporic communities, preferring to work with people they think would benefit their projects. This mode of transnational, ad-hoc cinematic production "has become their *modus vivendi*" (Iordanova 2009). While this sets apart the postcommunist transnational filmmaker from the exilic and diasporic one, the process of production has the values of

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way. And I am a professional" See V. Pritulenko, "Sergei Bodrov: Ya khotel sdelat' gumannuyu kartinu," *Iskusstvo Kino*, no. 6 (1996): 11-15, p 15.

the European co-production, in which film companies from several national contexts work together on a project.

Thus, in accounting for the filmmaking of Bodrov and his films, the investigation will have to relate to the European co-production, as described by various film scholars (Bergfelder 2005, Eleftheriotis 2001, Jäckel, European 2003). Here the issues are collaboration, exchange and founding practices. Included in this form are postcommunist co-productions, which arise from the film industries of the former communist countries (Iordanova 2003; Jäckel 1997). Although similar to European co-production practices, the postcommunist co-production is distinguished from the European model in its immersion in reasserting the national. This is seen, in particular, in the two latter films of Bodrov, *Nomad* and *Mongol*, where the narration of the nation happens through the transnational, or the supranational, epic film.

As has been the case since the pre-sound era of European cinema, co-production has featured prominently in the development of European cinema (Eleftheriotis 2001, 48; Forbes and Street 2000, 8). Two key features of European co-productions will be emphasised as vital for understanding the process of representing Russians abroad in the films of Bodrov. First of all, it is important to stress the genre dimension in this mode of production. Tim Bergfelder, who analyses the German involvement in co-productions of the 1960s, says that the main genre for co-productions "was essentially international chase stories, with an emphasis less on narrative consistency, but a kaleidoscope of visual spectacles and a multitude of generic attractions" (Bergfelder 2000, 149). An example would be the James Bond films, which replicated the formula of these popular

European narratives. The genre dimension of Bodrov's films is also important to highlight, because if genre is preoccupied with the allocation of popular audiences, then the representations of Russians abroad, as seen in Bodrov's filmmaking, is equally formed out of a desire to address transnational viewers. This leads into the second feature of the European co-production that should be of concern: the cross-cultural dimension being worked out in a transnational context. If the co-production cinema looks across the national framework for audiences, through adapting generic conventions, then the expression of these productions also differs from the films that speak to a national audience.

It is here that the anthropological perspective becomes important again: who is narrating and who is the narration for? These two simple questions will reveal a third: what is being said (represented)? It is hence meaningful to examine the who's who of the co-productions that have representations of Russians abroad, because these films are formulated with the intention of being consumed on a transnational level. In this instance, the 'translator'or 'informant' is Bodrov, and what is expressed through 'his' films is the result of Bodrov's and others' collective effort in addressing issues that would appeal to viewers who are not exclusively Russian. Thus, the representation of Russians abroad has been subjected to a process of transnational vetting, which builds on a shared common denominator of 'imaging' the Russian. The postcolonial perspective should not be ignored either. Bodrov's desire to 'escape' the moorage of the post-Soviet Russian film industry could well be described as a desire to shed his Russianness and inferiority complex by becoming a postcommunist cosmopolitan citizen of the world. In this way Bordrov resembles his postcommunist colleagues, such

as the Hungarian Isván Szabó or the Polish Agnieszka Holland, who fluctuate between the concrete postcommunist condition, from which they arise, and transnational global filmmaking, in which they thrive.

As Iordanova has noticed, these postcommunist filmmakers were already celebrated in the West at the point of the disintegration of communist Europe, and therefore had the benefit of being in the limelight when the West came searching. Tellingly, "while migration and diasporic existence figure as topics in the films of these directors, they can barely be described as their only or primary concerns" (Iordanova 2009). Elsewhere, she has suggested the changing funding system might have favoured more experienced filmmakers (Iordanova 2002a, 525). This is true in the case of Bodrov, who, as was mentioned earlier, was already in the public eye by the late 1980s. By the mid-1990s he was very experienced in the working processes of the co-production, and has continued to make transnational cinematic productions that surpass, or in a postcolonial fashion gloss over, the explicit migration narratives of his films. This makes Bodrov a prime example of a postcommunist filmmaker who transcends national boundaries and who makes cosmopolitan films where Russians feature predominantly, without connoting particular Russian values. This is what sets Bodrov's filmmaking apart from other postcommunist attempts at making Russian co-productions.

1.2.2 Co-Production from a Postcommunist Russian Perspective

The potential gains from making co-productions are many (Eleftheriotis 2001, 106). In postcommunist Russia, the equipment, facilities and working ethics were still Soviet

when the economic funding system together with the distribution system and the film theatres broke down (Beumers 1999a, Iordanova, 2002a). In such a situation, the advantages of co-production easily outweigh the negative sentiments. This was also the approach taken by the film journal *Seans* in 1994 when they dealt with the rise of the post-Soviet Russian co-production. Without co-productions "we would have no *Window to Paris* and no *Castle* [by Balabanov]" (Arkus 1994, 72). A similar process was seen in Eastern European cinema (Iordanova 2002a, 518). In popular European cinema this has led to a sizeable shift towards co-production, which "represents a qualitative leap, as the norm will almost certainly become (if it is not already) the transnational rather than the national production" (Eleftheriotis 2001, 48). In the view of European cinema becoming transnational, it is interesting to contemplate the position of post-Soviet Russian cinema. In *European Cinema* (2000), it is worth noting that Jill Forbes and Sarah Street include both Soviet and post-Soviet Russian cinema in their general narrative on European cinema, pointing for example to the Soviet involvement in the pan-European distribution network in the late 1920s (Forbes and Street 2000, 9).[13] Arguably, this comes naturally as there are many artistic and stylistic affinities and influences fluctuating across the cultural divide. An example would be Nikita Mikhalkov, who, apart from Andrei Konchalovsky and Andrei Tarkovsky, was the only Soviet director with international connections (Beumers 2005, 6).[14] However, where Bodrov avoids being caught up in the national discourse on Russian cinema, Mikhalkov stands in the midst of it with the result that he gets accused of catering for foreign viewers. It suffices to recall the defence Mikhalkov had to make over catering for foreign audiences: "yes, [I have catered] for foreigners. For one hundred million foreigners living in my country"

[13] There are two chapters on Soviet (*Battleship Potemkin*) and Russian (*The Barber of Siberia*) cinema by Birgit Beumers.
[14] The French producer Michel Seydoux worked with Mikhalkov on four films, i.e. *Urga* (1991), *Anna: From Six Till Eighteen* (1993), *Burnt by the Sun* (1994) and *The Barber of Siberia* (1998).

(Arkus 1999, 89). Because of his informal attachment to the central (Moscow-St. Petersburg) film industry in Russia, Bodrov can float in-between Moscow and Los Angeles and avoid such accusations. Quietly and calmly Bodrov can state that, "filmmakers really wish to tell a universal story, which is of interest not only for Russian audiences," without being called a filmmaker of kitsch (Bodrov 2007, xv). It has to be said, though, that Mikhalkov's high visibility on the local scene makes him more prone for national scrutiny and vulnerable to critics, which constitutes a real difference between the two filmmakers and their European co-productions.

Nonetheless, the Russian-European co-production informs on how representations of Russians abroad are mediated through the native Russian filmmaker. This mediation of Russian cultural and national values is projected onto narratives that are acceptable to non-Russian producers. It is the claim of this study that Bodrov's co-productions venture into a web of co-operational working practices where popular texts are negotiated, moderated and exchanged in the form of a trading market. In this market, compromise, goodwill and trust are the characteristics that are valued. As Tim Bergfelder says:

> Once a filmic text enters the context of transnational transfer and distribution, they become subject to significant variations, translations and cultural adaptation processes. It is at this level, not at the level of production, that the question of intelligibility is decided (Bergfelder 2005, 326).

This sets the working practice of co-production apart from the transnational auteur filmmaker. While the auteur filmmaker reigns supreme over the foreign and the

foreigner's investment placed in the name and the aesthetics of the filmmaker, [15] in postcommunist transnational cinema the trust is placed in the professionalism of the filmmaker and the possibility of influencing the text in order to please local, national viewers and make a profit. Dina Iordanova says that the commercialisation of the European co-production resulted "in an emerging class of European 'auteurs' – established filmmakers who benefit from their existing international standing" (Iordanova 2002a, 519), which is most definitely a class that Bodrov belongs to. As suggested by Iordanova's inverted commas, these filmmakers are not quite auteurs in the *Cahiers du Cinéma* sense of the word. In the view of this study, the auteur co-production is less negotiable than a film that through co-production aims to make the maximum profit for its investors. In this sense the four Bodrov films are made in co-operation with European partners and have therefore been scrutinised through a transnational process of 'give and take'. Bodrov's cinematic craftsmanship, his scriptwriting abilities and his ability to compromise set him apart from the Soviet auteur filmmakers and establish him as a transnational filmmaker who can cross national boundaries and break into foreign markets with storytelling that is likely to appeal to popular audiences outside the art-house audiences.

This is underlined by the fact that Sergei Bodrov has managed to cross over into Hollywood cinema production with *Running Free,* which was entirely produced in the US and scripted by people other than Bodrov. This points to a different kind of transnationality than the one which was seen above with European co-productions. When Hollywood is mentioned in connection with issues of transnationality, it is chiefly

[15] An interesting case here would be Andrei Tarkovsky and his co-operation with foreign producers, notably in the making of *Nostalghia*/*Nostalgia* (1983) and *Offret*/*The Sacrifice* (1986).

linked to the absorption of actors or national filmmakers into the American film industry (Phillips and Vincendeau 2006). While the shaping of, or failure to shape, the national edges of filmmakers into a Hollywood mould is part of narrating Hollywood cinema as hegemonic and dominant in global cinema (a loss of national traits), this hides the fact that American cinema is far more diverse and engaged in cross-cultural co-production than is acknowledged. Contrary to those European co-productions, which are deemed impure, American co-productions gloss over such a notion by passing as universal. However, the absorption discourse is the prevailing approach in accounting for Hollywood's transnational filmmaking, which is also a practice that best suits filmmakers of Bodrov's status. Again the incorporation of the auteur, the art creator, into Hollywood's working practice is painfully full of sacrifices and loss of artistic control, which on the other hand makes the cross-over of the craftsman or the storyteller easier, as the willingness to compromise is greater. Very few Russian filmmakers have made it into Hollywood in recent times. Andrei Konchalovsky was a case in point. He emigrated from the Soviet Union in the early 1980s and made a string of US-produced films, only to return after 1991 to restart his career in Russian cinema (Jäckel 1997, 112). That said, Konchalovsky's filmmaking career points to a more traditional sense of migrant cinema, which can be seen in the fact that his chief producer in the US was Menahem Golan, who together with Yoram Globus formed the production company Cannon Group, which was very influential in the 1980s.[16] Golan is an Israeli of Polish decent, which points to a shared communist diasporic experience. This sets Bodrov apart from Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky, because, as it has been mentioned, he floats freely from abroad to home. It is Bodrov who chooses, not his migratory condition.

[16] Golan also produced the Israeli comedy *Sallah Shabati*, which will be examined in the next chapter.

Although the four films, and in particular the three examined here, have been produced exclusively with European countries, it is important to underline Bodrov's (transnational) American connections. Living in the United States since 1992, married to an American and having a close working relationship with the Hollywood film industry influenced the development and practise of the filmmaker Bodrov. As he tells Pritulenko,

> When I went to America, I did not plan to live there. I just began to work in scriptwriting, for which I receive quite a lot of money … In America everybody wants to make cinema. It is a Mecca for filmmaking! And I am a passionate man. From my Tartar ancestors I have two passions: horses and the game of chance [passionate games]. It is likewise a passion to make cinema in America. In a manner of speech, I am a dog that lifts its leg and makes a pee-pee. As if imprinting, I was here (Pritulenko 1996, 13).

Here the cinema of Hollywood is, from the perspective of the Russian critical discourse, the fortress that few manage to get into, and hence references are made to Milos Forman, Roman Polanski and others who made the transnational jump into the hostile competitive world of the US film industry. Likewise, there are implicit connotations of the loss of a national filmmaker that criticise the transnational filmmaker and mock the outcome of the films which are made abroad. It is these two viabilities that Bodrov and his films are judged by in the US transnational discourse.

Since the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 and the break up of the Soviet Empire in 1991, the discourse on respective cinema industries has concentrated on exactly that – respective cinema industries. In other words, writing has often been at pains to describe the peculiar cinematic characteristics of each nation rather than looking at common shared values and/or transnational co-operations. The

reason for this is perhaps an explicit desire to do away with any overarching ideology determining the region's political, cultural and national identity, but more recent developments have seen a reversal of this tendency. For example in *Traditions in World Cinema*, Christina Stojanova describes the Eastern European region as a whole, examining the rise of the melodrama, the Mafiosi thriller and the national epic as common throughout the region after the fall of communism (Stojanova 2006, 95-117; see also Iordanova 2003 and Jäckel 1997, 116). However, there are concerns in this approach as it condenses the region's predicament into a neat sameness of female falling from grace, male anxieties and xenophobia without taking into account the political and cultural power structures of the region. In other words, the condition of the postcommunist reality becomes the shared feature, and the differences, the local cuisine. Adhering to the trend of probing into a common postcommunist condition, it is vital that the investigation approach the region's cinematic production as a political and cultural process where co-operation emerges on the back of cultural affinities and historical bonds. Sameness, of course, plays a role in cultural exchange, but rather than gloss over national significance, the study suggests an approach to the region's cinematic production where transnational co-operations are expressions of re-establishing former ties, which were formed during Soviet hegemony. Films that have been deemed national epic and monolithic cultural expressions of a particular national idea will reveal new aspects, through postcommunist co-operation, of cinema production in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Take the example of Ivan Passer whom Bodrov replaced as the director of *Nomad* purporting a shared affinity between the Czechs and the Kazakhs:

> In Kazakhstan, there was something familiar to me. The Czechs and the Kazakhs had the same experiences [in the Soviet era]. But the landscape

> looks as if nobody ever lived there. It's raw, it's wild, very rugged – they still hunt with wild birds (Macnab 2006).

This points to historical and cultural affinities without losing the differences,[17] although, since Passer left the project because of the involvement of a cheaper Russian crew (Macnab 2006), there also lingers an uneven balance of power when post-Soviet Russianness is perceived to assume the position of former Soviet hegemony. That said, when Bodrov took over from Passer, Bodrov was not seen in this way. As Ivan Passer comments: "I'm glad Bodrov did it. He's a very good director and he did a good job" (Macnab 2006). Bodrov is the lesser of two evils in postcommunist co-productions – neither the indifferent foreigner nor the nationalistic Russian.

It is easy to detect Passer's perception of the Russians as former colonisers and therefore unsuitable for co-operation. The shared similarity is extended to national identities that have suffered during Soviet hegemony. Paradoxically, in this postcolonial spectrum Bodrov is not the coloniser, but a filmmaker who has cast off the Russian imperialistic helmet. In this light, Bodrov is also the former colonised who from his workings abroad has formed a cosmopolitan indifference to national belonging, and, in particular, transnational disinterest in Russian national cinema's project of boosting national sentiments in its audiences. However, just as for Balabanov and Mikhalkov, two filmmakers who are very much preoccupied with narrating a Russian national idea, Bodrov can be accounted for as a postcolonial from the postcommunist condition. The disinterest in the national is as indicative of a postcolonial position as the obsession with resistance through nationalism.

[17] As old Soviet rhetoric goes, 'socialist in form, national in content.'

2 Russians Abroad in the Films of Sergei Bodrov

Instead of dealing with the four identified films in their chronological order, the investigation will start with the way the 'abroad' is narrated in *Prisoner of the Mountains*, which is the film set nearest to the Russian national border. Then, moving further afield by pooling together two films centering on Russians in European spaces, i.e. *White King, Red Queen* and *Bear's Kiss*. And finally, the analysis crosses over to the United States with the European production of *The Quickie*, examining how the Russian gangster stereotype is modified through the workings of Sergei Bodrov.

2.1 *Prisoner of the Mountains*

As mentioned, *Prisoner of the Mountains* originates in the Russian diaspora of Kazakhstan, with Boris Giller suggesting the project to Bodrov. Boris Giller studied scriptwriting under Bodrov (et al.) at VGIK before building his media empire in Kazakhstan (Lyndina 1996). It is not uncommon for the postcommunist transnational filmmaker to return home for the purposes of teaching at a national film school. The link to VGIK also explains the employment of the scriptwriter Arif Aliyev, who, although of Azerian descent, was born in Moscow and graduated from the scriptwriting course at VGIK in 1990 (Gorelov 2001, 51-2). That *Prisoner of the Mountains* is formed out of this motley crew of communist displacements is significant for the film's expression. This postcommunist postcolonial background, from which the film's expression emanates, is something that needs to be taken into account in the examination of its Russian characters abroad. As a further indication that the film comes out of postcommunist displacement, is the fact that *Prisoner of the Mountains* was

styled in Russia as Bodrov's homecoming film. There are two things in this, which are both related to the postcolonial. Firstly, it underlines Bodrov's period abroad as a particularly postcommunist exile, where there is a level of understanding, and pride, for the transnational filmmaker, because the domestic industry is inferior to that abroad/in Hollywood. Secondly, in the critical reception of the transnational filmmaker, he is greeted as a messiah, who has the key to unlock the postcolonial with his magic international touch and influences. Perceptively, this is something that Pritulenko picks up on in his interview with Bodrov for *Iskusstvo Kino*, which took place after the Russian press conference. Pritulenko asks Bodrov, "but nonetheless you shot [the film] in the Caucasus, as you expressed in the press conference – 'at home'. At the same time you say, 'imperial consciousness is alien to you'. And we the critics are nodding happily. No imperial consciousness, but how about imperial subconsciousness?" (Pritulenko 1996, 13). Unfortunately, Pritulenko lets Bodrov off the hook here and follows up the question with biographical references, and Bodrov replies by talking about the eastern 'faktura' as cited in the beginning of this chapter. However, with a film about a contemporary war, in a region that has seen 400 years of imperial endeavour, it is a highly relevant question to ask. Undoubtedly, there is an imperial subconscious in this film, but a subconscious that equally has a postcolonial meaning.

These issues have to be taken into account when analysing the literary adaptation of a story that has concerned Russian writers (like Pushkin, Lermontov and Tolstoy) for over a century and a half. Especially of importance, in this context, are the functions of Russians abroad in the context of the Caucasus and how the anti-war message of the film signifies the peripheral position of its makers. While the film touches upon many

other important topics, such as (Soviet) Russian cinema's penchant for adaptations, which will not be dealt with here,[18] the analysis will instead concentrate on cinematic traditions. This investigation views the film as part of the narrative trope that sees the capture of the Russian (male) by the Imperial Russia's Other. The film is close to Tolstoy's anti-imperial narrative of two Russian soldiers being captured in the Caucasus in order to be exchanged for Chechens who have been captured by the Russians.

It is the most discussed film of all Bodrov's works so far and it occupies a significant position in the discourse on post-Soviet Russian cinema. *Prisoner of the Mountains* was viewed as the exception of the films released that year or of the whole postcommunist era (Johnson 1997, 281, Graffy 1996, 24). This is the film that all the major scholars of Russian cinema highlight when dealing with Bodrov and post-1991 Russian cinema. Birgit Beumers sees it as the major anti-war film of the 1990s (Beumers 2000b, 31); David Gillespie analyses it as a literary adaptation (Gillespie 1999, 121-4, Gillespie 2003, 26-8), and others, as a war film (Youngblood 2007, Lawton 2004, 228-30).[19] While in no way discarding these accounts, this study will highlight two other scholarly works by anthropologist Bruce Grant and Slavic scholar Peter I. Barta, which broaden the topic of the film and take it into the realm of political power structures of the imperial narrative and postcolonialism.

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[18] On Russian literature and the Caucasus, the most cited publication is Susan Layton's book, *Russian Literature and Empire* (1995). Another cinematic narrative of the Russian soldiers taken captive for the sake of ransom is Balabanov's *War* (2002), a film that diverts significantly from Bodrov's narrative with regard to the ideological message. For reviews of Balabanov's film in English, see Andrew James Horton, "War, What Is it Good for?," *Central Europe Review*, November 2002, and Sergei Lavrentiev, "Aleksei Balabanov: War," *KinoKultura*, no. 0 (February 2003).

[19] This reception analysis might stay apart from the one provided for the other films under scrutiny here. However, this is also one that has been written the most about, by scholars, critics and cineastes, which again asserts the film's popularity in Russia and abroad.

Peter I. Barta, while continuing the literary interpretation of the film by applying a postcolonial framework, says that the controlling text of Bodrov's film is not Tolstoy's story of the same name but his *Khadji Murat* (Barta 2004, 136). This is significant because this last great novella by Tolstoy "draws an analogy about the destructive nature of Russian behaviour in the Caucasus" (Barta 2004, 138). Thus Bodrov's film comes to occupy a liminal space within Russian cinema where the imperial Russian Other is narrated as neither the noble savage nor the threatening terrorist. This leads Barta to form a postcolonial analysis of Bodrov's film, asserting that "Bodrov's film is one of the few genuinely anti-colonial cultural products of the post-Soviet period" (Barta 2004, 136). However, while agreeing that the film is anti-colonial and anti-imperial, Barta fails to take into account that the film was a co-production with Kazakhfilm Studio, which is informative with regard to the anti-war message of the film. This position, facilitated by the postcommunist co-production of *Prisoner of the Mountains*, can narrate an anti-imperial Russian story, which is unthinkable from the Russian centre.[20] That said, the film also offers a nostalgic look at the Soviet Empire, in which different nationalities were held together by a 'friendship of the people' (*druzhba narodov*), and which, as Barta says, included "at least official, *de jure* – if not *de facto* – rejection of racism" (Barta 2004, 137). It could be argued, however, that it is this rejection of racism and anti-Russian imperial sentiments, which are so rare in Russian cinema, that makes it popular with non-Russian viewers. Adding to this admiration, it can also be argued that the story of the good Russian soldier, held in captivity in the Caucasus Mountains, is a deeply colonial narrative, which performs the emplacement of

[20] Balabanov's *War* is a good example of the imperial centre's impossibility to narrate anti-colonial film.

the European coloniser in the inhospitable land. Thus viewers, Russians and Western foreigners, identify with the Russian coloniser, just as the identification of the American Western genre lies with the colonising farmers.[21] Examining the cycle of Russian prisoner narratives, Bruce Grant, an anthropologist who has done research in the region, argues that the Russian narrators "seized a physical place, found a mythic place, and generated a narrative space. By means of these narratives, the tale of the archetypical long-suffering Russian benefactor could be told and retold, possessed and repossessed, circulated and recirculated" (Grant 2005, 45). However, Grant's argument is not limited to Russian colonial cosmologies, because understanding these narratives – their colonial override of the region and their four centuries-long residence (including the communist rule) – offers insight into the workings of colonialism and sovereignty at large (Grant 2005, 47). One Azeri historian tells Grant that 'these Russian fairy tales are worse than bombs,' implying the power they hold over popular perceptions. Bodrov's film is part of this prisoner cycle, despite its anti-war stand. Grant says about the film: "[It] has nothing to say about Russian policy in Chechnya as good or bad: instead, all wars are bad [and] deep down, all combatants are good" (Grant 2005, 55). Despite Grant's dismissal of the film, there are important traits that need to be picked up.

One thing that Grant underlines is the main character Zhilin's (Sergei Bodrov Jr) ability to fix things. These skills are significant for the narrative of the good soldier story, since Zhilin repairs his captors' things, e.g. a clock, which denotes his good nature and partially accounts for his later release from captivity. Furthermore, the imperative of cultural capital can be added, which determines the desirability of the Russian in the

[21] It is worth noting that this is also a purported formula for the analysis of Balabanov's narrative in *War*. Sergei Lavrentiev, "Aleksei Balabanov: War," *KinoKultura* 0 (2003).

postcommunist labour exchange. In the representation of Zhilin, it is remarkable that these skills are valued in the Caucasus abroad. He performs a Russian humanistic engagement with the Russian Caucasian Other, an engagement that in the postcolonial syncretism can be determined as a cultural encounter of difference. However, Zhilin has a duality that is worth mentioning, because, on the one hand, he is the incarnation of a formerly colonised Russian that sees similarities in the postcommunist difference, but on the other hand, he is also the former coloniser who has to come to terms with his colonial past. This is chiefly addressed in Zhilin's compatriot, who has no other way out than being the Russian soldier who continues the military intervention. As Grant's research showed, despite the anti-war message of the film, any story about the Russian captive soldier has a colonial dimension, which is also where Bodrov's imperialist subconsciousness is clearly on display.

With Zhilin's humanistic value, marked by his skills (cultural capital), Bodrov's film also contrasts greatly with the two *Brother* films examined in chapter 3, where Danila's (also played by Bodrov Jr) skills are put to use. The deathly weaponry emulated by nationalist Russian cinema is narrated gently in Bodrov's co-production of the near abroad. This again suggests Bodrov's 'outsider status' from the dominant position of post-Soviet Russian cinema and the ease with which the film could gain acceptance outside Russia. The Russian-Kazakh co-production of the film gave the filmmaker "greater freedom to tell the tale as he wanted," as Julian Graffy writes in his review of the film in *Sight and Sound* (Graffy 1998, 35). The review in *Iskusstvo Kino* expresses bewilderment at the fact that the film, which was of the highest technical quality – the film stock, the sound and quite difficult crowd scenes - was realised without the Russian

state's financial support (Plakhov 1996, 10). Plakhov echoes Graffy by saying that it would have been tempting to show the anti-human, 'real' Chechen features of decapitation, "but this is not part of Bodrov's repertoire, usually looking – from Alma-Ata, from Los Angeles – at the world good-naturedly and with warmth" (Graffy 1998, 35).[22] These two reviews together illustrate well the reception of the film both in Russia and outside Russia. There is a sense that this is a good film, but that it emerges outside Russian cinematographic tradition.

The position that Russian soldiers are occupying here is that of the former coloniser. Both Russian protagonists are representative of the long history of Russian imperialism that this region has seen. That said, the stance of the film is, as noted above, anti-imperialist, which is most clearly seen in the relationship that Zhilin forms with his native captor and in his cultural capital of mending things. This should not make the investigation blind to the fact that the retelling of the story of the Russian captive soldier has colonial implications for the mindset of the former Soviet colonised people, for whom the plot all too clearly 'implants' the Russian as a natural part of the region. This is also something that can be levelled at the filmmaker, whose colonial subconsciousness shapes this incursion into the region, despite the film's anti-colonial message. It is in the expression of *Prisoner of the Mountains* that the image of the Russian abroad as the postcommunist coloniser is most strongly seen.[23] The investigation will leave this position of Russian coloniser for now, because with the rest

[22] Plakhov continues, "the friendship with Quentin Tarantino comes free of charge", alluding to Bodrov's working with Tarantino on the film *Somebody to Love* but also implying that Hollywood has not rubbed off on Bodrov. See Andrei Plakhov, "Plennik gory i zalozhnik uspekha," *Iskusstvo Kino*, no. 6 (1996), p 10.

[23] Important to recall that this position was also part of the set up in *Urga*, where Sergei makes his presence felt by the Mongolian family.

of Bodrov's films his characters abroad are in search of a new identity outwith the Soviet Russian colonial discourse.

2.2 *White King, Red Queen* (1992) and *Bear's Kiss* (2002)

There is a gap of ten years between these two films and, although at first sight they invite a comparative analysis, it is more illustrative to recount these representations of the Russian abroad in a progressive examination. The aim therefore is to pinpoint the Russian spatial setting in the context of the European co-production, which sees Russia as a curiosity in the early 1990s before actively including it in the early 2000s. Furthermore, by pooling these two films together, the study examines them as a distinct European filmmaking practice which enlists several film companies whose goal is to make films that cross national boundaries. If *Prisoner of the Mountains* was made without European backing, these two films have European co-financing as their heart beat; it is what defines them.

White King, Red Queen involved four production companies including Alyona-Film (a one-off company based in Switzerland), Initial Groupe (Paris), Metropolis Filmproduktion (a Berlin based company) and Mosfilm and Kur'er Studio (Moscow). Mosfilm is the largest of the Russian film studios and was the flagship of Soviet cinema, while Kur'er studio was created and run by Karen Shakhnazarov, who is also listed as a producer of the film and who in 1998 became the general director of Mosfilm. This Russian (or more exactly, Soviet) involvement from the outset of the production is reflected in the mono-cultural plotline of the film. A Soviet delegation

travels to Geneva where they encounter a Russian-French émigré, who was once the love of the head of the delegation. In the film there is very little engagement with non-Russians apart from the staff of the hotel in which the delegation and the émigré stay.[24] Despite the cross-cultural outlook of the film, it is in fact a straightforward Russian drama set in a European context. This is also the reason for the participation of the co-producing companies. Because the location for the film lies outside Russia, the foreign companies are sought for their local expertise, foreign subsidies[25] and desirable foreign locations. While these may be the prime reasons for a Russian film production to co-operate with foreign producers, the non-Russian investors in the film would in return hope to gain access to the Russian market and at the same time have reason to believe that the film would be marketable in their own respective countries. The latter is suggested in the casting of a French star, André Dussollier, in the role of the Russian émigré, which points towards their desire to make the film accessible to non-Russian viewers. Added to this is the curiosity about the feared Soviet Other who has turned into a recognisable human being exhibiting confusion at his/her newly formed national identity. In this regard, the representation of Russians abroad is comparable to other films in which Russians appear as fallen from grace (Iordanova 2000).

At the centre of the film's representation of Russians abroad is a delegation of people, who are shown as a quite disparate group of people hustling their way through the foreign city of Geneva with little money and no sense of pride. They are far from the

[24] Sergei Bodrov Jr. has a cameo appearance as a postman. This makes it the first screening of Bodrov's son, who was seen above in *Prisoner of the Mountains* and in Balabanov's *Brother 2*.
[25] The film received money from the European Union programme Eurimages (€228,674, according to Eurimages' webpage. Council of Europe, *Co-production support - Year 1992*, 14 09 2008 <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/eurimages/History/Coproduction/1992coproductions_EN.asp>).

threatening images of the feared Homo Sovieticus who dominated the mindset of Western Europeans during the Cold War. In *White King, Red Queen*, they are reduced to post-Soviet Russians who have great difficulties in navigating the Western European metropolis. This is, of course, in contrast to the flamboyant Russian émigré who drives a red sports car and has a son who vacillates between his father in France and his mother in New York. The main themes of the film are professional success, love and coming to terms with the shared communist past. In this regard, the film describes the delegation's turnaround within a couple of years from having the skills (and power) to control, to being without any valued cultural capital. What once was an asset has been reduced to nothingness. This goes especially for Ekaterina, the head of the delegation, a staunch communist believer, who suddenly sees her values discredited by the fall of communism, while at the same time, as Plakhov notes, it is too late to begin a new life (Plakhov 1992). Andrei Plakhov's festival report, which mentions Bodrov's film, reveals how Russian critics see this turnaround. Plakhov says,

> We are portrayed as a totally incorrigible people: both at home and abroad we easily betray one another, shamelessly sponge on foreigners, drink and steal, to say nothing of lesser vices. Anyway, who can reproach the picture as an exaggeration? The main idea is not so much to paint the Russians black, however, as to provide a background on which the nostalgic and tragicomic story of two lonely hearts is supposed to stand in greater relief (Plakhov 1992).

While Plakhov acknowledges the film's original depiction of Russians in a foreign space, he also sees them as a generic convention for the transnational co-production's aim to provide digestible characters for transnational consumption. One could see them as an attempt at forming a new, viable stereotype of the post-Soviet Russian, aiding the non-Russian viewer in easily reclassifying the new Russian subject after the fall of the Soviet Union.

In the postcolonial paradigm, these early representations of post-Soviet Russians can be viewed as first of all not posing any threat to their surroundings; they are, in short, harmless people, 'liberated' from communist ideology, and show a great desire to become part of the pan-European community. Ekaterina takes very seriously the offer from French-Russian Andrei of a life abroad. At one point, sitting at a café on a centre square and being asked for directions by two Japanese tourists, she toys with the idea of living there. She tells the Japanese that she lives in Geneva and that she has a very happy life in this beautiful city. However, she fails to convince herself, the viewers and the tourists (she tells them all this in Russian which they do not understand), and therefore has to stand Andrei up on the final night. Ekaterina is consciously mirroring, or masquerading as a postcolonial subject with a life abroad, but cannot connect with its reality. As Plakhov remarks, it is too late to start all over again and Ekaterina returns home to Russia. Significant in this regard is the fact that the delegation travels by train and hence endures no scrutiny of its post-Soviet national identity. Where cross-border travel within the two first chapters was remarkable for the high level of scrutiny (*Brother 2*) or none in the magical passage (*Window to Paris*), in *White King, Red Queen* the travel abroad is marked by a slower means of transportation. Where the cross-border train journey also has customs and passport control, travelling by air (or magical passage) carries the confrontational identity clash. This points to the fact that the train journey allows time for contemplation of border crossing and the self in this foreign space. Furthermore, if the film mediates the inclusion of Russians with all their postcolonial flaws as part of the European space, then the train also signifies this. The

train with its track system (re)connects the divided spheres of Cold War Europe.[26] The mediation of Russia as part of Europe is also one of the main themes in *Bear's Kiss*. However, here it is not the old train track that reconnects Europe but a travelling circus.

Bear's Kiss has been viewed as a Europudding, a term that, according to Anne Jäckel, signifies "a hybrid mixing of artistic and cultural inputs, in which the use of a polyglot cast and international locations betrays the film's multinational sources of finance" (Jäckel 2003, 62). In this way, *Bear's Kiss* is part of a tradition of European co-productions that focus on financial returns, on genre films with recognisable characters (stereotypes) and situations (clichés). That said, it could be argued that the film also fails in this task, which might explain the film's poor box office returns. Rather than seeing the film's failure as *comme il faut* of the Europudding genre, this investigation will argue that the representation of Russians abroad in *Bear's Kiss* is too ambiguous.

Although the production of *Bear's Kiss* is similar to the making of *White King, Red Queen*, there are several notable differences serving to mark the development of the Russian transnational co-production. *Bear's Kiss* is a co-production between six companies of different nationalities: Spanish, Swedish, Italian, French, German and Russian.[27] They all have a sizable stake in a film that has the travelling circus pick up a bear in Russia, cross over into Sweden and continue down through Europe to end on the southern coast of Spain. Where *White King, Red Queen* arose from a Russian context,

[26] One will still have to change track system between Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, which uses a narrower gauge than the European model.
[27] *Bear's Kiss* received €763,000 from Eurimages according to their website (Council of Europe , *Co-production - Year 2000*, 14 09 2008) <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/eurimages/History/Coproduction/2000coproductions_EN.asp#TopOfPage>.

Bear's Kiss seems to have been thought of as a European film from the outset. This is evident from the Russian involvement of the STV film company, which is present only to facilitate the shooting location in Russia, and the casting of Bodrov's now famous son in a leading role.[28] The casting strategy of the film goes beyond attracting Russian audiences through the name of Bodrov Jr. The only Russian character is Misha, the bear, while Rebecka Liljeberg, whose name became internationally known after her performance in Lukas Moodysson's *Fucking Åmål*/*Show Me Love* (1998),[29] is the leading female star of the film. With each production company bringing their own stars into the film, the cast lists performers from the same countries as the film companies: Spain, France, Italy and Germany (Russia and Sweden already mentioned). This mixture of cultural input makes the film 'noisy', a term Mette Hjort has used to describe the "self-defeating" co-production, which mixes cultural elements such that the viewer, for whatever reason, finds them confusing or distracting (Hjort 2005, 195).

The review of the film on *KinoKultura* points exactly to this noisiness. Daniel H. Wild, an American specialist in German cinema, laments the film as reactionary,[30] saying that

> the notion of *Bear's Kiss* as a contemporary European film is troubling. The film promises a Europe without borders but, in doing so, abandons any nuanced conceptions of difference, save for the most hackneyed and humorless caricatures possible. This is the reason that we are offered gypsy

[28] Sergei Bodrov Jr gained significant notoriety from his role in Balabanov's first *Brother* film and directed the evenhanded Mafiosi flick *Syostry*/*Sisters* (2002), which was also produced by STV in St Petersburg. Another element in Bodrov Jr.'s rise to fame lies in his appearance in 2001 as presenter on the popular reality show *Poslednii geroi* (The Last Hero/Stowaway) on the Russian NTV channel. The employment of the popular actor was part of a strategy to guarantee high ratings. See Mikhail Trofimenkov, *Poslednii geroi: Sergei Bodrov*, Moskva (Bystrov EKSMO, 2003), p 156.
[29] Swedish Memfis film, which produces Moodysson's films, also took part in the production of *Bear's Kiss*. Rebecca Liljeberg has since abandoned her cinema career for medical studies in Stockholm.
[30] While not criticizing Wild for his evaluation of *Bear's Kiss*, the study will, however, point to Bergfelder's argument above which stated that the premise for the European co-production, especially in the 1960s, was, more often than not, reactionary. The type of film Bergfelder had in mind was far from the liberal auteur cinema of the same time and so are the films here.

> fortune-tellers in Spain who dance flamenco at night, that we see respectable businessmen suitably repulsed yet mesmerized by the harmless freakishness of street performers, that any understanding of the difficulties in a nomadic life has been reduced to the depiction of journeys across bridges. (Wild 2004).

This leads Wild to account for the film as reactionary rather than liberal. However, *Bear's Kiss* should be seen in line with the European co-production that focuses more on financial return than on truthful representation. While it is clear what is wrong with the film, with its contrived effort of mixing pan-European national identities into a continuous narrative, what needs to be emphasised is their verification through the vetting process of the co-production mode. The representations must have been seen, judged, and approved by everyone, including the Russian producer, and hence agreed upon as reflecting sentiments in transnational audiences that would potentially buy cinema tickets. Thus, the film does not include a Soviet delegation as in *White King, Red Queen*, which saw Russians as a disparate group of people. In *Bear's Kiss*, the Russian abroad is a single male Russian, in the form of a bear, who cannot be caged and consequently has to be released into the Siberian forest. It is here that the representation of Russianness in *Bear's Kiss* is ambiguous, because the Russian beast/man cannot or should not be caged, since his rightful home is the Siberian forest. We cannot as a spectator be sure if the representation of Misha (Bodrov Jr) is a nationalistic one (Russianness cannot be caged), or one that reflects Western anxiety concerning Russia in the post-Soviet era (Russianness should be caged). In both cases, it appears that the post-Soviet Russian's home is not in Europe.

This does not, however, affect any use of the postcolonial paradigm, because it is in this image of the caged bear that the connection to other representations of Russians abroad

can be found. In the films discussed, most of the Russians abroad were men forming various relationships while outside Russia; Sergei in *Urga*, Danila in *Brother 2*, and, not least, Kolya in *Window to Paris*. In this transnationally-formed representations, the bear/man Misha and his liberator Lola, the daughter of the circus director, form a heated love affair. The relationship between the Russian 'man' and the foreign woman/girl also informs the film's position in the postcolonial syncretism, which is that of freewill and love that knows no national borders.[31] However, Misha is a bear and held captive by his circus environment, consigned to perform an exotic animal's dance that is meant to infuse both fear and awe into the spectator of the show. Misha is meant to, on the one hand, tickle a latent fear of the beast, while on the other hand, amaze the audience with his well trained tricks, emphasising the ability to master the fearsome animal. This, of course, lends itself to the analysis of post-Soviet Russia as the bear, which is captured in the Siberian forest and brutally misplaced in a cage. Nonetheless, it is the love relationship that the focus should be on, because it is here that the formation of the Russian male as eroticised is most clearly visible. While Misha has little by way of cultural capital and skills, his chief asset is his body both as man and bear. Thus the film has lingering shots of Misha's naked body and his abilities to lure female partners, which amounts to postcolonial males being fetishised as both dangerous and erotically alluring. Interestingly, Daniel Gerould has noted that the transformation from bear to man, or reverse, is hidden from the spectator, "we never see the painful intermediary and grotesque moments […] both bear and natural man are wholly beautiful and noble" (Gerould 2005, 50). Hiding the grotesque creates a postcolonial savage, who is both noble and beautiful.

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[31] The rape paradigm is invoked, but rather than Misha enduring this, it is Lola who has to fend off her substitute father figure attempting to rape her, and Misha who has to save her from this. This too points to the film being of a postcolonial mode that sees the Russian abroad from an 'insider's' perspective.

Lastly, as has been noticed, *Bear's Kiss* performs the return narrative, which, just as in *White King, Red Queen*, points to the difficulty for the Russian abroad to feel at home. In particular, in *Bear's Kiss* the return narrative is pronounced as it is framed with the capture and release of the bear into the Siberian forest. Lola's mission in life becomes to return the bear that cannot be caged to Siberia, and, while setting her loved one free, she herself turns into a bear. Together they run into the forest (a rather Russian metaphorical sunset). The return narrative of Misha is typical of Russian cinema, as seen in the two previous chapters. However, the films of Bodrov differ greatly from those other films. Bodrov's representations of Russians abroad are formed out of a desire to explain, translate, and/or decode Russian values for transnational consumption. Thus, in *Bear's Kiss*, an erotic male is caged at daytime as a bear, but is lovingly and tenderly affectionate at night for the few believers. One could view it as a fairytale like *Beauty and the Beast* (Gerould 2005). Bearing this in mind, it could be asserted that Misha is a postcolonial King Kong that will die in captivity but that the (white) European girl can reach out to him through love and tenderness.

2.3 *The Quickie*

With *The Quickie* the investigation moves further afield – to a US setting, which means that although it predates *Bear's Kiss*, *The Quickie* accentuates the erotic exoticism of Misha the bear/man. *The Quickie* is a European co-production that, contrary to *Bear's Kiss*, is marketed as an American Hollywood production. It is a play on the common Russian stereotype of the post-Soviet Russian gangster who is loved by both contemporary Russian cinema (as seen in *Brother 2*) and popular American action

thrillers. *The Quickie* contains a mixture of these two cinematic traditions of representing the postcommunist Russian gangster abroad. On the one hand, the film serves to paint a new background and the emergence of a new Russian Other as seen in popular American cinema. On the other, the film reasserts the former Second World identities in the setting of the First World, as seen in contemporary Russian cinema. Where *Brother 2* is a case of the latter, examples of the former would be *Little Odessa* (1994) by James Gray or *Lord of War* (2005) by Andrew Niccol. In these two American productions the setting is the émigré communities of Brighton Beach in New York, which forms a background of the ethnic Russo-American hero who lives on the edge of the law with grave moral distress.[32] In *Little Odessa* the hero is a professional hit man, and in *Lord of War* he is an arms dealer.

Bodrov's script (co-written together with Carolyn Cavallero) plays on these accepted Hollywood representations. Oleg is preparing his New Year party by gathering together his family; his mother and her new young Latino husband, his half-brother who was born in the US to a different father, his lawyer and the lawyer's beautiful wife. Oleg has assembled these persons to announce that he is to retire from the business, which he intends to leave in the hands of his half-brother. To the dismay of his personal bodyguard (played by Bodrov Jr.), who sees himself as the natural inheritor of the business empire that works mostly on the margins of the market place. However, Oleg's Mafiosi partners back in Russia are not entirely happy with Oleg's newly-found desire to go legitimate. They therefore place a contract on his head; a task that lands on the desk of Lisa, a trailer park girl who besides being a professional contract killer has lost

[32] In terms of a British context, then *Eastern Promises* by David Cronenberg (2007) serves to illustrate that the Russian gangster is not an exclusively US phenomenon.

the custody of her daughter. When Lisa turns up as a pest controller, Oleg senses something is not right. In any case, he allows her into his lavish world and, just like the bear Misha, woos his female opposite number.

Focusing on a few scenes from this action thriller, it is the intimate scenes that in particular reveal the fetishization of the Russian male body. At the New Year party, the half-brother has ordered several call girls to join the party, and one of them ends up in Oleg's bedroom, just as Oleg learns about the contract on his head. Sitting naked in his bed, Oleg plays with his gun, challenging the girl to a game of Russian roulette. High on cocaine and champagne, she accepts. What is significant about this scene is the fact that Oleg is the desired object; the scene is made for him, his muscular body, his luxurious life style and his strong character (if one can say this about people willing to play Russian roulette). And the female character desires this person, who is defined by one of the most tried, and tired, clichés about Russia and Russians, the Russian roulette. This is not the postcolonial King Kong like Misha (although Oleg has some similarities), but the postcolonial stereotype comprised of sexual attraction and truism: the body that oozes sex appeal. In another scene, this is even more obvious. The pest controller, Lisa, is invited to dine with Oleg. The table is set for eating caviar by the spoonful, *pelmeni* in a creamy sauce, the Crazy Russian cocktail of vodka and champagne, all of which are explained by Oleg. These easily-identifiable Russian delicacies are part of the construction of the Russianness that is aimed at popular audiences. If these are stereotypical elements, where is the 'informer' aspect of Bodrov's narrative? Where does the transnational paradigm divert from the other films that have already been

examined and from the non-Russian films that will be concentrated on in the next part of the study?

The aspect of the transnational informer narrative lies mainly in the employment of the actor Mashkov as the main protagonist, Oleg. Vladimir Mashkov rose to become a notable star in Russian cinema in the 1990s.[33] He is, in the words of Olga Gershenson, "tagged as a sex symbol in Russia" (Gershenson and Hudson 2007, 180). His presence in *The Quickie* makes the film stand out from the other Russian gangster diaspora narratives, as mentioned earlier, because he infuses empathy and a certain amount of genuineness into his criminal characters. Although Mashkov is not recognisable to non-Russian viewers, casting him in the role of the Russian gangster who seeks redemption for his past but who is caught up with his homeland's refusal to let him retire, adds verisimilitude to the Russian gangster image that the American counterpart often lacks. It indicates Bodrov's desire to challenge the stereotypical representation of Russians abroad through a character that carries weight in terms of national authenticity. In the postcolonial syncretism, Oleg performs none of the shenanigans of the Gorokhovs, the antagonism of Danila or the displacement of Sergei. Rather he is natural in his setting of the West Coast environment, despite his shady business empire, the nature of which is not at all explained in the film. We as spectators get no explicit insight into the criminality of Oleg's cultural capital; there is no ruthlessness of the Russian Mafiosi boss, or any hints at Oleg's 'work' as undesirable for the host nation.

[33] See *Vor*/*Thief* (Pavel Chukhai, 1997) and *Oligarkh*/*Tycoon* (Pavel Lungin, 2002). Mashkov also scripted, directed and starred in the film *Papa*/*Daddy* (2004). *The Quickie* was styled as the film that would cannon Mashkov into the American market and levitate his career from Russian fame into international stardom. For this perceptive observation, the study is indebted to Julian Graffy.

Another way in which Oleg differs from those Russians abroad in Russian cinema is by comparing Mashkov's character in *The Quickie* to that of Aleksei in Karen Shakhnazarov's film *American Daughter* (1995), mentioned earlier. In *American Daughter*, Mashkov plays Aleksei, the father seeking to take his daughter back to Russia. The daughter has been taken to the US by her mother, who has re-married a wealthy American. Aleksei 'kidnaps' the little girl and the two attempt to reach the Mexican border to fly back to Russia. There are great similarities in these two films: both films star Vladimir Mashkov in the leading role, both films are entirely set in the United States, and both films centre on the estranged hero trying to get his family together. Furthermore, both films portray Russian ex-Soviet mothers as selfish gold-diggers, who leave behind their male partners in the struggle for survival. However, *American Daughter* is a much more straightforward narrative of Russian self-representation.[34] There are no references to Russian gangsters, Russian roulette or pelmeni in a creamy sauce. Instead we encounter a small-time Russian musician, who just wants to take his 6-year-old daughter back to Russia to visit her Babushka. In the comparison of Aleksei to Oleg, a shift is revealed in representing Russians abroad. This shift happens because of the transnational co-production: Bodrov (and his co-writer) has to mould his representation according to the general perception or stereotype of what constitutes being Russian and being Russian abroad. This is why the viewers get the sexualisation of the Russian male and the display of truisms about Russianness.

[34] The film was partly produced by Roskomkino, the Russian state agency for film financing, and hence resembles the production mode of *White King, Red Queen*. The production companies involved are Kur'er Studio and Karavan. The producer of the film was Boris Giller.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with transnational Russian cinema, a line of filmmaking that grew significantly after 1991 and of which Sergei Bodrov is an exemplary case. Due to Bodrov's own liminality (he resides between Moscow and Los Angeles), his filmmaking reflects a tradition in transnational filmmaking where co-operation with foreign producers instructs the modifications in and variations on the theme of Russians abroad. This analysis began in the near abroad and has ended on the West Coast of the US. The study looked at how the 'cultural capital' of Russian soldiers, acting in the hostile 'near abroad' of the Caucasus, plays out in a region that has seen centuries of colonisation and has only recently become emancipated. This is, however, modified in Bodrov's film, *Prisoner of the Mountains*, which carries a seemingly anti-colonial message. The co-production modes of the other Bodrov films examined also reveal the shaping influences on new representations of Russians abroad. In *White King, Red Queen*, *Bear's Kiss* and *The Quickie* in particular, the investigation saw how Russians abroad are constructed with transnational audiences in mind. Firstly, the Russians were confused over their postcommunist positions; secondly, the representation tends to be male-orientated, with exotic and erotic elements. Overall, representations in transnational cinema are edged, rounded and softened by the 'informer' status of the transnational filmmaker. Accordingly, here the representations of Russians abroad differ significantly from the self-representation found in post-Soviet Russian cinema, because it is about characters that have to be acceptable and digestible for transnational viewers. In order for the films to be able to communicate with their target audiences, they deliberately play with existing popular stereotypes (like the one of the Russian gangster) that are familiar to audiences across national borders and instantly recognizable.

All films looked at in this chapter have been co-produced with some participation from Russia, and in that they differ significantly from the films investigated in the previous two chapters. The next chapter will keep the focus on films made from the 'informer' perspective, but will highlight cinematic representations of Russians abroad where no Russian financial co-operation is involved.

Chapter 6: Russian Diasporic Cinema

1. Diasporic Cinema

This chapter examines how two filmmakers of Russian origin, each in their different way, have migrated and re-established themselves in an Israeli context. Here the study detects most clearly signs of accented, exilic and diasporic style, as described by Hamid Naficy (2001). Russian-Israeli cinema offers an excellent opportunity to examine the representation of Russians abroad, not only because the influx of Russian migration to Israel leads to an abundance of representations concerned with Russians travelling abroad, but also because some Russian filmmakers have migrated to Israel and, subsequently, have experienced the turn-around that follows displacement from one country to another. Others, growing up in Israel, have trained as filmmakers here and carry the experience of migration and diaspora over into their filmmaking. They are different from the Soviet émigré filmmakers who had no option of returning or collaborating with the Soviet Union.

This chapter opens with some historical observations of Russian immigration into Israel, which make a clear distinction between the first wave of immigrants, from the early 70s to the early 80s, and the second wave, which began in 1989. Then the focus shifts to explore the contexts of Israeli cinema and to underline specific considerations given to ethnicity within the Israeli/Jewish national and multicultural identity. It is in this context that the two Russian-Israeli filmmakers, Leonid Gorovets and Arik Kaplun, will be dealt with. Just as with Bodrov, the study will first give a biographical account of their respective migration trajectories and then provide close analyse of their films. The chapter makes observations concerning new developments in Russian-Israeli

filmmaking by briefly discussing films by the younger generation of Russian diasporic filmmakers.

1.1 The Israeli Context

The World Refugee Survey states at the beginning of every report, "Jews are eligible to immigrate and become Israeli citizens under the Law of Return" (USCRI 1998). The Law of Return is sometimes referred to as repatriation, emphasizing a Jew's right 'to return' to the Promised Land. However, this right to return has led to ethnic conflicts not only in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian relations, but also between ethnic Jews, between the Ashkenazis and the Sephardis. While both groups originate in Europe, Ashkenazi in Germany and Sephardi in Spain, the term 'Sephardi' has largely become associated with the Oriental Jews.[1] The position of most Russian-Soviet Jews within the hierarchy is highly ambiguous – while technically they are Yiddish-speakers and clearly not Oriental Sephardic Jews, they are nonetheless somehow peripheral to what the desired Israeli Jew is. There are some 'second class' feelings (or inferiority issues) associated with the Russian Jew, playing on a hushed gradation that is somewhat muted but sufficiently well known to everybody familiar with the realities of contemporary Israel. There is something in the cultural capital of the Russian Jew that is not quite right. Ethnically looking the part of the white European Ashkenazi, the Russian immigrant is poor, in need of economic support, and behaves differently; in an Israeli

[1] The term Mizrahi might be better suited, as it groups the Jews who originate from the Arab world. However, Mizrahi Jews use the Sephardi liturgy, and hence are grouped as Sephardi.This study will use the term 'Sephardi' here because of the ethnic connotations. Sephardi Jews are considered to be Mediterranean and not just Spanish Jews. Just as Ashkenazi has become an umbrella term for white Northern European Jews, so Sephardi has become the term for the Oriental, black Jews. That said, this dynamic excludes consideration of the Ethiopian Jew, who are black. The voice of the Sephardi community is much larger because of size, therefore, more politically and culturally influential.

perspective, he is unscrupulous, dishonest and corrupt. This detail is highly important in this study's consideration of representations of Russians abroad, as the somewhat lower standing sometimes given to the Russian-Israeli immigrant can result in tension, which characterises all social interactions involving the new immigrants.

It is an ambiguity that could be seen as an expression of the difference between the First and Third World. As Ella Shohat has observed, "although Zionism collapses the Sephardi and the Ashkenazi into a single category of 'one people', at the same time the Sephardi's oriental 'difference' threatens the European ideal-ego" (Shohat 1987, 207). It is the Sephardi ethnic difference that problematises Israel's European belonging, pointing rather to Israel's geographical position in the Middle East. Post-Soviet Russian migration to Israel is viewed generally as a flow that is fuelled by economic concerns rather than Zionist zeal, a situation that radically undermines their standing in the new country.If the Sephardi lowliness threatens the lofty Israeli European ideal, then Russian immigration with its legacy of totalitarianism and inadequate cultural capital also stirs up problems for the narration of Eurocentric Israel. The Sephardi threaten on the level of ethnicity and race, but while the Russian Jew conforms to the European ideal as far as appearance is concerned, he/she still stands out in his position of liminality on the margins of Europe. While Russian migration history reports Russian Jews as being Ashkenazi, in Israel, the postcommunist Russian immigrants are regarded as inadequate individuals who have trouble fitting the Jewish European-ideal and who remain suspended between the First World and the Third World, between the Occident and the Orient.

1.2 Russian Migration to Israel

It is important to stress from the outset that migration to Israel from Russia and the Soviet Union has a long history and, although the emphasis of this study is on the two waves of the late 20th century, this migration process has gone on for much longer. Since the late 19th century Zionist newcomers have migrated to Palestine through different Aliyah movements.[2] Emigration from Russia only increased after the revolution in 1917 when Soviet Jews emigrated to Yishuv (Jewish communities) in Palestine for ideological reasons in order to build a Kibbutz where socialist and Zionist ideas merged into the utopian idea of communal living. Later, after the establishment of the State of Israel, migration from the Soviet Union became less oriented towards ideology and more a result of a threat of anti-Semitic pogroms, which swept over the Cold War socialist countries.[3] This early migration is important to the study at hand, because contemporary Israeli cinema has to be analysed in terms of its representation of conflicting ethnic constellations (in this case the conflict between the Askhenazi and Sephardi Jews). The mythical ideal that these two forms of Jewish identity aspire to is the Sabra Jew. Sabra means 'born in Palestine' and has, according to Oz Almoq, "turned into something of a linguistic code for expressing the nation's love for its loyal youth […] the stereotypical Sabra appeared to become a cultural hero" (Almoq 2000, 8). Russian immigrants are part of the formation of this Jewish ideal, but it has to be

[2] Haim Watzman identifies five such waves of migration leading up to the establishment of the Israeli state and Russian immigrants were very much part of these movements. See Haim Watzman, "Translator's Note," in *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, trans. Haim Watzman, xii-xiv (Berkeley, Los Angels, London: University of Califonia, 2000) One example is the Bilu Movement, which in the 1880s built the very first Ailyah, fleeing Russian pogroms.
[3] There are several examples of Soviet plots against Jews, for example the Doctors' plot (1952-53), which was instigated as the newly founded Israeli state formed closer ties with the West. Stalin got paranoid, thinking that Jewish doctors were conspiring to kill leading Soviet figures. The official line was against Jewish nationalism and cosmopolitanism, but Jewish doctors were singled out as enemies of the state.

recognised that they are also part of a perennial European position that differs from the Ashkenazi West European ideal (Shohat 1987, 208).

This study will concentrate on Russians of late Soviet and postcommunist migration, since Russians "constitute the largest ethnic group to have immigrated to the Israeli state" (Kimmerling 2001, 136). Therefore, the contextualisation that frames the analysis of the two films and their filmmakers lies within the period of the early 1970s up to the present day.

1.2.1 The First Wave of Russian Immigrants

The wave started in 1971 and ended ten years later, in 1981, when the 'open gate' policy of the Soviet authorities was abandoned. While Soviet Jews still emigrated both prior to and after this period, it is generally believed that the possibility for allowing a great number of Soviet Jews to emigrate was instigated by the Soviet Union itself. Where the Khrushchev period (1954-64) saw only 2,418 Jews emigrating, the number of people migrating during the Brezhnev period (1964-84) soon began to increase. The outflow peaked in 1979 with 51,320 leaving the country in just one year, only to decrease dramatically by 1982, when only a couple of thousand migrated (Karlikow 1983, 32). Overall, the Brezhnev period saw about 250,000 Soviet Jews departing for a life outside the communist bloc. This does not mean that all Soviet Jewish emigrants ended up in Israel. A great number chose either not to travel to Israel once they reached

Vienna,[4] or simply to leave for other countries after spending some time in Israel. According to Kimmerling (2001, 139), only 57,000 immigrants chose Israel as their final destination. Thus, it appears that only a quarter of the people who emigrated actually ended up in Israel.

Several factors contributed to the Soviet Union's opening this gate of migration, but the most important one was the pressure coming from Jews and their organisations, both inside and outside the Soviet Union, which forced the question of emigration to be addressed. This is evident in the fact that almost 400,000 Jews in the Soviet Union had asked for permission to leave the country (Karlikow 1983, 35) by the time the migration gate closed. It is small wonder that, when the gate opened again in 1989, many Jews were already prepared to go with what was to become the second wave of migration. Furthermore, it is important to note that whereas the first wave had a 'choice' in destination, the second wave was characterised by having Israel as 'practically' the only possible country of migration (Kimmerling 2001, 139), largely because the US had imposed a strict selection process on people emigrating from the Soviet Union which, as a result, almost stopped migration of Russians to the United States. In short, the second wave had fewer alternatives in its country of destination when embarking on migration.

[4] Vienna was the first destination en route to Israel (the Soviet Union had cut diplomatic relations with Israel in 1967 and direct journey was impossible). Here many opted for changing their Israeli destination. See Abraham Karlikow, "Soviet Jewish Emigration: The Closing Gate," *World Refugee Survey 1983*, 1983, p 35. This is also the destination of the leading character of Georgi Danelia, *Passport* (1990), in which migration to Israel happens by accident.

1.2.2 Second Wave of Russian Immigration

The second wave began in 1989 when restrictions on migration from the Soviet Union were loosened as a consequence of Glasnost. The figure for postcommunist immigration to Israel amounts to almost 850,000 arriving from the former Soviet Union during the 1990s (USCRI 2000), which, according to Madij Al-Haj, "constitutes about 15 per cent of the Israeli population [7.1 million]" (Al-Haj 2002, 52).[5] Although the fall of communism split the Soviet Empire into 15 different countries, migration figures continued to count them as a whole. The non-differential term 'Russian speaking' is used when issues of migration from the former Soviet Union are dealt with in the Israeli context. Alternatively, scholars insert inverted commas over the word 'Russians' (Al-Haj 2002, Santo 2005, 22). While both practices reflect that not all immigrants from the former Soviet Union are Russian Jews, it is vital to highlight that the term 'immigrants from FSU' (the former Soviet Union) is confusing. The World Refugee Report from 1998 acknowledges this when it states that in 1998 Ukrainian Jews were double the number of immigrants from the Russian Republic (USCRI 1998).[6] Despite this, it is still difficult to say how many of these immigrants are Russian, as Russian Jews might just as well have migrated from the territories beyond Russia proper. For example, many Russian Jews moved to Central Asia during the Soviet period and hence would have migrated from there. It is outside the scope of this study to break down the numbers of immigration to Israel into ethnicities from the Soviet bloc. Yet, it is important to keep

[5] This is still under the 20 per cent (1.5 million) mark, which is the population size of Arab Israelis. It is important to emphasise that when we speak of the position of Russian immigrants within Israeli society and their identity formation therein, we are articulating national Jewish identities, which are placed above the Arab Israeli identity that finds itself at the bottom of the stratification.

[6] Baruch Kimmerling proffers numbers of 201,000 from Russia proper, 200,000 from the Ukraine, 140,000 from Central Asia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, and 115,000 from the Baltic States, Moldavia and Belarus. See Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001), p141.

these details in mind, when examining this flow of migration in terms of ethnic identity formation within Israeli society.

A migrational flow the size of the Russian immigration to Israel is bound to make an impact on the receiving society and as such the waves of Russian immigrants have had a major impact on the cultural, ethnical and national outlook of Israel. Israeli society is said to consist of seven cultural strata: middle-class Ashkenazi; a national religious class; traditionalist Sephardi/Mizrahi; Orthodox religious; Arab/Palestinians; Russian and finally Ethiopian (Kimmerling 2001, 2). Because the Israelis are divided by ethnicity, religious rituals and class, the influx of immigrants of Soviet origin also becomes subdivided within this stratification. In other words, the immigrants are divided into migrants from the southern Soviet sphere (Georgia, Caucasus and Central Asia) and the 'European' Soviet sphere, but this does not automatically mean that 'European' Russian Jews are elevated to Ashkenazi status. Rather Russians are left to fight for a better position with the Sephardis; from the Ashkenazis' point of view, the Russian immigrants are still viewed as inferior to European Jewry and the Sabra ideal. It is important to stress this fallen status of the Russian Jew, because it reflects the large scale disappearance of the Second World, and with it, Russia's position as a World superpower. It is due to the poor economic status of the Russian immigrant, infused with the quasi-European position of being Russian, that the Russian Jew is aligned with the Sephardi position. It is here that the postcolonial perspective can be detected in representations of the Russian Jew.

The Russian imperial 'fatigue' that was examined earlier in both Russian cinema and Russian transnational cinema is also felt in diaspora. Dimitry Shumsky accounts for a 'Russian speaking' Orientalism and Islamophobia within the Russian-Israeli intelligentsia. This Russian-Soviet imperialist discourse functions on the local level as representing an identity which sees itself as superior to other minorities in Israel and, on a global level, as a Western defence against the common Islamic 'enemy' (Shumsky 2005). This corresponds to the assertions made in the section on Russian self-representation, where antagonism against other minorities was said to constitute an important part of confirming the Russian self as part of the First World. This is not a discourse exclusive to the postcommunist era. Writing in the mid 1980s, Ella Shohat remarked that

> the Ostjuden, perennially marginalised by Europe, realised their desire of becoming European, ironically, in the Middle East, this time on the back of their own 'Ostjuden', the Eastern Jews. Having passed through their own 'ordeal of civility', as the 'Blacks' of Europe, they now imposed their own civilising standards on their own 'Blacks' [the Sephardis] (Shohat 1987, 208).

Where this is an established discourse, and one that serves the national dominant voice of 'Israel's European-ideal,' then the children of postcommunist migration show more complex attitudes towards Mizrahim culture and literature, forming alternative modes of negotiating the ethnicities of Israel (Lomsky-Feder, Rapoport and Lerner 2005). However, this generation also has critical views on the national Israeli ethos, viewing the national Zionism as the only parameter of assimilation (Lomsky-Feder and Rapoport 2001). This suggests that Russian-Israeli immigrants are redefining their self-perception in relation to other diasporic communities, and in particular in relation to the older and larger Sephardi group.

2 Israeli Cinema

Since this study explores Israeli representations from the transnational perspective, it is the transnational journey of the filmmaker that is of most interest. How is the exilic and diasporic trajectory reflected in the expression of the films? Since the state of Israel is founded on the influx of Jews, the history of its cinema also consists of the histories of individual filmmakers' migration. In this regard, the account of Russians abroad in Israeli films will also emphasize on the personal history of the filmmakers. Having said that, the Israeli cinematic context is obsessed with Jewish national identity, which is most clearly detected in the specific portrayal of Sephardi identity. Ella Shohat's pioneering research sets up the interpretative framework of the Ashkenazi and Sephardi ethnic divide and its relation to the Arab-Palestinian conflict which is continued in later studies such as *Beyond Flesh* by Raz Yosef (2000) and *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen* by Yosefa Loshitzky (2001). Despite the fact that general academic work on Israeli cinema tends to exclude the Russian element in Israeli filmmaking, recent research aims to fill this gap. The favoured approach is through the writings of Hamid Naficy (1999, 2001), and Laura U. Marks (2000). However, in Marks' and Naficy's transnational cinema studies, hybridity becomes experimental in form, fusing documentary, fiction, personal and experimental genres (Marks 2000, 7). In Russian-Israeli cinema, on the other hand, the mode of diasporic film production is not entirely divorced from the Israeli film industry (Santo 2005, 39) and its normative mainstream national cinema. Instead the diasporic approach is revealed in terms of an overall examination of representation, gender and ethnicity (Gershenson and Hudson 2008, 2007). This study examines the particularities of representation within Israeli cinema and its relationship to the postcolonial syncretism, revealing how the representation of Russians is formed on the backdrop of other ethnic and gendered representations.

For this reason, it is necessary to pick up on Boureka cinema (1960s-1980s) and its portrayal of Sephardi identity, which has "a prevalent *topos* in the current post-colonial discourse" (Loshitzky 1996). The stereotypical portrayal of Sephardi in the Boureka films (a term derived from the spaghetti western) and in popular films centring on the Oriental Sephardis, is found in popular comedies like *Sallah Shabati* (Ephaim Kishon, 1964). The film is one of Shohat's examples of popular representations of Sephardis, where they are depicted as the undeveloped Oriental, and of Askhenazis as the natural Israelis who make the desert bloom. As in the Eurocentric framework, the Oriental here is associated with death and the European – with life and development (Shohat 1987, 158). In *Fortuna* (Menahem Golan, 1966), the focus is on the Sephardi woman in need of rescue (the Russian equivalent of which was seen in Balabanov's *Brother 2*).[7] However, as a consequence of these misrepresentations, the fortification of Oriental identity leads to the formation of the Israeli Black Panther movement (Loshitzky 1996, 100, n5). In other words, issues of representation in Boureka films of the early 1970s became the backdrop to the Black Panther movement in Israel and a reinforced attitude of resistance and fight back.

[7] In this regard, it should be mentioned that Israeli society has been the target for postcommunist trafficking of women for prostitution, in which postcommunism is seen as the main trigger. See Yossi Dahan and Nomi Levenkron, "Trafficking in Women in Israel," *Theory and Criticism* 24 (Spring 2004): 45-71. Trafficking is the subject of Amos Gitai's *Promised Land* (2004), where Russian-Estonian girls are trafficked to work in an underwater brothel. In a realistic style Gitai's film tells of a murky underworld that entails smuggling through the Sinai desserts by Bedouins, just as described in *McMafia* by Misha Glenny, who has a chapter on prostitution in Israel, tracing the trajectory of one particular woman, Moldovian-Russian Ludmila Baldinova. See Misha Glenny, *McMafia: A Journey through the Global Criminal Underworld* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).

While postcommunist Russian immigration has not formed an equivalent of the Black Panther movement (itself an indication of refusing a postcolonial position), Russian-Israelis do feature as an integral part of the Israeli subculture, e.g. in rap music.[8] As with Sephardis in the Boureka films, *how* Russians are represented in work by Russian-Israeli filmmakers is of vital importance in the consolidation of a postcommunist Russian-Israeli identity. The analysis focuses on the work of two filmmakers, whose similarities and differences represent the ways in which Russian-Israeli filmmakers engage with/in Israeli cinema. The investigation begins with the journey of Leonid Gorovets because, although he belongs to the second, later wave of Russian migrants, he is the oldest of the two filmmakers. Furthermore, his film, *Coffee with Lemon* (1994), was made earlier than Arik Kaplun's *Yana's Friends* (1999). Thus, even if Leonid Gorovets migrated to Israel after Arik Kaplun, his migratory trajectory takes logical precedence.

2.1 A Road to the Jewish Homeland I

Leonid Gorovets (b. 1950) emigrated from Kiev in 1990, largely, "because of the Chernobyl accident, but, to be honest, I still do not understand why. Even after all these years" (Gorovets 2007). He has two degrees, one in Russian and the other in filmmaking, from the State University of Moscow. Gorovets completed his first feature *Damskii portnoi*/*Ladies' Tailor* (1990), on a Holocaust topic, which enjoyed considerable success both in and outside the Soviet Union. While calling the film "not great" (192), Judith Kornblatt (1999) still goes on to write a 15-page article about it.

[8] This is evident in the Russian-Israeli rapper Vulkan, who has risen to considerable success with his style of mixing both Russian and Hebrew into his lyrics.

The film won an award at a festival in Germany, and its leading actor, Innokenti Smoktunovsky, took the Best Actor award at the Soviet Nika Awards in 1990. Although it might seem strange for the director to emigrate just as he is enjoying the success of a debut film, it is important to stress that at the time there were great uncertainties as to where the Soviet Union was heading. The political hard-liners could as easily have gained the upper hand, as could the reforming forces. As Gorovets said, "the second wave emigrated out of fear. Out of the fear of what could happen with the Soviet Union" (Gorovets 2007). Therefore the case of Gorovets follows the general pattern of the second wave of immigration, where the ideological grounds for migration are subdued, and the uncertainties of what the future holds are cited as the main motivation.[9]

In Israel, Gorovets has made only one feature film and has since worked mostly in television production, having made a numbers of documentaries (Kornblatt 1999, 193, n10). The small national film industry cannot cater for all its members, hence idle times for filmmakers are commonplace and often work in television comes in handy for providing the daily bread.[10] Furthermore, because Gorovets is less religious in conviction with regard to his profession, he finds himself being censored by the Israeli industry authorities. Gorovets states: "I consider myself a very 'Christian' Jew and at times feel that Jewishness (the skullcap or Kippah) is used as an emblem of access and virtue, just as the party membership card was a necessary thing to hold during

[9] In this regard, Herz Frank could be mentioned. He immigrated to Israel in 1993 and was the leading figure in the Riga School of Poetic Documentary Cinema. Frank continues to work from Latvia despite taking residence in Jerusalem.

[10] This is not something that is particular to the immigrant filmmaker, but rather a condition that affects the field as a whole. Furthermore, Israeli cinema has a preoccupation with documentary filmmaking, which often spills over into TV production. The genre of documentary is highly regarded and, at times, placed higher than feature filmmaking.

communism" (Gorovets 2007). In this way, Gorovets feels outside the hegemonic society and emphasises that his film, *Coffee with Lemon*, was criticised both in Israel and in Russia. The film did better outside these countries, in the United States and in Germany, where Gorovets felt he received more understanding for his work than in Israel. Gorovets continues to uphold the sense of being a Russian Jew in Diaspora, rather than being a Russian-Israeli filmmaker whose engagement is in Israeli cinema. He, as an artist, is less concerned with the justification of the Jewish national idea, than with making art that, in his opinion, reflects reality. Consequently, Gorovets has not made any feature films since *Coffee with Lemon*. Gorovets' Soviet classical literary education and his auteurish style would have suited the Israeli Personal Film of the 1980s, but this style is difficult to realise in the contemporary Israeli climate. Gorovets casts himself as suffering from prevailing anti-intellectualism, and sees himself as upholding the position of the Russian outsider. As Kornblatt notes Gorovets has a troubled relationship with his own immigration, or Aliyah (1999, 193, n10). Gorovets makes no attempt to hide that he is still considering leaving Israel for a climate that is friendlier towards art and artistic production. In fact, Gorovets recently directed the Lithuanian comedy *Linksmoji našlė*/*Merry Widow* (2009), which is produced by Baltic Film Group, suggesting that Gorovets has opted for a more free-floating project-based transnational form of filmmaking, rather than the diasporic and exilic form set in Israel.[11]

[11] This transnational free-floating filmmaking is similar in the style of Sergei Bodrov, but far more modest in scale.

2.2 Another Road to the Jewish Homeland II

Arik Kaplun (b. 1958) emigrated with his parents in 1980 at the age of 22, and, as he emphasised, "initially, I didn't want to move to Israel, but I went along with my parents" (Kaplun 2007). The Kapluns had family in Israel, who had emigrated from Soviet Russia in the 1920s, and therefore Arik Kaplun's migrational narrative is constructed as a family reunification. Moreover, this linkage to the early Soviet Zionist emigration underlines Kaplun's alignment to the Askhenazi European identity. Before leaving the Soviet Union, he began to study medicine in Moscow, but received most of his education in Israel. Kaplun's background is in theatre and he has formal training in filmmaking from Tel Aviv University, which is important for this study. The fact that Kaplun's schooling as a filmmaker happened in Israel, and not in Russia, makes him different from Gorovets, who carried over his cinematic cultural capital from Russia to Israel. Thus, in the migrating exchange system, the capital of Kaplun lies almost exclusively with his ethnic origin, which the host society, through education, is able to mould in its own image. This partly explains the success, both critical and popular, of his first feature film, *Yana's Friends* (1999). That said, Kaplun's student film, *Solo for Tuba* (1985), resembles Gorovets' first feature in Israel, *Coffee with Lemon*. They both have an artist in the lead role, and both centre on the artists' role in an Israeli society full of ethnic and religious conflicts. That both of these 'first' films share this similarity points to comparable migrational roads, which interrogate the host society once the filmmaker has settled in Israel. According to the BFI Film and TV database, *Solo for Tuba* "examines the position of the artist under the conditions of a civil war. The artist (a Tuba player) does not identify with either side of the conflict, but in the end cannot remain indifferent to the conflict around him" (BFI 2008). Kaplun himself tells the online *Jewish Journal* that the film is "an allegory about the artist's condition during

civil war — inspired by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict" (Pfefferman 2001). The film was Kaplun's graduation project and won him a US student Oscar nomination, but it was not until the late 1990s that Kaplun was to make his feature film debut with *Yana's Friends*. In between these two films, Kaplun worked in scriptwriting on various projects for television, and taught filmmaking both in the US and Israel.

The difference of the two migrational paths – Kaplun's earlier emigration, his educational background and moreover, his family ties to the Russian Aliyah movement – underlines the process of assimilation and integration into Israeli society. This is clearly expressed in the way Kaplun aligns Russianness with the Ashkenazis. Kaplun returned my question as to where Russian immigrants are positioned in the Israeli ethnic divide by asking, "are they [Russian immigrants] the European type of people?" (Kaplun 2007). Explaining that Russians themselves might be uncertain as to whether they are European or Asian, Kaplun replied: "The immigrants from the southern republics are Sephardis, while the immigrants from the Baltic countries, Ukraine and Russia are Ashkenazis" (Kaplun 2007).[12] In this response, the study detects how the divisions are constructed according to skin colour, ethnicity and region, rather than Jewish liturgy, suggesting that the Sephardi/Ashkenazi discourse is based on race and class struggles. Although Kaplun is associated with the first wave of Russian immigrants and is well established into the Ashkenazi European identity, he still nurtures his Russian background.[13]

[12] In response to the same question, Marek Rozenbaum, the producer of *Yana's Friends*, added, "if my school education still stands, then Leningrad and Moscow are European cities." Marek Rozenbaum, interview by Lars Kristensen, *Conversation at the offices of Transfax Film*, Tel Aviv (22 01 2007).
[13] For example, he says, "I was recently asked by Rustam Ibragimbekov, with whom I am co-writing a new project, where I would like to be buried. And I replied that I would like to be buried in Russia, close

3 Two Russian Israeli films, Two Immigration Strategies

The two filmmakers' stylistic preferences differ, as can be seen in their work. The style of Kaplun's *Yana's Friends* is fast-paced with few lingering shots. The mood is light, mainly achieved through humour, and it employs a rather convoluted narrative. In the film's finale, all the clues of the story come together, as in the work of Robert Altman (e.g. *Short Cuts* (1993)). Gorovets' *Coffee with Lemon*, on the other hand, resembles the late Glasnost period with a dismal feel, and is constructed in style that is familiar to the postcommunist region. This is chiefly achieved through narrative, but also the cinematography makes the locations seem dull and dark. The pace of the film is relatively slow with a storytelling that seems to want to include all aspects of the plot, to want to tell the 'whole' story in a chronological order. Furthermore, because the film is omitted from many accounts of Russian-Israeli filmmaking (Santo, however, does include it), it has been necessary to rely on Gorovets' own account of the film.

3.1 *Kafe v'limon*/*Coffee with Lemon*

Dir/Script, Leonid Gorovets, Script, Semyon Vinokur, Prod. Gadi Castel, Zvi Shapira, Isramec Ltd., Israel, 1994.

Leonid Gorovets' narrative begins on a theatre stage in Moscow. Valery Ostrovsky (Aleksandr Abdulov) is performing a duel scene, which ends in great applause from the

to my father. That said, I am considering myself as fully integrated into the Israeli society." Arik Kaplun, interview by Lars Kristensen, *Conversation at Kaplun's Flat*, Tel Aviv (21 01 2007).

audience. Valery, as we discover, is a famous actor, who, with a wife and a teenage son, is embarking on emigration to Israel. As the farewell party at the Ostrovskys' spacious flat progresses, voices of concern from the gathered friends are heard, e.g. how will the family cope with language barriers? To this Valery, speaking directly into the camera, says, "I am worried for my wife and son. I want simply to be an artist." Here Gorovets is quick to set the dramatic composition of the film from early on. The question that is put forward stands as follows: is it possible to be an artist without engaging with the outside world? Can one, despite emigration, 'simply' be an artist? However, Valery's answer to his friends also reflects that the protagonist is emigrating out of fear for the political climate, rather than ideological belief, which echoes Gorovets' own emigration. The next day the Ostrovskys leave their housing block, a Stalinist-style skyscraper.[14] Valery puts on his sunglasses, and the film cuts to Israel. The scene contrasts the buzzing Moscow with the barren land of the Judean Hills – the grandiose buildings of Stalin to the newly erected Israeli settlement, which becomes the Ostrovskys' new home. There is a great significance to Valery's landing in the settlement, because it points to the tendency of Russian immigrants to be 'posted' in frontline territories[15]. Gorovets' main point in having Valery and family arriving at the settlement is to point to the contrast between Valery's old and new creative environment.

[14] Also called 'Vysotki' (or the Seven Sisters by English-speaking expatriates), these 'cupcake' buildings of Stalin's 'Empire' style are desirable living accommodation and much preferred, which again suggests the high status of Valery in the Soviet Union. It is worth mentioning that while in Moscow, Danila Bagrov in *Brother 2* is also staying in one of these buildings, which too is meant to reflect on his social status in Moscow.

[15] This is part of the Zionist ideology where claims are made on land in order to make it blossom, which is also a major theme in the nationalist films of Israeli cinema that Shohat analyses (Shohat, 1987: 22).

This is evident in the subplot that is attached to the depiction of the settlement. An elderly Russian immigrant has shipped his grand piano, but the sheer size of the piano makes it unsuitable for the prefab houses. On several occasions the main narrative is intercut with the old man's efforts to accommodate the piano into the settlement. At first, they build a plastic-roofed extension to the house, where the old man can play his piano. Eventually, they disassemble the piano, which finally makes its way into the trailer house. Gorovets got a lot of criticism for this subplot in Israel: the critique centred on the apparent suggestion that Russian high culture is too big and out of place for the Israeli setting.

While the story of the piano could be interpreted in this way, Gorovets' aim was to ask: "Can we find a place for art in Israel?" (Gorovets 2007). This is, of course, also the objective of the main narrative of Valery's emigration. However, the fact that Gorovets asks the question points to his own detachment from his host country, Israel, and his own recent immigration. In short, he is asking if there is a place in Israel for people like him. To an Israeli audience, however, this would be a nonsensical question, because an Israeli would consider art as natural to Israel. For the postcolonial perspective, the question illustrates very well the exchange of cultural capital. What Gorovets does with his narrative is to question the very desirability of his protagonist for the Israeli society. Gorovets is ambivalent when answering his own question, because, while the piano (i.e. Russian high art) story does end with the high art finding its way into the Israeli settlement, Valery enjoys much less success at finding true art in Israel.

Once in Israel, Valery gets in touch with an old acting friend from Russia and is employed as the lead character in a Hebrew performance of Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. During rehearsals for the play, Valery performs a solo act of his own in Russian, which is at first well attended by Russian immigrants. Soon, though, the audiences dwindle and instead it is Valery's old friend's dubious trick that becomes the most popular people magnet. The friend performs an act of healing where an accomplice, the young daughter of the theatre's boss, gets pulled out from the audience and is 'miraculously' cured from her illness.[16] At one point, when Valery is to perform his 'serious' act, the audience is revealed to be Ethiopian-Israelis.[17] All are waiting for the friend to go on stage as a spiritual oracle. There are two things that this study can level at the analysis of Russians in Israel. Firstly, it should be noted that racist connotations are implicit in the scene – Valery thinks of himself as 'higher' than his audience, which, according to him, is unable to comprehend his art. Secondly, according to the film, creative Russian immigrants come in two forms. One of the forms adapts to the surroundings by downgrading the artistic value of their performance. The other tries hard to bring the Russian 'high' standard of art to Israel. The first of these two is more successful in terms of popularity and financial outcome, but also doomed to cater for the 'bottom' of the Israeli society. The latter, in wanting to bring Russian cultural values to Israel, is, according to Gorovets' film, doomed to failure, because of

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[16] The performance echoes the quack doctor in the Western film, who exposes common folk naivety and lack of judgement. The connotations are the same in Gorovets' film: that people cannot judge a good, serious act from a bad and deceitful one.

[17] Their colourful dresses distinguish them as Jewish Ethiopians, an Israeli minority that endures hardship. If the Sephardi characteristics expose the Israeli European ideal, then Ethiopian Jews are even more of a threat to this ideal. Ironically, the Ethiopian-Israeli are more religiously conscious, but are treated worse than postcommunist Russian immigrants. Religious authorities have not been willing to recognize their religious practice and the unemployment rate among Ethiopians is about three times the national average, forcing many Ethiopian-Israelis into professional military service, as it constitutes their only way into Israeli society. Furthermore, the Ethiopian population has been segregated from the rest of Israeli society, settling in Israel's most impoverished towns and cities. "Numbering about 70,000, most of Israel's immigrants from Ethiopia arrived in dramatic airlifts in 1984 and 1991." (USCRI, "World Refugee Survey: Country Report Israel," 2000, 15 09 2008).

popular Israeli audiences' inability to understand the nuances of the Russian language or to translate Russian values.

This is nothing new to Israeli cinema. For example, in the film *Hem Hayu Asarah*/*They Were Ten* (Baruch Dienar, 1960), Russian pioneers in Israel "show their mastery of Pushkin and Chekhov [thus reinforcing] the image of the pioneers as possessors of [European] knowledge, implicitly suggesting their potential power to enlighten an Orient presumed to be living in the Dark Ages" (Shohat 1987, 45). It is easy to level the cultural capital of the Russians in the migrant narrative with Valery's high art capital that is not recognized any longer by Israeli society. In Gorovets' narrative, however, the act of translating values is futile, e.g. Valery fails to gain the level of fluency in Hebrew, which is required for his performance in the Bulgakov play. In the scene where Valery stands in front of the Ethiopian-Israeli audience, he starts to laugh and eventually completely halts his performance by walking off the stage. This testifies to the position of the Russian immigrant's perceived superiority over the Ethiopian-Israeli Jew. Furthermore, also implicit in this context is the Russian immigrant's inability to engage and communicate effectively with the European Ashkenazi population. The Russian high art in the postcommunist era no longer means instant elevation to Ashkenazi status. The Russian, even in the context of diaspora, stands outside the First World Eurocentric narrative.

This failure to engage with Ashkenazis is echoed in the intimate relationship that Valery forms with Michal, his Hebrew teacher. As Avi Santo asserts, Michal "is revealed to be more interested in using Valery as a sexual object to escape her malaise than in actually

helping him" (Santo 2005, 30). This failed attempt to align the two Israeli ethnicities, the Russian and the Ashkenazi, points to the construction of the Russian as an exoticized and eroticized other, over whom the Ashkenazi wields superiority. This echoes the eroticization that was encountered in the last chapter on Russian transnational cinema. However, here the context is different. Where Bodrov employs an explicit sexualisation in his portrayal of the male Russian abroad to 'please' foreign audiences, Gorovets' objective and target audiences are different. Gorovets' film is aimed at a particular audience, Russian-Israeli communities, and the eroticization here is depicted as a sort of downgrading of Russian cultural capital. Thus, the film expresses feelings about the impossibility for a Russian to assume a place among the Ashkenazi middle classes.

Language acquisition is one of the areas that is an obstacle for the Russian immigrant. However, learning Hebrew is just part of the migration deal, because it helps in entering the labour market. It does not carry with it an identification with Israel; it is just "a necessary tool" (Santo 2005, 30). This is also the reason for the film's return narrative that has Valery returning to Russia after having failed at being 'simply an actor'. Valery is disgruntled when the production of the high art Bulgakov play is moved outside to a historical site with many structural changes to Bulgakov's famous story.[18] When Valery tells the director of the play that he has problems in finding the heart and soul of the production, the director, also a Russian immigrant, tells Valery that these are luxury problems, saying "in Moscow you were a star. But here you are nothing. You are just an

[18] Gorovets spoke of visiting such a historical site once and discovering that the attendant guard was sitting reading Bulgakov. However, it puzzled Gorovets what this guard could possibly get out of reading Bulgakov in that particular context. Leonid Gorovets, interview by Lars Kristensen, *Conversation at Tel Aviv Cinematheque*, Tel Aviv (19 02 2007).

immigrant living in a trailer van". Valery is replaced in the play by somebody else and returns to Russia and to the kitchen of his friends and an empty theatre stage that needs to be filled. But the return narrative of the diasporic cinema is not idealised[19] – Valery is killed on the streets of Moscow during the siege of the White House. The Russian 'home' of the Russian Jew is not full of salvation. Rather, in Gorovets' portrayal, it is linked to the eternal wandering Jew, a form of a nostalgia for Jewish nomadism that never finds home (Peters 1999, 38). The narrative of the film reflects the filmmaker's own position as exilic, fraught with issues of displacement and in-betweenness.[20]

In Israel, the film received much criticism. This made Gorovets leave the country for Holland, whence he returned to Ukraine for a short spell, only to return to Israel again. Hence, the film could be seen as an allegory of Gorovets' own failure in the Russian diaspora. But, this would be to place too much weight on an auteurist reading of the film. Instead, this study would like to put forward a reading of the film that takes into account the question that Gorovets initially set out to explore in making it: "Can we find a place for art in Israel?" This question moulds Gorovets into an outsider within Israeli society. However, Valery's return is not the answer to Gorovets' question, because the production of the Bulgakov play will continue without Valery.[21] While the protagonist

[19] Analysing the images of Moscow that appear throughout the film, Avi Santo notes that Gorovets "shatters the illusion of a mystical homeland to which the exiled FSU community can return, choosing instead to end the film with images of the harsh reality of life in [post-Soviet Russia] after its economic collapse and with [Valery's wife] trapped in liminality with no escape in sight." See Avi Santo, "Between Integration and Exile: "Russian" Filmmaking in Israel," *Framework* 46, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 22-42, p 31.

[20] Of the end of his film, Gorovets reveals that it came about on the spur of the moment, when they were shooting in Moscow. It was at the time of the 1993 White House siege and as a result the ending revealed itself right there with Valery getting killed. Gorovets emphasises, "I made the ending as I felt it should be." Leonid Gorovets, interview by Lars Kristensen, *Conversation at Tel Aviv Cinematheque*, Tel Aviv (19 02 2007).

[21] *The Master and Margarita* was performed at the Russian Gesher theater in Tel Aviv a couple of years after the film was released, which, Gorovets admitted, indicated that there was a place for high (Russian)

of the film fails to find a place in Israel, Gorovets has found a place as a filmmaker despite the difficulties of not knowing all the codes of the adopted Hebrew language. For the Russian intelligentsia this is a sort of castration, because they cannot compete for high-end jobs without mastering the new language (Santo 2005, 30). For Gorovets, educated in Russian philology and filmmaking, art and the ability to express oneself artistically lie at the heart of his working practice. This ability is somewhat lost by experiencing emigration at the age of forty. "[Before] I was a poet which meant that I mastered the codes of the Russian language and the codes of one's different 'life stages', but these code systems are lost in migration" (Gorovets 2007). Gorovets is the 'informer' filmmaker for an imaginary audience back home, which can no longer be reached. Hence, his bitterness towards Israeli emerges in the film. In this way, Gorovets is the émigré Russian artist, who prefers to remain an outsider and act as the elevated visionary in order to make predictions about society marred by jaded authority. As such, Gorovets is representative of the second wave of Russian immigration, for whom a sense of self-containment (aided by the Russian media outlets) has led to detachment, which in turn allows 'naïve' questions to be asked. That said, it also leads to criticism from the dominant 'voice' of the Israeli cultural establishment.

Before moving on to *Yana's Friends* and a different kind of Russian diaspora narrative, it is worth underlining the features of Gorovets' filmmaking that are important in the context of this thesis. Firstly, Gorovets' educational background bears significant weight on his working practice as well as on the content of *Coffee with Lemon*. Secondly, Gorovets is a second wave immigrant, which is reflected in his critical stance

art in Israel, after all. Leonid Gorovets, interview by Lars Kristensen, *Conversation at Tel Aviv Cinematheque*, Tel Aviv (19 02 2007).

on Jewish Zionism and in his efforts to be an outsider looking in on Israeli society. Thirdly, the time of Gorovets' emigration is important, coming, contrary to that of Arik Kaplun, at the age of forty. This late emigration, fused with the size of the immigration wave, makes it hard to shed the homeland identity completely and therefore a return to the place of origin is a tangible possibility. This possibility of return is refused in *Yana's Friends*.

3.2 *Ha-Chaverim Shel Yana*/*Yana's Friends*

Dir/Script Arik Kaplun, Script Semyon Vinokur, Prod. Marek Rozenbaum et. Al., Transfax Film, Profile and Paralight Ltd., Israel, 1999

The film is set during the First Gulf War (1991) and Iraqi missile attacks on Israel. The time frame of the film points to the paradox that many postcommunist immigrants experienced. That is, many emigrated from the former Soviet Union precisely because of the fear of armed civil unrest, only to arrive in Israel and realize that they had come to a country at war with its neighbors. The war is explicitly referred to in *Yana's Friends* through several television news reports. One report switches to Russian Jewish immigrants alighting from the plane at the airport, kissing the ground and obviously glad to have escaped the Soviet Union, to covering the impact of missiles.[22] Gas masks also feature prominently, worn by various protagonists in the film.

[22] *10, Weitzman St.* (2006) by Pini Tavger is a film about a Russian family arriving to Tel Aviv at the same time period as the protagonists of *Yana's Friends*. The strangeness and alienation from the situation of the First Gulf War is also at the centre of Tavger's short film, where the family wrongly enters a house thinking that it is their new place of living, but arriving during a missile attack they find the streets deserted and all tenants of the house wearing gas masks.

Arik Kaplun begins the story with black and white shots of the streets of Tel Aviv. The images focus on street musicians, be they a chamber ensemble or soloists playing the violin or accordion. Other street dwellers are not musicians, but just beggars asking for money. The opening of the film sets up an important subplot. In a way that sets it apart from *Coffee with Lemon*: the narrative of *Yana's Friends* follows multiple storylines which converge in the end. While in *Coffee with Lemon* the side story of the old man and his piano only adds to the main narrative, there are several stories in *Yana's Friends* that run in parallel. It soon, however, becomes clear that the story of three-month pregnant Yana is the centre of attention. Yana is a slim blonde woman in her early 30s, who seems to be abroad for the first time in her life. The viewer gets no information as to her social position back in Russia, nor about her family background. Yana is abandoned in Tel Aviv by her husband Fimka, who has gone back to Russia to set up a business with money he has loaned as a new immigrant in Israel. Yana is 'placed' in a room of a flat where Eli, an amateur filmmaker, also lives. The room, paid for by Fimka, is rented from Rosa, a first wave Russian immigrant.

Also moving in to the block of flats are Alik and his family: wife, baby son and grandad, Isaac. Isaac, who comes to play an important role in the film, is a mute, wheelchair-bound Second World War veteran. Because Isaac is disabled, his entrepreneurial son-in-law Alik sees potential fortunes in wheeling Isaac out into the streets to beg. For this income to materialise, Alik positions Isaac beside another Russian immigrant, Yuri Kalantarov, an accordion player, who is basking near a music school. Yuri, a former music teacher, hopes that once the people who run the music school hear his playing, they will employ him (again an example of cultural capital that

goes unrecognised by the host country). For the time being, though, it is only the children from the school who listen to his music. When wheeled out beside Yuri the musician, veteran Isaac soon gets all the money from the kind-hearted passers-by. Soon an argument erupts between Yuri and Alik. "I was here first", says the accordion player, but Alik is scrupulously arguing that people just like the war veteran better (grandad Isaac wears Second World War medals across his chest). This image of the enterprising Russian wheeler-dealer 'taking over' from the earnest, well-educated and hard working immigrant is a theme that runs throughout the film. This is also seen in the portrayal of Yana's husband Fimka who only cares for money and not for the human sacrifices that are left in his wake. Alik is sacrificing the dignity of grandad Isaac and Yana is being sacrificed by Fimka. Neither of them consents to the condition in which they are placed. That said, while Isaac is paralysed and mute, Yana has both her voice and her mobility. Yana tries to leave Israel, but is held back at passport control because she does not have a release statement from the bank that gave her husband the loan. When Yana forces her way through and causes the airport to close down for several hours, Eli, her flatmate, has to come and vouch for her. Yana's efforts to leave Israel continue despite Eli's advances and his growing desire to 'rescue' Yana from her predicament, which is part of the narrative ploy that Kaplun sets out: will she or will she not return to Russia? That said, the film could be viewed as a rescue drama, which suggests that the post-Soviet Russian female immigrant in Israel is victimized and in need of rescue by 'friends,' i.e. Askhenazi men. Both the rescue narrative and the victimisation of the Russian women at the hands of the 'Western/European' 'friend,' is a feature that will be explored in part 3 of this study.

In order for Yana to get the bank release, she has to claw a year's worth of rent money from Rosa, the landlady, and in Rosa Yana finds her match. In a scene where Yana tries to negotiate the rent money, Rosa tells Yana her own story of migration, which is contrasted with that of Yana's. When Rosa arrived in 1967 with a newborn baby, she got no help from the state and had to raise her son by herself. Rosa's contrasting account makes explicit the view that second-wave Russian immigrants are spoiled and complain whenever they can. The viewer's empathy toward Yana, however, makes her stand apart from the depiction of Alik, who seems to have no other goal than to be a parasite on the Israeli system. It is when she learns Rosa's story that Yana first begins to take matters into her own hands and starts to look for a job. She goes to shops and cafés looking for employment, but is refused. She finds Alik's notice seeking a carer for grandad Isaac, but is beaten to the job by Edik, yet another Russian immigrant of the parasite mould. What is important in Yana's job hunt is that she does not possess 'cultural capital' of interest to potential employers.[23] This is also typical for other second wave characters, whose educational backgrounds or specialities that might contribute to Israeli society are not mentioned – reflecting popular sentiments in Israeli society, wherein the second wave of Russian immigrants is viewed as lacking an understanding of a free-market economy and having an underdeveloped sense "of an entrepreneurial spirit following years of communist cradling" (Santo 2005, 25).[24] However, other aspects of the film show the entrepreneurial spirit of post-Soviet Russians as quite developed. There is entrepreneurial creativity but of a bent that is at

[23] Kaplun had to defend his protagonist in this regard when applying for funding for the film. The reasoning from the Israeli Film Fund was, "we are spending the taxpayers' money; therefore we cannot have unsuccessful immigrants. There are no doctors and engineers in the film. Also, they felt the comedy was unconvincing." Arik Kaplun, interview by Lars Kristensen, *Conversation at Kaplun's Flat*, Tel Aviv (21 01 2007).
[24] These are also some of the characteristics that are described in the stereotypical portrayal of the Bourekas, e.g. *Sallah Shabati.*

times outside commonly accepted standards of both morality and law. This is seen in the depiction of Alik. While he is presented in a bad light in his dealings with grandad Isaac, he is also energetic and inventive in providing for his family. Just as Yana's character does, Alik gains our sympathy during the film and in the end, when he and his family have decided to leave for the US, the viewers have sympathy for him. It should be mentioned that the actor playing Alik is Valdimir Friedman, a Gesher Theatre actor and one of the most popular and well-known Russian-Israeli actors on Israeli screens, who has risen to fame as a comedian with roles in other popular films.[25] The film plays the card of casting a shadow over the second wave, in order to reveal in the end the characters' loveable nature.

Another ingenious invention of these Russian immigrants is accordion-player Yuri's response to the challenge from grandad Isaac in gaining street audiences.[26] On a television programme, Yuri discovers the Theremin, a Russian-invented electronic musical instrument that again suggests a way of implementing Russian 'cultural capital.' Yuri, who passes the Theremin off as his own invention, uses it to recover the attention of the crowd.[27] This image of the immigrant 'tricking' his audience in order to become popular echoes Valery's friend in *Coffee with Lemon*. As in *Coffee with Lemon*,

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[25] For example, *Circus Palestine*/*Zircus Palestina* (Eyal Halfon, 1998) and *Schwartz Dynasty*/*Shoshelet Schwartz* (Amir Hasfari, 2005).

[26] The character is played by the Israeli actor Shmil Ben-Ari, which points to a casting strategy where well known faces of Israeli cinema are employed to allow the film to reach out beyond Russian diaspora filmmaking. Gershenson and Hudson stress that Ben-Ari's accented Russian does not interfere with the narrative, because he plays a Bukharan Jew, from Central Asia. See Olga Gershenson and Dale Hudson. "Absorbed by Love: Russian Immigrant woman in Israeli Film." *Journal of Morder Jewish Studies*, November 2007: p312. While this could be highlighted within the multiple language usage of the film and as part of its diasporic traits, this study will underline the film's viewer strategy, as mentioned, and Yuri's profession as important.

[27] This was also seen with Gorokhov in *Window to Paris*, where in his fight over the local music box player, his box is 'loaded' with the music of Tchaikovsky, which also turns out to be a crowd pleaser.

one needs to lower one's act (or artistry) in order to gain recognition from the general public. Although Yuri's story points to the ingenuity of Russian immigrants, it also addresses the potential value that the immigrant can offer. In this regard, Yuri's potential for giving music lessons to the children of the music school is realised in a scene where he conducts the children in his flat. The scene underlines that if the immigrant's cultural capital is placed in the right environment, then the host country can gain from the immigrant and achieve an enriching cultural outlook. Contrary to the parasitic immigrant, as represented by Alik and Edik, Russian immigrants are often highly educated and have great cultural capital, exactly because they arrive from the former Soviet Union.[28]

In Baruch Kimmerling's account, the high educational credentials of Russian immigrants make them easier to mingle with the Askhenazi middle class and, furthermore, enable them to overtake the Sephardi Jews and Arab-Israelis in the competition for white-collar jobs.[29] That said, *Yana's Friends* shies away from explicitly stating this, because while the two main characters, Yana and Eli, could be seen as joining forces in their love relationship, the distance between them remain and no complete merger of the two is realised. In the postcolonial syncretism, the union between the two is not total, despite their similarities. However, the relationship is neither forced nor involuntary, but based on mutual consent; the two need each other, which in turn places the film completely within the diasporic mode of filmmaking.

[28] According to Kimmerling, referring to the second wave of Russian immigrants, "58% of the immigrants of working age were classified as having academic [education] (in comparison to 25 percent of the veteran Israeli population)." See Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001), p 141.

[29] The 'competition' among immigrants in the Sephardi films should be recalled. Here the Russian is seen as having/being given a favorable position.

In this regard, the study diverts from Avi Santo's reading of the film. In his analysis of the lovemaking scene, where both characters are wearing gas masks, he emphasises "their sameness" (Santo 2005, 36). The gas mask scenes, however, could also be read as emphasising their detachment from and their inability to take shape in a complete symbiosis of the two ethnicities. Furthermore, Santo merges Kaplun the filmmaker with the Eli character concluding that "this is particularly disturbing since Kaplun is an actual 'Russian' immigrant and Eli a fictive Israeli Sabra" (Santo 2005, 38). Santo is wrong here, not in considering Eli the ideal Sabra Jew, but in narrating Kaplun as a Russian immigrant. Although not a Sabra, Kaplun has Israeli education and has lived in Israel for over 20 years, thus having adapted to Israeli society (Kaplun 2007).

This is also why, time after time, Kaplun tries to get across that *Yana's Friends* is not *about* Russian immigration per se.[30] Kaplun wanted the film to be universal and to reach out to viewers beyond the Russian diaspora. Kaplun wants to address Israeli viewers and to use the narrative to voice some of the problems that Israelis are already concerned with: the dubious morality of the second wave Russian immigration in particular. It is in this regard that the boureka film is brought into prominence, because Kaplun's film addresses "interethnic tension between Russian immigrants and *sabras*" (Gershenson and Hudson 2008, 28). Kaplun does not subvert the image of the Russian

[30] Kaplun mediated this in the interview conducted for this study, in an interview with *Jewish Journal* and, presumably, also when talking to Avi Santo. Kaplun said, "when the film was in circulation, I was very much against calling this film a Russian immigrant film, for the same reasons that *Othello* is not an immigrant story. To me the film is about love and I didn't care about the migrant situation. In fact, the First Gulf War is the only thing that ties it to Israel and the Israeli situation. It could as easily have been made in LA during the race riots or during 9/11 in New York." Arik Kaplun, interview by Lars Kristensen, *Conversation at Kaplun's Flat*, Tel Aviv (21 01 2007).

immigrant, but plays along with the popular consensus of how immigrants from the former Soviet Union behave. Moreover, whereas Gorovets had trouble fusing the Russian immigrant with the Askhenazi Jew, Kaplun goes a step further in this attempt, but stops before its completion. In his film, the post-Soviet Russian has the ability to integrate into the First World, yet in the process of this integration, the Russian has something which confines him/her to the notion of being non-Western. Another factor in the divergence of the two Russian-Israeli filmmakers is that their leading characters are of different genders. Through love, marriage or prostitution the entrance of post-Soviet Russian female gender is somehow easier than the admission of their male counterparts. The Russian female's encounter with the European 'West' will be dealt with in the next chapter.

4 The New Generation of Russian Diasporic Filmmakers

Before concluding, it is necessary to point to the emergence of a new generation of Russian-Israeli filmmakers. Termed 'children of the second wave Russian immigrants,' they were given viewing space at the 8th Jerusalem Film Festival in 2006 (Maftsir 2006). The festival organised two special programmes with student short films by young Russian-Israeli filmmakers and an evening discussion. The moderator, Boris Maftsir, says in the festival programme, "they arrived as children and matured into adults. They graduated from high school, went to the army, and studied film. Their films are filled with talent and candour" (Maftsir 2006, 61). Many of the student shorts of the programme showed the candour that the programme talks about. Two shorts particularly highlight this.

Alex (2003) by Noam Josephides shows the arrival of a family to peacetime Israel. Here the teenage boy, Alex, who has problems in getting accepted, pulls a trick on an old Askhenazi lady from the neighbourhood by pretending that he is her long lost son. Again the desire of becoming Askhenazi (even if by deception) is evident: by the end of the film, after the boy has been accepted by the Askhenazi youths of the backyard, a removals van brings in new immigrants. These new the immigrants are Ethiopian Israelis, suggesting a hierarchy where the Russians are already aligned with the Askhenazim, and the 'new' immigrants are relegated to the bottom. Although this is a continuation of the discourse found in *Coffee with Lemon*, the politics here are much more subtle and inoffensive than Gorovets' heavy-handedness. This suggests that the new generation of filmmakers is in prossession of greater awareness and sensibility, and that their cultural capital is formed within the context of the host country rather than carried over from the home country.

Issues of assimilation and integration are also the topic of *Russian Dance* (2001) by another young Russian-Israeli filmmaker, Boris Levinzon. A young adult, Shay, after having spent ten years in the country, is an assimilated Israeli with no visible Russian markers. He has been in the army and has a red-haired (key symbol of the Ashkenazis) Israeli girlfriend, but is thrown into turmoil by the fact that his parents have decided to return to their 'hometown' of St Petersburg. Shay takes a trip down memory lane by visiting his old Russian Youth club, where he encounters a new Russian immigrant girl from St Petersburg. They have different memories of the city: he remembers Leningrad and she postcommunist St Petersburg. Realising that his Leningrad is no more, Shay decides to stay in Israel not least because of the new girl's hostility towards the Israeli

society. Because he has learned to love Israel, he sees no point in returning to a country he once knew but to which he is now a stranger. As in *Alex*, *Russian Dance* emphasises the alignment of the Askhenazis with Russianness. Because these student shorts are cruder and less refined in their depiction of the dissemination of the topic of Russian immigration, they tend to be a lot more explicit in voicing the concerns of the Russian diaspora.

At the centre of the programme of the 2006 Jerusalem Film Festival was a new feature film, *Yaldey Ha CCCP*/*The Children of the CCCP* (2005) by Felix Gerchikov. This film reveals unabashedly the process of fighting for a place in Israeli society. Slava is thrown out by his girlfriend, with whom he has a newborn baby, because of his inability to find work in a small southern town. He protests that "here they wouldn't have Russians," but he seeks to reform his petty criminal gang by engaging them in a football match against the local Moroccan team. The film centres on the gang's overcoming the obstacles of getting everybody fit for the match, out of prison and away from drugs. Furthermore, following encouragement from their coach, who is a former Soviet international team member, an African-Israeli player is invited to join the Russians. Sporting red T-shirts with 'CCCP' (USSR) written on them, the team makes it to the match despite a suicide. The film ends with the kick-off, hinting at a continuation of the struggle of the Russian diaspora.

The Children of the CCCP suggests that Russian immigrants are the new Blacks in Israeli society, echoing the Sephardi experience found in the Boureka films. Just as might happen to a juvenile Sephardi character in early 70s Israeli cinema, in *The*

Children of the CCCP, Slava stands at the crossroads of choosing between a life of crime and a life among honest elders – mainly his football coach. Gerchikov's film clearly shows Russians abroad from the postcolonial perspective, because the film positions its main protagonist as being angered at his status as social outcast, an anger that is geared towards the dominant society. It is a male-driven narrative that bears little resemblance to Valery and the projection of homeland in *Coffee with Lemon*; instead, similarly to the Sephardi narratives of the 1970s, it gives voice to discontent and resentment. Pointing to a continuous struggle, the film projects a fight back in the postcolonial mould and which is aimed at tackling discrimination. However, the film is simultaneously (self-)critical of the diasporic community. For example, the parents of Slava's girlfriend also look down upon him and his inability to find work. Slava has to fight prejudices both from the dominant society and from within his own diasporic community.

This new wave of younger Russian-Israeli filmmakers points to the Russian diaspora in Israel as continuing to express their concerns through a cinematic style and narrative tone that searches for popular reception. In particular, Gerchikov's film suggests that Israeli cinema has the ability to produce 'ethnic' narratives (in the mould of Boureka), which can engage wider Israeli audiences. These young filmmakers are closer to *Yana's Friends* and Arik Kaplun than to *Coffee with Lemon* and Leonid Gorovets. Return is not an option for these filmmakers. They are firmly grounded within Israeli society, with all the problems that this entails. Asking Gorovets about *The Children of the CCCP*, he retorted,

> "We are in a new epoch of filmmaking, where cinema has split into art cinema [the old language] and new cinema [narrative language]. The latter

> is an unprofessional cinema with young directors who have no formal education or training. *The Children of CCCP* is made in this way. The director is very young and inexperienced. I do not like this film. Instead of working with Israeli actors, I prefer to work with Russian actors, because they are better trained" (Gorovets 2007).[31]

Gorovets' Soviet cultural capital and his formal cinematic training is termed old and undesirable, while the young faster pace, clearer cultural clashes and self-criticism are with the new generation. In terms of cinematic styles, then, and unlike Gorovets, Kaplun adheres to narrative cinema and entertainment art forms. Hence, he has no grudge to bear against the new up-and-coming Russian Israeli filmmakers. Talking about *Children of CCCP*, Kaplun makes it clear that he likes the film very much. He said: "it resembles an early Robert Altman film" (Kaplun 2007). The differences between the two filmmakers become obvious here: Kaplun's linkage to narrative cinema, and Gorovets' rejection of the same. While both filmmakers represent the 'informer' perspective, they aim at different audiences that are located outside the Israeli context. Kaplun seeks to make his narrative compatible with an internationally accepted formula, while Gorovets reworks the Russian and Soviet formula of high art cinema. In short, while both look at the Russian diaspora, Gorovets addresses his work more to Russian viewers back home, while Kaplun targets international 'Western' viewers. This difference goes beyond the dichotomy of art versus popular cinema, suggesting that there are differences in discourses of the diaspora narrative. Therefore, the two films analysed here are not pitted against one another but are viewed as complementary and as representing two different accounts of the Russian Israeli diaspora.

[31] Language unquestionably plays a role in his preference to working with Russian actors.

Conclusion

The films analysed here are made entirely within the context of the Israeli film industry and therefore have been through a strict rubber-stamping process, where they have been assessed as fit for public release and deemed films that have something to offer the average Israeli cinema audience, whether Russian-speaking or not. Thus these films are part of the Israeli public discourse, as seen most clearly in Kaplun's film. *Yana's Friends* addresses popular Israeli perceptions of Russian newcomers as economic migrants who are not particularly concerned with Zionist beliefs. This topic of Russians struggling their way through the lower strata of Israeli society is further developed more recently in films such as *The Children of the CCCP*. Just as the children of Sephardis/Mizrahis did in the 70s, for whom ethnicity and class played a large role in the formation of a national Israeli identity, so too do the children of postcommunist Russian immigrants stand at a crossroads, posing a threat to dominant society and in need of identity (national and/or diasporic) for themselves. This is why the Boureka films and the analysis of Sephardi characters is useful for this chapter. The representation of Sephardis in Israeli cinema went from the construction of otherness through a Manichaean split where "the putative 'essence' was separated into positive [Ashkenazis] and negative [Sephardis] poles" (Shohat 1987, 147), to a more balanced narrative, in which juvenile characters search for selfhood and an identity outwith their parents' diaspora identity. In *Coffee with Lemon*, Valery assumes he is the Manichaean positive – just like in the nationalist Israeli cinema of the 50s. However, Valery's cultural capital goes unrecognised by the dominant society. *Yana's Friends*' comic play on the positive and the negative aspects of Russian immigration equally reinforces the postcommunist stereotype of the Russian abroad, which is seen, in particular, in the dubious 'entrepreneurial' skills of Alik. It appears from the depiction of *Yana's Friends*

that the postcommunist Russian immigrant to Israel carries the split within him, the positive ('Western appearance') and the negative ('Oriental laziness'). The assertion in this chapter is that the Russian immigrant in the Israeli context adheres to the general European outlook by 'overtaking' the Sephardi Oriental Jew, but fails to be a full member of the idealised Sabra community, because of his or her perennial European position of origin. It would be a gross mistake to outright compare the representation of Russians in *Yana's Friends* to those of Sephardis in *Sallah Shabati*. However, the investigation should not fail to notice that both films are comedies, and that both play on popularly accepted stereotypes and notions of large waves of immigration to Israel. Lastly we looked at the new generation of Russian-Israeli filmmakers, who, similar to the Sephardi representation in 1970s Israeli cinema, perform the break away from essential notions of the diasporic. In these films, there is explicit resentment against Israeli society for discrimination that positions them as (or designates to them the space of) criminals and shifty thieves.

Part 3: Non-Russian Cinema

The Perspective of the 'Outsider'

This part of the study will explore the question of representation in the context of two non-Russian national film industries, namely Britain and Sweden, where the perspective of the 'outsider' view of Russians abroad can be seen. The British and Swedish cinema industries are characterised partly or wholly by reliance on state funding or national broadcasters' involvement in film finance. Although one of the films that will be examined can be categorised as transnational, there are two factors that makes this chapter different from the previous ones. Firstly, in these films, no Russian finances were involved. Although this was also the case in the previous chapter, co-funding *was* sought in both cases. Secondly, the two filmmakers in question, Pawel Pawlikowski and Lukas Moodysson, have no claims to be Russian. These filmmakers are not 'informers' but 'outsiders' portraying Russians abroad.

This part of the study could also be called 'Cinema of Small Nations,' because the two European cinemas in question are greatly influenced by transnational relations and interactions (Hjort and Petrie 2008, 11). Although British cinema sits uneasily under this heading, it stands to reason that *Last Resort* is part of a small cinema discourse that "privileges particular film moments or directors felt to have some connection with the national culture" (Higson 1995, 5). If Pawel Pawlikowski can be accepted as a British, or indeed an English, filmmaker, then it is even easier to define Lukas Moodysson as a Swedish filmmaker. One of the characteristics of these cinemas of small nations is, beside their size of population and geographical area, the need to combat, incorporate or

affect larger national processes of globalisation. According to Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie:

> Globalisation may underpin the emergence of the new international division of labour, including the new emphasis on transnational production […], and lend credence to cosmopolitan or diasporic perspectives on cultural production, but internationalisation informs the national schemes of film funding that continue to exist in many countries" (Hjort and Petrie 2008, 14-5).

Although part of global and world cinema, British and Swedish cinemas are best understood as national, because they are funded nationally and explicitly aimed at discourses located within their national contexts, however global an outlook they may have. Thus, both Pawel Pawlikowski and Lukas Moodysson, are here considered contemporary European filmmakers, who by portraying Russians abroad in their films, comment on the postcommunist condition from within their respective cinematic contexts and specific national discourses. This study argues that, despite being multi-lingual transnational migrational narratives, these films are speaking from within a national cinematic context and thus consider postcommunist global concerns through local, national cinematic discourses. The films narrate Russians abroad to audiences that are national, or at least regionally based (West European); hence they tap into popular conceptions of what constitutes a Russian abroad.

These filmmakers are artists who work within a national cinematic discourse that they cannot fail to acknowledge. Although multi-national on paper and cosmopolitan in life, these filmmakers seek chiefly to influence a national discourse. Thus they comment on local and national concerns as affected by the global movement of people and products. The study will once more look at the spectrum of consenting union versus rape between the Russian and the non-Russian Other, as well as at the airport space as a site for the

negotiation of cultural capital, revealing the shift in the postcommunist power structure. Furthermore, the investigation will re-invigorate the postcolonial perspective for the examination of the displaced female migrant. The postcolonial paradigm described in the previous chapter focused on the diasporic Russian and on the hybrid identity in the settler country of Israel. In this part of the study, the investigation is faced with a different context, the European cinematic space, a space that also has female Russians abroad. As with *Yana's Friends*, these narratives centre upon the ability to fit in, to assimilate or to bridge national affiliations. However, European cinema will also show the total rejection of any attempts at assimilation or integration.

Post-Soviet Russians have (since 1991) featured predominantly in European cinema. In Greek cinema, Russians are portrayed as part of a budding diaspora which is growing around Athens and Northern Greece, as seen in *Apro tin akri tis polis*/*From The Edge of the City* (Constantine Giannaris, 1998). In the Dutch film *Duska* (Jos Stelling, 2007), they are represented in the form of a long lost Russian 'friend' who shows up on the door step of the filmmaker one day. In fact, the postcommunist Russian Other can be seen in all European cinemas, from Spanish cinema, for example *Los lunes al sol*/*Mondays in the Sun* (Fernando León de Aranoa, 2002)(see Santaolalla 2003), to Austrian Cinema, e.g. in *Mein Russland*/*My Russia* (Barbara Gräfner, 2002) and *Import/Export* (Ulrich Seidl, 2007)(see Dassanowsky 2005, 276; Brown 2010). Irish cinema has also seen representations of Russians. In the film *Pavee Lackeen* (Perry Ogden, 2005), Russians are invoked to reflect on the historical Irish Other of the traveller. Winnie, a traveller girl, aimlessly walks the high street of Dublin and enters a video shop, but all the films are in Russian, meant to cater for the newly arrived Eastern European labourers. The shop assistant speaks in a heavily accented voice, marking her

as Russian. Here Russians are part of the changing ethnic make-up of Ireland, affecting people like the traveller girl, Winnie, whose group is at the bottom of the social hierarchy of the new multicultural Ireland. At the amusement arcade, Winnie is catered for by Southeast Asians, and by Africans at the hairdresser. Interestingly, in this scene, according to Mitch Miller, a writer, film critic and traveller, "[Winnie] is, of course, the only 'white girl' in these situations, untainted and unmarked to those whose difference is more marked" (Miller 2007, 14). Again, the whiteness of Russians makes it difficult to pick up and reduces their symbolic 'outsideness' reflected in the eyes of the traveller girl.

The films *Last Resort* and *Lilja 4-ever* are chosen for two reasons. Firstly, because they both have managed successfully to generate debates on labour migration and on the way immigrants are treated once arriving in Europe: making them texts that deal with the emerging post-Soviet Russian abroad from the perspective of European cinema. By selecting British and Swedish-made films, the thesis by definition excludes other national cinemas' accounts of the postcommunist shift in representations of Russians abroad. By emphasising European narratives, the investigation leaves aside US productions, such as *Postmark Paradise* (Thompson E. Clay, 2000), and Chinese films, such as Jia Zhangke's film *Shijie*/*The World* (2004)(Lu 2000).[1] Acknowledging as

[1] In most portrayals of Russians abroad in non–Russian cinema, it is the female Russian prostitute or the bride-to-order that are the most frequent ready-made images of the postcommunist demise of the former Soviet superpower. Emily Schuckman enlightened the conference *Russia on Screen* about these connotations of the Russian woman. In a simple web search, she made searches for 'British woman' and 'Russian woman.' While the British search came up with women poets and women's novels, the Russian search was purely dating agencies capped with, for example, 'Women Seeking Older Men'. There are countless examples of film that revolves around the Russian prostitute. Emily Schuckman, "The Prostitutka Abroad: Foreign representation of the Russian Prostitute," *Russia on Screen Conference* (Queen Mary, University of London, May 10, 2008). However, at the same time, it is a known fact that Russia is currently the largest source country for trafficked women, which is bound to show in cinematic narratives. Thus, the representation of the female prostitute is twofold; on the one hand, she stands for the

much, it is outside the scope of this study to include further national cinemas' representations of Russians abroad. However, the second reason for choosing *Last resort* and *Lilya 4-ever* is because they have females protagonists, which makes them comparable not only to *Yana's Friends* and *White King…*, but also to *Brother 2* with its rescue drama of Dasha, the displaced Russian prostitute.

The representation of Russian women and men will be constructed in such a way that it has an impact on the context, i.e. a contemporary Europe in which that representation arises. For this reason, any representation will not be divorced from a European/Western consensus about what constitutes a Russian abroad. As will be shown, the representation of Russians abroad in *Lilja 4-ever* is, on the one hand, carefully constructed to inspire empathy from the viewer, while on the other hand it also presents a most horrific portrayal of a Russian female being trafficked to Western Europe. In this regard, Pawlikowski's film follows on from the previous chapter, which ended with Arik Kaplun's film and the portrayal of Yana's immigration route into Israeli society. Firstly, the film's main protagonist, Tanya, also gets entangled like Yana in routes of migration, and, secondly, similarly to Arik Kaplun, Pawel Pawlikowski also left a country to settle in a new one. However, Pawlikowski is of Polish rather than Russian origin, which makes him an informative 'outsider' on Russian cultural values, but who sees in Russians abroad an opportunity to comment on the United Kingdom. In short, before entering the horror of human trafficking in *Lilya 4-ever*, the investigation will have to

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demise of Russia's geopolitical status and male fascination with the topic, but on the other hand, the representation speaks about a reality that is very much grown from the postcommunist condition: unemployment, economic crisis, and organized crime. See Emily Schuckman, "Antitrafficking Policies in Asia and the Russian Far East: A Comparative Perspective," *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 14.1 (2006): 85-102.

unravel Pawlikowski's link to Russian culture, which has become a trademark of his filmmaking.

Chapter 7: The 'British' Filmmaker

1 Pawel Pawlikowski

Pawel Pawlikowski was born in Warsaw in 1957 and moved to Britain with his mother while in his teens, in some interviews this move being cited as taking place at the age of 15 (Pulver 2004), in others 12 (Gibbons 2001). Whichever it is, Pawlikowski arrived in Britain in the early to mid 70s.[1] Like Arik Kaplun, Pawlikowski gained his filmmaking training outside his country of birth, but while Kaplun studied filmmaking at university, Pawlikowski studied literature and philosophy. Furthermore, Pawlikowski is fluent in several European languages, including Russian. Pawlikowski's educational background is significant because it explains the literary connotations of Pawlikowski's early documentaries, which he made at the BBC for the Bookmark series in the late 1980s. Bookmark was meant to be a literary exploration of television and soon Pawlikowski made a niche for himself with films exploring Eastern European literary traditions. Examples of his works include *Vaclav Havel: A Czech Drama* (1989), *From Moscow to Petushki* (1990) on the writer Venedikt Erofeev, *Dostoyevski's Travels* (1992), and most notably, *Serbian Epics* (1992), which follows a poetry-citing Radovan Karadžić at the initial stages of the Bosnian War.[2] These endeavours made Pawlikowski a well-known entity within the British film industry. *Serbian Epics* caused an outcry in British parliament for its observational portrayal of the nationalist warmonger Karadžić, and *Tripping with Zhirinovsky* (1995) only further underlined his exploration of nationalism

[1] The reason for immigration is cited as the broken marriage of his parents. Pawlikowski's mother was a lecturer in English and re-married once in England. See Richard Porton, "Going Against the Grain: An Interview with Pawel Pawlikowski," *Cineaste* 30, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 37(5).

[2] The film has Eduard Limonov, a Russian writer turned nationalist politician, shooting at the city of Sarajevo, which suggests a preoccupation with the formation of pan-Slavic nationalism. For an account of Limonov's literary work see Andrei Rogachevskii, *A Biographical and Critical Study of Russian Writer Eduard Limonov* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003). Limonov has associations with Serbian nationalists and "burnished his credentials as a defender of Russia's historical interests." See Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Remaining Relevant after Communism: The Role of the Writer in Eastern Europe* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p 94.

in the postcommunist region. The latter resulted in the feature film *The Stringer* (1998), which starred Sergei Bodrov Jr. as a budding cameraman getting entangled with a Russian nationalist politician. It is Pawlikowski's preoccupation with literature and postcommunist Russia, plus his educational background that allows for the definition of Pawlikowski's perspective as an 'informer.'

1.1 The Russian Connection

Throughout Pawlikowski's career, an interest in literature can be detected, which is grounded in the geographies of Eastern Europe. Russia and its literary tradition is often the focal point in these films, which position Pawlikowski as the translator/interpreter of Russian cultural values and traditions.[3] Since Pawlikowski lays no claim to being Russian, his investigation of, or rather his preoccupation with, Russianness stems from his British-Polish liminality where Russian is "the master language (and the master culture)," as Dorota Ostrowska has asserted (Ostrowska 2007, 62). For Pawlikowski it is the East that is in the centre, or more accurately, Soviet Russia with its cultural influence on its Central and Eastern European neighbours. While the topical inclination of Pawlikowski conflicts with that of the Eastern European diaspora, which has a difficult relationship with Post-Soviet Russia and its influence, his hybrid national identity "distances" him from the subject of his films, from Russian political and cultural domination (Ostrowska 2007, 62). It is this distance from the topic that is interesting here, because although he is connected to the Eastern European diaspora, Pawlikowski uses his representations of Russians as the chief symbol of the changes that have occurred in Europe since the fall of communism. His distance from the topic is

[3] In this regard, he bears resemblance to the position of Sergei Bodrov as a cultural interpreter/translator.

also what makes Pawlikowski stand apart from the exilic Israeli filmmakers, who, by being of Russian origin, cannot claim such a position. The Russian abroad becomes a generic device that signifies the larger political shifts in the postcommunist era.

Russia was also the topic of Pawlikovski's first venture into feature filmmaking with the entirely British produced film *The Stringer* (1998). Starring Sergei Bodrov Jr., the film follows a young cameraman in his pursuit of new footage for a foreign broadcasting company, and his gradual entanglement in the rise and fall of a right-wing nationalist leader. The film was inspired by the rise of Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who, after his surprise Russian election victory in 1995, became the main channel through which Russian nationalism (spiced with chauvinist misogyny) gained popularity. The film was overlooked by critics and audiences, but it furthered and developed Pawlikowski's investigation into the economic and political shift of postcommunism. In this regard, the Russian(ness) in the filmmaking of Pawlikowski represents the filmmaker's own investigation into being himself an Eastern European Other, but also into the illumination of the significant shift in Eastern Europe for Western/British audiences. This is where Pawlikowski as translator/interpreter is important. With *Last Resort*, in particular, Pawlikowski wanted to revise and adjust the viewers' perceptions of Eastern European transnational migration. In a conversation with Jason Wood, he says,

> The critical hype around *Last Resort* didn't affect me that much. I mean the film was what it was. I liked it, but it seems to me that some critics, who professed to love the film, hadn't actually seen it. The film was this rather personal story about a mother and son thrown into a strange, scary world, which was again slightly abstract (Wood 2006, 187).

On the one hand, Pawlikowski wanted to turn the negative image of asylum seekers on its head by narrating a personal story, but on the other hand, he wanted to retain some

distance by not making it a story about Polish immigration. The use of Russians abroad helps Pawlikowski to narrate a post-national story without digressing from concerns generated from the geographies of Eastern Europe. In other words, it brings the narrative to a general level of interpretation; this is not a narrative just about one or two people (i.e. Pawlikowski and this mother) but rather about a larger transnational movement of people.

By aiming to subvert pre-existing images of transnational labour migration, the filmmaker needs equally to refuse and to recognise the commonly agreed stereotype of post-Soviet Russians abroad. Thus, in Pawlikowski's portrayal of Russians abroad, the study detects both the confirmation of a post-Soviet Russian fall in status, but also an acknowledgement that migrants are real people with hopes, desires, needs and aspirations. Pawlikowski says, "my 'political' contribution was mainly to show two foreigners with a degree of empathy, from inside, as interesting people, and not the way they're shown in English-speaking films, as incomprehensible gangsters, or victims to be pitied" (in Wood, 187). For Alice Bardan, Pawlikovski seems to succeed in this, comparing his film with, among others, *Hiroshima, mon amour*/*Hiroshima, My Love* (Alain Resnais, 1959).

> [Last Resort] resists becoming 'just another film' about them [the refugees], foregrounding certain ethical implications pertaining to the limits of representation. By choosing to portray Tanya's experience as an asylum seeker in the narrative who does not end in victimisation, Pawlikovski eschews appropriating the figure of the 'other' in ways that blur distinctions between different experiences of being displaced from home (Bardan 2008)

Bardan picks up on the theme of Russianness throughout Pawlikowski's films, rendering the Russian element in terms of Whiteness, i.e. Tanya's sameness to the viewer 'blurs' the distinction between the Western audiences and the Other. In this way,

Tanya is Russian because she allows Pawlikowski to question how Western viewers think through, and thereby construct, their own post-imperial (postcommunist) condition in Britain. Although Bardan's reading is one of the very best accounts of *Last Resort*, this study takes a slightly different approach, highlighting the film in relation to other British immigrant films, a context that explains the specific representation of the Other. While retaining the same postcolonial line of questioning, in *Last Resort*, in particular, the investigation looks for the evidence of the inclusion of Russians into Western society. Just as with *Yana's Friends*, the choice of committing to a new country and a new society is not a foregone conclusion.

2 *Last Resort*: Neither Rape, Nor Union

Dir. Pawel Pawlikowski, Script. Pawel Pawlikowski and Rowan Joffe, Producer Ruth Caleb, BBC Film, United Kingdom, 2000

In *Last Resort*, the viewers encounter Tanya and her 10-year-old son, Artiom, on their way to passport control at Stansted airport near London. They are to meet up with Briton Mark Walden, who is allegedly engaged to Tanya. However, at the border check point, the two are held up by immigration officials because they have insufficient funds and because Mark has failed to turn up. Therefore they are sent to a detention camp in Stonehaven (the fictional name for Margate on the south-eastern coast of England). Here asylum seekers are held while their applications are being processed. At the camp Tanya unsuccessfully tries to contact Mark, enlisting the help of Alfie, the owner of a local amusement hall. Alfie takes mother and son under his wing, supporting them in their efforts to make a new home. With no money and unable to escape Stonehaven,

Tanya is lured by Les, a small time pornographer, to earn a little extra cash by posing nude on the internet. Disappointed by Tanya's attempt to make money, Alfie helps the two to escape the camp by sea. Well away from the eyes of the immigration authorities, Tanya and Alfie split. Tanya explains that she has to pursue her fortune, which is not with Alfie, who is left by the side of the motorway.

At first glance, *Last Resort* does not belong to the narratives of colonial rape.[4] Tanya, the female character in the film, does not endure any physical sexual violence. However, she is 'forced' to pose for Les, the local pornographer, and his internet porn enterprise, and this does constitute a form of postcolonial rape.[5] Although Tanya's pornographic posing raises important issues, *Last Resort* is not on the whole imbued with violent exploitation. Rather, the film centres on Tanya's union, or the possibility thereof, with a non-Russian male. There are two such possible unions in the film. The first is the relationship Tanya has with Mark Walden before coming to the UK. The second is the projected possibility of commitment to the marginalised Alfie. In the first, there is the suggestion of a bride-to-order relationship, where the postcommunist woman is viewed as trapped in her environment of heavily drinking men, a failing

[4] Although no physical rape occurs, there are scenes that expose the system of immigration as exploitative. For example, the blood donations of the refugees in the back lane suggests that another system of economy is in operation. These people sell their blood in order to survive, not in the form of humanistic charitable donation, and the scene lends itself to the interpretation of a system that sucks the blood out of people in need of protection. Pawlikowski stresses a post-imperial Britain that has turned into a vampire consuming people in unfortunate positions. See Alice Bardan, "'Welcome to Dreamland': The Realist Impulse in Pawel Pawlikowski's Last Resort," *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* (Intellect) 6, no. 1 (2008): 47-63, p 59. For Tanya this (or selling internal body parts, as in *Dirty Pretty Things*) is also an option, but because of her desirable female body, she can turn to Les the pornographer, which course of action is no less infected with bodily exploitation.

[5] This reference to pornographic images and the postcommunist condition is also an explicit connection made in the Austrian film*, Import/Export* (Ulrich Seidl, 2007), which charts a Ukrainian woman's journey to Austria, while a male Austrian drop-out travels the opposite way, to Ukraine. However, in this film, the Internet porn vendors are placed in Eastern Europe itself and there is no examination of the men behind it.

social system and few job opportunities (Schuckman 2006).[6] Thus the postcommunist woman is seen as led by desire to escape from her condition and willing to marry the Western man in order to emigrate. Although often depicted as a dirty business and with connotations of the sex industry (old ugly men seeking young beautiful women), it is also important to highlight that these migrating women are seen as adding value (cultural capital) to their newly found communities. For example, in remote, or marginalised, areas that have seen a de-population and are in desperate need of professional people moving to the area, the highly educated postcommunist woman is in this regard a desired agent of re-generation; her teacher, librarian, or doctor qualifications add value to the community and prolongs its survival.[7] Having said that, this dream or ideal, on which the bride-to-order industry thrives, neglects the power structure at hand. Where women have to 'sell' themselves in competition with other women, the Western men are outnumbered by the potential women interested, which creates a pick and choose situation from the men leisurely walking from one woman to the other – a situation the men would not encounter at home. Furthermore, there are connotations of the postcommunist woman being less imbued with Western feminism and hence viewed as more willing to uphold a patriarchal form of living, which has been rejected by Western women. While on the one hand, *Last Resort* plays into this

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[6] *Postmark Paradise*, in particular, gives voice to this discourse. Its extra material on the DVD version has the filmmaker commenting on the footage of Ukrainian women posing for the camera. The director is audibly amazed at "these beautiful young women" who are seeking Western men. The conjugation of Western men with a sexualized gaze and the 'helpless' young women that want to escape their 'poor' environment is a postcolonial discourse that is rendered both on the level of rescue and sexualisation of the Other.

[7] This was also seen in the Israeli context, where the desired Russian immigrants are people who are highly educated, which will in turn add value to the host country. Russian migration to Israel is also viewed as the 'prolongation' of the Israeli state in the sense that the more Jewish people take up residence in Israel, the more viable it becomes for Israel to exist as a Jewish state. In the Swedish context, the consolidation of the immigrant as a natural part within the nation state is a sign of assimilation and integration. In regard to remote regions and Russians in Sweden, *Babas bilar*/*Baba's Cars* (Rafael Edholm, 2006) should be mentioned. It has Russian characters as a natural part of the remote community. However, the connotations that these characters carry are of transnational criminality, which is viewed as something that has to be eradicated.

discourse of the plight of the postcommunist woman, on the other, it goes to great lengths to reverse this image by suggesting a postcommunist relationship between the Russian Tanya and the English Alfie.

Just like the postcommunist woman Tanya, Alfie is on the margins of British society, and it is on these margins that the possible postcommunist partnership can arise. This is a liminal space and it is the dynamics of this marginality that *Last Resort* wants to explore. Although Alfie is established through the film as a fixer, a man who helps the people around him, his marginality is accentuated, as, in his own words, one of the "fuck ups" that the seaside town Stonehaven is full of. It is, however, primarily as the skilled fixer that we as viewers are introduced to Alfie; as he leaves his flat, he settles an argument between two neighbours and fools around with their kids (shadow boxing his way out of the landing). At his entertainment arcade, he provides refugees with contraband cigarettes, and when Tanya enters the arcade, he helps her out with her phone card. Alfie is the announcer at the bingo hall, which again suggests that he functions as a facilitator of entertainment. The town of Stonehaven is in his hands, despite the fact that Alfie has no family ties to the place; he is, like the asylum seekers, not part of Stonehaven. Contrary to the new-home-seeking refugees that he serves in his arcade, Alfie seems to be associated with a nomadic lifestyle, one that is associated with a travelling circus or a seaside funfair. Thus, Alfie has no family and functions best on his own.

The prospect of Alfie's relationship with Tanya and her son could offer him, in one stroke, the chance of forming a nuclear family of child, mother and father. Alfie is

clearly attempting to create a homely feel to Tanya and Artiom's flat by painting it, hanging Tanya's picture, and bringing food for dinner. The beach outing is also constructed as a family event. As they huddle together in a beached sailing boat in order to avoid the rain, they are one family – in the same boat, so to speak. Despite Alfie's efforts to get closer to Tanya and to form a (possibly romantic) bond with her, she does not seem to feel comfortable in accepting the role of an object of desire. When Alfie puts the obvious question to Tanya, "Why don't you stay with me?" Tanya replies, "I have to stop dreaming. I have been dreaming all my life." Tanya's refusal of Alfie is grounded in the fact that the dream Alfie offers her does not correspond with Tanya's own dream. Her dream is closer to the tropical wallpaper that Alfie paints over when giving the flat an overhaul. Moreover, the food that Alfie brings to the 'family' dinner, tikka masala Curry, is not exactly part of Tanya's projected dream of living abroad. Nonetheless, the viewers feel for, and with, Alfie when he smashes the local porn producing establishment, and thus we construct him – not Tanya – as the victim of the society within which he lives. Thus, it is Alfie who gets Tanya's picture at the end of the film, which portrays Noah's Ark, the chief symbol of heterosexual survival, suggesting that Tanya has put her dream of forming the nuclear family to rest, while Alfie is the one who has to carry on dreaming in order to end his nomadic isolation.

These two relationships (the bride-to-order and the potential-ephemeral-liaison) that Tanya tries to form while in Britain do not end in formal marriage. Marriage can often be seen in cinema as the fusion of two entities thereby forming the basis for a hybrid

identity,[8] a hybrid identity – of postcommunist female and Western male – that is refused in *Last Resort*. In other words, despite the film's efforts to subvert the image of the immigrant by injecting empathy into its characters, it does not end happily with the marriage of the two main characters. As can be recalled, the happy ending was also refused by Arik Kaplun in his construction of the Russian woman abroad in Tel Aviv. However, whereas in Kaplun's film Yana stays in Israel and therefore conforms to the Jewish Diaspora ideal of inclusion into the host society, Pawlikowski's *Last Resort* ends with Alfie and Tanya splitting. Helped by Alfie, in an altruistic way, to escape from the detention centre and to enter the wide postcommunist world, Tanya rejects a life with her rescuer, saviour and liberator. The working-class hero is left untouched after having saved "the damsel in distress" (Loshitzky 2006, 752). The proposed marriage on the margins of postcommunist Britain is thwarted with the Russian woman's rejection of a British life abroad. Tanya's expectations, projections and desires of a life abroad are not met by Alfie.

It is not untypical for the mail-order-bride narrative to use this line of plot development; more often that not, it is the host community, white middle Britain or white Mid-Western USA, that is being educated by the Russian woman.[9] Although *Last Resort* ends in a manner akin to poetic realism (e.g. the open ending), its plot line conforms

[8] For example, Dimitris Eleftheriotis writes in this sense on the end scene of *Bila jednom jedna* zemlja/*Underground* (Emir Kusturica, 1996) where an outdoor marriage party becomes disconnected from the riverbed and floods into a new entity, a new utopian homeland. The dual image of the union in the marriage and the process of separation exemplify for Eleftheriotis the "fundamental dialectic between similarity and difference that informs national identity." See Dimitris Eleftheriotis, *Popular Cinemas of Europe: Studies of Textc. Contexts and Frameworks* (New York, London: Continuum, 2001), p 61.
[9] This happens in *Birthday Girl* (Jez Butterworth, 2001) and in *Postmark Paradise*. The former is a take on the English middle-class that is chiefly the butt of the jokes of a sketch show, such as *Little Britain*; therefore "it is the reformulation of a relatively old cinematic joke about staid suburban England in the era of Internet brides, the rise of organized crime in Eastern Europe and middle England's demonization of asylum seekers." See Steve Blandford, *Film, Drama and the Break-up of Britain* (Intellect, 2007), p 44.

more to a mainstream Russian bride-to-order narrative, in which the Russian abroad typically carries a greater cultural capital than her receiving husband. Interestingly, in his review of *Last Resort*, Philip French notes that the film is "a transposition to Europe of a longstanding Hollywood feminist genre that one might call 'the relocation movie'" (French 2001). Thus, for French, the film's 'poetic realism' is wrapped up in a familiar story of a woman relocating with a teenage child. Intended to tell the human story behind the migration to Britain, nonetheless *Last Resort* plays on accepted forms of postcommunist Russian womanhood.

Having touched upon the concluding scenes of *Last Resort*, it is necessary to rewind to the beginning of the film – to the arrival of Tanya at Stansted Airport. As was seen in chapter 3, and in particular in *Brother 2*, the airport holds up the postcommunist Russian for interrogation, because of his or her fallen status in the geo-political power structure. The Western border officials watch the post-Soviet Russian with suspicion, as a result of his/her reputation for transnational criminality, human trafficking and prostitution.[10] However, if the person can produce evidence of cultural capital that is desired in the West, then this passage may happen more smoothly. This process is explicitly tackled in *Last Resort* and therefore essential for this analysis.

2.1 Postcoloniality at the Airport

Last Resort opens at Stansted, where Tanya and Artiom are travelling on the driverless train up to the arrivals terminal. By opening the film on the train, Pawlikowski places

[10] Soviet Russians were also controlled with suspicion, but for international espionage rather than transnational criminality.

his characters in the transit space, which is considered as international and rather a no man's land (or non-space) that renders nationality as indifferent.[11] This changes significantly when the two enter the queue at the border control. Just as the Bagrov brothers were told to do in *Brother 2*, Tanya smiles confidently when she endures the same sort of questioning as the two brothers. "How long do you intend to stay?" and "How much money do you have?" When Tanya answers that she does not know the length of her stay and that she only has 85 US dollars, the immigration officer becomes suspicious and asks her to stand aside. While Tanya and Artiom wait to be dealt with, Artiom reads from a tourist guidebook that states that in Britain friendly people start their conversation by talking about the weather. However, this is not how the immigration officer starts his conversation at the queue and it is certainly not how conversation begins when Tanya is interrogated later behind closed doors. Instead, the object of the officer's enquiry is what Tanya has brought with her, i.e. the contents of her bag: framed photographs and a picture she has painted herself. The officer's line of

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[11] Stansted airport also features in *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002) by Stephen Frears, which is important in connection to *Last Resort*, because the two films are often seen as being preoccupied with the same theme of immigration. Sarah Gibson says of the airport that it "is a place of transit, a place of arrival and departure, one of the 'doors' into the British nation." See Sarah Gibson, ""The Hotel Business is about Strangers": Border Politics and Hospitable Spaces in Stephen Frears' Dirty Pretty Things'," *Third Text* 20, no. 6 (2006): 693-701, p 699. While Frears' film has a hotel in the middle of London as its centre of the narrative, which is truly a transitory space, the seaside resort Stonehaven (based on and filmed in Margate) in *Last Resort* keeps the association of the margins, rather than transit. This, in the view of the study, differentiates the two films and makes *Last Resort* more imbued with travel and being constantly on the move, rather than reaching a centre. Thus, this study subscribes to *Last Resort*'s inclusion in the trope of the European road movie, as seen in the writing of Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli. That said, it might be asserted that *Last Resort* is not about Tanya's home, which she has left, i.e. Russia. Rather it is about Alfie's home and a British construction of home. This supports the argument that the representation of the Russian female abroad in *Last Resort* functions as the catalyst for telling about the national home/context. Thus, the road movie is about home, as much as it is about getting away from home. See Wendy Everett, "Leaving Home: Exile and Displacement in Cinema," in *Cultures in Exiles: Images of Displacement*, ed. Wendy Everett and Peter Wagstaff, 17-32 (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004), p 21.
In regard to the transit space of the airport, *The Terminal* (Steven Spielberg, 2004) should be mentioned, in which Viktor Navorski gets trapped in the JFK airport. Navorski is from an unidentified Eastern European country, Krakozhia, but the connotations are clearly aimed at a postcommunist country, despite the fact the real story, of which the film tells, is that of Mehran Karimi Nasseri, an Iranian refugee who lived at the Charles de Gaulle airport until 2006 when he was hospitalized and later moved to a shelter for the homeless. *The Terminal* was co-written by Andrew Niccol, who was also behind *Lord of War* (2005), about an Ukrainian-American arms dealer.

enquiry is that it is not normal to bring these things on a tourist visit, but rather they suggest an intent to migrate. Tanya defends herself by saying that she is an illustrator of children's books but she fails to impress her interrogator. Instead he asks: "Are you intending to *solicit* work while in Britain?" Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius picks up on the stress of the word 'solicit,' saying that

> the use of the term 'solicit' and its direct connotations with prostitution makes the first verbal allusion to the contents of Tanya's hospitality pact,[12] to the representational clichés imposed on the Eastern European female in the West (Murawska-Muthesius).

Murawska's observation, which is also picked up by Bardan (Bardan 2008, 56), very well illustrates the system. The scene in *Last Resort* "brings to our attention the way in which white bodies from Eastern Europe are 'filtered' in the UK" according to their culture, class and gender (Bardan 2008, 55). Are they of use to the UK or have they arrived to 'solicit' work? Tanya seems to be in possession of genuine cultural capital, but it goes totally unrecognised. Tanya's cultural capital is not the profession of doctor or teacher, engineer or nurse, but that of an artist. However, it is still worth highlighting the rejection that Tanya endures at the hands of the border official. She is placed immediately upon arrival within the generally acknowledged stratification of how postcommunist women are represented, i.e. sexual prostitution. Her cultural capital of being an artist is rendered as bogus, in diametric opposition to the two Bagrov brothers in *Brother 2*, who dodge their scrutiny by faking cultural capital. Furthermore, while Balabanov aims to show how the system is flawed, inappropriate and should be overhauled, Pawlikowski uses this opening to place his characters in a recognisable

[12] It is Murawska's general argument that Tanya enters a regime of representation, which fluctuates between the Derrida's neologism of hostpitality containing both hospitality and hostility. This resembles closely this study's analysis of cultural capital exchange in the postcolonial system. However, Murawska's framework places the emphasis on the receiver (the host) rather than on the stranger seeking hospitality. Alice Bardan also uses this framework for her investigation of *Last Resort*.

context, but a context which we, the spectators, have to revise during the course of the film. In other words, where Balabanov fights a system in honour of the Russian spectator, Pawlikowski's concern is the preconceptions of the Western audience, which inform these popular constructions. Although trying to subvert them, Pawlikowski cannot avoid pandering to these preconceptions of the postcommunist woman as involved in the sex trade, which is most evident from the internet porn stand of *Last Resort*'s narrative. The filmmaker's 'gaze' on the refugee (Loshitzky 2006, 752, Bardan 2008, 56) is equally Pawlikowski's look at the postcommunist Russian. Another way of detecting Pawlikowski's legitimisation of the connotation of prostitution that follows the Eastern European woman is his choice of location for the film in the seaside town of Margate, which serves as the set for the fictional 'Stonehaven.'

2.2 The Seaside Resort of Margate

The south-eastern British seaside town of Margate is the spatial context of Tanya's migrational narrative where she and her son are brought by the immigration authorities. Margate, and the way Pawlikowski constructs this fictional space, is also the point at which the critics took up the film when it came to epitomise Britain's treatment of asylum seekers (Gibbons 2001, French 2001). However, there are two very important reasons for the filmmaker's choice of Margate as the shooting location. Firstly, there are the connotations of the seaside resort as a Bakthinian 'safety valve,' where, under controlled means, people can collectively turn around society's repressive structures.[13]

[13] "[The carnival] is best seen as a safety valve, which in some overall functional way reinforces the bonds of authority by allowing for their temporary suspension. [T]he carnival inversions, the world-turned-upside-down of these festivities, were clearly not aimed at loosening people's sense of rightness of the rules which kept the world the right way up, but on the contrary at reinforcing them". See Simon Dentith, *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), p 73-4.

The carnival, according to Bakhtin, turns society on its head, the low (sexual desire) surfaces and the high (reason and law) is repressed. Just as the carnival, the seaside resort, according to Judy Hemingway, is "a site of contest and conflict where social relations, moralities, and cultures are made and remade" (Hemingway 2006, 430). Even in the word 'carnival' there is a suggestion of meat (carne), which can be associated with the freak shows, circus performances or nudity postcards that are encountered at the seaside resort. This leads to Tanya and her encounter with Les, the local pornographer, where she is reduced to a piece of meat 'acting' in front of the camera. Alice Bardan also stresses this line of investigation, saying that the banner 'Welcome to Dreamland' becomes a welcome to a Count Dracula's den, opening its gates every morning to suck the blood out of people, refugees or not (Bardan 2008, 59). It suggests that Pawlikowski seeks this place for its associations of sex, death and renewal: sex is implicit in the notion of a dirty weekend, death through the metaphorical killing of everyday normality, and renewal arises from the return to this normality, after spending time at the seaside.

Secondly, Margate has a very significant place in British cinema, one which Pawlikowski would have been aware of when embarking on his project of reversing the depiction of asylum seekers in British media, as mentioned earlier (Wood 2006, 187). In Lindsay Anderson's Margate of the early 1950s, as portrayed in *O Dreamland* (1953),[14] the seaside town also has something scary about it; the life-size amusement figures are more alive than the people attending the Dreamland amusement park, and the canned laughter of a British-flag-waving clown is the only laughter heard on the soundtrack.

[14] Anderson's film is referred to both by Philip French and Steve Blandford.

The visitors are numb and walk around without expressing any joy at being in the park. Furthermore, the amusement display consists of horror scenes – torture chambers, the burning of Joan of Arc, execution by hanging – beside the food parlour, which gives a quick service of baked beans, sausages and chips. At the end of the film, we as spectators are in the Ferris wheel taking us up and giving us an overview of the park. It is this view that Tanya and Artiom have from their flat in the high-rise overlooking what is left of Dreamland. It is this window overlooking Dreamland that Tanya wants to jump out of when contemplating suicide; or at least this is what the film suggests, although there is no explicit reference to Tanya expressing an intent to kill herself. While Pawlikowski astutely makes the name 'Dreamland' allegorical to Tanya's illusory dreamland of immigration, he stays clear of completely ending Tanya's journey. It is necessary to highlight this, because when looking at *Lilja 4-ever*, the suicide of its main protagonist is constructed as the ultimate escape from the migrational journey gone horribly wrong. In *Last Resort*, the contemplated suicide of Tanya stems as much from migration and failed expectations, as from the seaside resort with its connotations of death and rebirth. One of the characteristics of poetic realism, established from the pre-war era,[15] is that the setting reflects back on the cinematic characters, who are more often than not doomed to failure. Equally, the setting of Margate reflects and drives the character of Tanya towards her destiny.

Although far from a neutral space, the coastal fringe of Britain is not just a marginal space but also a site where 'immoral' leisure activities can take place, as Judy Hemingway has pointed out (2006, 430). The seaside resort, and in particular Margate,

[15] In particular, this is evident in the films from French poetic cinema, such as *L'Atalante* (1934) by Jean Vigo.

is sought for its associations with metaphorical death through rejuvenation and the release of repressed sexual desire through the 'dirty weekend.' It is these connotations that Pawlikowski taps into by setting his film in Margate and it is also these connotations that follow the postcommunist female abroad: sexualisation and death by suicide (or by return).[16] Another film that might compare to Pawlikovski's is *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) by Gurinder Chadha, which also takes place at a seaside resort. Chadha's film should be considered as part of a trope of films that deal explicitly with Britain's colonial legacy, with its narrative of nine British-Asian women on a visit to Blackpool. The film is often considered as a part of Black British cinema, which emerged during the 60s and 70s as 'Cinema of Duty,' committed to telling "types of stories which the mainstream British media had, to date, largely ignored" (Malik 1996, 206). However, Chadha's film also breaks from the tradition of Black British cinema by refusing a simplistic representation of ethnicity; it is multilayered and complex in terms of genre, style and form (Malik 1996, 210), in particular with regard to the British seaside resort.

In *Bhaji on the Beach*, the seaside resort of Blackpool invokes a 'Bombay' in Britain: crowded streets with colourful ornaments and bustling with noise (Eleftheriotis 2001,

[16] No more is this evident than in *Top Spot* (2004), a film by concept artist Tracy Emin, who is a native of Margate. She says about her film: "I've made this film for women [and] it's about the moment of understanding that you're not innocent any more, understanding that you're walking into an adult world, which means sex, which means often violence, which means that you may suddenly have some perspective on your own life that you've never had before" (quoted in Hemingway 437). Despite Pawlikowski constructing his character of Tanya four years earlier than Emin's teenage girls of Margate, there is a close relation between the two formations. Tanya also has to change a perspective on herself through the discovery of sex and violence. Furthermore, Tracey Emin's film explicitly has death at its centre; one of the teenage girls commits suicide because of an early pregnancy, another girl gets raped (mirroring Emin's own teenage rape), and the film ends with the imaginative destruction of Margate by WWII bomber aircraft.

57). The liminal space of Blackpool triggers the fantasy of the film's main protagonist, Asha, almost having a holiday romance with Ambrose, an elderly, distinctive Englishman. It is the fluidity of national identities that is examined, for which Dimitris Eleftheriotis points to the water and the sea as the manifestation of similarity and difference, which is part of the formation of a national identity. He says,

> water has specific narrative and symbolic functions which represent distinctive ways in which cultural difference and exchange are conceived and constructed. Furthermore, in a geographical sense water seems to reproduce this dynamic relationship between similarity and difference, union and separation: seas and rivers are not only physical frontiers and markers of national borders, but also routes of communication linking and connecting ports, peoples and cultures (Eleftheriotis 2001, 63)

In this regard, it can be asserted that the setting of *Last Resort* is by no means a coincidence. The seaside resort is a manifestation of a cultural meeting point, a place that can link dispersed regions into one common condition. However, while Gurinder Chadha might be considered a diasporic filmmaker, Pawlikovski's film does not fit into the same categorisation. Despite the narrative similarities – female journeys, 'romantic' engagement with English men and the seaside resort, *Last Resort* is not the hybrid identity film that characterises *Bhaji on the Beach*. If *Bhaji on the Beach* is about a postcolonial Britain at the beginning of the postcommunist era, then *Last Resort* is about the effects of postcommunism on Britain.

The tradition of narrating Margate, both in film and literature,[17] has been constructed around death, rape and sex games and Polish-born Pawlikowski contributes to this

[17] This tradition is not only a cinematic one, but is also evident in literature, e.g. *Last Orders* by Graham Swift (1996), where four men travel to Margate to scatter the ashes of a friend (again death). Standing on a broken jetty, the narrator says, "on one side the waves are smacking and crashing, and on the other they're gurgling and clucking like they're trying to apologize. One way there's Margate and Dreamland,

tradition (with a rather personal narrative). This is also why Pawlikowski is closer to British cinema than to diasporic or transnational cinema. *Last Resort* is narrated from a British perspective and speaks mostly of and to Britain. The filmmaker's cinematic statement is meant for home audiences; Pawlikowski wants his film to be judged on these grounds rather than as an immigrant film. Margate is the symbol that connects the film to its (British/Western) viewers.

> For England, though, the potency of the use of Margate cannot be entirely denied; a place that thrived on working-class day trippers and holidaymakers is now, in the so-called classless society, a symbol both of decline and of the hollowness of the re-branding of Britain. The quintessentially English seaside resort is now a real prison camp, a blackly comic twist on the humour of the *Carry On* films and the real-life Butlins and Pontins and a potent symbol of the hidden underbelly of an England bitter and resentful of its new role in the world (Blandford 2007, 43).

It is in Blandford's account that the investigation most clearly sees that both the West and the East are under the spell of the postcommunist condition; Margate and Russians abroad in *Last Resort* become the symbol of postcommunist England "that is the very antithesis of the confident resurgent 'Cool Britannia' that had been central to the political rhetoric at the turn of the century" (Blandford 2007, 42). Pawlikowski's vision of the postcommunist world with its greyness, wire fences, bad food and totalitarian state policies of former Eastern Europe, is found on the south-eastern coast of England. Where the master narrative of the Cold War talked about the good and the bad world, the black and the white, the postcommunist master plot has murky grey as its tonality: good and bad are found everywhere, both in the region of ex-communism and the postcommunist West. The Russian abroad becomes a talisman for rendering this paradox that preoccupies Western filmmakers, including Pawlikowski.

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the other there is the open sea." See Graham Swift, *Last Orders* (Basingstoke and Oxford: Picador, 1996), p 292.

Thus this study diverges from those scholars (mostly of Polish origin) who see Pawlikowski as a diasporic filmmaker (e.g. Murawska-Muthesius 2003, Ostrowska 2007). Rather, this study sees Pawlikowski as part of Europe's wide trend in postcommunist filmmaking (Bardan 2008), which produces genre films that Iordanova terms "metropolitan multicultural margin" films (Iordanova 2009). Films of this genre explicitly share a pan-European sameness in the depiction of immigrants, a sameness based on inequalities and dependencies and a sameness that extents to films' similarities in terms of production, distribution and reception. However, the films are not diasporic narratives. These are filmmakers who, in the words of Iordanova, "do not qualify as bona fide 'migrant' or 'diasporic', nor are they 'exilic' or 'intercultural' [rather] they are more adequately described as 'transnationally mobile filmmakers'" (Iordanova 2009). Pawlikowski himself underlines that he resents being labelled an immigrant filmmaker, or an issue-led filmmaker (Blandford 2007, 42). For example, he says, "despite what was there on the screen, these critics just went on about the film's gritty realism, about it being a searing indictment of the asylum system" (Wood 2006, 187). Similar to the Russian-Israeli Arik Kaplun, Pawlikowski refuses to carry the mantle of diaspora filmmaking, rejecting the classification as an immigrant filmmaker. It is not uncommon for filmmakers who have migrated to renounce their status as part of a migration cinema (Bardan 2008, 48-50).[18] Through the choice of Margate as the location for his film, Pawlikowski wanted to be considered and judged alongside the iconic filmmaker Lindsay Anderson. Pretentious, maybe, but Margate is a major character in the film where the representation of Russians abroad becomes the symbol of postcolonial,

[18] This is also the case in Swedish immigrant cinema.

postcommunist Britain that resembles nothing like the Cold War mindset of a prosperous and affluent country with a secured place in history.

Conclusion

Pawlikowski has no claim to be of Russian origin, but on the other hand, he is closely familiar with Russian language, literature, culture and politics, which is mainly expressed in his earlier documentaries and *The Stringer*. In *Last Resort*, he uses a stereotype of the Eastern European female, which he then subverts. The analysis has used a postcolonial framework to show how the opening airport scene conforms to the image of mistrusted cultural capital, but it has also seen that the film constructs a possible, meaningful relationship for Tanya with Alfie. In *Last Resort* there is no rape, but rather a chance for the two protagonists to form a union. However, both the bride-to-order status and the ephemeral relationship with Alfie are rejected as promising postcolonial hybrids. Finally, the investigation has seen how Pawlikowski uses the seaside town Margate, with its strong allusions to a particular trope of British filmmaking. This marks Pawlikowski's filmmaking as part of a British cinema tradition. He refuses to be exclusively pocketed as an immigrant/diasporic filmmaker. It is through this filter that his representations of Russians abroad, i.e. Tanya and Artiom, should be viewed. This chapter has seen the 'informer' perspective in the filmmaker, who has no claim to a Russian national identity, but who claims close familiarity with the tropes of both 'Russianness' and 'Britishness.' However, this dual 'informer' perspective is all but gone when, in the next chapter, the study jumps to Lukas Moodysson and the Swedish context of *Lilja 4-ever*.

Chapter 8: A 'Swedish' Film

1 Lukas Moodysson

Having established how a transplanted filmmaker like Polish-British Pawlikowski operates within the context of British cinema, it will be simpler to address how Swedish Lukas Moodysson operates within Swedish cinema. In the last decade, Moodysson has emerged as one of the brightest stars of Swedish cinema with films that have been critically and popularly successful. In particular, his first two features, *Show Me Love* (1998) and *Tillsammans*/*Together* (2000), were received as films in which a tight narrative style captured a Swedish society in the process of change, but which also set out to re-examine some old themes that have preoccupied Swedish cinema for decades, such as teenage love and the breaking up of the traditional family constellation. Moodysson, while clinging on to these familiar themes, goes further than his predecessors by granting his characters a clear point of view in the story, i.e. telling narratives from the perspective of the child(ren). It is this child's perspective that has driven Moodysson in his filmmaking career and it is also this perspective that makes *Lilja 4-ever* an exceptional film within Swedish cinema, because contrary to his two previous films, where the topic was Swedish children, *Lilja 4-ever* concentrates on the point of view of the Russian Lilja,[1] a post-Soviet teenage girl who gets entangled in human trafficking when travelling to Sweden in the hope of earning some money by picking vegetables.

[1] The chapter will uphold the Swedish spelling of the name 'Lilya'; just as the title of the film will remain the untranslated.

2 The Context of *Lilja 4-ever*: a Swedish Film?

Dir/Script. Lukas Moodysson, Producer Lars Jönsson, Memfis Film, Sweden, 2002.

Sixteen year-old Lilja is living in an unspecified post-Soviet country. When her mother moves to the US with her new partner, a Russian living in the States, Lilja is left behind in the care of her aunt. Lilja has few friends and most of her time is spent with teenage Volodya, sniffing glue and playing at a derelict naval base, which has been abandoned by the Soviet military. When Lilja's aunt fails to provide for Lilja, her only option for survival is to follow in the footsteps of a friend to 'solicit' work at the bars in the nearby town, offering sexual favors in return for money to buy food. On one of these outings, Lilja meets Andrei, a young man who at first appears to give Lilja the attention that she needs and does not seek sexual favors. However, Andrei turns out to be part of a human trafficking ring and he makes Lilja travel to Sweden in the hope of becoming a vegatable picker. Once in Sweden, Lilja is met by Witek, who locks her up in an anonymous flat. The next day, Witek returns and rapes Lilja. Witek subsequently sells her as a prostitute to Swedish men. After having lived as a slave, being used by men and living on junk food, Lilja manages to escape from Witek, committing suicide by jumping from a motorway bridge. In her afterlife, she returns to her post-Soviet (Russian) home as an angel where she is reunited with Volodya, who has also committed suicide.

Although *Lilja 4-ever* marks a change in subject matter for Moodysson, there are several recurrent traits that can be pinpointed as typical of the filmmaker, such as his work with the production company Memfis Film in a transnational partnership with Danish Zentropa, and Moodysson's strong social engagement, not shying away from

criticising his native Sweden.[2] The latter is evident from the television production, *Det nya landet*/*The New Country* (Geir Hansteen Jörgensen, 2000), which Moodysson penned together with Peter Birro before making *Lilja 4-ever*.[3] Although Moodysson did not direct *The New Country*, his episode clearly shows his growing preoccupation with how immigrants are treated in contemporary Sweden. In the film, a 15 year-old Somalian boy, Ali, joins Massoud, an Iranian man in his 40s, on a summer road trip through Sweden. The two have diverging experiences of their new homeland, with Ali being the optimist; however, it is Massoud who ends up staying in Sweden, having fallen in love with a Swedish woman. Ali, on the other hand, leaves Sweden for another country. The film is important in connection to *Lilja 4-ever*, because it highlights the immigrants' view (the Other's point of view) on a country that throughout its history has seen itself as a champion of liberal migration laws and as a saviour of people in need of a refuge. However, Moodysson wants to point at other features of this self-pleasing image, namely that immigrants live on the margins of their new society, that xenophobia does exists, and that even those with optimistic views of Sweden can be downtrodden by rejection and denial of selfhood. This is carried over into the story of Lilja, but with much more sinister connotations.

If the television production of *The New Country* gives evidence of Moodysson's aim to portray his version of Sweden in the 21st Century, then it does not follow the other trait of close transnational collaboration between Memfis Film and Zentropa. In this regard,

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[2] Olof Hedling comments on the critique made by *Lilya 4-ever*, pointing out that as a state-financed film, it has "the traits of national ideological mirror." See Olof Hedling, "Om Lilja 4-ever – en svensk film," in *Fran Eden till damavdelning*, ed. Bibi Jonsson, Karin Nykvist and Birthe Sjoberg, 323-334 (Lund: Absalon, 2004), p 326. The idea is that because the film enjoys the state support of Sweden and Denmark, it is driven by ideological interests of the established society and its decision makers, rather than economic interests.

[3] Peter Birro is one of the leading playwrights in Sweden, who, just like Moodysson, is a passionate critic of contemporary Sweden.

the investigation enters once again the field of transnational cinema, which was dealt with in regard to Russian cinema and the filmmaking of Sergei Bodrov. The point of bringing the transnational once more to the fore is to emphasise that, although *Lilja 4-ever* is a co-production and therefore has transnational production values, there is no involvement from Russia. According to Mette Hjort, "the assumption, expressed by [Scandinavian] filmmakers, producers, and policy makers from the mid-90s onward, is that co-operation across national borders is far easier in the Nordic context" (Hjort 2005, 210-1). The logic in this supposition is that the Nordic countries share cultural, linguistic and historical affinities, which translates as 'we cooperate (communicate) with those similar to us'. However, since *Lilja 4-ever* has no evidence of Russian involvement, it also points to a case where Russians and Russian production companies are not 'similar to us.' Newspaper reports on the film state that Moodysson and Memfis Film themselves went to Moscow to organize casting auditions, which is similar to the approach taken by Pawlikowski in *Last Resort*. This is significant in the case of *Lilja 4-ever*, because just a couple of years before, Memfis Film, together with STV Kinokompaniya, were co-producing Bodrov's film *Bear's Kiss*, which was analysed earlier. Thus, contacts between Memfis Film and STV had already been established by the time of the production of *Lilja 4-ever*, but despite these contacts, Russian involvement was ruled out.

Lilja's representation – the representation of a Russian abroad – is constructed purely from a Swedish/Danish point of view. It is in this context that the film is meant to speak, provoke or expose.[4] *Lilja 4-ever*'s production scheme points to a different kind

[4] This is indeed the approach that is taken by Andrew Nestingen, who uses the film to illustrate the shifting "background understanding" of selves in Scandinavian society from homogenous welfare states

of Nordic identity formation, as suggested by Iver Neumann, who has analysed Nordic identity formation in relation to Europe through the dialectical interaction of two opposite forces, the inside-out and the outside-in (Neumann 1999, 117-122). The former sees the region as sharing intrinsic values and hence forming transnational partnerships; the latter sees the formation of a regional identity as part of the geopolitical situation. The Nordic countries consciously strive for a shared identity because of their proximity to more powerful nations – Russia, Germany, the UK and the US. The inside-out model is clearly seen in Nordic filmmakers' expression, as quoted by Hjort. However, the outside-in model works better in the case of *Lilja 4-ever*, because it is in this model that the Russian Other informs (forces) the formation of a Nordic identity. The postcommunist female Other fascinates, because her social decline is unjust and horrific. The decay portrayed in the film – the grey housing blocks, the courtyard's muddy look, the derelict marine base[5] – all yield despair on the faces of the characters, which in turn arouses the viewer's empathy and desire to rescue its victims. On Moodysson's behalf, there is a desire to 'rescue' the victims of post-Soviet economic 'development.' Moodysson states: "if the film could make one young girl reconsider [emigration, prostitution or just travelling to Sweden(?)], then it has succeeded" (Hjerten 2002, 36). The major reason for including *Lilja 4-ever* in this part of the project is to illustrate the strongest indictment of the postcommunist Russian as an excluded and completely alienated postcolonial Other. However, although honourable in his intention of exposing human trafficking and modern-day slavery, Moodysson builds his

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to a neo-liberal market orientated arrangement. See Andrew Nestingen, *Crime and Fantasy in Scandinavia: Fiction, Film, and Social Change* (Washington and Copenhagen: University of Washington Press/Museum Tusculanum Press, 2008), p 4-5.

[5] According to Julian Graffy, this is very much what makes *Lilya 4-ever* tell an "authentic" Russian story, referring to the drabness – "the faceless, unmaintained blocks on the edge of an unnamed town, the derelict and trashed public spaces, the meagre adornments of Lilya's room." See Julian Graffy, "Trading Places," *Sight and Sound* 13, no. 4 (2003): 20-22, p 21.

representation of Russians abroad on a power system that bears an uncanny resemblance to a (neo-)colonial system where Westerners hold the power to use and abuse people who are considered little more than bodies made of meat and bones. In this regard, *Lilja 4-ever* becomes similar to the postcommunist, postcolonial version of what Ella Shohat has called "the imperial rescue fantasies of clitoridectomized and veiled women proffered by Eurocentric feminism" (Shohat 1997, 40).[6]

2.1 The Reception of *Lilja 4-ever*

When *Lilja 4-ever* premiered in Britain in 2003, Julian Graffy wrote in *Sight and Sound*: "it is one of the considerable strengths of *Lilja 4-ever* that the Swedish Moodysson has made such a convincing 'Russian' film" (Graffy 2003, 21). Graffy uses the word "Russian" in inverted commas, reflecting that the film has 'Russianness' all over it, although Moodysson is Swedish and not Russian. Graffy's inverted commas are warranted, but not in the way Graffy intended, because the film's construction of the postcommunist woman in fact conforms to a Eurocentric view of the (neo-)colonial Other. Although it tells an 'authentic' story in the sense that these cases of human trafficking happen regularly in contemporary Europe, it is Olof Hedling's assertion that *Lilja 4-ever* plays on the same ambiguous emotions of the viewer that were exhibited in the white slave trade films of the early silent era.[7] Hedling says:

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[6] This is related to the (neo-)colonial rescue paradigm of Russian women. According to Anna Johnston, a historian and scholar of missionary writing, an important part of the colonial narrative was the 'rescuing' of the native woman from her predicament. Such narratives "focus on the native woman as victim, suffering because of her relatives (be they fathers, husbands, or brothers) and, by extension, because of the native society itself." See Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p 56.

[7] The best known of these films is perhaps *Traffic in Souls* by George Loane Tuckers (1913), which features the kidnapping of a young girl meant for forced prostitution. In the system behind this trade are the high society men, who, when not trafficking white souls, are society's pillars of moral concern. Interestingly, the film suggests the possibility of Swedish female immigrants being caught in the

> While *Lilja 4-ever* narrates a similar story [of white slavery], it has even more actual qualities. The most explicit feature of this is the deeply felt incomprehension of the treatment of a young, lonely girl, whose vulnerable existence rises from a postcommunist and ever more globalised society. A gender guided problematic with the origin in a near reality is one of the central motifs of the film (Hedling 2004, 325).

Hedling's balanced analysis of *Lilja 4-ever* is warranted here, because it deconstructs the film according to spectatorship and viewer empathy, which points to the sensationalized narratives in the early cinema of attractions. While Hedling, a Swedish film scholar, finds the film problematic, some of his compatriots, among them film critics, applauded the film's realism.[8] Contrary to the Swedish critics, Tony Rayns claims that the film "says nothing more useful than: isn't this shocking? Aren't we powerless to do anything about it?" And he continues: "Lilja is a brattish Russian teenager, formed by her tough environment, but ultimately a tabula rasa" (Rayns 2003, 56). While Tony Rayns' review is not synonymous with the film's reception outside the Nordic countries (e.g. Stephen Holden in *The New York Times* is quite positive about the film), it does indicate that the film and, in particular, its portrayal of postcommunist trafficking was not popular throughout Europe. The majority of its cinema viewers came from the Nordic countries, mostly from Sweden.[9] The point is that *Lilja 4-ever* narrates the reality of contemporary Sweden set against a post-Soviet existence and therefore, the film addresses Swedish/Nordic concerns, which is also what Moodysson

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trafficking, which makes it possible that in the early part of the 20th century, Swedes constituted the vulnerable Other that Moodysson attributes to post-Soviet Lilya.

[8] Thus Ingvar Engvén, writing for the Swedish film industry's journal, applauded the film as a "harmonious masterpiece." See Ingvar Engvén, "Inom verklighetens murar: Lilya 4-ever," Filmrutan 45, no. 4 (2002).

[9] Although it was released in 23 countries across Europe, only 600,000 people attended screenings of *Lilya 4-ever* Europe-wide. Compared to Moodysson's two previous films, this is a considerable drop: *Show Me Love* (1998) was seen by 1.5 million viewers across Europe and *Together* (2000), by nearly 2 million. Of *Lilya 4-ever*'s 600,000 European viewers over 400,000 came from the Nordic countries alone, and 300,000 of these from exclusively Swedish audiences. Having said that, shortly after the film's premiere in Sweden, a newspaper noted that its Swedish viewers had cooled their interest in the film, and overall admissions dropped considerably.

emphasises when addressing Russian audiences. For example, when interviewed in Rotterdam for a Russian online publication, Moodysson says,

> I think that *Lilja 4-ever* is not just a Russian theme. This is a global situation. Not in the details, of course, but in the aim that in many countries people are enduring difficult experiences. I did not set out to concretely make a film about Russia. Rather about Sweden – in as long as Lilja turns up in that country. And when Swedes watched the film, afterwards they spoke of a Swedish reality (Chen 2005).

What is clear from Moodysson's address to his Russian viewers is that he distances himself from the post-Soviet reality, instead emphasising the Swedish context of the film as its ideological foundation. The statement made through *Lilja 4-ever* is for and about a reality that is not Russian, but one that needs, requires (or nostalgically wishes for) the Russian Other.

The fact that Moodysson's film speaks from a Swedish perspective and constructs its representation of Russians abroad accordingly is important in this context. The film will be analysed along the same lines of investigation as *Last Resort* by focussing on the interpersonal relationships formed (from voluntary union to rape), and on the exchange of cultural capital and its contextual position within the postcolonial postcommunist sphere. In particular, the rape will be targeted for analysis, because, as Wendy Everett and Peter Wagstaff have pointed out, it is in the rape where the complete robbery of selfhood is projected (Wagstaff and Everett 2004, x). The rape of Lilja makes the film stand out from the other films that have been investigated so far.

2.2 Cultural Capital and Labour Migration

In the previous chapters, the focus has been on the airport as a Bakhtinian chronotopical space where temporal and spatial subtexts converge and lay bare for the viewer a system

of exchanges. This cultural capital approach will be continued in the analysis of *Lilja 4-ever*. However, with regard to the story of Lilja it is equally important to pick up on the discourses of labour migration, to which the film gives an impetus. In the view of this study, *Lilja 4-ever* forms a European 'anxiety' narrative that is meant to infuse suffering in its spectators. According to Jennifer Willgning, anxiety is an obvious force in creative narration. She says,

> psychology characterizes it essentially as an emotional state – a very unpleasant and often prolonged one – in which the sufferer experiences a vague sense of immanent danger. Anxiety differs from fear in that the danger that prompts it is only anticipated; it is not, or not yet, real (Willging 2007, 3)

Human trafficking is difficult to scrutinize in real life, but *Lilja 4-ever* makes it literal and tangible, and thus inflicts suffering on its spectators. They are the ones who are the 'sufferers' for whom human trafficking is only anticipated. Andrew Nestingen approaches the film as a 'melodrama of demand'. "We cannot," Nestingen argues, "understand the politics of the films unless we identify them as melodrama, for they draw on melodrama to construct their intervention" (Nestingen 2008, 104). In other words, to construct intervention, anxiety needs to be infused in the viewers. Yet another, equally powerful source of anxiety, is the 'threat' from Eastern European labour migration, which sees 'hordes' of people 'flooding' the Western country, undermining the homogenous welfare system. Moodysson goes to great lengths to show why Lilja desires to travel to Sweden in the first place, but vitally performs a return narrative, where Lilja's rightful home is established in her post-Soviet country. The film is explaining a system of exploitation that places the viewer in the role of exploiter, but also where the exploited is 'rightfully' located in the home country. This investigation, however, emphasises the issues of cultural capital in this system of migration, because it

is an area where one can clearly see how this labour exchange system resembles and shapes itself in the image of a (neo-)colonial exploitation.

Lilja 4-ever enters two prevailing discourses on migration. The first discourse is constructing labour migration as a necessity for escaping the postcommunist condition of poverty, implying that postcommunist subjects benefit from transnational migration. The economy of the postcommunist country is injected with valuable foreign currency remittances that are sent home by the migrated worker. Furthermore, the viability of the economy of the host Western country is sustained by immigrants taking up work places that few others would want. Thus, the economy of the Western country is kept on the road to progress, because vital positions (often low paid manual labour) are used to uphold the level of welfare for the rest of the population.

The second discourse – the one to which *Lilja 4-ever* in particular bears testament – is that it is morally dubious to leave family (children, mothers, fathers, husbands and wives) and the native country in search of happiness. Furthermore, women, who like Lilja have migrated, are often, in both the host and the home country, connected to concepts of prostitution, whether in the actual sex industry or just because they are taking low status jobs beneath their level of education. This is a variety on a subtle discourse, which is present in both the West European countries and in postcommunist countries that provide East European labour. In both cases, nationalistic sentiments are the prevailing feature of the discourse, to protect one's own national interests. In the host countries, it informs a fear of being flooded by immigrants who are chiefly seen as criminals, prostitutes and social benefit seekers, i.e. labour migration does not bring any

benefits but rather complicates and deepens existing social ills. It is this discourse that Pawlikowski aims to subvert in *Last Resort*, a discourse that sees anxiety manifested in the image of hordes of immigrants flooding countries in the West, an anxiety that is evident in most Western welfare states, including Sweden.

However, these two discourses are separate; whereas the first one functions on a transnational, socio-economical level, the second one functions largely on a popular and emotional-populist national level. That said, cultural capital plays a significant role in both discourses. On the economic level, the cultural capital of the postcommunist worker is valued as useful, something that adds to the economy. Western countries are able to 'fill' gaps in their labour market by regulating immigration, cherry-picking people with the right education, training and required skills. In this regard, immigration from postcommunist countries is particularly interesting, because of the high levels of education and thus, the cultural capital that immigrants from these countries allegedly bring along. On the national, emotional level, however, the arrival of these immigrants is regarded differently, as an advent that has the potential to pollute and undermine traditional values and local ways. Thus, when opening its borders to immigrants, the Western welfare system has to balance these two, often contradictory, conceptualisations of immigration.

Lilja 4-ever exhibits both discourses. On the one hand, the film shows why people from postcommunist countries search for work outside their home country. On the other hand, however, the fact that Lilja gets trapped in a trafficking system points to the national discourse, i.e. that transnational migration leads to sexual exploitation and

misery. Furthermore, a major reason for Lilja's downfall is because her mother abandons her for a life abroad. The abandonment of Lilja infuses her mother with exclusively negative connotations, as she selfishly improves only her own situation, and hence the film refuels the negative narrative of transnational female migration.[10] In her anthropological analysis of Moldovan mothers in a transnational migration circuit between Moldova and Turkey, Leyla J. Keough describes the representation of Lilja's mother and her choice in seeking a better life as constructing "one solution for desperate women like Lilja and her mother: Don't be a slave to passions for men or money, stay home, buck up, and take care of your responsibilities" (Keough 2006, 457, n11). The women that Keough talks to are telling a different story where 'good mothers' leave for work in neighboring countries in order to better their domestic situation.[11]

Although Lilja's mother plays a significant part in Lilja's subsequent downfall, it is with Lilja herself that this investigation detects how transnational labour migration can be viewed as a neo-colonial system that positions the postcommunist would-be immigrant worker with low, or no, cultural capital. In this system, women are (neo-) colonial subjects desired only for their bodies, without minds of their own.

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[10] Emma Wilson has an apt analysis of this moment in the film creating a strong linkage to the viewer. She says at this moment "Lilya is the child the viewer has been [or] a child the viewer has left behind, a reminder of parental responsibility and its visceral ties." See Emma Wilson, "Children, Emotion and Viewing in Contemporary European Film," *Screen* 46, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 329-340, p 337.

[11] According to Keough, "the blame for social disorder in Moldova is placed upon migrant women – especially those who work in Turkey, who are represented as irresponsible mothers, immoral wives, and selfish consumers. Migrant women themselves counter that local disorder and their migrant work is caused by economic dislocation. They argue that in going abroad to work, they are selflessly sacrificing [themselves] for their children and thus are more resourceful and better mothers (even if transnational ones) than those who stay" (Keough 432-3).

However, before proceeding to the rape of Lilja and her subsequent suicide, the investigation must briefly examine the sequence where Lilja travels abroad. Andrei, Lilja's 'boyfriend' and trickster, provides Lilja with a passport, saying 'now you are Katya.' On asking why, Lilja is told that as she is not eighteen yet, this is to avoid problems at the airport. Lilja accepts the explanation and prepares for the trip by packing her things, including a picture of a large angel (the picture that foregrounds the film's ending). Andrei says goodbye to Lilja at the airport with a promise that he will follow her in two days. The scene has the standard connotation of a lovers' farewell with a long kiss to cement the relationship. Lilja is then seen in the duty free section of the airport, looking at perfumes and the rows of liquors and wine. Once on the airplane, Lilja is confident and smiles at the prospect of a happier life abroad. Lilja gets her in-flight meal, which she receives with admiration, and she rehearses her new identity by repeatedly stating her new name and date of birth. The process of travel is presented as a process of identity transformation, which points to the masquerading of the self in line with a desired identity and cultural capital. At the passport control, Lilja is permitted into Sweden without any questions; in the arrival hall she is met by Witek. What is important in these scenes is that Lilja passes through immigration control without questions being raised about her identity (real or false). The fact that Lilja travels on a fake passport makes her transnational endeavor resemble that of the Bagrov brothers in *Brother 2*. Another noteworthy similarity with these two films is that they are both structrured as narratives of return. Danila always returns home as the national Russian hero, but Lilja will also return to her home in her afterlife. This makes the two films' transnational migration discourse play out at the same national level, but in two different contexts, *Brother 2* in the context of Russian cinema and *Lilja 4-ever* in the context of a Western welfare state, like Sweden. For Tanya in *Last Resort*, the airport

encounter with immigration officials was the place and the time where she had to re-examine her post-Soviet identity and was turned into a 'refugee.' Lilja, on the other hand, has yet to realize that for her this 'no questions asked' moment was also one leading to a reassessment of self. She is soon to realize that life abroad is not what was promised, because it is just hours later that she is raped and hauled into forced prostitution, stripped of any chance to re-examine her mutating selfhood or individuality. It is with her rape that the complete annihilation of cultural capital as a form of exchange for the transnational labour migrant is evident, and it is for this reason that the investigation will turn now to this troubling moment.

2.3 Rape and Suicide

First of all, it is important to highlight that the first rape that Lilja endures is not shown explicitly. Having been locked up, Lilja starts to tidy up her new place, removing rubbish in the form of McDonald's packaging, hanging her picture and making her bed on the couch. The next morning, she takes a bath. While she is in the bathtub, Witek arrives and enters the bathroom. He closes the door behind him and seconds later we hear Lilja screaming several times, 'No, please.' The film then cuts to Lilja sitting in the bathtub bruised; she looks directly into the camera, as if recognizing the camera's presence. This is the beginning of Lilja's tormented life abroad, which will end in suicide. While Moodysson leaves the rape of Lilja behind the closed door, he goes to great lengths to show the men who subsequently abuse Lilja. In an explicit montage sequence, the camera assumes the position of Lilja looking up or down on the grunting men having sex with her. In an interview at the NFT in London, Moodysson explained that the cameraman became physically sick while shooting in this position and that

Moodysson himself shot some of these horrific scenes (Leigh 2002). Explicitly, Moodysson aims at placing the spectator in the position of the exploited (Lilja), laying bare the men and their sexuality.[12] Thus, Moodysson needs the postcommunist woman/girl in order to render the representation of sexual exploitation and the purchase of sexual favours with all their horrors. Therefore it is also in *Lilja 4-ever* that the clearest representation of the post-Soviet Russian positioned as a (neo)colonised Other is found: a Russian Other that is being abused, exploited, and reduced to nothingness by the economic and social practices of the West, exemplified by a welfare state like Sweden, where inequality has diminished the postcommunist person to neo-colonised subjecthood. A similar exploitation of the Russian woman was also found in the representation of Tanya in *Last Resort* and the subplot where she was compelled by circumstance to associate with Les, the pornographer. However, it is nothing in comparison with what Lilja endures. The rape of Lilja is the most extreme rejection of any possibility for a meaningful relationship; she is radically denied a chance to lead a simple life in the new country. *Last Resort* suggested a possible union between Tanya and Alfie, but the film's outcome also indicated that such a relationship was not really viable. In *Lilja 4-ever*, however, there is no attempt to form interpersonal relationships abroad; this idea is completely dismissed and instead Lilja is forced into exploitative domination. Lilja never achieves selfhood, her own identity, she lacks agency in her earthly life and only gains control in her afterlife. In fact, in her trajectory towards prostitution, Lilja is never in charge as she is governed by her surroundings (the postcommunist condition), and her movements are reactive, responding to that situation that is forced upon her by others (her mother, her aunt, Andrei, her Polish-Swedish

[12] Moodysson's investigation of middle-age male (hetero)sexuality, a line of examination which he continues in his following two films, *Et hål i mitt hjerte*/*A Hole in My Heart* (2004) and *Container* (2006), becomes in *Lilya 4-ever* a quest into a male sexuality that is facilitating prostitution and human trafficking.

pimp Witek and the sex 'customers'). All this drives Lilja to the suicide that Tanya contemplated in *Last Resort*.

In the final part of the film, Lilja is given the chance to reverse the trafficking and her 'wrong' doing in afterlife. Reaching her trafficker, Andrei, she tells him, "I'm not going. You don't pick vegetables in the winter. I'm no fool," indicating character development, i.e. that she will never be fooled again into the path of transnational labour migration – she has learnt her lesson. Back in her mother's apartment, the camera slows down and rests completely on Lilja, with her arms reaching up, looking directly into the camera. Again, there is an explicit address to the audience, which was also the case after the first rape of Lilja, hinting at the connection between the rape and the ultimate escape from the (neo-)colonial system that the film's (Western) viewer is involuntarily part of and that governs Lilja's postcommunist transnational trajectory.

For Lilja, death is the only way out of the hellish inferno that has swallowed her; it is the only relief, equivalent to her return home to 'Russia.'[13] In this way *Lilja 4-ever* performs the circular 'return' plot that is prevalent in nationalistic Russian narratives such as *Brother 2*, in which the investigation also encountered the image of the raped post-Soviet woman. When in Balabanov's film Danila enters the back rooms of the Metro Club, behind Richard Mennis' wobbling accountant, on a television set a snuff

[13] A similar flight into the meta-real is also seen in the ending of Lars von Trier's *Breaking the Waves* (1996), where the ringing of the bells in heaven signals the salvation of the leading female character, Bess, and the redemption of her earthly self-sacrificial torment. Both Trier in *Breaking the Waves* and Moodysson in *Lilya 4-ever* owe their focus on female suffering to the Dostoevskian religious question: 'Can there be a God when there is so much suffering in the world?' While Dostoevsky mused over the question his entire life, the two filmmakers answer it with an emphatic "yes".

film is playing, with a Russian woman being raped by masked men. For Danila, this is a clear expression of American exploitation of Russia's downfall; it is the most profound reason for Danila's (and Balabanov's) avenging the neo-colonial condition that denigrates postcommunist Russians abroad. The rape of the Russian woman is as important for the nationalist Russian filmmaker, Balabanov, as Lilja's rape is for the Western Swedish filmmaker, Lukas Moodysson. However, only when seen from the postcolonial perspective can these acts of violence be seen as compatible. A postcolonial power of truth is illustrated when Danila lectures the Americans at gunpoint that having a lot of money may give economic power, but that knowing the truth is much more important. Thus, in *Brother 2*, Balabanov is fighting a neo-colonial system where the United States is seen as holding economic power, while Russians are in possession of the power of truth. However, within the fictional space of Balabanov's film, the snuff-movie (where the woman on screen is raped 'for real') functions as justification for Danila's 'truth' crusade against the Americans. The real-life rape and actual suicide of a trafficked girl in Sweden, which inspired Moodysson's film, goes beyond the fictional in that it provides commentary on 'the true' state of affairs in contemporary Swedish reality. Of his film, Moodysson says: "I cannot lie. This is what society looks like" (Domellöf-Wik 2002, 50). In both cases, the representation of a mistreated raped woman is used to stand in for inequalities that have come about as a consequence of the disappearance of the communist Second World. While both films involve rape scenes, only a cross-cultural contextualisation of the two can reveal their specific ideological meaning. Moodysson's rape of Lilja functions differently than the rape in Balabanov's snuff movie. The latter intends to infuse patriotic resolve into Russian audiences and the former to infuse empathy into audiences that are bluntly told their social order makes human slavery possible. The fact that the films are compatible

at all shows that there is a shared relationship between representations that seem poles apart.

Conclusion

The thesis has come a full circle since the analysis of the representation of Russians abroad by non-Russian filmmakers had led us back to *Brother 2*. However, the notion of non-Russian filmmakers is problematised, because the investigation placed Pawel Pawlikowski, with his ambiguous linkage to Russianness, within this taxonomy. The inclusion of Lukas Moodysson, however, presents a filmmaker who never sought any Russian input to his Danish-Swedish co-production of *Lilja 4-ever*, apart from the involvement of Russian actors. Despite the fact that the film was shot from the point of view of a post-Soviet Russian girl, Moodysson denies that his film speaks of a particular postcommunist reality. On the one hand the film hides a degree of unhealthy sensationalism, and, on the other hand, it ultimately exposes the injustice of human trafficking that the filmmaker genuinely wants to combat. This is similar to the white slavery of earlier silent films, but Moddysson takes it a step further with the rape of Lilja, a situation of a complete denial of selfhood. Significantly, *Lilja 4-ever* is constructed around transnational human trafficking, which informs discourses found across Europe today. For example, the film was liked by the political establishment in Sweden (Nestingen 2008, 104), who saw it as an important film commentary on issues of feminism and as a contribution to the narrative of Western (neo-)colonial rescue of the mistreated fallen (Other) woman. Yet despite the political endorsement, *Lilja 4-ever* remains a film that uses the Russian Other to speak of a Swedish reality, just as *Last Resort* speaks about a particular British reality. Tellingly, both filmmakers allege a

connection to reality and/or construct their films as a reflection of a perceived reality. However, their 'realism' must be compromised, because the films speak less of the Russians abroad than of their respective national contexts into which the Russians travel.

The assumption that started this thesis implied that there was a discrepancy between the portrayal of Russians abroad in nationalistic films such as *Brother 2* and the portrayal found in European cinema; and that these different protrayals could not possibly have anything to do with each other. However, the investigation has established a connection between Russian Balabanov's filmmaking and his non-Russian counterpart, Moodysson, and has shown that their representations of Russians abroad are not so profoundly different. In both films, rape functions as a justification for action, which in Balabanov's case means the re-establishment of Russia's previous hegemonic position, and in Moodysson's, exposing the First World by revealing its corrupt exploitation of postcommunist subjects. The aims and goals of these two films may be different, yet they are comparable in their narrative structure and underlying ideology. Without the postcolonial framework, though, these images of Russians abroad would drift apart. Viewing them alongside each other, however, one as a representation of oneself and the other as a representation by the Other, reveals that various cinemas, and not just those of former communist countries, share a similar perspective on the postcommunist condition.

Conclusion of Study

This thesis has dealt with representations of Russians abroad in ways that have underlined different takes on the postcolonial, postcommunist condition of 'Russians abroad.' The different cinematic contexts brought together here allow for a better understanding of the syncretism that is formed through these representations, each of which is specifically preoccupied with the postcolonial postcommunist paradigm, where the disappearance of the Second World signifies the loss of an alternative to capitalist globalization and unites filmmakers as diverse as Balabanov and Moodysson.

While the postcolonial postcommunist condition that this thesis describes is universal and could be used as a framework to study other representations of Russians abroad not dealt with here, it has been of crucial importance to include in this thesis the contexts of the films considered. Filmmakers and their films do not emerge out of nowhere, but are informed by a the particular system or systems that breed them: state institutions, investors, producers, studios, and not least, the film schools that educate them. Thus, when representing Russians abroad, these films display a particular point of view, which is determined by the context of the film. This is why, when studying the Russian abroad in cinema the key questions are: Who is narrating, what is being narrated, and who is the narration for? At the heart of these questions are the interfaces between the narrator/narrated, the (post)coloniser/(post)colonised, the subject/object, the researcher/researched and the representer/represented. The answers to these questions depend on a variety of factors visible in the representation: female-male, aggressive-

gentle, hybrid-essential, and so on. Yet the Russian characters here are invariably also symbols for the postcommunist postcolonial condition.

It is the common experience of postcommunism that enables this thesis to bring together films and filmmakers from different contexts. The postcommunist condition affects not just the countries and people that were under communist rule. Although, there are marked differences in how this condition manifests itself in different regions and in different domains – political, economic, and cultural, the system of power in postcommunism is similar to that of the decolonized state, which means that the postcolonial paradigm assists us in understanding the construction of cinematic representations of Russians abroad. Filmmakers cannot avoid the overpowering discourse of the postcolonial postcommunist legacy; inevitably, the creation/formation of the character of the Russian abroad signifies a fallen Second World. If depiction of East Europeans at large is a symbol of the general postcolonial postcommunist condition, then depictions of Russians are the master signifier, because the Russian abroad more than anyone connotes communism in all its manifestations.

It would be easy to divide the representations into simple good and bad Russians abroad, but this would neglect the many variations that were encountered in the course of this study and the influence of context. On the other hand, the duality that the postcommunist condition brings about, the division of globalization into binary dynamics of us/them, rich/poor, democratic/undemocratic and First/Third world, cannot be overlooked. It is therefore necessary, this thesis argues, to speak of a postcolonial

condition and to develop a whole syncretic view of the consequences of the disappearance of the Second World.

In the introduction, the research question – *How are representations of Russians abroad constructed and formulated according to film practices?* – was broken down into three fields of investigation: Russian cinema (filming oneself), Russian transnational cinema (filming through an 'informer'), and finally, non-Russian cinema (filming others). These three film practices of representing Russians abroad imply specific cinematic contexts, employ specific conventions and form implicit perception patterns, all of which were included in the analysis.

1 Self-Representation

In the first part which focused on the self-representational form, the thesis found that Russian national discourse plays a significant role in locating where post-Soviet Russia belongs, to Europe and/or to Asia, by looking at the character of Sergei in Nikita Mikhalkov's *Urga*. In accordance with the rest of Mikhalkov's oeuvre, *Urga* establishes Russia as unique in its position of being in-between continents and therefore having to form its own 'Third Way,' outwith dominant positions. Sergei marks the rejection of the Western civilisation and any alignment with values associated with the West. However, by inserting his representation of Russianness as part of Russia's colonial past in the East, Mikhalkov expresses Russian nationalistic ideas: Russia is the rightful master of Eastasia, paradoxically because Russians possess the (Westerners') colonial capital over their Eastern neighbors. *Urga* conforms, therefore, to the view that refuses Western

(neo)colonization while simultaneously suggesting that re-colonizing the East may be an acceptable way forward.

Balabanov's *Brother 2* also offers a strong rejection of the West. However, Balabanov gives voice to a cinematic discourse in which postcommunist Russians refuse to be 'degraded' to Third World status. The Russian postcommunist hero abroad acts as a racist against Black Americans in order to affiliate postcommunist Russianness with white America. This emblematic behaviour is triggered by the postcommunist Russian's fallen status from a master of the powerful Second World to a pariah of the inferior Third World.

Splitting the world into good-hearted Russians and immoral Westerners is to a certain extent also the premise of Yuri Mamin's *Window to Paris*, in which everything good and spiritual is in the hands of Kolya, the hapless Russian teacher who loses his pupils abroad. However, through comedy, this split is just a comic surface, because Mamin manages to touch upon ideas about notions of 'good' and 'bad' Russians abroad. Kolya is the epitome of the intellectual who seeks survival. The onslaught of postcommunist capitalist enterprising is equally threatening at home and abroad, which is chiefly seen in the Gorokhovs' wheeling and dealing in Paris and in Kolya being sacked from his teaching position in Russia. Despite Kolya's return to Russia at the end of the film, Mamin places emphasis on a migrational discourse that was topical in the mid-1990s; it is through Kolya's nightmares that the scenario of Russian displacement is addressed. It is important to stress the comic dichotomy of good and bad Russian emigrants, which was also seen in *Yana's Friends*. The comic dichotomy functions as a narrative vehicle

commenting on the social gaps and discrepancies that are brought about by postcommunism. Comedy allows for a subtler split into positive and negative. Thus, the comedy genre offers advantages, especially when compared to the Manichaean duality of good and evil found in the nationalistic films of Mikhalkov and Balabanov.

2 Representation Through an 'Informer'

In the second part of the thesis, the investigation explored two distinct forms of transnational filmmaking: co-productions involving transnational filmmakers and diasporic cinema. The first chapter of this part examined the filmmaking of Sergei Bodrov as one of the postcommunist pioneers in Russian transnational cinema. In exploring the specific production contexts of his filmmaking, the thesis detected narratives of 'Russians abroad' that rise above and beyond the limiting national confines of Russian cinema. Understanding the co-production background of *Prisoner of the Mountains* is crucial to unveiling its anti-colonial message; it would not have been possible had the film been made exclusively with Russian (state) funding. The forces at play in co-productions are important to bear in mind, because co-operation with foreign professionals (producers, scriptwriters) entails further multi-dimensionality in the negotiation of the film's representations of Russians abroad. In transnational cinema, the Russian characters have to go through an explanation process that complicates but also enriches the films. Therefore, in transnational cinema 'Russians abroad' change significantly; they lack the threatening features of the nationalistic Russian hero and cannot easily be divided into positive or negative, as seems to be the case in comedy. Instead, while not losing sight of Russia's fallen status, these films look forward to building new cross-cultural relationships, as seen in the case of Tanya in *White King,*

Red Queen. That said, it is specifically in the depiction of the Russian male abroad that the thesis detected the first signs of the sexualisation of Russians abroad. The bear/man Misha in *Bear's Kiss* and the mafia boss Oleg in *The Quickie* become objects of desire for Western women, as they are presented as an exotic and erotic Other. Thus investigating transnational cinema is essential in the context of studying the different cinematic modes of representing, especially when the sexual desire of the coloniser is involved. Notably, it is the men who are desired here.

In the transnational mode of cinematic production target audiences are judged not to be nationally specific, hence the films on the one hand have to recognise stereotypes, but on the other hand, they try to make these stereotypes more authentic by having a Russian filmmaker. Thus in Bodrov's films there is a conscious play on the stereotype of the Russian gangster but also an authentication through the Russian actor, which is lacking in many other portrayals of the Russian gangster figure. In short, Russians abroad in transnational cinema tend to conform and add to general global sentiments about Russians. The transnational filmmaker is, thus, an 'informer' who embodies the duality of the insider/outsider view on Russian values, but who crucially manages to stand outside the Russian cinematic discourse and not seen as a proponent of the nationalistic ideas of other postcommunist Russian filmmakers.

The perspective of the 'informer' was extended in the second chapter of this part, which dealt with Russian-Israeli cinema. The postcommunist shift is heavily evident in Russian emigration to Israel, which has seen two large waves of Russian immigrants amounting to a total of about a million Russian-speaking newcomers. Contrary to

Bodrov's co-productions, Russian-Israeli filmmakers work within the complex ideological reality of the Israeli film industry, where home audiences are the main target, since it is the popularity of a film at home that legitimises financial support from the state. Thus, despite these filmmakers being (diasporic) Russians, their films are produced for the Israeli market and are expected to resonate with Israeli society. Indeed this is what Gorovets fails to deliver by working in a split mode and by addressing viewers from both his 'home' nation (Russia) and his 'host' nation (Israel). The Israeli context offers an opportunity to examine the narrative of the displaced Russian, where issues of home, host and homeland feature prominently. In *Coffee with Lemon*, Valery is assumed to be an inherently good character, a bearer of an honourable cultural capital (a cherished actor), but these qualities somehow go unrecognised in Israeli society. The representation of Yana in *Yana's Friends* invites comparison to *Window to Paris* and it is the comic play between the positive and negative sides of Russian emigration that equally reinforces the postcommunist stereotype of the Russian abroad. The national context in which diasporic films are made is of vital importance in understanding the films' mode of address. First versus Third World dynamics are also present here, since these films reveal a complex dichotomy that marks the position of postcommunist Russians. Once in Israel, the Russian strives to turn into an Ashkenazi Westerner by demonstrating superiority over the Middle Eastern and African Jews, thus again echoing the Russian nationalistic discourse of the Russian postcolonial urge constantly to reassert one's superiority over non-white people.

3 Representation by the 'Outsider'

In the last two chapters, the thesis examined films by filmmakers that cannot be associated with Russianness or a Russian national identity. However, this was problematised by examining the career and cinematic output of Pawel Pawlikowski, a Polish-British filmmaker whose intellectual foundation is influenced by Russian culture, and who therefore could also be positioned as an 'informer.' Pawlikowski's 'informer' perspective lies in his effort to create images of migrants that are not necessarily like those media depictions of victimized lambs slaughtered by a cool and brutal Britain. The Polish-born Pawlikowski has no claim to be of Russian origin, but he uses his intricate knowledge of Russian language and culture to bring into British cinema serious commentary on the subject of migration. *Last Resort* starts by affirming the migrant narrative, a stereotype of the Eastern European female accused of prostitution, but goes on to show how the protagonist rejects compromise, retains her dignity and emancipates herself in turning down the offer of staying in Britain with Alfie. Just as the national cinematic discourse in Israel is important for the representation of Russians there, so is the British cinematic tradition vital in understanding Pawlikowski's use of the 'Russian abroad' in his narrative.

The setting of *Last Resort* in Margate resonates with its strong allusions to a particular trope of British filmmaking, which marks Pawlikowski's standing within British cinema, rather than keeping him in the pigeonhole reserved for immigrant/diasporic filmmakers. Hence, the representation of Russian Tanya in Pawlikowski's film is considered in comparison to other British films on diaspora/migration, like Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach*.

The postcolonial whiteness of 'Russians abroad' plays a role in *Lilja 4-ever* by Swedish Lukas Moodysson. While the film can be seen as a shattering tale of the downfall of a pure (white) victim of modern day slavery, it also contains a postcolonial rescue narrative of the mistreated native (Other) woman. At the same time, *Lilja 4-ever* is a film that very much uses the Russian Other to comment on Swedish reality, just as *Last Resort* speaks about a particular English reality. What the two European narratives underline is that using the cinematic representation of 'Russians abroad' – be it in revealing the injustice of human trafficking in Moodysson or in subverting the myth of mistreated refugees in Pawlikowski – inevitably takes its impetus from a certain degree of excitement coming from the realization of the fallen status of the postcommunist subject/woman.

* * *

As the globalisation of filmmaking increases, more films and filmmakers will move, or migrate, across the globe. Russian cinema will be part of this process, as it has been since the invention of the medium. The representation of Russians abroad, however, is likely to continue moving within the framework that this thesis has outlined. Migration, diaspora and transnational cinema will continue to play a vital role in the effort to change stereotypical images of Russians abroad. Thus, it is to be expected that we will see more films operating in the contexts that were explored here. In particular, the Russian diaspora in Germany is likely to produce filmmakers that are going to tackle the

established cinematic representation (Iordanova 2007). Certainly, this will also happen in the US, which also produces films that embark upon the long tradition of Hollywood representations of Russians abroad. These cinemas will continue to investigate the peculiarities of the postcommunist Russian abroad.

Representations of Russians abroad in the West are unlikely to change, because the cinematic narrative form is always in need of an Other, through which the self can be accommodated. Postcommunist 'Russians abroad' are expected to continue functioning as master signifiers of a failed communist alternative and of a barbaric East. The latter is evident in the historical position of Russians as dissimilar to Westerners (Wolff 1994). In this sense, Russia will never be European, because, despite Russians' European whiteness, they are dissimilar. It is this difference that will continue to be showcased cinematically.

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Gorovets, Leonid, interview by Lars Kristensen. *Conversation at Tel Aviv Cinematheque* Tel Aviv, (19 02 2007).

Kaplun, Arik, interview by Lars Kristensen. *Conversation at Kaplun's Flat* Tel Aviv , (21 01 2007).

Rozenbaum, Marek, interview by Lars Kristensen. *Conversation at the offices of Transfax Film* Tel Aviv, (22 01 2007).

Filmography

1. Films Selected for Investigation

Brat 2/*Brother 2* (Aleksei Balabanov, STV, 2000)

Bear's Kiss (Sergei Bodrov, Pandora/STV, 2002)

Belyi korol, krasnaya koroleva (Russkie)/*White King, Red Queen (Russians)*(Sergei Bodrov, Mosfilm/Metropolis Film, 1992)

Chaverim Shel Yana, Ha /*Yana's Friends* (Arik Kaplun, Transfax Film, 1999)

Kafe v'limon/*Coffee with Lemon* (Leonid Gorovets, Isramec, 1994)

Kavkazkyi plennik/*Prisoner of the Mountains* (Sergei Bodrov, Karavan, 1996)

Last Resort (Pawel Pawlikovski, BBC, 2000)

Lilja 4-ever/*Lilya 4-ever* (Lukas Moodysson, Memfis, 2002)

Okno v Parizh/*Window to Paris* (Yuri Mamin, Lenfilm, 1994)

Quickie, The (Sergei Bodrov, Pyramide/Pandora, 2001)

Urga, territoriya lyubvi/*Urga, Territory of Love* (Nikita Mikhalkov, Trite/Caméra One, 1991)

2. Films Cited

10, Weitzman St. (Pini Tavger, Tel Aviv University, 2006)

Alex (Noam Josephides, Tel Aviv University, 2003)

Amerikanskaya doch/*American Daughter* (Karen Shakhnazarov, Mosfilm, 1995)

Anna: Ot shesti do vosemnadtsati/*Anna: From Six Till Eighteen* (Nikita Mikhalkov, Trite Studio/Caméra One, 1993)

Avtostop/*Hitch-hiking* (Nikita Mikhalkov, Trite Studio/Gamma Film, 1990)

Babas bilar/*Baba's Cars* (Rafael Edholm, Nordisk Filmproduktion, 2006)

Beloe solntse pustyni/*White sun of the Desert* (Vladimir Motyl, Lenfilm, 1970)

Bhaji on the Beach (Gurinder Chadha, Channel Four Films, 1993)

Birthday Girl (Jez Butterworth, FilmFour, 2001)

Bolshe Vita (Ibolya Fekete, M.I.T. Studio/ZDF, 1996)

Brat/*Brother* (Aleksei Balabanov, STV, 1997)

Breaking the Waves (Lars von Trier, Zentropa, 1996)

Brilliantovaya ruka/*The Diamond Hand* (Leonid Gaidai, Mosfilm, 1969)

Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan (Larry Charles, Four by Two/Everyman Pictures, 2006)

Cobra (George P. Cosmatos, Golan-Globus Production, 1986)

Coming to America (John Landis, Eddie Murphy Productions, 1988)

Container (Lukas Moodysson, Memfis Film, 2006)

Damskii portnoi/*Ladies' Tailor* (Leonid Gorovets, Fora Film, 1990)

Det nya landet/*The New Country* (Geir Hansteen Jörgensen, SVT Drama, 2000)

Die Hard (John McTiernan, Twentieth Century-Fox Film Production, 1988)

Dirty Pretty Things (Stephen Frears, BBC, 2002)

Dostoevsky's Travels (Pawel Pawlikovski, BBC, 1992)

Eastern Promises (David Cronenberg, Focus Features, 2007)

Et hål i mitt hjerte/*A Hole in My Heart* (Lukas Moodysson, Memfis Film, 2004)

Fontan/*The Fountain* (Yuri Mamin, Lenfilm, 1988)

Fortuna (Menahem Golan, Noah Films, 1966)

Frantsuz/*The Frenchman* (Vera Storozheva, Channel One Russia, 2004)

From Moscow to Petushki (Pawel Pawlikovski, BBC, 1990)

Fucking Åmål/*Show Me Love* (Lukas Moodysson, Memfis Film, 1998)

God sobaki/*Year of a Dog* (Semyon Aranovich, Lenfilm, 1993)

Hem Hayu Asarah/*They Were Ten* (Baruch Dienar, Orav Films, 1960)

Hiroshima, mon amour/*Hiroshima, My Love* (Alain Resnais, Argos Films/Pathé, 1959)

Import/Export (Ulrich Seidl, Ulrich Seidl Film Produktion GmbH, 2007)

Inner Circle, *The* (Andrei Konchalovsky, Mosfilm/Columbia Pictures, 1991)

Ironiia sudby ili s legkim parom!/ *Irony of Fate or Enjoy your Bath!* (Eldar Ryazanov, Mosfilm, 1975)

Khrustalev, machinu!/*Khrustalyov, My Car!* (Aleksei German, Lenfilm/La Sept Cinéma, 1998)

La battaglia di Algeri/*The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, Igor Film, 1966)

L'Atalante (Jean Vigo, Gaumont, 1934)

Linksmoji našlė/*Merry Widow* (Leonid Gorovets, Baltic Film Group, 2009)

Little Odessa (James Gray, New Line Cinema, 1994)

Lord of War (Andrew Niccol, Entertainment Manufacturing Company, 2005)

Luna Park (Pavel Lungin, Blyuz/CiBy 2000, 1992)

Lyubimaya zhenshchina mekhanika Gavrilova/*The Favourite Woman of the Mechanic Gavrilov* (Petr Todorovsky, Mosfilm, 1981)

Mne ne bol'no/*It Doesn't Hurt Me* (Aleksei Balabanov, STV, 2006)

Mephisto (István Szabó, Hessischer Rundfunk, 1981)

Meeting Venus (István Szabó, BSB, 1991)

Moscow on the Hudson (Paul Mazursky, Columbia Pictures, 1984)

Mongol (Sergei Bodrov, Andreevsky Flag/Kinofabrika, 2007)

Deribasovskoi khoroshaia pogoda ili na Brighton Beach opiat' idut dozhdi, Na/*On Deribasovskaia the Weather is Fine, or, on Brighton Beach It's Raining Again* (Leonid Gaidai, Mosfilm, 1992)

Neprofessionaly/*Non-professionals* (Sergei Bodrov, Kazakh Film Studios, 1985)

Nochnoy dozor/*Night Watch* (Timur Bekmambetov, Bazelevs production/Channel One Russia, 2004)

Nomad (Sergei Bodrov, Ibrus/Kazakhfilm Studios, 2005)

Nostalghia/*Nostalgia* (Andrei Tarkovsky, RAI, 1983)

Osobennosti Natsionalnoy okhoty/*Percularities of the National Hunt* (Aleksandr Rogozkhin, Lenfilm, 1995)

Osobennosti Natsionalnoy Rybalki/*Pecularities of the National Fishing* (Aleksandr Rogozkhin, Lenfilm, 1998)

Ochi chernye/*Dark Eyes* (Nikita Mikhalkov, RAI, 1986)

O Dreamland (Lindsay Anderson, Sequence Films, 1953)

Offret/*The Sacrifice* (Andrei Tarkovsky, Argos Films/SFI, 1986)

Oligarkh/*Tycoon* (Pavel Lungin, Arte/STV, 2002)

Papa/*Daddy* (Vladimir Mashkov, NTV, 2004)

Passport (Georgi Danelia, Mosfilm, 1990)

Piraty XX veka/*Pirates of the 20th Century* (Boris Durov, Gorky Film Studios, 1979)

Postmark Paradise (Thompson E. Clay, Vanguard Cinema, 2000)

Prazdnik Neptuna/*Neptune's Feast* (Yuri Mamin, Lenfilm, 1986)

Promised Land (Amos Gitai, Agav Production, 2004)

Rambo III (Peter McDonald, TriStar Pictures, 1988)

Reka/*The River* (Aleksei Balabanov, STV, 2002)

Running Free (Sergei Bodrov, Columbia Pictures, 1999)

Russian Dance (Boris Levinzon, Tel Aviv University, 2001)

Sallah Shabati (Ephaim Kishon, Sallah Company, 1964)

Schwartz Dynasty/*Shoshelet Schwartz* (Amir Hasfari, 2005)

Serbian Epic (Pawel Pawlikovski, BBC, 1992)

S.E.R/Freedom Is Paradise (Sergei Bodrov, Mosfilm, 1989)

Short Cuts (Robert Altman, Fine Line Features, 1993)

Sibirskii tsiriul'nik/*The Barber of Siberia* (Nikita Mikhalkov, Trite Studio/Caméra One, 1998)

Solo for Tuba (Arik Kaplun, Tel Aviv University, 1985)

Somebody to Love (Alexandre Rockwell, Cabin Fever Entertainment, 1994)

Stringer, *The* (Pawel Pawlikovski, BBC, 1998)

Taiskii voyazh Stepanovicha/Stepanovits' Voyage to Thailand (Maksim Voronkov,

NTV, 2006)

Tango and Cash (Andrei Konchalovsky, Warner Bros. Pictures, 1989)

Taxi Driver (Martin Scorsese, Columbia Pictures, 1976)

Terminal, *The* (Steven Spielberg, DreamWorks, 2004)

Tillsammans/*Together* (Lukas Moodysson, Memfis Film, 2000)

Top Spot (Tracy Emin, Revolution Films, 2004)

Traffic in Souls (George Loane Tuckers, IMP, 1913)

Tripping with Zhirinovsky (Pawel Pawlikovski, BBC, 1995)

Underground (Emir Kusturica, CiBy 2000, 1996)

Utomlyonnye solntsem/*Burnt by the Sun* (Nikita Mikhalkov, Trite Studio/Caméra One, 1994)

Vaclav Havel: A Czech Drama (Pawel Pawlikovski, BBC, 1989)

Voina/*War* (Aleksei Balabanov, STV, 2002)

Vor/*Thief* (Pavel Chukhai, NTV/Canal+, 1997)

White Nights (Taylor Hackford, Columbia Pictures, 1985)

Ya khotela uvidet angelov/*I Wanted to See Angels* (Sergei Bodrov, Screen Angel Productions, 1992)

Yaldey Ha CCCP/*The Children of the CCCP* (Felix Gerchikov, (Unknown), 2005)

Zamok/*Castle* (Aleksei Balabanov, Lenfilm/Bioskop Film, 1994)

Zhizn s Idiotom/*Living with an Idiot* (Aleksander Rogozhkin, Kanal Rossia, 1993)

Zhmurki/*Blindman's Bluff* (Aleksei Balabanov, STV, 2005)

Zimnaya vishnya/*Winter Cherries* (Igor Maslennikov, Lenfilm, 1985, 1990, 1995)

Zircus Palestina/*Circus Palestine* (Eyal Halfon, Transfax Film Production, 1998)