

UDC 13

The Image of Russia on the Western Screen: the Present Stage (1992–2013)

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Abstract. This article included the analysis of evolution Russian image representation on the Western (USA, UK, Germany, Canada, France, Italy) screen – of the period of post-communist modern times (1992-2013): ideological and social trends, myths, stereotypes, illusions, classification of the contents' models and modifications of genres. The main conclusion: the image of Russia in the majority of the Western fiction films of 1992–2013 is still treated as an image of something, “alien”, “different”, often hostile...

Keywords: cold war; Western films; screen; image of Russia; USA; ideology; media studies; film studies; spy; enemy.

Introduction. Media Myths of the Post-Communist Period (1992–2013)

The post-communist epoch also gave rise to quite a few myths.

Myth 1: The western screen ceased to create an enemy image of Russia.

Even a superficial analysis of the filmography of 1992-2010 (see Appendix) easily refutes this thesis.

Myth 2: After the USSR disintegration the western cinematograph suddenly lost interest in the Russian topic.

In practice the number of western films about Russia and with Russian characters has increased (see Tables in the Appendix). From 1946 to 1991 on average they shot 12 films concerning Russia whereas from 1992 to 2010 this figure reached 14 films...

Myth 3: in western films of the Post-Soviet period Russia has always been associated with Russian mafia, alcoholism, prostitution and economic dislocation.

But again everything depends on a media text. On the one hand, such an image of Russia continues to be cultivated in the majority of western films but there are many examples of a different kind...

**A Brief History of the Russian Image Transformation
on the Western Screen: 1992-2013**

The USSR disintegration and the initiation of radical economic reforms in Russia in 1992, as is known, were accompanied by an enormous fall of living standards of the Russian population that almost inevitably led to a rise of crime and mass emigration. The Russian screen reacted to the situation with a surge of the so-called *gory films*. The inertia period in film production told on the western interpretations of the Russian theme of 1992-1993 – there were realized films appealing to some historical events of the past such as *Stalin* (1992) directed by I. Passer and *Vent d'est* (1993) by director R. Enrico where with a greater or smaller degree of authenticity the authors reflected on the nature of the Soviet totalitarianism (one more example of the kind is a powerful psychological drama about the time of Stalin's terror – *Est-Ouest* by R. Wargnier which was released in the late 1990s).

Perhaps, the first American films that tried to avoid the traditional anti-Sovietism or condescending sympathy for *perestroika* were *Prisoner of Time* (1992) by M. Levinson and *Little Odessa* (1994) by J. Gray.

The American film director M. Levinson was, apparently, well-intentioned. He was eager to relate a drama of an expatriate Russian artist living in the USA. He wanted to sell his non-conformist paintings but the owners of American picture galleries were no longer interested in the dissident courage of the protagonist and his politically committed art with a protest against the Soviet totalitarian system...

The conception of the film was good but its realization leaves much to be desired. Alas, an unintelligible indistinct dramatic concept of the film prevented the actors from creating characters

that could ring more or less true. That is why their acting resembled a bad amateur performance: forced gestures, intolerably false intonations... As a result, *Prisoner of Time* (the authors apparently hinted at B. Pasternak's line 'Captured by time') proved to be an extremely boring show. And one should be very fond of the words 'perestroika' and 'Russian vodka' to derive any pleasure from this opus of our transatlantic colleagues.

As for *Little Odessa* (1994) directed by J. Gray, it was notable for the implied motives of potential danger of Russian emigrants who had rushed to the USA and Europe in the late 1980s – early 1990s which were replicated in subsequent decades; since they allegedly took the lead in narcomafia and new gangs (see, for example, *Hollow Point* (1996), *Dykaren/Diver* (2000), *Hjarta av sten/Heart of Stone* (2000), *15 Minutes* (2001), *Mail Order Bride* (2003), *Lord of War* (2005), *Rockaway* (2007), *We Own the Night* (2007), *Driven to Kill* (2009), et al.)

'Female export' is another marketable topic about the Post-Soviet time on the western screen. Sometimes they are comedies (*Mail Order Bride*, 2003; *Russian Bride*, 2007), sometimes – dramas (*Beyond the Ocean*, 2000; *The Russian Bride*, 2001; *Lilja 4-ever*, 2002; *Het zusje van Katia*, 2008). And at times it is something in the mixed genre (*Russian Doll*, 2001; *Birthday Girl*, 2001). But the essence of the stereotypes remain the same - Russian girls/women on the western screen are, generally, either unfortunate victims of Russian economic dislocation/poverty and (sexual) violence, or prostitutes, or calculating predators who emigrated to the West to derive benefit from their marriage with men of means.

However, sometimes the western screen seemed to recall old melodramatic comedies of the 1950s where charming Soviet women who were KGB agents fell in love with nice American officers. For example, a romantic comedy *History is Made at Night* (1999) where a CIA agent (played by B. Pullman) fell in love with charming FSB agent Natasha (played by famous French actress I. Jacob) was made in this retro manner.

An American detective entitled *Citizen X* (1995) by C. Gerolmo is a thematic example of the contemporary western interpretation of the Russian image. It is a sad story about the crimes of sexual maniac and murderer A.Chikatilo. The USSR/Russia of the 1980s – 1990s presented in this primitive film from the artistic point of view as 'a total zone of absolute poverty, something resembling a backward African country in a grip of a civil war like Liberia, Sierra Leone or Ethiopia. Hungry and emaciated citizens roam about Rostov streets, they won't stick at anything to get a meal or a drink. In fact, Rostov is a large city and a rich seaport but it is shown in the film as a small town which has recently been bombed... In genuine Rostov citizens dressed, probably, even better than in Moscow (though in bad taste, with 'provincial chic') but in the film *Citizen X* the locals are dressed as beggars, as dispossessed kulaks of the collectivization time, as the Chinese during in time of *national communes* and *Great Leap!* The poverty of the Soviet population is incredibly exaggerated: police officers do not have coats (!) they have to put on military overcoats. People are dressed in the fashion of the 1940s-1950s if not the 1930s (the same goes with well-off people). And it does not concern only clothing. The interiors and exteriors of buildings are also taken from the 1940s-1950s. The cars going along Rostov streets are of the 1950s and police officers use pre-war phones' (Tarasov, 2001).

Running ahead, let us mention that another sad film about Chikatilo's crimes was made in 2004 – *Evilenko* (2004) in Italy. This time the role of the main character was played by demonic Malcolm McDowell. The authors of the film persistently convinced viewers that Evilenko had become a sexual maniac, hypnotist and a KGB agent because of his schizophrenic reaction to the ruin of communist foundations during the restructuring period (*perestroika*). It did not even occur to them that such fellows (who have nothing to do with communist ideas and special services) are not uncommon on the vast expanse of America and in small cosy towns of Western Europe...

Naturally, the western cinematograph of the 1990s was concerned not only with Russian sexual maniacs. Much more often Russian military men and representatives of the *Russian mafia* became *bad guys*, very often represented all in one. For instance, in the film *Running Red* (1999), ruthless Russian special squad soldiers who had emigrated to the USA became leaders of the largest mafia clan... In the movie *The Trans-Siberian Express* (2008) the villain of the piece is a Russian militia major – *a bent copper who conceived to annihilate peaceful American tourists...*

Another product of *Bondiana* is the film *Goldeneye* (1995) that sharpened the topic of the Russian military aggression against the West. In the previous films James Bond struggled mainly with agents of a secret villainous organization – *Spectrum* but not with Russians. This organization

is constantly trying to cause a clash between the USSR and the USA in order to provoke the third world war, but every time Bond appears to be quicker and prevents stupid war-hawks of the two super-powers from touching the nuclear button... *Goldeneye* begins with an episode where Bond engineers a large-scale act of sabotage on the USSR territory, and during the restructuring period! He mows down rookies in the Soviet uniform by platoons. After several years he arrives in modern Russia. But, as shown in the film, it is by no means a democratic country, it is marasmic and dangerous: Russian generals-Mafiosi who know the codes to secret space weapons aim to ruin London. And what for? – In order to paralyze the world banking system and to steal billions of dollars in the forthcoming economic chaos. Well, after all, it is a Bondiana! Any competent viewer in any country will immediately guess that it is a parody. And that is where you are wrong! In some moment the mockery-conventional style completely vanishes and is replaced by a serious speculation about the Soviet empire that became even more unpredictable and dangerous after its disintegration. Bond's distrust of Russians is, certainly, justified : they pose a threat to civilization and world order' (Gladilshchikov, 1997).

After the film *Goldeneye* (1995) the leading Hollywood studios got down to the Russian topic in real earnest. In the film *Air Force One* (1997) by director W. Petersen the American president fights with Russian terrorists in person. In the movie *The Saint* (1997) directed by P. Noyce Russia is completely seized by a totalitarian mafia that can be defeated only by a hero like Superman/Batman...

The authors of the action film entitled *The Sum of All Fears* (2002) went even further. In the course of the plot a comparatively peace-loving Russian president dies a sudden death and new Kremlin authorities have thought of nothing better than... blasting out an atomic charge onto the USA territory that may kill thousands of people...

If the genre of *Goldeneye* can be defined as a conventional parody and *The Sum of All Fears* can be called a sci-fi in a way, the topic of unrestrained Russian aggression found its culmination in the film *The Peacemaker* (1997): 'a Russian nationalist general (who is also a bandit connected to both the Russian mafia in Europe and Bosnians) steals ten nuclear warheads... To conceal the fact the general – with the help of his killers – annihilates a whole guarding platoon, then he arranges a collision of the train transporting the warheads with a passenger train and, to crown it all, he detonates a nuclear explosive device in the middle of Russia... In modern Russia the train with nuclear warheads is drawn neither by an electric locomotive nor by a diesel locomotive but by a steam locomotive with a tube and a furnace of 1913 production year (Gladilshchikov, 1997).

Such action films as *Maximum Risk* (1996), *Eraser* (1996), *The Jackal* (1997), *Counter Measures* (1999) and others were made in the same spirit. For example, in the film *Stiletto Dance* (2001) American policemen penetrate into a Russian gang that is going – neither more nor less than – to blast out a nuclear bomb in the centre of New York...

The Russian topic is widely presented in western sci-fi movies of the post-Soviet period though to a lesser degree than in the 1950s. To our regret the plots here cannot be called pro-Russian either. For example, here is the plot of the movie *The Rage* directed by R. Kurtzman: a mad Russian doctor experiments with new lethal viruses which turn people and birds into mutants...

Western comedies of the 1990s – 2000s also contain accents on maniacal and Mafioso elements: in the film of quick-witted producer and film director M. Golan – *Russian Roulette – Moscow-95* the capital mafia kills honest businessmen, the militia is powerless and only furious widows are sharpening their knives – they castrate hateful bandits one by one... Undoubtedly, none of large *politically correct* Hollywood studios would agree to shoot such a frivolous comedy which abounds in sexual episodes. The film was financed by a Germany corporation. As is known, censorship limitations are much more liberal in Germany... It is odd but a comedy genre in no way prevented the authors (as well as the authors of another vulgar comedy – *Police Academy: Mission to Moscow*) from exploiting the western stereotypes concerning new Russia: gang rule, corruption, prostitution, defenseless civilian population, an explosion of suppressed sexual energy under the pressure of communist prohibitions...

However, everything is not as simple as it looks. For example, in 1994 they shot a thriller – *Bullet to Beijing* directed by J. Mihalka with M. Caine starring in the film. It was shot in St. Petersburg. The characters of the film fought with the Chechen mafia. However in December, 1994 the first Chechen war broke out and the West immediately began to actively sympathize with 'noble

fighters for freedom and independence', and to show 'bad Chechens' became *politically incorrect*. As a result, the film was deprived of the wide screen in the USA and Europe... The fate of its sequel – a thriller *Midnight in Saint Petersburg* (1996) was not a lot better...

Perhaps, one of the most memorable western films about Russian gangsters is a thriller *15 Minutes* (2001); according to its plot two Slavonic morons (one of them was played by Russian sportsman and actor O. Taktarov) arrive in New York and gain their '15 minutes of glory' torturing and slaying a policeman, and also filming this 'little episode' (one of the best drama roles in Robert De Niro's career)...

Probably, the most complex and ambiguous image of the Russian mafia head was created by A. Baluev in his Swiss drama *La Traductrice / The Interpreter* (2006). His character has nothing in common with western stereotypes and is endowed with a psychological depth and underlying themes almost in the spirit of Dostoyevsky...

As it was already mentioned, the western film production about Russian gangsters started in the 1990s. However, namely in the 2000s it has reached its climax. Cruel Russian gangsters and mafiosi, frequently presented in an absurd and absolutely improbable manner by western actors (*Eastern Promises* by D. Cronenberg with Frenchmen trying to play Russian gangsters who settled down in London) have become sort of symbolic characters on the USA and European screens.

Certainly, 'the enemy image is indispensable for an action film. Why are Russia and Russians suitable for Hollywood?... Russia is far away, besides, it is no longer so strong and ambitious as it used to be. Furthermore: Russians, what is of no small importance, are white. Hollywood (especially after the Los Angeles events) is careful not to show Latin Americans, Afro-Americans or South-Eastern Asians as villains who constitute a considerable part of the population and (by the way!) the audience. It is also very convenient that the Russian lobby in America does not show their mettle. If Hollywood offends any other nations in its action films (one can remember the recent events with Arabs and Japanese) the cinemas get picketed by the disaffected. Russians do not raise a rumpus' (Gladilshchikov, 1997).

At the same time, it is necessary to consider S. Kudrjavnitsky's opinion: 'the fact that finally (after playing such games as *perestroika*, *glasnost*, etc. with us) Americans easily returned to the conventional enemy image of Russia (and now there is no need for them to make a silly mistake and confuse the USSR and Russia) is increasingly confirmed not by their hatred or hostility to Russians. Apart from purely utilitarian goals (say what you like – any time-proved dramaturgic conflict works like a charm, an old foe is worth two new ones) Yankees voluntarily or not show us their respect by choosing us for the only worthy adversary that is as menacing as before. Why should they be afraid of Japan or Germany defeated on real battlefields? They had no opportunity to whip Russia in reality – and God forbid! It is better to fight on the screen, simulate dashing *star wars*, combats in the air, afloat and overland. It is also possible to *kick back* without consequences, and to send all this notorious political correctness to hell and whereby to hit the big time. And provoke an excessively hysterical reaction from Russian critics who have suddenly desired genuine patriotism' (Kudryavtsev, 1999).

At the same time, unlike the period of 1946-1991 western films on the Russian theme of 1992-2010 fed not only on confrontation plots (military confrontation, espionage, mafia and so forth) but also on satisfying the interests of the sizable Russian-speaking diaspora that has delegated their representatives in the American and European film business. All this caused continuous presence of films about Russians in the western (first of all, American) film production. Hence it is clear why in many American serials where the scene is laid in the USA there appears, at least in one episode, a Russian character-emigrant or any Russian who arrived in America for some reason (the best-known case is – the appearance of Russian character M. Baryshnikov in the superpopular American serial *Sex and the City*). Thanks God, that he is not always a spy, a gangster or an alcoholic.

In the XXst century two well-known western Art-House masters – Peter Greenaway (*The Tulse Luper Suitcases, Part 3, 2003*) and Jos Stelling (*Duska, 2007*) dug into the Russian theme. In both the films the masters developed a parable-like game with their pet creative motives laid over the ironical interpretation of conventional images of Russia. But, in our opinion, in either case the great masters (especially Greenaway) could not get rid of the stereotyped western image of Russia and created the films that cannot be considered first-rate in their career.

It goes without saying that the leading parts in megabudgetary blockbusters with *Russian motives* are played by well-known American actors – H. Ford, V. Kilmer, G. Clooney, N. Kidman

and others. But the movies *Goldeneye*, *Air Force One*, *The Saint* revealed a new tendency of the western screen – to invite not only *home* Slavonic emigrants but also actors from Russia for minor and walk-on part. So, Valery Nikolaev and Irina Apeksimova played notable parts in *The Saint*, and their performance was not any worse than the acting of their western colleagues – both in their extravagant image presentation and plastique...

On the other hand, one should not overestimate the involvement of famous Russian actors such as V. Mashkov, C. Khamatova, V. Nikolayev, A. Baluev, N. Andreychenko, E. Rednikova, E. Safonova in the western motion-picture industry for each of them played maximum in a dozen of western film. A true film army of *influence agents* in Hollywood in the 1990s – 2000s consisted not of them but of hundreds of Russian emigrants who arrived there during the last twenty years and settled down in the USA and Western Europe. Many of them are almost unknown in Russia, however the lists of American and West European films with their involvement look rather impressive: Ilya Volok was filmed in 100 films, Andrew Divoff was in 90 films. They are followed by: Ilya Baskin (he is a Hollywood old resident who has been working there since the 1970s) – 70 films, Larissa Laskin – 60 films, Gennadi Vengerov – 50 films, Dimitri Diatchenko, Ravil Isyanov, Eugeny Lazarev, Paul Lychnikoff, Eugeny Sitokhin, Ivan Shvedov, Dmitry Shepovetsky – over 40 films. Dmitry Boudrine, Svetlana Efremova, Maxim Kovalevski, Alla Korot, Michael Khmurov – more than 30 films. Grigori Manukov, Oleg Taktarov, Anton Jakovlev – over 20 films.

Certainly, they act mainly in serials and play bit parts of *bad Russians* (no wonder that the word collocation '*Russian Mafia*' appears in IMDb (International Moving Image Data Base) annotations 180 times!), however, some of them were engaged in large-scale projects. Some Russian emigrants (A. Nevsky, R. Nakhapetov) managed to start their own film production in the 1990s – 2000s in the USA (as a rule, they shoot amusing action films and thrillers such as *Treasure Raiders*) anyhow connected to the Russian theme.

Contemporary Cinematographic Stereotypes of the Russian Subject on Western Screens (1992-2013)

Content analysis of Western films on the Russian subjects created in 1992-2010 allows us to represent their main plot topics as follows:

- retro: the crimes of Soviet government during the period of 1917-1991 (totalitarianism, concentration camps, military aggression against other countries, espionage, etc.);
- contemporaneity: helplessness and corruptibility of Russian authorities, which are unable to set the economy going, to control the accumulated arsenal and fight with criminality: post-Soviet Russia is the country of mafia, bandits, terrorists, prostitutes, beggars, wretched and miserable people;
- Russians emigrate to the West in search of better life (marriage, prostitution, criminal activities).

The Stereotype Structure of Western 'Confrontational' Dramas

Historical period, scene: any period, Russia, USSR, the USA, other countries.

Setting, household objects: modest dwellings and household goods of Russian and/or Soviet characters, luxurious dwellings and household goods of Western characters.

Representation of reality: realistic or grotesque representation of people's life.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures: good characters are bearers of democratic ideas; bad characters are bearers of inhuman, terrorists', militarist ideas. The characters are often separated not only by social but also by material status. Russian characters are often represented as rude and violent fellows, with primitive vocabulary and frowning faces, active gestures and unpleasant voices.

Significant change in the characters' life: bad characters aim to realize their inhuman ideas (for example, terrorists' attacks or other crimes).

Incipient problem: life of good characters as well as the whole nations/countries is threatened.

Search for solutions to the problem: the fight of the good characters against the bad ones.

Problem solution: extermination/arrest of bad characters, the return to peaceful life.

The Wind from the East / Vent d'est. France, 1993. Director R. Enrico.

Historical period, scene: Liechtenstein, May, 1945.

Setting, household objects: clean streets and well-furnished houses of Liechtenstein; modest life of soldiers and officers of the First Russian national army (which was on the side of Third Reich), trying to hide from the approaching Soviet forces after the defeat of Nazi Germany.

Representation of reality: realistic, almost documentary.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures:

the soldiers and officers of Russian national army (especially their general B.A.Smyslovsky), are depicted positively in general, – they are honest warriors with scanty vocabulary, gestures and mimics; and members of prince's family, the government of Liechtenstein – hereditary aristocrats, who sympathize with Smyslovsky and his detachment who try to escape from Bolsheviks' repressions.

Significant change in the characters' life: the leaders of Soviet army demand to extradite soldiers and officers of the First Russian national army for parricide.

Incipient problem: the lives of good characters – soldiers and officers of the First Russian national army – are threatened.

Search for solutions to the problem: The government of Liechtenstein enters into negotiations with the representatives of USSR.

Problem solution: good characters which refused to surrender voluntarily remain under the protection of the government of Liechtenstein which refused to yield to pressure.

Enemy at the Gates. USA-Germany-Great Britain, 2001. Director Jean-Jacques Annoud.

Historical period, scene: USSR 1942-1943, Stalingrad.

Setting, household objects: poor front-line life, the remains of destroyed city buildings.

Representation of reality: pseudo-realistic (however there are many absurd mistakes in representation of uniform and life of Soviet soldiers).

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures:

Soviet and Nazi soldiers and officers which are separated by ideological status. Nazi are professional, clever and honest soldiers, their speech, mimics and gestures correspond with army regulations. Their Soviet opponents less care about army regulations, severe Soviet officers shoot retreating soldiers. Germany army is well-disciplined and organized (tanks, planes, motorcycles, different weapons). Soviet army evidently is lacking all this; instead it is shown that merciless officers dispatch their soldiers as "cannon fodder"...

Significant change in the characters' life: the condition of Soviet forces is critical, they had to surrender half of the city to the Nazi...

Incipient problem: Soviet army can lose the battle on the Volga.

Search for solutions to the problem: Soviet troops mobilize all forces to win, sniper Zaytsev kills enemies with accurate shots.

Problem solution: Soviet army defeats the Germans, sniper Zaytsev shoots the best Germany sniper...

K-19: The Widowmaker. Great Britain-USA-Germany-Canada, 2002. Director K. Bigelow.

Historical period, scene: 1961, open ocean.

Setting, household objects: cabins of a submarine.

Representation of reality: realistic, preserving documentary objectivity.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures:

the commander of the Soviet atomic-powered submarine K-19, its crew. The commander is charming, clever, honest, dressed in uniform, his speech is correct, mimics and gestures correspond to those of man-of-war's man. His subordinates are also dressed in uniform, they are all professionals.

Significant change in the characters' life: an accident occurs in one of the partitions of the submarine, followed by radioactive release.

Incipient problem: the crew has to liquidate the accident at all costs.

Search for solutions to the problem: the commander of the submarine and his crew are trying to handle the accident by themselves, without resorting to the help of the American navy.

Problem solution: heroism of Soviet submariners allows them to liquidate the consequences of the accident.

The Stereotype Structure of Western 'Confrontational' Thrillers or Detectives

Historical period, scene: any period, Russia, USSR, the USA, other countries.

Setting, household objects: modest dwellings and household goods of Soviet characters (or a bit better ones in contemporary Russia), luxurious dwellings and household goods of Western characters (however, living in the hostile country, the spies adapt themselves to the living conditions of their enemy).

Representation of reality: as a rule the representation of people's life in "hostile countries" is somewhat grotesque.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures:

good characters (counter-intelligence agents, intelligence officers/spies, saboteurs, peaceful citizens) and bad characters (the same except peaceful citizens, and also terrorists, criminals, bandits, maniacs). Divided by ideology and world outlook, or without any of those, as a rule the characters are sturdy and look in accordance with the aims of the source of the media texts: at first spies and criminals may seem quite attractive, but sooner or later their abominable essence is inevitably exposed... Russian bad characters are represented as rude and violent, their vocabulary is poor, their faces wear a frown, their gestures are abrupt and their voices are unpleasant...

Significant change in the characters' life: bad characters commit a crime (for example, a terroristic attack, espionage, blackmail, murder, stealing of State secrets, etc.).

Incipient problem: violation of law.

Search for solutions to the problem: investigation of the crime, pursuit of bad characters.

Problem solution: good characters expose/arrest/kill the bad ones.

Citizen X. USA, 1995. Director C. Gerolmo.

Evilenko. Italy, 2004. Director D. Grieco.

Historical period, scene: USSR/Russia, 1980s – early 1990s.

Setting, household objects: homely streets, modest dwellings, institutions and household goods of Russian/Soviet characters.

Representation of reality: pseudo-objective, in reality grotesque representation of life in USSR/Russia: poverty, exhausted and hungry citizens...

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures:

the bad character is a maniac (the prototype was A. Chikatilo who murdered tens of children); the good characters are militiamen. The characters wear grey, plain clothes.

Significant change in the characters' life: the maniac terrorizes the southern city, raping and murdering young girls.

Incipient problem: long-term unsuccessful searches of the maniac threaten the reputation of Soviet/Russian militia and keep thousands of peaceful citizens in constant fear.

Search for solutions to the problem: the good characters are trying to find the maniac.

Problem solution: the maniac is found and arrested...

Anthony Zimmer. France, 2005. Director J. Salle.

Historical period, scene: France, 2000s.

Setting, household objects: streets, apartments at hotels in French cities.

Representation of reality: neutral and correct in representation of good characters; grotesque representation of the bad ones; the setting, interiors look quite realistic.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures:

the bad characters are from Russian mafia; the bad ones are the agents of Interpol. All the characters are dressed into fashionable clothes of high quality. Both are reserved in showing their feelings and thoughts. Among the good characters the most notable is the charming beauty Chiara (Sophie Marceau).

Significant change in the characters' life: the Russian mafia and the elusive Anthony Zimmer, which is connected with it, obviously want to lay their hands on the entire Cote d'Azur...

Incipient problem: the quiet resort life of the French in Nice is under the threat. It's hard to catch the elusive Anthony Zimmer, the accomplice of the Russian mafia, who even underwent plastic surgery...

Search for solutions to the problem: French police and Interpol are trying to trail Zimmer and the Russian mafia...

Problem solution: only beautiful Chiara manages to deal with the Russian mafia in the finale of the film...

Transsiberian. Great Britain – Germany – Spain - Lithuania, 2008. Director B. Anderson.

Historical period, scene: Russia, the XXI century.

Setting, household objects: compartments and corridors of a transsiberian train, railroad station, Siberian taiga, a hotel room.

Representation of reality: conditions of life and all the characters are represented in quite realistic, though a bit grotesque way.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures: the good characters – the young well-dressed American couple who travel to Moscow from Far East by the transsiberian train. The bad ones (this is revealed later) – their criminal fellow-traveler, and the insidious militiaman Grinko.

Significant change in the characters' life: The American woman, unwilling to be raped, kills her criminal fellow-traveler, who was connected with drug mafia. Later on the violent Grinko wants to kill the defenseless Americans...

Incipient problem: the lives of the Americans are in danger.

Search for solutions to the problem: the Americans are trying to survive in the wild and barbarous Russia.

Problem solution: the Americans manage to escape from the paws of militiamen/mafia men and reach Moscow and finally the USA.

The Stereotype Structure of Western 'Confrontational' Action Films

Historical period, scene: any period, Russia, USSR, USA, other countries.

Setting, household objects: modest dwellings and household goods of Soviet/Russian characters (unless they are bribable officials or mafia men), luxurious dwellings and household goods of Western characters (unless they live in Russia/USSR), military objects – bases, planes, tanks, men-of-war, submarines.

Representation of reality: as a rule, relative and grotesque representation of people's lives in "hostile countries".

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures:

good characters (military men, peaceful citizens) are bearers of democratic ideas; aggressors (military personnel, saboteurs, terrorists) are bearers of inhuman ideas. The characters are often separated by ideology and world outlook, as a rule they are sturdy, they look accordance with the aims of the source of the media texts. In Western films Russian/Soviet characters (soldiers, officers) are often represented as rude and violent fellows, with primitive vocabulary, malicious faces, active gestures and unpleasant voices.

Significant change in the characters' life: bad characters commit a crime (military aggression, terroristic act, diversion, murder).

Incipient problem: violation of law – the lives of good characters as well as of all peaceful citizens of some democratic country (in this or that sense) are threatened.

Search for solutions to the problem: armed struggle of good characters against enemy aggression.

Problem solution: extermination/arrest of bad characters, terrorists, aggressors, the return to peaceful life.

The Saint. USA, 1997. Director P.Noyce.

Historical period, scene: Moscow, the 1990s.

Setting, household objects: the streets of Moscow, apartments, underground labyrinths.

Representation of reality: dark, gloomy interiors, costumes, etc., are represented in a grotesque way. Moscow looks like gloomy, dirty, unfriendly city with unstable political regime.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures:

the good characters – the manly and smart American "The Saint" and the female British scientist; the bad characters – the Russian mafia, which consists of unsympathetic, though dexterous and strong people; the speech of all the characters is simple. Mimics and gestures are often exaggerated.

Significant change in the characters' life: the head of the Russian mafia a certain Tretyak has hidden all the supplies of fuel... He also plots a coup d'état...

Incipient problem: the winter cold threatens people's lives in Moscow... The approaching coup d'état is also a problem...

Search for solutions to the problem: the British scientist invents the formula of guided nuclear reaction which can help to solve the energy crisis...

Problem solution: the independent fighter for justice nicknamed "The Saint" having shown his miraculous heroism, saves Russia from coup d'état and the energy crisis...

Running Red. USA, 1999. Director J. Jacobs.

Historical period, scene: Spain of the 1980s and the USA of the 1990s.

Setting, household objects: the military base at the coast of Spain, streets and houses in the USA, well-furnished accommodation of an average American family.

Representation of reality: interiors, costumes, etc. are represented in the realistic way.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures:

the good characters – an American family: the father (an emigrant from URRS, former commando of the Russian special forces, who gives himself out to be native American), the mother and their ten year old daughter; the bad characters - former Soviet special force fighters, settled in the USA. The latter are represented in the grotesque way: forced mimics and gestures, coarse speech. The Soviet characters are dressed in homely and dull clothes.

Significant change in the characters' life: the main character accidentally meets his former fellow-fighters from Soviet special forces, who nowadays are at the head of the Russian mafia in the USA.

Incipient problem: the main character is psychologically pressured: the former members of the special forces are trying to force him to kill their rival, an American mafia leader. The main character has to choose either to become a killer or to lose his family.

Search for solutions to the problem: the good character who is afraid of being unmasked (for many years he has been hiding his past and nationality from everybody, even from his wife), has to yield to his ex-fellows.

Problem solution: the good character overcomes the difficulty with honor...

Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull. USA, 2008. Director S. Spielberg.

Historical period, scene: 1957, North and South America.

Setting, household objects: jungle, deserts, military bases, military fixings (weapons, uniforms, etc.).

Representation of reality: interiors, costumes, etc., look conditionally, which is especially noticeable in the scenes of fights and skirmish which are peculiar to this genre.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures:

the good character is the manly and invincible American professor of archeology Indiana Jones, the bad ones are fighters of Soviet special forces (represented in the grotesque way). The speech of the characters is simple, it is often connected with military specificity. Mimics and gestures of the characters are often exaggerated. Most characters are dressed in uniform. Their physical strength is evidently above the average.

Significant change in the characters' life: Indiana Jones is captured by Soviet special forces.

Incipient problem: the life of the American is threatened.

Search for solutions to the problem: the heroic American professor decides to fight with the impudent Soviet commandos.

Problem solution: Indiana Jones defeats the Soviet commandos.

The Stereotype Structure of Western 'Confrontational' Melodramas

Historical period, scene: any period, Russia, USSR, the USA, other countries.

Setting, household objects: modest dwellings and household goods of Soviet/Russian characters (unless they are oligarchs or mafia men), luxurious dwellings and household goods of Western characters.

Representation of reality: as a rule, relative and grotesque representation of people's lives in "hostile countries".

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures: male and female characters with different ideological and social status or without it. As a rule the

characters are slender and look quite nice. Their clothes, vocabulary and mimics are in the “average statistical” framework.

Significant change in the characters’ life: the meeting of the male and the female characters.

Incipient problem: national, ideological and/or social misalliance, “cultural shock”, mutual misunderstanding.

Search for solutions to the problem: the characters overcome national, ideological and social obstacles on the path to love.

Problem solution: wedding/love harmony (in majority of cases), death, separation of the characters (as an exception to the rule).

The Russian Bride. Great Britain, 2001. Director N.Renton.

Historical period, scene: Great Britain, London, 2001.

Setting, household objects: the apartment of the “middle-class” British man Christopher, the streets of London.

Representation of reality: realistic, positive with respect to the good characters, first of all to Christopher’s Russian wife Natasha.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures: the British characters are typical representatives of the “middle class”. It is difficult for Natasha to get used to the life in the country with other social and cultural traditions. General clothes of the characters correspond with their social status – they are well-dressed, though without any particular nicety. The vocabulary of the characters is simple, mimics and gestures are forced at times.

Significant change in the characters’ life: Natasha who is accustomed to the “careless” life in Russia marries an elderly British man and settles in his apartment in London.

Incipient problem: soon Natasha finds out that her husband doesn’t show any sexual interest in her, and that her position doesn’t vary much from that of a maid: she has to cook and clean the rooms all day long...

Search for solutions to the problem: Christopher’s friend, jobless Eddy, tries to go after Natasha...

Problem solution: alas, here the hardships begin. Natasha now cares about her own survival, not the love intrigue...

Birthday Girl. Great Britain-USA, 2001. Director J.Butterworth.

Historical period, scene: Great Britain, London suburb, 2001.

Setting, household objects: a modest apartment of a clerk named John, a bank office, streets of London.

Representation of reality: somewhat exaggerated (because the genre of the film is the synthesis of melodrama, comedy and thriller) with respect to the good character, John, and mixed with respect to his Russian wife Nadja.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures:

John is represented as a lonely man who dreamed about love of a Russian beauty... General clothes of the British characters are quite modern, without any particular nicety. Nadja is dressed exaggeratedly grossly. The vocabulary of the characters is simple. At the beginning Nadja is able to express herself only with forced gestures and mimics. However, at that she swears in Russian (though with accent)...

Significant change in the characters’ life: Nadja who is connected with Russian criminals and accustomed to the adventurous life in Russia, marries the bank clerk John and settles in his apartment in London suburb.

Incipient problem: soon John finds out that Nadja doesn’t know English at all, later on two Nadja’s Russian “friends” appear and make him take part in bank robbery...

Search for solutions to the problem: falling in love with Nadja for real and fearing for her life, John has to participate in the bank robbery...

Problem solution: love triumphs in spite of everything...

Lilja 4-ever. Sweden-Denmark, 2002. Director L.Moodysson.

Historical period, scene: post-Soviet area and Sweden, 2002.

Setting, household objects: apartments and streets of a small post-Soviet town, an apartment in a Swedish city and its streets.

Representation of reality: realistic, positive with respect to the good characters, first of all to a sixteen-year-old Lilja.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures: the Swedish characters are typical representatives of the middle-class. Lilja, her Russian relatives and acquaintances live in horrible poverty, incapable of getting accustomed to the post-Soviet life. General clothes of the characters correspond to their social status, the Swedish are well-dressed, the Russians are dressed baldly and tastelessly. The vocabulary of the characters is simple, mimics and gestures are at times forces.

Significant change in the characters' life: tired of the hardships of life, Lilja agrees to leave for Sweden when she one of her friends invites her..

Incipient problem: soon Lilja finds out that her "friend" took her to Sweden to make her a prostitute...

Search for solutions to the problem: Lilja is trying to break away from the trap...

Problem solution: unfortunately, sad finale awaits Lilja...

The Stereotype Structure of Western 'Confrontational' Comedies

Historical period, scene: any period, Russia, USSR, the USA, other countries.

Setting, household objects: modest dwellings and household goods of Soviet/Russian characters, luxurious dwellings and household goods of Western characters.

Representation of reality: as a rule, relative and grotesque representation of people's lives in "hostile countries".

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures: characters with different ideological and social status or without it. Clothes of Western characters are better than those of Russian ones. Their figures, vocabulary, gestures and mimics are different, but in general if the main characters fall in love with each other they are of pleasing appearance.

Significant change in the characters' life: the main characters fall in love with each other under some amusing/eccentric conditions, or Western and Russian characters simply meet each other at foreign territory.

Incipient problem: national, social, ideological (in films about Soviet times) misalliance, "cultural shock", mutual misunderstanding.

Search for solutions to the problem: the characters overcome national and social obstacles through a series of amusing/eccentric situations.

Problem solution: united solution of the problem, friendship, wedding/love harmony, humorously colored.

Russian Doll. Australia, 2001. Director S. Kazantzidis.

Historical period, scene: Australia, 2001.

Setting, household objects: comfortable houses and modern household goods of the Australians.

Representation of reality: conditional (within the framework of the genre), Australian setting and characters are represented with obvious sympathy. The main female character, Russian bride Katya, at first is represented in grotesque way, later on – in sympathetic way.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures: the Australian characters are typical representatives of the middle class. Katya apparently lived in poverty in St. Petersburg. General clothes of the characters corresponds with their social status, the Australians are well-dressed, Katya is dressed worse (at first). The vocabulary of the characters is simple, mimics and gestures are at times forced.

Significant change in the characters' life: Having read a marriage advertisement, Katya leaves for Australia.

Incipient problem: Katya finds out that her future bridegroom is dead, as a result she is left alone in the foreign country without any money...

Search for solutions to the problem: Katya is trying to find a way out of the predicament, then she meets Ethan...

Problem solution: Ethan proposes Katya to contract a pro forma marriage with his friend...

Spinning Boris. USA, 2003. Director R. Spottiswoode.

Historical period, scene: Russia, Moscow, 1996.

Setting, household objects: hotel rooms, offices, streets of Moscow.

Representation of reality: conditional (within the framework of the genre), Moscow and Russian characters are represented with ironical sympathy. American characters are represented only in positive key.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures: the American characters are typical representatives of top managers, political scientists, they are business-like and purposeful. The Russian characters, on the contrary, are disorganized, lacking understanding and skills. General clothes of the characters correspond to their social status – the Americans are wearing business suits. Some of the Russians are dressed in a vulgar way. The vocabulary of the characters is simple, their mimics and gestures are at times forced.

Significant change in the characters' life: the group of American political scientists and image makers arrive in Moscow to help the sick Boris Yeltsin to win the election.

Incipient problem: disorganization in the Russian government, low popularity of Yeltsin with people and pre-election rush of the communists threatens the plan of the Americans.

Search for solutions to the problem: with the help of intricate political technologies and PR little by little the Americans overcome the difficulties.

Problem solution: finally the American team achieves their goal and B. Yeltsin becomes the president.

All or Nothing: A Moscow Detour. USA, 2004. Director: G. Bloch.

Historical period, scene: Moscow, 2004.

Setting, household objects: interiors of Moscow houses and hotels; streets, roads.

Representation of reality: conditional (within the framework of the genre), the Americans and the Russians are represented with sympathy.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures: the Americans are fashionably dressed, the Russians are dressed worse. The vocabulary of the characters is simple, their mimics and gestures are exaggerated...

Significant change in the characters' life: an American woman Gabby travels from New York to Moscow to meet her father who has become an oil oligarch in Russia.

Incipient problem: under Gabby's influence her father отец promised her to return to the USA, but later is trying to stay in Moscow.

Search for solutions to the problem: getting accustomed to the Russian way of life, Gabby is trying to overcome the originated difficulties.

Problem solution: in spite of numerous comic obstacles Gabby manages to achieve her goal...

The Stereotype Structure of Western 'Confrontational' Sci-Fi Films

Historical period, scene: distant/near future. Russia, the USA, other countries, outer space.

Setting, household objects: fantastic dwellings, space ships and household goods of the characters – from total devastation to super technologies.

Representation of reality: quasi-realistic or futuristic representation of events in "friendly countries, space ships", conditional and grotesque representation of the life in "hostile countries, space ships".

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures: good characters (cosmonauts, military men, peaceful citizens) are bearers of democratic ideas; aggressors (cosmonauts, military men, saboteurs, terrorists) are bearers of inhuman ideas. Clothes: uniform of cosmonauts, military uniform, civilian clothes. Constitution: sturdy, athletic. Vocabulary: business-like, mimics and gestures depend on current functions.

Significant change in the characters' life: bad characters commit a crime (military aggression, sabotage, murder).

Incipient problem: violation of law, the lives of the good characters (often the lives of the people of some democratic country as well) are in danger. Variation: only few people survive nuclear catastrophe.

Search for solutions to the problem: armed struggle of the good characters with enemy aggression, or the attempts of the survivors of nuclear explosions to adapt themselves to the new conditions of life.

Problem solution: extermination/arrest of the aggressors, return to peaceful life, or adaptation of the survivors to the new severe conditions of post-nuclear world.

Deathline / Redline. Canada-Netherlands, 1997. Director T. Takacs.

Historical period, scene: Moscow, near future.

Setting, household objects: streets and apartments of Moscow.

Representation of reality: quasi-realistic representation of events.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures:

the main character is an American. His clothes, vocabulary, mimics and gestures correspond to “average statistical” level. His murderers look nastily, their gestures and mimics express violence and anger.

Significant change in the characters’ life: the American arrives to Moscow, where the bandits rob and murder him...

Incipient problem: the main character is dead, and his murderers are alive and at large.

Search for solutions to the problem: the scientists decide to test a new reviving medication on the main character.

Problem solution: the medication revives the character and he collects his strength to take vengeance on his murderers...

Armageddon. USA, 1998. Director M. Bay.

Historical period, scene: near future, outer space.

Setting, household objects: interiors of space ships, offices, comfortable way of life of American spacemen, untidy way of life of their Russian colleagues.

Representation of reality: grotesque, almost caricature with respect to the Russian cosmonauts.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures: the good American spacemen (sympathetic, strong, brave, honest, patriotic, faithful to their civic duty) and the disorganized Russian cosmonauts (their commander is drunk on board). The vocabulary of the characters is simple and is connected with spaces specifics. The characters are dressed in space uniform.

Significant change in the characters’ life: a gigantic meteorite is approaching the Earth...

Incipient problem: the lives of all people on the Earth are in danger, the end of human civilization (Armageddon) is near.

Search for solutions to the problem: the Americans send a space expedition to blow up the meteorite, on their way they rendezvous with the Russian orbital station to refuel.

Problem solution: the Americans manage to blow up the gigantic meteorite.

Deep Impact. USA, 1998. Director M. Leder

Historical period, scene: near future, the USA, outer space.

Setting, household objects: the interiors of space ships, offices, comfortable life of spacemen.

Representation of reality: quasi-realistic.

Characters, their values, clothing, constitution, lexicon, mime, gestures: the good American and Russian spacemen (sympathetic, strong, honest, brave). The vocabulary of the characters is simple and is connected with space specifics. The characters are dressed in space uniform.

Significant change in the characters’ life: a gigantic comet is approaching the Earth...

Incipient problem: the lives of people on the Earth are in danger.

Search for solutions to the problem: the united American and Russian expedition is sent to blow up the comet...

Problem solution: the spacemen manage to blow up the comet but nevertheless its pieces reach the Earth cause damage to it...

Conclusions. Analysis of western media texts created in post-Soviet period (1992-2013) allows to represent their main plot schemes as follows: retro variant: crimes of the Soviet government in the period of 1917-1991 (totalitarian dictatorship, concentration camps, military aggression against other countries, espionage, etc.); the present: feebleness and corruptibility of Russian authorities which are unable to set the economy going, to control the arsenal and fight against criminality; the contemporary Russia is the country of mafia, bandits, terrorists, prostitutes, beggars and miserable people; Russians emigrate to the West in search of better life (marriage, prostitution, criminal activities);

- unlike in the period of 1946-1991, western films of 1992-2013 on the Russian subject were nourished not only by confrontational plots (military confrontation, espionage, mafia, etc.), but also by satisfaction of the interests of a huge Diaspora of Russian-speaking emigrants which delegated its representatives into film business. All this could not but affect the constant presence of the Russian subject in the western (first of all – in the American) cinema production. Thus for instance in many American TV series in which the action takes place in the USA from time to time appear Russian characters, emigrants or whatever;

- however on the whole Western cinematographic “Rossika” fully inherited the traditions of the western attitude to Russia: in the majority of fiction films of 1946-2013 the image of Russia is treated as an image of something “alien”, “different”, often hostile to western civilization;

Owing to all the above stated it would be superfluously optimistic to expect the stereotyped conception of western with respect to Russia, which has been formed through the ages, to change in the near future; most likely the plot schemes, ideological approaches, the characters of the heroes, etc., which we analyzed would predominate in the foreseeable future to a greater or lesser extent.

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УДК 13

Образ России на западном экране: современный этап (1992–2013)

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Аннотация. В данной статье автор анализирует эволюцию репрезентации образа России на западном экране за последние двадцать лет (1992-2013): идеологические и социальные тенденции, мифы, стереотипы, иллюзии, классификация моделей содержания, жанры. Основной вывод: образ России в большинстве западных фильмов периода 1992-2013 по-прежнему во многих случаях рассматривается как нечто опасное, варварское, чужое, враждебное.

Ключевые слова: холодная война; западные фильмы; экран; образ России; США; идеология; медиа; кино; враг.