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PREFACE

This reader is intended both for contemporary Russian cinema courses and for modern Russian culture courses that emphasize film. The collection includes films from 2005 to 2016. It does not attempt to establish a canon for the period, but seeks to provide undergraduate students with an introduction to significant Russian films that are available with English subtitles. Time will tell which of the films are masterpieces, but all are significant within the period covered by the collection. *Ninth Company* (*Deviataia rota*, 2005) and *How I Ended This Summer* (*Kak ia provel etim letom*, 2010) do not appear in this collection because they were included in volume two of *The Russian Cinema Reader*. Because the goal is to provide students with the best level-appropriate essays on the films, the collection is a mix of newly commissioned pieces and adaptations of published articles, as is the practice in this series. The length of essays varies because of authors' varying approaches. Sometimes a film is represented by two shorter essays. The editor selected subtitled films, invited authors, and added ideas to a number of essays.

Transliteration follows the simplified Library of Congress system, except for some spellings conventionally accepted in English, such as Yekaterinburg, Yeltsin. Final Cyrillic "-ий" in personal names, surnames, and place names is transliterated as "y": Anatoly, Todorovsky. Transliteration may vary slightly because of different systems used in previously published essays, the use of Library of Congress transliteration in footnotes and further reading to facilitate library research, and authors' preferred spelling of their names.

Vlad Strukov's introduction surveys recent Russian cinema in a global context as well as developments in the industry, genre, and themes, and discusses important films that are not available

with subtitles. The twenty-one essays on individual films provide background information on the director's career, a detailed analysis of the selected film, and suggestions for further reading both in English and Russian.

For students who have not taken an introductory film studies course, the Yale Film Studies film analysis website (http://filmanalysis.yctl.org) is an excellent resource for basic terms relating to mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, sound, and analysis, accompanied by illustrations and short clips. Timothy Corrigan's *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* is a useful text, which covers film terminology, different approaches to writing about cinema, sources for research, and guidelines for writing and formatting papers.

All films have been released with subtitles by American, British, or Russian distributors. *My Good Hans* (*Milyi Khans, dorogoi Petr*) is available in the iTunes store. *The Land of Oz* (*Strana Oz*) should be available on DVD within the next year or two and may be streamed at present through the subscription service of Nonfiction.film. Sovietmoviesonline.com also adds to its collection periodically.

This reader would not have been possible without the expertise and generosity of the authors of the introduction and the individual essays. I also owe special thanks to Philip Rogers, Faith Stein, Oleh Kotsyuba, Ekaterina Yanduganova, and to Kira Nemirovsky and her staff.

Rima Salys
Boulder, 2018

RUSSIAN CINEMA IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

Vlad Strukov

It has been customary to define Russian history and culture in terms of changes in political leadership: Khrushchev's Thaw, Brezhnev's Stagnation, Gorbachev's perestroika, and so on. The period under scrutiny—roughly 2005 to 2016—can easily be defined as the Putin era or an era of "staged democracy," "rising authoritarianism," "post-Soviet revanchism," "the new Cold War," "new imperialism," and so on. The repertoire of this alarmist terminology derived from political science and sensationalist journalism is vast. However, while it is indicative of actual negative developments such as the annexation of Crimea or attempts to recriminalize "non-traditional" sexuality, it fails again and again to explain—and, particularly, to predict—the actions of the Russian leadership. The figure of Vladimir Putin, who has occupied the position of the Russian prime minister and Russian president since 2000, is at the center of this top-down historiographic approach. I argue that it reveals much about the Western obsession with Putin and little about Russia itself, especially about contemporary Russian culture and society. This approach also robs the Russian people of agency—in effect, orientalizing them—and thus undermines the very purpose of the Western emancipatory project.[1] With regard to the cultural production in the Russian Federation, this Putin-centric approach sustains the Cold War–era binary narrative of official/unofficial, conformist and dissident realms of culture whereby the work of individuals is judged on the basis of their relationship to the Kremlin instead of their global citizenship. Instead, I suggest that we should examine Russian culture and its cinematic component using a different system of referents and cognitive procedures. I propose

[1] For a suggestion of a new project of resistance, see Vlad Strukov, "Towards a New Paradigm of Resistance," in Further Reading.

here a polycentric, multilayered reading, which is characteristic of the era of globalization. (It would also be useful to apply this approach to the study of Russian contemporary power dynamics but that is a task of another book.)[2]

Of course, Russia participated in early globalization processes. For example, Russia emerged as a result of the colonization of a Muslim entity—the Khanate of Kazan—in the sixteenth century. Russia continued the imperial logic of Western states such as Spain and England which had just embarked on the "discovery" of new worlds and on securing new spheres of influence. During the late Tsarist period, the Trans-Siberian railroad was built, linking the Russian Far East with Saint Petersburg, Warsaw, and Western Europe. Fifty years later Iury Gagarin's flight into space on the first manned mission provided the Soviets, and the whole world, with a view—and fantasy—of a single world, united in its will to overcome some of the greatest tragedies of the twentieth century—the Holocaust and Stalin's repressions. The experiments of the early Soviet filmmakers also conceptualized global visions as in, for example, Dziga Vertov's image of the modern city in *Man with the Movie Camera* (*Chelovek s kinoapparatom*, 1929) and Sergei Eisenstein's 1925 revolutionary manifesto *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potemkin*). Andrei Tarkovsky (*Solaris*, 1972, *The Mirror*, 1975, and *Stalker*, 1979) and Sergei Paradjanov (*Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, 1965 and *The Color of Pomegranates*, 1969) employed visual metaphors to convey messages about universal concepts of love, beauty, loneliness, suffering, and overcoming.[3]

However, it was only after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 that Russia began to participate in global economic and cultural life freely, that is, unhindered by the ideological and political constraints of the Cold War. Russia's gradual involvement in global affairs was formalized as the country's entry into the World Trade

2 An attempt to formulate this agenda can be found in Robert Saunders and Vlad Strukov, *Popular Geopolitics*, in Further Reading.

3 Some argue that the USSR attempted to build its own form of globalization. See, for example, Alain Badiou, in Further Reading.

Organization. Russia became its 156th member in 2012 and very soon embarked on a series of actions with global consequences such as the Sochi Winter Olympics, the annexation of Crimea, and participation in the Syrian War. These events, as well as Putin's rise to power, had their origins in the late 1990s and especially in the 1998 financial crisis that bankrupted the Russian state, gave birth to a new generation of oligarchs, demoralized the Russian public, and nearly destroyed the Russian film industry. The 2000s is an era when Russia simultaneously benefited and suffered from a rapid entry into the globalized world, and its cinema of the period documents and reflects on these complex processes of adjustment, realignment and reconfiguration. From a country that was rarely thought of fifteen years ago, the Russian Federation has evolved into a phenomenon that is constantly in the headlines of global media, most recently due to the ongoing investigation into its interference in the 2016 US elections. The mediatization of Russian politics and culture is an evolving process which reveals the complexity of current renegotiations of the country's identity and vision. Russian filmmakers have been instrumental in the formulation of the new ideologemes of the Russian state[4] and in the creation of the new visual language of the Russian people. Similar trends have occurred elsewhere—for example, in China, India, and Turkey—including the rise of the new traditionalism, the attempt to "nationalize" local cultural production, and the imposition of new hegemonic regimes, which is an outcome of the implementation and adaptation of Western neoliberal policies.[5]

[4] On the conservative end, we find Nikita Mikhalkov who has been responsible for the blending of patriotic and monarchist tendencies. On the liberal end, Kirill Serebrennikov and Vasily Sigarev have promoted the values of tolerance and inclusivity in their production for cinema and theater.

[5] Ashvin Devasundaram's examination of internal politics in the Indian film industry reveals uncanny resemblances to the Russian case. Both Russian and Indian filmmakers have been compelled to produce films with a populist agenda in response to government imperatives and the rising demand among the viewers, which often overlap. See Ashvin Devasundaram, in Further Reading.

The contemporary Russian cinematic landscape is characterized by an incredibly rich mixture of production models and visual styles. Four generations of filmmakers continue to produce a robust body of work: (1) *the Soviet generation* (such as Aleksandr Sokurov, Kira Muratova,[6] Nikita Mikhalkov, Karen Shakhnazarov, Vladimir Khotinenko, Vadim Abdrashitov); (2) *the post-Soviet generation* (such as Aleksei Balabanov, Pavel Lungin, Valery Todorovsky, Aleksandr Rogozhkin, Aleksei Uchitel'); (3) *the new Russian generation* (such as Andrei Zviagintsev, Timur Bekmambetov, Renata Litvinova, Nikolai Khomeriki, Anna Melikian); and (4) *the Russian millennials* (such as Valeriia Gai Germanika, Oksana Karas′, Ivan Tverdovsky, Mikhail Mestetsky, Kantemir Balagov). I identify these "generations" not in relation to the directors' age, but rather in terms of (a) their relationship to two defining historical events—the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 and the financial crisis of 1998—and (b) the date of their entry into the film industry. (Many of these directors released their first films in the early 2000s despite the fact that they were born in different decades of the twentieth century.) It would be wrong to assume that each generation has its own unique style or themes when instead the opposite is true: unlike in Iran and Romania, no single dominant group of filmmakers has emerged, and therefore there has been nothing resembling "the Russian new wave."[7] For some time there was a discussion about the so-called "new quiet ones" (*novye tikhie*), a loose cross-generational association of filmmakers interested in reflective, slow, and socially engaged cinema. However, as a grouping or as an academic construct, it had no legacy and soon went out of use.[8] Therefore, in terms of its stories, settings, styles, production models, and audience engagement, Russian cinema—much like the new Russia—is immensely diverse, with each filmmaker providing his or her unique interpretation of what it means to live in the new globalized world.

6 Muratova passed away in June 2018.

7 For further discussion of this counter-position see Vlad Strukov, *Contemporary Russian Cinema*, in Further Reading.

8 See, for example, David McVey, in Further Reading.

Nevertheless, it is possible to identify some dominant stylistic trends. In the early years of the new century, *chernukha*, or black cinema of the 1990s,[9] reemerged to include exaggerated and occasionally fantastic elements while maintaining its focus on political critique, interest in social outcasts, and violent representations of the human body. For example, we find these tendencies in the work of Aleksei Balabanov, *Dead Man's Bluff* (*Zhmurki*, 2005) and *Cargo 200* (*Gruz 200*, 2007). The release of Andrei Zviagintsev's *The Return* (*Vozvrashchenie*, 2003) marked the start of a new stylistic trend, or what I have called elsewhere the symbolic mode.[10] It is characterized by the use of highly abstract concepts and visual language, and it is often directed toward a mystical world or even an afterlife. While valuing authenticity, spontaneity, natural harshness, and uncompromising attitudes, Russian directors in this period often create and operate within abstract environments in which to explore social concerns in the symbolic mode. It is a kind of cinema that addresses big questions such as the possibility of thinking beyond dichotomies of constructed time and pure duration, continuity, and discontinuity. It stages an attack on the possibility of discourse and the probability of being by contesting and affirming the infinite. Aleksei Fedorchenko's *Silent Souls* (*Ovsianki*, 2010), Aleksandr Zel'dovich's *The Target* (*Mishen´*, 2010), Aleksandr Sokurov's *The Sun* (*Solntse*, 2005), Aleksei German's *Hard to be a God* (*Trudno byt' bogom*, 2013)—all discussed in this volume—are representative of this type of cinema along with Renata Litvinova's *Goddess: How I Fell in Love* (*Boginia: Kak ia poliubila*, 2004), Aleksandr Veledinsky's *Alive* (*Zhivoi*, 2006), Andrei Zviagintev's *Banishment* (*Izgnanie*, 2007), Aleksei Balabanov's *Morphine* (*Morfii*, 2008), Kirill Serebrennikov's *St. George's Day* (*Iur´iev den'*, 2008), Igor´ Voloshin's *Nirvana* (2008), Aleksandr Proshkin's *The Miracle* (*Chudo*, 2009), Nikolai Khomeriki's *A Tale About Darkness* (*Skazka pro temnotu*, 2009), Aleksei German Jr.'s

9 From *chernyi* (black), a slang term popularized in the late 1980s and used to describe unrelenting negativity and pessimism in the arts and in mass media.

10 Strukov, *Contemporary Russian Cinema*, in Further Reading.

The changing geometry of human relations and cinematic language.
Film still from Zel'dovich's *The Target*.

Under Electric Clouds (*Pod elektricheskimi oblakami*, 2015),[11] and many others.

The tonality of Russian cinema changes in the early 2010s, becoming more interested in mundane situations and social conflicts as we see in Zviagintsev's *Elena* (2011) which offers a critique of the class divide in the new, globalized Russia. Another example would be Boris Khlebnikov's *Long and Happy Life* (*Dolgaia schastlivaia zhizn'*, 2013) which tells the story of Sasha, a young businessman living in a remote part of Russia, and his fight against the dishonest government that wishes to confiscate his land. With its critique of corruption and focus on the disintegration of personal relationships, *Long and Happy Life* foretells the conflicts and aesthetics of Zviagintsev's *Leviathan* (2014). To confirm, this new aesthetics of Russian cinema does not signify a return to social realism; in fact, it does not eschew cinema in the symbolic mode but rather incorporates it into its new arsenal by retooling its aesthetic potential. (This is similar to

[11] The work on the film was interrupted by the death of the director's father when Aleksei German Jr. had to complete his father's project *Hard to be a God*. Therefore, *Under Electric Clouds* belongs to the earlier period of Russian cinema in the symbolic mode, and is arguably its last masterpiece.

how postmodern cinema such as Zel´dovich's *Moscow* (2000) was incorporated into the cinema in the symbolic mode, just as with his film *The Target*.) The difference between cinema in the symbolic mode and the new cinema is that the latter aims to speak to a larger audience, not the niche audience of film buffs. A good example is Zviagintsev's transition from the aesthetics of *Elena* to that of *Leviathan*: the second film includes gags, sex scenes, violence, and the use of obscene language— all those elements that we commonly associate with popular cinema. To complicate the discussion, these elements also effectively relate Zviagintsev's *Leviathan* back to the *chernukha* period and Balabanov's intensity of cinematic presentation, thus completing the circle of aesthetic exchange of the past twenty years.

An example of the use of abstraction for social critique.
Film still from Zviagintsev's *Leviathan*.

The director who best represents this shift to the new cinema is Vasily Sigarev. He is primarily known as a scriptwriter and playwright and previously worked with Yekaterinburg-based director Nikolai Koliada. Sigarev became famous after his play *Plasticine* (*Plastilin*, 2000) was staged by Serebrennikov at Moscow's Centre for Drama and Directing.[12] His work for the theater belongs to the tradition of New Drama which has "the aspiration to

12 Tsentr dramaturgii i rezhissury.

define and form an identity ad hoc, either by analysis of precisely demarcated social groups or through aesthetic communication."[13] The hypernaturalism of New Drama lends itself to the exploration of identity, sexuality, violence, and fears associated with the sense of the disappearance of reality and its replacements with different kinds of simulacra. As a result, New Drama emerges simultaneously as a theater of hypernaturalism and hyperabstraction, focusing on complex philosophical themes such as the nature and structure of communication.[14] Sigarev's first two films *Wolfie* (*Volchok*, 2009) and *Living* (*Zhit'*, 2011) explore the child-parent relationship,[15] and the themes of love, loss, grief, and guilt, in an environment of violence, alcohol and drug abuse, sex, and death. In his later film *The Land of Oz*, Sigarev addresses the same concerns but alters the genre to a romcom that incorporates humor, breaks the story into a set of short novellas, and introduces other changes to appeal to a larger audience more accustomed to short clips on YouTube rather than the intensive, slow engagement of the cinema of the 2000s.[16] This strategy was rewarded as the film became one of the most popular releases of 2015. While employing "popular aesthetics," Sigarev maintains a high level of philosophical reflection—much like during the period of the symbolic mode—such as his interest in living after a (personal) apocalypse and finding meaning in the gaps in discourse (such as posthumous, postevental subjectivity).[17]

If Sigarev works with new audiences by adapting the style of his films, other directors employ entirely different strategies. For example, during the era of the symbolic mode, Khomeriki authored a few award-winning experimental films, most notably, *A Tale about*

13 Birgit Beumers and Mark Lipovetsky, 34, in Further Reading.

14 On Russian New Drama see Beumers and Lipovetsky, in Further Reading.

15 This is a dominant theme of Russian cinema in the twenty-first century. See Helena Goscilo and Yana Hashamova, in Further Reading.

16 On "slow cinema," see Tiago de Luca, in Further Reading.

17 For the discussion of these theoretical concepts see Strukov, *Contemporary Russian Cinema,* in Further Reading.

Darkness (*Skazka pro temnotu*, 2009) and *Heart's Boomerang* (*Serdtsa bumerang*, 2011). These films were concerned with knowledge conceived in philosophical and cinematic terms whereby knowledge as an apparatus of subjectivity deconstructs the filmic image in its relation to "what is known" and "what is seen." In the new era, Khomeriki switched to making historically themed "feel-good" blockbusters such as his 2016 *Icebreaker* (*Ledokol*). This film is based on real-life events of 1985 when the icebreaker "Mikhail Somov" was caught in the Antarctic ice and drifted for 133 days in extreme cold. In this film, which is clearly aimed at a general audience, Khomeriki maintains his focus on the psychology of his characters; however, he loses the cinematic and philosophical complexity of his earlier films in favor of basic allegories and straightforward conflicts. The portrayal of the ideological conflicts of the late socialist period—the film is set on the brink of Gorbachev's perestroika—had an unusual effect on the viewers who were still taken by the patriotic fever after the annexation of Crimea. A similar strategy was adopted by Boris Khlebnikov who, after a series of influential critiques of Russian society, released his new socially affirmative drama *Arrhythmia* (*Aritmiia*) in 2017.

For other directors, the search for a new, more appealing cinematic language has been more productive. For example, Melikian's early *Mars* (*Mars*, 2004) and *Mermaid* (*Rusalka*, 2007) addressed the problems of gender, identity, and memory through the use of complex narrative structures and somewhat esoteric visual language. In her later *Star* (*Zvezda*, 2014) and *About Love* (*Pro liubov'*, 2015), Melikian opted for more engaging, perhaps even melodramatic and sensationalist storylines: a romantic relationship between the son of an oligarch and a teenage girl who is dying of cancer (*Star*) and the sexual adventures of Muscovites (*About Love*). What for some critics is a strategy of dumbing down content, for others is an ingenious way to engage with the stylistics of contemporary everyday living such as the use of dating apps and sexting. Melikian investigates how the processes of mediation—of sex, feelings, and ultimately, of the self—have transformed our notions of identity, especially female identity. Both *Star* and *About Love* reflect on the construction of femininity in contemporary

Russia and on the impact of globalization on the Russian knowledge economy. In particular, *About Love* features a young Japanese woman whose "external" point of view is used to critique Russian men and their obsession with money. The film also showcases how women struggle—but sometimes succeed, as with Renata Litvinova's character—in finding a role in the new neoliberal economy where young people have to accept unpaid internships, work on zero-hour contracts, and engage in other forms of unsecured employment. Melikian provides both a critique of contemporary Russian society and an inspiration for young individuals and especially women, which explains why her most recent films have been so successful with Russian audiences.[18]

The imperative to speak to the generation of millennials who have their own sense of temporality due to a different media experience is one of the reasons why Russian directors have to adapt their visual strategies. Another, of course, is competition with Hollywood; in this regard, contemporary Russian cinema faces enormous challenges because it is much less protected than Chinese, French, or German cinema. Russian cinema is unquestionably dominated by Hollywood in terms of aesthetics and distribution. For example, in 2016 in Russia sixty distribution companies showed 147 films grossing US$774.8 million, and only a small proportion of them were Russian films. The two most successful companies, the US-based WDSSPR and Fox—both well-known for their extremely conservative ideological stance—accounted for the lion's share of releases: 31 films grossing US$230.37 million and 25 films grossing US$130.97 million, respectively. They are followed by the Russian company Karo Premiere with 35 films grossing US$128.27 million.[19] The majority of films shown in Russian cinemas are Hollywood

[18] For comparison, the box office of *Mars* was US$240,000 and *About Love* brought in US$750,000.

[19] Mikhail Vodop′ianov, "Rost kassovykh sborov v Rossii," *Kinodata*, January 21, 2017, accessed June 15, 2017, http://kinodata.pro/vse-o-kino/obzor-kassovyh-sborov-v-rossii/26034-rost-kassovyx-sborov-v-rossii-v-2016-godu-proizoshyol-iz-za-uvelicheniya-kolichestva-relizov-nashix-mejdzhorov.html.

productions; as few as one film made in the Russian Federation might be shown in a typical multiplex over a period of three months.[20] This is because Russia does not have a quota system, as in France, and lacks a tradition of audiences voluntarily supporting domestic productions as in, for example, Scandinavian countries. In addition, the tradition of watching international quality productions that characterized the Soviet cinema system—and is maintained in countries like Italy, France, and Spain thanks to the system of art house cinemas—has been lost almost entirely due to the privatization of the distribution networks in the 1990s and 2000s. As a result, Russian cinema must compete with Hollywood majors on the domestic markets, which is done by having an exceptionally strong supply of arthouse films and by utilizing alternative distribution platforms such as the Internet.

Major Russian film archives, collections, and distribution companies such as Mosfilm continue to make their content available online for free. Some independent directors stage premieres of their films online as this is the only opportunity for them to reach an audience. Others engage in agonizing legal battles with distribution and media companies that publish films illegally on the Internet. To be clear, these companies generate income by placing advertising alongside the illegally distributed films. In spite of these efforts, film piracy is widespread. If at the start of the century piracy helped the film industry rise from the ashes, by the end of the first decade it became apparent that piracy was the industry's major problem.[21] The government addressed these concerns by introducing new legislation and enforcing anti-piracy laws. Although the situation has improved somewhat, the Russian film market is still characterized by high levels of illegal distribution of cinematic materials, both Russian-made and international. As a result, film distribution companies have to employ ingenious methods to control the distribution of their films, including unusual screening schedules and cross-

20 Vlad Strukov, "Russian 'Manipulative Smart Power'," 37, in Further Reading.

21 On the role of film pirates, see Vlad Strukov, "Translated by Goblin," in Further Reading.

regional monitoring. In a way, in the global neoliberal fashion, the Russian government has delegated the regulation of the market and protection of revenue to the private sector. In some rare cases, the free circulation of audio-visual products on the Internet has had a positive effect for filmmakers. This is particularly noteworthy with regards to the animation industry and especially digital animation. Individual entrepreneurs such as Vladimir Nikolaev and Anatoly Prokhorov have managed to build incredibly strong brands so that now their film products are purchased in other countries for official distribution. Nikolaev's animated feature-length film *Snow Queen* (*Snezhnaia koroleva*) and its sequels were a leading audio-visual production in terms of sales to non-Russian markets in 2017. Prokhorov's *Kikoriki* (*Smeshariki*) animation series has attracted the attention of international audiences and subsequently

The fluidity of the digital close-up available in cine-games.
Film still from Naishuller's *Hardcore Henry.*

of the political elites in China and Russia, leading to the signing of co-production deals at the highest possible level.

Recently, by reaching out to an international audience, Russian filmmakers have been able to secure revenue to compensate for the losses on the domestic market. In this regard, 2016 was a record year

for the Russian film industry when 20 films earned US$37million on the international market.[22] The most successful films included *Hardcore Henry* (*Hardkor*) directed by Il'ia Naishuller and produced by Timur Bekmambetov. The film is a science fiction drama about a man who wakes up in a Moscow laboratory to learn that he has been brought back from the dead as a half-human, half-robotic hybrid. The story is told by means of a first-person shooter, that is, showing the events from the perspective of a computer game player. Another successful feature was *Mafia: The Game of Survival* (*Mafiia: igra na vyzhivanie*, 2016), directed by Sarik Andreasian and structured like a television show, where participants are eliminated one by one.[23] The film was inspired by the party game "Mafia," which was extremely popular in the Russian Federation and other post-Soviet countries in the 1990s; however, the film takes the game to a new level as participants are eliminated physically. For Russian audiences, the film provided a reflection on the traumatic decade after the dissolution of the USSR when crime was rampant. The success of *Hardcore Henry* and *Mafia* signals a greater convergence between the media of film and computer gaming. This is both a marketing strategy that exists in order to extend the experience of film and augment the practices of the film franchise and an aesthetic that promotes cultural and media hybridization.[24]

In spite of these successes, the Russian film industry, especially its international distribution arm, lacks coherence and coordination. For example, there are no cultural institutions like the British

22 Sergei Lavrov, "V pervom polugodii 2017 goda rossiiskoe kino zarabotalo za rubezhom uzhe $21.5 mln," *Kinodata*, July 02, 2017, accessed April 12, 2018. http://kinodata.pro/vse-o-kino/obzor-kassovyh-sborov-v-mirovom-prokate/29566-v-pervom-polugodii-2017-goda-rossijskoe-kino-zarabotalo-za-rubezhom-uzhe-21-mln.html.

23 It is noteworthy that the film was particularly popular in China, which means that Russian filmmakers "work" on non-Western film markets and that they can specialize in specific genres to be produced for particular markets.

24 On the convergence of cinema and computer gaming in the Russian context, see Vlad Strukov and Stephen Norris, in Further Reading.

Council that would promote Russian films abroad. Instead, the Russian government utilizes a hybrid system by outsourcing these activities to private companies and individuals, thus employing neoliberal business models which in other countries have proven to be destructive for the institution of cinema. At the same time, the tradition of cinema-going has been replicated and reinvigorated thanks to the activities staged by cultural centers such as New Holland (Novaia Gollandiia) in St. Petersburg and the Film Club in Rostov-na-Donu. In such centers, people normally attend a screening of a classic or contemporary film in an arts or educational venue and then participate in a discussion led by an invited speaker. These types of events are frequently held in Russian urban centers and function as a form of community building and an alternative means of education in film and culture. This is the arena in which international art house films reach their audience. These events are so popular that they have been featured in Russian films as a setting or even a narrative device. For example, in Melikian's *About Love* a lecture delivered by Renata Litvinova's character provides a narrative organization to the film's five novellas, each telling a story of a different character. Conversely, many cinemas have been used to show new types of content, such as operatic and theatrical performances streamed live from the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow or the Royal Opera House in London. The diversification of content available for demonstration in cinemas is indicative of the media convergence. It is also an attempt to speak to different kinds of audiences, and an endeavor that is in line with the global trend in working with niche audiences. Finally, it reveals a number of interconnected global flows of information and cultural exchange which exist independently from the state and are pertinent to the new, post-industrial era of economic development. In that economic system, the audiences emerge as a new kind of active cultural producers who make meaning through their consumption practice or alternative cultural products.

Since the early years of the twenty-first century, the main objective of Russian filmmakers has been to make films that would appeal to that kind of active audience. This has led to changes in how Russian films are funded and to the emergence of commercial,