Youth Film in Russia and Serbia

Since the 1990s

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Abstract

This thesis explores the youth film genre in Russia and Serbia since the 1990s. Youth film is not only an essential means of tracing changes in cultural perceptions about young people and their lives in the post-communist period, but I argue that the genre serves as a means of representing society as a whole. The youth film genre, as an overarching framework dictated by the age of a film's protagonists, encompasses and adopts a wide variety of sub-genres. This flexibility in youth film allows for an innovative study of the position of one genre as part of a wider sphere of genre film-making in the post-communist period.

In particular, I demonstrate that global genre theory can be used as a means to examine the different genre types that have appeared in the cinema of Russia and Serbia in the post-communist period. The film industries of both nations were required to undergo vast changes in the transition from communism to capitalism, making film genres and audience preferences more significant than before. The films I analyse in this thesis borrow extensively from Hollywood genre types, using deviations and national-cultural references to appeal to their domestic audiences. However, I also contend that genres were an important part of the film industries of the Soviet Union and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and that these genre histories must be considered. My close analyses of six youth films provide the communist and post-communist context for their genre usages, placing them within a wider canon of films from particular genres.

This thesis contributes not only to the understanding of the youth film genre and the different ways in which these films are made, but also to knowledge of the use of genres in recent Russian and Serbian cinema as a whole. The chapters of this thesis examine how youth films and youth audiences have become increasingly important to post-communist film industries. I demonstrate that youth film allows directors not only to depict the trials and tribulations of growing up during the transition from communism, but how these youth films often reference the suffering of adults in this period. Young people are situated in a historical limbo, between the communist past and the capitalist future, and as such become a poignant metaphor for the wider experience of transition in these two nations.

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Note

Transliteration of Russian names adheres to the Library of Congress system, unless the name in question is that of an author who has already been published in English and transliterated in a particular format (e.g. Troitsky, Yurchak). This thesis uses the Latinised form of Serbian/Croatian throughout using diacritics. Where Serbian sources have originally been written in the Cyrillic alphabet, they have been transliterated according to the standard practice of Serbian/Croatian transliteration between alphabets (e.g. Чолић to Čolić) to maintain consistency.

All quotations are reproduced with their original spelling and transliteration. Any spelling and grammar mistakes in the originals have been highlighted.

All translations from secondary sources are my own unless otherwise indicated (e.g. subtitles used on official film releases). The source text is given in its original form in the footnotes for cross-referencing. In many cases, the wider context of the sentence to which quotations belong has been given in order to demonstrate why a particular grammatical form has been chosen or to indicate original syntax.

All translations of film dialogue from Russian and Serbian/Croatian to English are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

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Introduction

In his study of youth on film, *The Cinema of Adolescence*, David Considine writes: 'In looking at the way in which film depicts adolescence, it has been possible to learn something of the way in which the film industry and the society it serves view themselves.'[1] Youth film has taken many different forms and has encompassed a variety of sub-genres over the course of film history, but within this history, filmic representations of the lives of young people have focused continually on the relationship between youth and society, not solely on young people alone. Although Considine is a scholar of US youth film, his approach towards the interaction between representations of youth and society can provide particular insight into the study of nations in cultural, political and social transition. Youth film can be used as an important measure for assessing the culture and social attitudes of a nation at a specific point in history. If the various strata of society do not know where their places lie, then the young people that are expected to eventually fall into these structures are doubly lost. The nuances of youth film have consistently taken on a specific role in the cinema of nations in flux and transition, and this is particularly true for the post-communist nations of Europe.

Youth is characterised as a time of change, a period in between childhood and adulthood, during which young people discover unfortunate truths about the world of grown-ups, undergo a number of painful experiences as part of the rites-of-passage to define their personal characters,

[1] David Considine, *The Cinema of Adolescence* (London: McFarland, 1985), p. 274.

and ultimately forge an identity for themselves within the social structure that they have been born into, or else remain in permanent drift. It is therefore no surprise that scholars have likened adolescence to the experience of the transition from communism, a transition that, for the most part, was as painful, jubilant and humiliating as the age of adolescence is. Yana Hashamova, whilst analysing the output of post-Soviet film, writes: 'The intensity and severity of such changes [in Russia] reminded me of an individual developmental stage, namely the adolescence period.'[2] This thesis is an overview of just one part of the culture that emerged in the transition from communism in Russia and Serbia, through an exploration into the role that youth has had as a metaphor for the difficulties of transition, in the medium of film. The collapse of communism is positioned as a rude awakening for society, as sudden and sobering as the experience of growing-up.

Since the establishment of youth as a social group, separate to adults and children, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the youth of all nations have played an important role as the symbolic carriers of a nation's future and have thus been subjected to particular attention. Jon Savage writes: 'From the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there were many conflicting attempts to envisage and define youth – whether through concentrated efforts to regiment adolescents using national policies, or through artistic, prophetic visions that reflected the wish of the young to live

[2] Yana Hashamova, *Pride & Panic: Russian Imagination of the West in Post-SovietFfilm* (Bristol: Intellect, 2007), p. 12.

by their own rules.'[3] In nations where this future is uncertain, due to changes in economic, political and social structures, representations of young people reflect these fears accordingly and take on a more significant role as reflections of society. Screen youths in Russia and Serbia are depicted as being adrift, subjected to inequality, abused or abusive, both victims and victimisers, as well as being immature or prematurely adult, selfish, and inconsistent. The representation of young people having their hopes and dreams dashed is indicative of the devastation wrought by state collapse. Others are taught lessons in humility with the intention that youth on and off screen will learn how to become proper citizens.

This thesis explores the youth film genre in Russia and Serbia since the 1990s as a lens on changes in the use of genre film in the immediate post-communist period. Each chapter will examine whether the representation of youth on film can indeed be seen as a metaphor for transition in Russia and Serbia, as Considine suggests, and how genre choice is part of this metaphor. In this thesis, I use the term 'youth film' as an over-arching category defined by the age of a film's protagonists, but also by the film's choice of subject matter, where the narrative is guided by a youth's experience of the rites-of-passage central to growing up. Each film that is explored has a youth protagonist, who is struggling to define themselves in the adult world. There are a number of terms used by scholars of youth cinema to define such films (teen film, teenpics, cinema of adolescence, youth film, representations of youth, cinema of youth), with each label focusing on different, but

[3] Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2007), p. xiii.

interlinking, areas of representations (rites-of-passage, psychoanalytical and social concerns, films aimed at the youth audience through subject matter and film classification, amongst others). Youth film has a complex relationship with its target audience, particularly as young people constitute the majority of cinematic audiences and many films thus aim to appeal to the tastes of these groups. However, this thesis illustrates that, in the case of Russian and Serbian film, the target of youth films is not just the younger audience, but the adult audience as well. I employ the term 'youth film' as a way of encompassing these various meanings, whilst also as a means of avoiding the strictures of examining youth films as being solely tailored to the teenage audience. Youth films are often intended to have a much wider appeal than is acknowledged and this guides my use of the term in relation to Russian and Serbian film genre.

While my main focus is on a genre I define as youth film, this thesis shows how the youth film uses the aesthetics of other genres to suit a specific and contemporary narrative, and to engage the audience according to their own genre preferences. Timothy Shary, a leading voice in the study of youth and cinema, suggests that films for young people are split into a number of 'subgenres', particularly as the representation of young people on screen has become more complex and nuanced.[4] I combine this principle of sub-genres with an investigation of the use of what Rick Altman calls 'genre mixing',

[4] See Timothy Shary, *Generation Multiplex: the image of youth in American cinema after* 1980, revised edn (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), p. 3.

applied to the youth film genre.[5] Such an examination can provide insight into the changing relationship between film-makers, audiences and film genre after 1991, since which time genre film has occupied a more prominent place in the film industries of Russia and Serbia. In both industries, directors have sought to appeal to wide audiences through the combination of youth protagonists and genre combinations.

However, the ways in which genres are adopted depends heavily on the director using these frames of reference. Many of my film analyses will examine what role the directors of these films have played in the development of post-communist film industries, and how these directors' visions of youth have fed into the development of youth characters and stereotypes more broadly. As a result, it is easy to see why so many youth films over the years have been seen as either promoting or negating rebellious youth behaviour. This is another issue of youth film that will not be the primary focus of my discussion, but nonetheless features in the background of the analyses. This thesis will discuss how the genre choices made by directors in post-communist Russia and Serbia can be seen as a reaction to the need for film to adapt to market-centric models and the necessity to appeal to audiences – youth or otherwise. In the process, the post-communist transition of these two countries is compared and contrasted, providing insight into the experience of this transition through the rise of genre film. Ultimately, an analysis of youth film allows for a discussion as to whether, in spite of their differences, similar patterns of representation

[5] Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999), p. 141.

can be identified in Russia and Serbia or whether the post-communist transition is seen to have specific consequences for cultural production in each successor state.

Youth as generation and metaphor

In order to establish what role youth plays in film, it is essential to characterise the role that 'youth', as a social group and metaphorical concept, has played in the history of Russia and Serbia, which explains the definitions made throughout this thesis. While youths are sometimes considered to be limited to those of the teenage years, in filmic reality and socio-legal structures, the age range is much broader. Those protagonists who have long ago ceased to be teenagers remain characters that are embedded with the codes of experience and behaviour considered common to those of younger ages, or they are purposefully positioned as being immature and/or naïve. This is compounded most clearly in the differences in the legal, and therefore social, definitions of youth and the representation of this social group on screen.

The age boundaries assigned to the category of 'youth' vary from country to country and, likewise, the traditions that characterise youth rites-of-passage fluctuate accordingly. The United Nations, for example, recognises the difficulties of allocating a definition of youth, considering cultural differences between nations, and ultimately defines 'youth' or 'young people'

as being people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four.[6] However, in present-day Russia, the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs defines young people as being between the ages of fifteen and twenty-nine, which, without a doubt, reflects on the specific cultural context of communism, where members of the Soviet Union's Komsomol (*Vsesoiuznyi leninskii kommunisticheskii soiuz molodezhi* All-Union Leninist Young Communist League) were aged between fourteen and twenty-eight.[7] In Serbia, the definition is very similar; youth are considered by the Ministry of Youth and Sport to be those between the ages of fifteen and thirty years old.[8] It is important to note that these boundaries indicate that, in both Russia and Serbia, this transitionary period between childhood and adulthood lasts longer than in other nations, which is compounded by their patriarchal structures. This prolonged infantilisation of young adults can be clearly traced in some films, particularly in those made in the 2000s, and produces numerous paradoxes within their narratives.

As this research has been conducted on Russia and Serbia, this thesis follows their parameters and considers youth as being between the ages of fifteen and thirty; some of the protagonists discussed in this thesis are indeed above the age of twenty-four, but are still treated as prime candidates for the

[6] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 'Definition of Youth: Fact Sheet', <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf> [accessed 24 July 2015].
[7] Federal Agency for Government Statistics and UNICEF, 'Molodezh' v Rossii 2010: statisticheskii sbornik' (2010), <http://fadm.gov.ru/upload/iblock/420/MOLODEG_RUS_2010.pdf> [accessed 31 October 2015], p. 8; for a detailed discussion of the Communist Youth League, see Matthias Neumann, *The Communist Youth League and the transformation of the Soviet Union, 1917-1932* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).
[8] Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Serbia, 'Zakon o mladima [Law on Youth]', 5 July 2011, particularly, 'Član 3 [Article 3]', <http://www.mos.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/download-manager-files/8.%20Zakon_o_mladima.pdf> [accessed 1 September 2015].

re-shaping common to all youth protagonists. Those younger than fifteen are counted as 'children' and, while not entirely absent from my analysis, will not be the focus of discussion. Filmic narratives of childhood require a different analytical framework, have a different history in film genre, and deserve a separate study to do the theme justice.[9] In both Serbia and Russia, the children's film genre belongs to its own, more established, generic category; this is particularly the case for Soviet cinema, as Chapter 1 will indicate. Yet for most of Russian and Serbian film history, films about children and youth were combined into one single genre, which was arguably dominated by the less problematic image of children, rather than teenagers. While teenagers and young adults have consistently been used as representatives for strife, Catriona Kelly argues: 'Children were […] the ultimate model citizens for the Soviet state, more perfectly grateful than any adult could be.'[10] This analysis will seek to continue the discussion of why and how children's and youth film should be considered two separate beings.

As Anne Gorsuch notes, 'youth […] is more than a social and biological formation […] it is also a cultural construct', stressing the metaphorical role

[9] For a comprehensive examination of Russian and Soviet childhood, see Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); and in South East Europe, see, *Childhood in South East Europe: historical perspectives on growing up in the 19th and 20th century*, ed. by Slobodan Naumović and Miroslav Jovanović (Belgrade: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju, 2001). For discussion of the representation of children on film, see for example: *Russian Children's Literature and Culture* ed. by Marina Balina and Larissa Rudova (London: Routledge, 2008); Kristina Đuković, 'Jovan Rančić, vuk samotnjak srpskog dečjeg filma', in *Novi Kadrovi*, ed. by Dejan Ognjanović and Ivan Velisavljević (Beograd: CLIO, 2008), 85-122; Karen Lury, *The child in film: tears, fears and fairy tales* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010); Stephanie Donald, *Little Friends: Children's film and media culture in China* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005); *Contemporary children's literature and film: engaging with theory*, ed. by Kerry Mallan and Clare Bradford (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
[10] Kelly, p. 100.

that youth plays in the social imagination of a nation.[11] In all nations, youth and influences on youth are considered with particular attention by societies and the government. However, the representation of youth is also highly-regulated and nearly always articulated through the spectrum of adult norms. This is true of the Soviet Union and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), where youth had an important role in the construction of communism. In a speech from 1920, Lenin declared that it would be youth that 'will be faced with the actual task of creating a communist society', rather than the adult population who would merely preside over the stages of communism's construction.[12] Thus youth were positioned as representatives of the Soviet 'radiant future (*svetloe budushchee*)' of full communism.[13] Young people were of particular concern for the Bolshevik government in the early years of their rule as, before the Revolution, 'little thought had been spent on what to do about young people'.[14] Youth were portrayed both positively, as 'innocent, enthusiastic, [and] communal', but also negatively, 'as corruptible, undisciplined, and "infectious"', suggesting that Soviet concerns about youth were not so different to those of Western societies.[15] Rather than forming a 'homogenous culture imbued with Soviet ideals', which became the stereotype of Soviet youth and the Komsomol, Soviet youth

[11] Anne Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 12.
[12] Vladimir Lenin, 'The Tasks of the Youth Leagues: Speech Delivered at the Third All-Russia Congress of the Russian Young Communist League, October 2, 1920', in *Lenin: Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), 601-614 (p. 601).
[13] For a discussion of the term 'radiant future', after Aleksandr Zinov'ev's novel, *The Radiant Future* [*Svetloe budushchee*], see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 8-9.
[14] Juliane Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Post-war Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 11.
[15] Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*, p. 12; see also Fürst, p. 11.

'engaged in several layers of cultural behaviour and varied in its alignment with official expectations'.[16] This was particularly the case after the Second World War (WWII), when young people 'were determined to enjoy their youth by indulging in all kinds of hedonistic and light entertainment'.[17] As for Western youths, the tastes of Soviet youths were driven by consumerism, fashion and a desire to be entertained, which became an important factor in the development of genres in the film industry. As Juliane Fürst notes: 'Like dancing, the cinema, and especially the slicker Western cinema, offered an alternative, imaginary reality that allowed young people to imagine a world to their own taste where they took centre stage'.[18] This perspective on the experience of Soviet youth culture helps to identify what was expected of young people in the post-communist period and to discourage the perception that Soviet culture was less driven by consumerist tastes than Western society. Parallels can be drawn between the experiences of East and West, even before the collapse of communism, particularly with regards to the consumption of cinematic products.

As part of another communist society in construction, Yugoslav youth were seen by the government in a comparable way to Soviet youth. A great deal of attention was paid to raising children in the spirit of communism, a process which took a variety of forms 'from the politicisation of education, to

[16] Fürst, p. 12, and Chapter 6, 'Redefining Sovietness: Fashion, Style, and Nonconformity', pp. 200-249. See also Gorsuch's discussion of youth subcultures in the early Soviet Union, in *Youth in Revolutionary Russia*.
[17] Fürst, p. 200.
[18] Fürst, p. 207.

the programming of free time', through organisations such as the Pioneers.[19] After WWII, youth played a particularly prominent role in the physical re-construction of the SFRY through service in Youth Labour Action (*Omladinska radna akcija*), which was used as 'an instrument to construct a youth that would create, support, and live the principle of "brotherhood and unity" as part of a reconciliation program'.[20] In 1957, the communist leader Josip Broz Tito declared that his birthday, May 25, would be jointly celebrated as Youth Day (*Dan mladosti*), underlining his commitment to connecting his rule with the image of young people. Each year would see youths from running a relay race across the SFRY, carrying the 'baton of youth (*štafeta mladosti*)', which was presented to Tito on his birthday as a gift from his young citizens.[21]

Unlike the Soviet Union, the SFRY was situated in the ideological space between East and West during the Cold War, but was influenced by popular culture from the West, particularly from the US.[22] This meant that the day-to-day cultural experience of Yugoslavs differed greatly from those in other communist states. Radina Vučetić calls the effect of this exposure of youth to Western culture the 'Disney-fication of childhood (*diznizacija detinjstva*)' in

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[19] '[…] od politizovanja obrazovanja, do programiranja slobodnog vremena'. Radina Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam: amerikanizacija jugoslovenske popularne culture šezdesetih godine XX veka* (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2012), p. 306. Throughout the main body of the thesis, I have provided English translations of those source texts that are in Russian and Serbian/Croatian. The original text will be provided in the footnotes, along with citations. To preserve the syntax and grammar of the originals, where necessary, the relevant quotation will be given in the wider context of the sentence, with square brackets to indicate the parts that are not included in my translations.

[20] Dragan Popović, 'Youth Labour Action (*Omladinska radna akcija, ORA*) as Ideological Holiday-Making', in *Yugoslavia's Sunny Side: A History of Tourism in Socialism (1950s-1960s)*, ed. by Hannes Grandits and Karin Taylor (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010), 279-302 (p. 279).

[21] A selection of these elaborately designed 'batons' remain on permanent exhibition in the Muzej Jugoslavije [Museum of Yugoslavia], alongside Tito's tomb [Cveća kuča], in Belgrade, see: <http://www.mij.rs/en/visit/PermanentExhibitions/95/relay-batons.html> [accessed 31 October 2015].

[22] See Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, p. 308; for more on East-West relations in Yugoslavia, see John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: twice there was a country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), particularly Chapter 9, 'Tito's Yugoslavia ascending, 1954-1967', pp. 265-298.

the SFRY, where young people lived off a diet of US culture and traditions, including the animations of Walt Disney.[23] From as early as the 1950s, US fashion and products were available in the SFRY, and would have a strong influence on youth culture, as Tito sought to prove 'how liberal' Yugoslav communism was through permitting such products.[24] Nonetheless, Vučetić writes: 'In a nation featuring a unique sacralisation of war, revolution, renewal, construction and creation of the new man, which was accompanied by carefully controlled schooling and privacy, the means of "escape" into childhood and youth, outside of party restraints, nevertheless did exist.'[25] The experience of youth in communist countries therefore must not be seen in binary terms, but as a multi-faceted process of experimentation and engagement.

Regardless of the official attitude of the authorities in both states, personal taste and individuality became important for young people after the end of WWII, and some young people experimented extensively with subcultures.[26] However, in both the Soviet Union and the SFRY, these subcultural explorations were negotiated within an overarching adherence to Soviet and Yugoslav communist identity. For the majority, there was little evidence that youth consumption of Western products was seen as being in

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[23] See Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, pp. 306-321.
[24] '[…] koliko je [Jugoslavija – LT] liberalna […]'. Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, p. 336.
[25] 'U situaciji svojversne sakralizacije rata, revolucije, obnove, izgradnje i stvaranja novog čoveka, a uz budno kontrolisano školovanje i privatnost, ipak su postajali načini "bega" u detinjstvo i mladost izvan partijskih stega.' Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, p. 307.
[26] For full discussion of post-war youth subcultures, see: Fürst, especially Chapter 6, 'Redefining Sovietness: Fashion, Style, and Nonconformity', pp. 200-249; and Dalibor Mišina, *Shake, Rattle and Roll: Yugoslav Rock Music and the Poetics of Social Critique* (Burlington, Vt: Ashgate, 2013), especially Chapter 2, 'Yugoslavia, Culture, and Popular Culture: The Discoveries of Youth and Rock'n'roll', pp. 39-102.

competition with their identification as communists. For example, Vladimir Anđelković writes of youth that, 'despite some oscillatory and trendy tendencies, Yugoslav subcultures project themselves as deeply Yugoslav', suggesting that the two sides of this identity are inseparable.[27] From the Soviet perspective, Fürst notes that post-war Soviet youth 'did not see themselves in opposition to the system', but rather 'they integrated their new practices into their Soviet identity'.[28] Adele Marie Barker suggests that: 'Although not market based, the Soviet Union was nevertheless a consumer society. What was produced was ideology; what was consumed was some portion thereof.'[29] In this sense, as communism came to an end, consumerism and the influx of Western culture were not new issues, but rather these influences gained a different meaning in the context of the transition from communism.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the primary concern over youth culture, as will be argued in Part One of this thesis, was the unbridled spread of capitalist, Western culture, combined with a nearly complete absence of domestic social structures to support youth through the transition.[30] The dangers of cultural influx from the West paled in comparison to the spread of organised crime in the passage to privatisation. Hilary Pilkington argues: 'By the end of 1991 […] youth had become not the symbol of the bright future in

[27] Interview with Vladimir Anđelković quoted in Mišina, p. 53.
[28] Fürst, p. 3.
[29] Adele Marie Barker, 'Rereading Russia', in *Consuming Russia: Popular Culture, Sex, and Society since Gorbachev*, ed. by Adele Marie Barker (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 3-11 (p. 7).
[30] For sociological examinations of youth in the transition, see Hilary Pilkington and others, *Looking West? Cultural Globalisation and Russian youth cultures* (University Park, P.A: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002); and Smiljka Tomanović and Suzana Ignjatović, 'The Transition of Young People in a Transitional Society: The Case of Serbia', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 9:3 (2006), 269-285.

a new society but "the lost generation" and as such a social metaphor for a collapsing society.'[31] In Serbia, Smiljka Tomanović and Suzana Ignjatović have suggested that the huge social problems of the 1990s created a legacy of difficulty for young people that this thesis proposes feeds into filmic representations. They write that 'the mutually reinforced constraints stemming from the context of blocked transformation [to a democratic-capitalist state] and the cultural patterns of infantilisation and retraditionalisation become dominant in terms of unifying young people's transition [to adulthood].'[32] The political, social, ideological and economic confusion that reigned in both states during the 1990s has had a strong impact on both their cultures, and has sharply influenced representations of youth on film. These representations have become even more potent in the context of an implied comparison between today's youth and the youth of the past, and to the role of youth in communist societies. Because of this, many of the representations I use as examples in this thesis are positioned as filmic projections of social issues that are prominent in the wider historical context; examining youth characters means the social and historical context must be considered more closely than for other genres.

Russia

In spite of the cultural-historical similarities that can be drawn between Serbia and Russia on account of their shared religions and historical partnerships, many of which took place in wartime, the two nations' experience of the

[31] Hilary Pilkington, *Russia's Youth and its Culture: A nation's constructors and constructed* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 162.
[32] Tomanović and Ignjatović, p. 283.

transition from communism was entirely different and the fate of their film industries likewise diverged during the 1990s. The dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) on 26 December 1991 resulted in unimaginable changes to the political, social and economic structures of Russia. In a now-famous speech from 2005, Vladimir Putin called the collapse of the Soviet Union, 'the most major geopolitical disaster of the century', during which, 'the epidemic of disintegration infected Russia itself'.[33] This 'epidemic of disintegration' that Putin refers to characterises the understanding of life in Russia in the 1990s, shared by scholars and citizens of Russia. Eliot Borenstein writes that: 'Russia's woes in the 1990s were familiar to anyone who turned on the TV: unemployment, the near total impoverishment of the population, the resurgence of tuberculosis, and the growing threat of AIDS; prostitution and sexual slavery; the increasing "brain drain" and threat of nuclear proliferation; and, of course, terrorism and the war in Chechnya'.[34] The decade was presented as and is remembered as a blot on Russia's modern history.

The conditions Borenstein describes arose from an initial wave of excitement that accompanied the establishment of Russia as a multi-party democracy in the late-1980s, which was soon replaced by political and economic instability that left Russia humiliated and debilitated under the

[33] '[…] крушение Советского Союза было крупнейшей геополитической катастрофой века', 'Эпидемия распада к тому же перекинулась на саму Россию'. Vladimir Putin, 'Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation', April 25 2005, <http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2005/04/25/1223_type63372type63374type82634_87049.shtml> [accessed 23 July 2015].

[34] Eliot Borenstein, *Overkill: Sex and Violence in Contemporary Russian Popular Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 1-2.

chaotic mismanagement of Boris Yeltsin and his governments.[35] As Boris Kagarlitsky writes of Russia in the 1990s: 'In the course of ten years the country suffered an unprecedented economic collapse – one of the most profound peacetime declines in all of modern history.'[36] Putin's ascension to the Russian presidency on 31 December 1999, the eve of the new millennium, is seen as a major turning point in the development of post-Soviet Russia.[37] Putin has taken on an appropriately mythical aura in the years since then, with Ronald Hill noting that 'Putin's primary goal – in which he has enjoyed undoubted success – has been to restore the dignity of the Russian state.'[38] One of the most interesting battlegrounds in the resurgence of Russian national identity has developed in the struggle to re-establish Russian culture in the wake of the Soviet collapse. The reconstruction of Russian national identity only began in earnest with the rise of Putin and much of this reconstruction has therefore become intertwined with the representation of Putin himself. His 'attributes in both visual and textual media typically include his sobriety, intelligence, competence, vigorous physical and psychological health and, above all, his manliness', values which are reflectively promoted in Russian culture.[39] A key part of Putin's revival of Russia has focused on young people; as the Russian Federal Agency for Youth Affairs (*Federal'noe*

[35] For a comprehensive examination of post-Soviet politics, see Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 4th edn (London: Routledge, 2008), particularly Part 1, 'The fall of communism and the rebirth of Russia'.
[36] Boris Kagarlitsky, *Russia under Yeltsin and Putin: Neo-Liberal Autocracy* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), p. 3.
[37] On Putin's presidency, see for example: Lilia Shevtsova, *Putin's Russia*, revised edn, tr. by Antonina W. Boius (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005); Richard Sakwa, *Putin: Russia's choice* (London: Routledge, 2004).
[38] Ronald J. Hill, 'Introduction: Perspectives on Putin', in *Putin and Putinism*, ed. by Ronald J. Hill and Ottorino Cappelli (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 14-26 (p. 19).
[39] Julie A. Cassiday and Emily D. Johnson, 'Putin, Putiana and the Question of a Post-Soviet Cult of Personality', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 88:4 (October 2010), 681-707 (p. 686).

agentstvo po delam molodezhi – Rosmolodezh') confirms, 'one of the important tasks put in front of *Rosmolodezh'* is the coordination of the patriotic upbringing of the younger generation of citizens'.[40] This thesis explores the cross-section between two of the most significant offensives that have been opened against Western cultural influences in post-Soviet Russia – the revival of the Russian film industry and the fostering of a specifically Russian, not Westernised, youth, resulting in a polarisation of these two categories once again.

In the 1990s, the film industry, like many other areas of the Russian economy that had been tied closely to government and Party control, collapsed under the financial difficulties posed by the loss of the state subsidies, which had propped up the film industry until 1991.[41] Rather than adapting to audience preferences, film directors continued to 'turn for financial support to the same structures that once crippled artistic freedom', expecting 'Goskino [the State Committee for Cinematography] to tell them whether their script is viable (commercially, rather than ideologically) and to allocate funds'.[42] Being unused to having to consider the needs of the audience, many film directors consistently produced films that were not popular with audiences, continuing trends that had begun during the 1980s. Stephen Norris suggests that 'the dark films that dominated Russian screens

[40] 'Одна из важных задач, поставленных перед Росмолодёжью, - координация патриотического воспитания молодого поколения граждан'. Federal Agency for Youth Affairs, 'Missiia', <http://fadm.gov.ru/about/mission/> [accessed 31 October 2015].
[41] Birgit Beumers, 'Cinemarket, or the Russian Film Industry in "Mission Possible"', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51:5 (1999), 871-896 (p. 871).
[42] Beumers, 'Cinemarket…', p. 873.

[in the late 1980s and 1990s] kept people away in droves.'[43] Rather than focusing on the genres that were popular with audiences, such as comedies and adventure films, 'Russian producers and film-makers responded to audience taste with reluctance and some delay, producing instead mainly thrillers, action movies and melodramas'.[44] The film industry suffered appropriately; in 1995, 'the number of new films plummeted to a new low'.[45]

Concentrated efforts by the film industry to restore itself were marked by a speech from one of Russia's most celebrated directors, Nikita Mikhalkov, at the IV Congress of the Union of Filmmakers in 1998, in which he declared: 'Man cannot exist without a hero […] he has to have a model, a symbol.'[46] In his speech Mikhalkov called upon the Russian film industry to re-focus their efforts on providing role models for the population arguing that, 'all over the children know who Stallone and Schwarzenegger are, because it is through these heroes that American cinema teaches its children the concepts of honour, justice, and so on.'[47] The speech underlines two issues that can be traced throughout the history of post-Soviet film, and which are also of importance to this thesis, the need to create Russian heroes and the need to use Hollywood models to inspire interest in Russian variants. Birgit Beumers highlights a flaw in Mikhalkov's highly influential argument, which is that US cinema is successful not because there are a proliferation of positive

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[43] Stephen M. Norris, *Blockbuster History in the New Russia: Movies, Memory, and Patriotism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), p. 26.
[44] Beumers, 'Cinemarket…', p. 884.
[45] Beumers, 'Cinemarket…', p. 871.
[46] Nikita Mikhalkov, 'The Function of a National Cinema', in *Russia on reels: the Russian idea in Post-Soviet cinema*, ed. by Birgit Beumers (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 50-53 (p. 51).
[47] Ibid.

American heroes for audiences to emulate, but because Hollywood is driven purely by profit, rather than being a 'myth factory' and thus caters to what the audience desires from the film experience.[48] Yet, it is possible to argue that there is clear evidence from genre research that profit does prefer certain myths over others in different historical or cultural contexts. Mikhalkov, on the other hand, stated in his speech: 'Cinema was nominated as the most important of all the arts [by Lenin] because it was capable of shaping the consciousness of the masses.'[49] This concept of cinema as having a pedagogical function is thus the sphere within which much of Russian cinema can be viewed.

The Russian film industry, in particular the section of the industry financed by the government, has never given up on the idea of being a myth factory, although the methods of creating films have become more sophisticated and darkness has disappeared from the forefront. The priority for the Russian film industry and the government since the late 1990s has been the creation of historical and patriotic films. Stephen Norris writes: 'Success […] came by merging the past with contemporary patriotism.'[50] Within this context, the Russian government lists '[fiction] film topics for children and teenagers, which promote the cultural or civil upbringing of the young generation', as a priority for funding (see also Chapter 5).[51] This

[48] Beumers, 'Cinemarket…', p. 893.
[49] Mikhalkov, p. 50.
[50] Norris, p. 4; see also, Ministry of Culture of Russia, 'O prioritetnykh temakh natsional'nykh fil'mov v 2011 godu', Order 45 (3 February 2011) <http://pravo.roskultura.ru/documents/165056/> [accessed 1 August 2015].
[51] '[…] темы фильмов для детей и подростков, способствующие культурному и гражданскому воспитанию молодого поколения'. Ministry of Culture of Russia, 'O prioritetnykh temakh natsional'nykh fil'mov v 2011 godu'. See also, Norris, p. 3.

emphasis recognises the significant role that young people play as consumers of film in global film industries. Oleg Berezin confirms that the 'integral centre of the Russian audience is teenagers and youth up to the age of twenty years old', suggesting that the post-Soviet Russian film industry has identical concerns to the US industry.[52] There have been improvements made to the infrastructure of film, with the creation of privately-run film production companies as well as investments driven through state broadcasters such as Channel One, Russia's flagship television channel. In the late 1990s, large investments were made to transform Russia's dilapidated cinemas into multiplexes, modernising the viewing experience – an aim that Mikhalkov also endorsed in his 1998 speech. However, these new sites alone were not sufficient to ensuring success with audiences. Norris notes that 'the return of the Russian spectator to theatres came through screening Hollywood blockbusters in American-style multiplexes', citing the example of the premiere of *Titanic* (dir. James Cameron, Twentieth Century Fox, 1997) in the Karo multiplex in Moscow as an example.[53] In this sense, Russia has copied the multiplex model that was established in the 1980s in the US, a process which, incidentally, Timothy Shary links to a new phase in Hollywood youth film. Shary suggests that: 'The clearest result of the multiplex movement was a voluminous outpouring of films directed to and featuring teens'.[54] This connection suggests that the specific focus of any film industry is the creation

[52] 'Целевое ядро российской аудитории – тинейджеры и молодежь в возрасте до двадцати лет'. Oleg Berezin, 'Prokat kak kontekst film'a', *Iskusstvo kino*, 3 (March 2015), <http://kinoart.ru/archive/2015/03/prokat-kak-kontekst-filma> [accessed 2 September 2015].
[53] Norris, *Blockbuster History*, p. 3, and for discussion of the rise of multiplexes in Russia, see pp. 1-5.
[54] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 7.

of films and the use of genres that appeal to young people; youth film forms a central part of this development.

In spite of the huge investments and attention paid to reviving the Russian film industry, the plan to make Russian film as successful as Hollywood film in Russia has not always had the result that the government expected. The very promotion of a Hollywood film experience puts the success of Russian equivalents in jeopardy, as Russian viewers often choose the familiarity of Hollywood blockbusters over Russian films. In spite of the success of some of Russia's big-budget films, Hollywood still dominates the Russian box-office in a way that most Russian films cannot match (see Chapter 5 for discussion). The reasons for this are not entirely clear, but can be attributed mainly to Hollywood's domination of the global film market and its access to huge budgets. However, the film industry, with the growing support of the Russian government, also spends large amounts of money on the creation of blockbuster films on pre-determined 'priority topics (*prioritetnye temy*)'. Elizaveta Simbirskaia suggests that this state intervention has an adverse, rather than helpful, effect; speaking of a renewed trend for sports films in Russia, she writes:

> You can change the direction of investments from patriotic-war films to patriotic-sport films, you can pour an endless amount of money into the industry, you can change the system and logic of financing

> each year, but all of this will have no result if the cinema industry is treated like a propaganda machine, and not as a business or as art [55]

Even a cursory overview of post-2000 Russian films reveals that a large number of the big-budget films may be spectacular in terms of effects, actors and narratives, but are sometimes of low narrative quality. A prime and very recent example of this is Russia's first 3D film, *Stalingrad* (dir. Fedor Bondarchuk, Art Pictures Studio, 2013), which was visually stunning and earned over 50 million dollars at the Russian box office, but is let down by its weak dialogue and plotline.[56] The problem that remains for the Russian film industry is whether the adoption of Hollywood tactics actually aids the re-construction of Russian identity and culture. Not everyone agrees that an emphasis on Russian values is a bad thing. The director Iurii Grymov laments that the success of Russian films depends on whether or not they are similar to Hollywood cinema: 'if a Russian film is like American cinema, it earns 30-50 million dollars [at the box office]. This is the dismantling of culture.'[57] The attention paid to creating Hollywood-style films, using popular genres, has been taken by some directors as a sign that Russian identity is being sacrificed for box-office success.

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[55] 'Можно сменить направление инвестиций с военно-патриотического фильма на спортивно-патриотический фильм, можно вливать бесконечное количество средств в индустрию, можно каждый год менять систему и логику финансирования, но все это не будет иметь результата, если относиться к киноиндустрии как к машине госпропаганды, а не как к бизнесу и не как к искусству'. Simbirskaia, 'I volky ne syty…'.

[56] Box office earnings for *Stalingrad* available from *Kinopoisk*: http://www.kinopoisk.ru/film/468196/ [accessed 1 September 2015].

[57] 'Если русский фильм похож на американское кино, он собирает 30-50 млн. долларов. Это культурное крушение'. Iurii Grymov in 'Kak vernut' zritelia rossiiskomu kinematografu?', Kul'turnyi shok, *Ekho Moskvy*, 18 January 2014, <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/kulshok/1239716-echo/#element-text> [accessed 18 September 2015].

Serbia

In Serbia, the transition from communism was no less painful than it was in Russia and the 1990s has also become a metaphor for infamy in the nations of the former Yugoslavia, as well as on an international scale. After the collapse of the SFRY in 1991, the transition from communism led to the worst conflict to have been fought in Europe since WWII, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths across all of the former Yugoslav Republics. A large volume of scholarly output has been dedicated to unfolding and analysing the Wars of Yugoslav Succession in an attempt to try to provide some sense of order to the events that took place; the majority of these works examine the worst of the Wars, in Bosnia-Hercegovina, where interethnic conflicts resulted in the death of over 100,000 men, women and children.[58] The experience of the conflicts and of the 1990s in the region has had a great influence on the perception and representation on post-communism in the region. As the transition from communism in the former SFRY varies from nation to nation, this thesis focuses purely on the Serbian experience, which is strongly felt and referenced in the narratives of the films in this thesis.

During the 1990s, Serbia was under the control of Slobodan Milošević who had unexpectedly seized power in 1987.[59] When war broke out between the constitutive parts of the former SFRY in 1991, the Milošević regime played

[58] See for example: John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: twice there was a country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Laura Silber and Alan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (London: Penguin, 1995); Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: chaos and dissolution after the Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995); and *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: key issues and controversies*, ed. by Dejan Djokić and James Ker-Lindsay (London: Routledge, 2011).
[59] See: Jasna Dragović-Soso, *Saviours of the Nation: Serbia's intellectual opposition and the revival of nationalism* (London: Hurst & Co, 2002); *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis* ed. by Nebojša Popov (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000); Tim Judah, *The Serbs: history, myth and the destruction of Yugoslavia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

a significant role in arming and supporting military and paramilitary action in Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina, through Serbia's inherited infrastructure of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) and informal armed groups. As a result of this involvement, the international community placed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY – Serbia and Montenegro, the successor of the SFRY) under sanctions in 1992, preventing the import and export of all products and commodities to and from Yugoslavia, amongst other stipulations.[60] The sanctions disproportionately affected the civilian population of Serbia and were lifted only after the signing of the Dayton Agreement in 1995, which ended the war in Bosnia-Hercegovina. This was not the end of the Wars of Yugoslav Succession for Serbia, however, and the tensions between Serbia and Kosovo, finally boiled over in 1998. The international community decided to intervene more decisively in the War in Kosovo than it had done in Bosnia; on 24 March 1999, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) began a bombing campaign that targeted the infrastructure of the JNA, the Socialist Party of Serbia, then controlled by Milošević, military targets, and the state broadcasting outlets, in particular, Radio Television Serbia (RTS). The NATO bombardment's targeting of RTS highlighted one of the most significant aspects of the Milošević regime, its concentrated effort on the part of the Serbian government to destroy any potential outlets for dissent and opposition.[61] This destruction was as cultural as it was political, with Milošević

[60] United Nations Security Council, 'Resolution 757', 30 May 1992, <http://www.nato.int/ifor/un/u920530a.htm> [accessed 3 September 2015].
[61] See for example, Eric Gordy, *The culture of power in Serbia: nationalism and the destruction of alternatives* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), especially Chapter 3, 'The Destruction of Information Alternatives', pp. 61-102.

tightly controlling media outlets or closing them down completely, and ensuring a stream of propaganda through the state broadcasters, the only access that many people had to television programming.[62]

In this atmosphere of deprivation and censorship, it is possible to assume that the Serbian film industry would have suffered and eventually collapsed, particularly considering the fate of Russian film during this period. However, as Nevena Daković argues, during the upheavals of the 1990s, the nations of the former SFRY 'succeeded in maintaining the quality, if not the quantity, of national production'.[63] This trend can be seen in Serbia, which produced seven films at the height of the sanctions in 1993.[64] It is significant that most of the films being produced in Serbia during this time were destined to be 'festival films', films that were specifically designed to appeal to juries at the major international film festivals, such as the Cannes Film Festival, or even as potential nominees for Academy Awards.[65] This appeal to external forces was part of the survival technique for the film industries of Serbia and other former communist states, which turned to regional and European Union (EU) co-productions and funds as a means of supporting film production, and of avoiding restrictions placed on Serbia during international

[62] See Gordy, p. 71; and Dina Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames: Balkan Film, Culture and the Media* (London: British Film Institute, 2001), p. 166-167.
[63] '[…većina balkanskih zemalja] je uspela da kvalitativno, i manje kvantitativno, održi nacionalnu produkciju'. Nevena Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr: slike, tekst, nacija* (Beograd: FDU, 2008), p. 197; Filmski Centar Srbije [the Film Centre Serbia] has an online database of film production in Serbia at <http://fcs.rs/generic.php?page=filmska_baza> [accessed 25 July 2015].
[64] See information from Filmski Centar Srbija: <http://fcs.rs/generic.php?page=film_godina> [accessed 30 November 2015].
[65] Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 198.

sanctions.[66] This greatly influenced the choice of film narratives being employed. In order to appeal to foreign audiences, Serbian films 'exploit stereotypes of exoticism, suffering, [and] historical unrest', which inevitably positioned Europe 'as a synonym for the success of (Western) democracy, economy, prosperity, and respect for human rights'.[67]

It is clear that when Serbian films could find no domestic funding sources and where domestic audiences had little opportunity to go to the cinema, international audiences needed to be a prime target. It is also true that many of these films catering to the international audience offered distinctly pessimistic and self-flagellating elements, which depicted life in Serbia as brutal and hopeless, and that these elements understandably may not have appealed to domestic audiences. Yet some films remained that were clearly intended for both a foreign and domestic audience, while others were aimed at the domestic audience alone; this is particularly the case after 2000 when international interest in the problems of the Western Balkans tailed off sharply. This is also the case for youth films, which largely feature narratives, plotlines and dark humour that would appeal to the particular understanding of a domestic audience. One of the most remarkable aspects of the Serbian film industry in the post-communist period is the enduring popularity of domestic films amongst the domestic audience – where some Serbian box-office hits have almost matched the success of big-budget

[66] '[Projekti koji privlače svetska ulaganja] eksploatišu sterotipe egzotike, patnje, istorijskih nemira [što podržava sliku nove Evrope postavlene] kao sinonim uspeha (zapadne) demokratije, ekonomije, prosperiteta, poštovanja ljudskih prava itd'. Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 198; See also, Jurica Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film: Stil i ideologija* (Zagreb: Hrvatski filmski savez, 2011), pp. 44-45.
[67] Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 199.

Hollywood films – and the notable success of Serbian films in former Yugoslav countries.[68] In addition to this, regional co-productions, particularly as projects between the former Yugoslav countries, are made in significant numbers.[69]

The popularity of domestic films has a precedent in Serbia, as Vučetić suggests that domestic films were popular in the SFRY, in spite of the dominant presence of foreign films in that industry.[70] Jurica Pavičić, a Croatian film scholar, also argues that the Wars had a knock-on effect on the popularity of Hollywood films in Serbia in the 1990s and the early 2000s, with events such as the NATO bombardment and the earlier international sanctions meaning that Hollywood did not dominate the box office in Serbia.[71] As with other global film industries, there is a distinction to be made here. In recent years, many of Serbia's highly successful films have been produced using extensive support from the Serbian government by well-established film directors, including Srđan Dragojević, who plays an important role in this thesis. Smaller, low-budget film productions, among which youth films are increasingly likely to be found, are not always featured amongst the high-earners that contend with foreign films, but perform well at small international festivals. However, this is not always the case; the low-budget mock-documentary film *Smrt čoveka na Balkanu* [*Death of a Man in the*

[68] See Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*, p. 45. Significant examples of successes include: *Montevideo Bog te* video [*Montevideo, Taste of Dream*], dir. Dragan Bjelogrlić, Intermedia Network, 2010; and *Parada* [*The Parade*], dir. Srđan Dragojević, Delirium Films, 2011. Data on box-office earnings is available from Filmski Centar Srbija (in Serbian only): <http://fcs.rs/generic.php?page=chartweek> [accessed 4 December 2015].
[69] See information on regional co-productions on the database provided by Filmski Centar Srbije: <http://fcs.rs/generic.php?page=filmska_baza> [accessed 4 December 2015].
[70] Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, p. 92.
[71] Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*, p. 44.

Balkans] (dir. Miroslav Momčilović, Brigada Productions, 2012) was a surprise box-office hit in Serbia, as well as being popular at international film festivals. Nonetheless, in both Serbian and Russian contexts, the successful use of genres cannot always be judged on box-office earnings alone.

Youth film in Russia and Serbia since the 1990s

In order to understand how the youth film genre has developed since the collapse of communism, it is essential to understand the context in which the youth film genre came into existence and the wider history of genre film in Russia and Serbia. Chapter 1 of this thesis will provide an introduction to global studies of film genre, focusing initially on Hollywood genre film production as a foundation. The discussion will then delineate the history of genre film in the Soviet Union and the SFRY. I argue that genre film had a particular ideological function in communist societies, which has impacted the way that film genres are perceived and adopted by directors in post-communist film. It is essential to understand this context before any examination of a film genre can be produced. In the second half of the chapter, I will introduce the literature and history of youth films, discussing how the genre evolved in dialogue with contemporary social fears. The chapter will finish by introducing the history of youth film in the Soviet and Yugoslav contexts, which has an impact on the post-communist representations of youth. Throughout the thesis, the youth film genre is positioned as an overarching category, dictated primarily by the age of its protagonists, able to count a variety of narratives and sub-genres within its

generic frame. Chapters 2 to 7 will provide examples of the many sub-genres that can fall under this generic category and thus will examine the flexibility offered by the youth film.

The number of youth films in both countries is considerable and a small selection of these films has been chosen in order to ensure there is a close analysis of each film. This selection also illustrates how the genre uses sub-genres and genre mixes. Chapter 2 to 7 are therefore organised as corresponding pairs, one film each from Serbia and Russia, revolving around a specific theme. Part 1 (Chapters 2 and 3) revolves around the theme of 'the 1990s' and addresses how this mythological decade resulted in the construction of a lost generation of young people. Part 2 (Chapters 4 and 5) discusses the connections between memory and war in both nations after the year 2000. Finally, Part 3 (Chapters 6 and 7) analyses the cross-section between youth film and socio-political concerns, through a discussion of how contemporary youth films reflect and communicate the difficulties that have come after the transition from communism. Each Part and Chapter illustrates where the selection of films analysed fits into the wider canon of Russian and Serbian cinema, with a particular emphasis on other examples of films that fit into these themes. The foci of the Parts have been chosen as they represent a particularly significant grouping of youth films, or a significant area of interest in the film industries and societies of Russia and Serbia, offering a means of comparing their post-communist experiences.

Chapter 2 discusses the appropriation of and deviation from the gangster genre in Srđan Dragojević's film *Rane* [*The Wounds*] (Cobra Film Production, 1998). While *Rane* uses several well-known traits of the gangster film, the narrative also twists these elements to provide a reflection on the perverted nature of life in Belgrade during the 1990s. The chapter is dedicated to an examination of the expansion of genre film-making in the 1990s, as a model for the continuation in the popularity of genre film into the 2000s. The narrative of the film is constructed as a tale of youth disenfranchisement and a moral fable about the effects of transition on young people. Dragojević is known for his innovative use of genres. *Rane* draws on elements of *film noir*, as well as the aesthetics of music videos; the latter of which became a marker of Dragojević's personal style in the period and a recurring influence in other post-communist films. The film's focus is as much on the adult population as it is on the youth, through a discussion of the brutality of sanctions.

Chapter 3 turns to Russian film genre in the 1990s through an analysis of Aleksei Balabanov's film *Brat* [*Brother*] (CTB, 1997). *Brat* has not traditionally been associated with the youth film canon, but the analysis of the film offers examples of the connections with late-Soviet youth films of the perestroika period as well as references to post-Soviet youth culture. The film evokes traits of *chernukha*, references perestroika youth films, and can be interpreted as a nostalgic take on the decline of late-Soviet rock culture, with

which Balabanov was intimately connected.[72] *Brat* is a means of reviving the youth protagonist and drawing the representation of young people away from the bleak narratives of perestroika-era youth film. The chapter posits that the representation of youth in *Brat* and the film's emphasis on stability in national identity has had an important influence on later representations of youth. Moreover, Balabanov uses the film as a means of wresting positive and nostalgic elements from the 1980s rock scene, and re-appropriating rock culture for the present.

Chapter 4 discusses the role that the post-conflict film plays in the wider canon of Serbian youth film in the 2000s through an analysis of Srdan Golubović's film *Apsolutnih sto* [*Absolute Hundred*] (Baš Čelik, 2001). In *Apsolutnih sto*, the film's teenage protagonist struggles to establish a future for himself in the aftermath of the 1990s, amid the cycle of criminality and memory that continues to plague Belgrade. This chapter will illustrate how, although not recognised as a film genre, post-conflict films have played a significant role in Serbian cinema since the 1990s and, like other genres, contain a number of repetitive themes. Drawing on studies of post-conflict films from West Germany and post-Vietnam Hollywood, the analysis of *Apsolutnih sto* suggests that the genre is particularly relevant to societies that are recovering from an experience of controversial warfare, where a nation has been the aggressor or has been on the losing side at the end of a conflict. Serbian post-conflict films are a way of examining the legacy of the Wars of

[72] 'Chernukha' derives from the Russian word 'chernyi (black)' and is used as a label for the negative narratives that became pervasive in film in the late-Soviet and early post-Soviet period. This topic is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Yugoslav Succession without directly depicting scenes of war, an important method for re-engaging film audiences in the post-2000 period. The film also uses sport film traits to divert attention away from the overwhelming presence of crime in contemporary life and as a means of addressing issues of national identity in post-2000 Serbia.

In Russia, the focus on re-engaging domestic audiences, particularly the youth audience, has increasingly led to the creation of genre films designed to appeal to an audience more accustomed to Hollywood films. Chapter 5 explores the relationship between the time-travel and youth film genres, continuing the trend for re-investment in the past. In *My iz budushchego* [*We are from the Future*] (A-1 Kino, 2008), Andrei Maliukov crafts a tale of time-travel that sends four youth protagonists back to the battlefields of the WWII to instil in them a sense of respect for the past. Time-travel films hold a specific relevance for children and youth, who are often the main target audience for such productions, as well as their protagonists. The time-travel film's central narrative revolves around personal transformation that mimics the rite-of-passage narrative that is common to youth films. In *My iz budushchego*, the four youth protagonists become symptoms of a fear that has developed in Russia in the post-2000 period: the concern over the potential influence of US culture on Russian youths. *My iz budushchego* mocks Hollywood youth stereotypes from the early 2000s as a means of proving the inherent superiority of Russian ideals and patriotism.

Part 3 of this thesis opens up an examination of the interaction between youth film and representations of youth in the wider media, extending the discussion of film, youth and the social context. The focus of recent film has turned to fears that youth culture has entered a particularly dark phase, where youth are depicted as participating in increasingly extreme behaviour, revolving around subcultural practices, delinquency, sadistic sexual experiences, drug abuse, and violence, all of which is communicated via mobile phones and the internet. In Russian and Serbian cinema, young people are depicted as having surpassed the control of their parents, the law, and school, in ways which echo global youth film, but contain distinct references to post-communism. Recent youth film dwells on the changes to youth culture brought about by the spread of technology, which allows young people greater access to dangerous information and potential to propagate it. In Serbia and Russia, as in other post-communist European nations, youth films are occupied with the apparent explosion of far-right nationalism amongst young people, which has been fuelled by domestic and international media dissections. The neo-Nazi, the skinhead and the football hooligan, as well as combinations of the three, have come to hold a prominent position in the representation of post-communist youths at home and abroad. Chapters 6 and 7 will examine the spread of these new character types in recent film.

The representation of far-right youth groups in Russia is seen in *Russia-88*, directed by Pavel Bardin (2Plan2, 2009), a documentary-style film about Moscow neo-Nazi youths. As Chapter 6 argues, treating fiction through

the medium of found-footage is a means of addressing fears over the access of young people to means of self-documentary through the spread of cheap technology, a practice which allows them to create their own means of broadcasting. In *Russia-88*, Bardin reflects on the self-mediated presence of young neo-Nazis on the Russian internet through a fictionalised re-enactment of youth videos broadcast online. The film attempts to highlight the blurred boundaries between fiction and reality, through these re-enactments and also through the *vox populi* technique. The film weaves not only a moral fable, but also a tale of young people struggling to find their place in the adult world, in a devastating condemnation of Russian patriotism, which found itself banned from distribution in Russia.

Serbian film directors are no less concerned with juvenile extremism than Russian directors are. Chapter 7 also examines the topic of youth nationalism and contemporary fears over extremist youth, this time from the perspective of Serbia. Stevan Filipović's film, *Šišanje* [*Skinning*] (Hypnopolis, 2010), explores the life of a teenage neo-Nazi football hooligan living in Belgrade, subverting the generic norms of the juvenile delinquency film to depict the ongoing corruption of life in Belgrade for young people. The juvenile delinquency genre presents particular difficulties for genre analysis. Not only is the genre based on a social group that is defined differently across the world, the categorisation of what is considered juvenile delinquent behaviour varies from nation to nation, and decade to decade. Considering these issues, the analysis in this chapter focuses on identifying how Filipović

defines contemporary Serbian juvenile delinquency, through his usage of newsreel footage and references to events that took place in Serbian society in the 2000s, combined with a fictional plot concerning efforts to combat delinquency. In turn, the chapter contends that Filipović helps to feed stories of juvenile delinquency, rather than offering a sense of catharsis for young people. The film itself revolves around a combination of neo-Nazi and football hooligan youth characters. The final part of the chapter examines how these characters have become new stereotypes in the representation of youth subcultures in post-communist country, replacing Serbia's stock characters of the previous decade with new, screen villains.

The film analyses I provide offer a cross-sectional exploration of a number of prominent genres and narratives that have been employed in Serbian and Russian film since the fall of communism. This thesis offers insight into why narratives of youth have become such an important site for the discussion of contemporary social problems in the difficult transition from communism in both countries. Young people are a useful means of both engaging with the recent historical context, whilst also separating the audience from this context. Youth are a metaphor for Russia and Serbia in transition – young people do not belong to the communist past, are struggling to carve out a position for themselves in the present, and are subject to the uncertainty of the future for post-communist nations. They also represent the inconsistencies of capitalism and the perceived corruptive vulgarity of materialism. As distance has separated Russia and Serbia from the collapse of

the USSR and the SFRY, young people, the broken future, are becoming increasingly alienated from their own society.

Chapter 1: Film genre and genre films

The film analyses in this thesis are not limited to an exploration of the youth genre alone, but rather discuss how the youth film genre interacts with other genres to achieve a certain political and aesthetic end, and how post-communist film interacts with the genre histories of its communist predecessors. To establish the way that this thesis employs the youth film and its genre mixing as an analytical framework, it is helpful to outline what is generally understood by film genre. The shortage of film genre scholarship dedicated to the Russian and Serbian contexts, together with the overall dominance of the Hollywood perspective in global film scholarship, means that here, as in most other studies of film genre, literature on Hollywood genres is the starting point. As Hollywood is often envisaged as the birth-place of film genre itself, so references to this historical precedent are crucial. Within this examination of film genre, particular emphasis will be placed on the relationship between genres and audiences. The film analyses that follow scrutinise the relationship and interaction between the contemporary audience viewing the film, and the film's evocation of that audience's social and historical context. Chapters 2-7 will provide an introduction to each film genre to which the film they analyse belongs, with a particular emphasis on the history of that genre in Russia and Serbia. This chapter will therefore discuss film genre as a wider concept and the history of genre film in the Soviet and Yugoslav context, as well as outlining the foundations of the youth film genre, and the history of this genre in the Soviet Union and SFRY.

1.1: Genre Theory

The scholarship covering film genres is vast. Genre is the subject of a variety of interpretations in different disciplines, not solely in film studies. On a basic level, genre films can be considered 'those commercial feature films that, through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations.'[73] The emphasis when identifying film genres is on the recurrence of certain elements that create a sense of recognition in the audience, providing both structural frame and label for the audience, and thus helping film studios to gauge potential success. Acknowledging that the historical bases of genres are in literature and theatre, particularly in Aristotle's theories of poetics, scholars of film genre frequently refer to literary and linguistic theory to structure their approaches.[74] Rather than examining particular genres in explicit detail, they have worked with genre as a theoretical concept and with the structures of signification within genre, which are used to create symbols for the audience to interpret. Over the course of film history, the study of film genre has been tied loosely to two types of focus. Authors such as Robert Warshow, Edward Buscombe, Thomas Schatz and Jeanine Basinger, amongst many others, have sought to highlight the importance of visual elements, including standard settings, props, costumes and stock characters in the identification of film genre, and have worked closely with classifying the traits of specific film genres.[75] Altman has

[73] Barry Keith Grant, 'Introduction' in *Film Genre Reader IV*, ed. by Barry Keith Grant (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), p. xvii.
[74] For a comprehensive overview of the roots of film genre in literary genres, see: Altman, *Film/Genre*, pp. 1-12. See also, Andrew Tudor, 'Genre', in *Film Genre Reader IV*, ed. by Barry Keith Grant, 3-11.
[75] See, for example, the work of these authors in: Robert Warshow, *The Immediate Experience: Movies, comics, theatre & other aspects of popular culture*, enlarged edn (London: Harvard University Press,

identified this method as a 'semantic approach' to analysing film genre, which 'stresses the genre's building blocks'.[76] The focus of the semantic approach is on the identification of concrete generic traits as a means of establishing the structure of the genre in question. Within these designations, these authors acknowledge the variations that exist within genres. While many of these generic elements are primarily supported through production values (costume, setting, characters), Warshow was one of the first to highlight the cross-over between genres, characters and social mythology: 'In ways that we do not easily or willingly define, the gangster speaks for us, expressing that part of the American psyche which rejects the qualities and the demands of modern life.'[77] The characters that shape genres can be tied to elements of the national imagination. As Steve Neale argues, Warshow's work on the gangster film is 'a piece of cultural commentary rather than an essay on film history'.[78]

In spite of the importance of repeated traits of film genres, the recognition of what a film genre consists of has long been established as a type of contract between the audience, the film and the director, where each film relies on a complex system of recognition and reception.[79] Thus the other school focuses on film genre as a wider structural concept that needs to be examined critically as whole – for example, by focusing on what it is that

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2001); Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981); and Jeanine Basinger, *The World War II combat film: anatomy of a genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

[76] Rick Altman, 'The Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre', *Cinema Journal*, 23:3 (Spring 1984), 6-18 (p. 10).

[77] Warshow, 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero', in *The Immediate Experience*, p. 100; see also, Thomas Schatz, 'Epilogue: Hollywood Filmmaking and American Mythmaking' in *Hollywood genres*, pp. 261-167.

[78] Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 69.

[79] See Tom Ryall, 'The Notion of Genre', *Screen*, 11:2 (March-April 1970), 22-32.

makes genres successful and whether it is visual elements alone that quantify the existence of certain genres. Altman refers to this school as the 'syntactic approach', which 'privileges the structures into which they [the genres] are arranged'.[80] Altman suggests that the syntactic and semantic approaches, when used individually, turn 'a blind eye on *the necessarily dual nature of any generic corpus*', and that scholars of genre should focus on combining both approaches in genre analysis.[81] A semantic/syntactic approach 'permits a far more accurate description of the numerous inter-generic connections typically suppressed in single-minded approaches.'[82] Works by authors such as Altman, as well as Neale seek to identify the function genre has in cinema and how genres are constructed more broadly. In his in-depth study, *Film/Genre*, Altman amalgamates the varied arguments concerning film genre, beginning with an examination of the roots of film genre in literary genres, and analysing how genres have evolved and been transformed while maintaining their importance to filmmaking from the birth of film to the end of the twentieth century. This thesis predominantly follows Altman's approach to genre analysis.

Film genre may be perceived as symbols and syntax, but genre is also firmly linked to profit-making in the film industry. The Hollywood studio system and its film genres were established to extract the highest earnings possible by attracting as large an audience as possible. As Schatz outlines, in the early years of film, 'the "studio system" functioned to mass produce and

[80] Altman, 'The Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre', p. 10.
[81] Altman, 'The Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre', p. 12 [emphasis in the original].
[82] Ibid.

mass distribute movies.'[83] Genres began as labels to signal to the audience what film they could expect, and this has expanded into a complex relationship between film, director and audience, guided largely by genre structures. However, Altman notes that: 'Since naming a genre […] always risks alienating potential spectators who systematically avoid that genre, Hollywood studios prefer instead to imply generic affiliation rather than actually to name any specific genre.'[84] Genres are thus usually inferred by the advertising of semantic elements. Following the decline of the Hollywood studio system in the 1950s and the arrival of television, film studios had to rely on more innovative means of attracting audiences. Hollywood film genre usage has therefore been associated with an aggressive and profit-motivated model that has strongly infected the national cinemas of other nations with an ideal of slick production and promotion. The repetition noted as being essential to the nature of film genres enabled Hollywood studios to attract audiences with the promise that they would arrive in the cinema to watch a certain film.[85] Tom Ryall, offering a British perspective on the Hollywood machine, has described this interaction as 'a controlling relationship between the film-maker, the genre and the audience', indicating how some scholars of film see the film genre model as exploitative.[86]

Critics have long disputed the idea that genres are predictable or pure, or that Hollywood can rely on the repetitive nature of film genres alone to continue to attract audiences, particularly once in competition with

[83] Schatz, *Hollywood genres*, p. 4.
[84] Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 128.
[85] See for example: Altman, *Film/Genre*, pp. 28-29; Schatz, *Hollywood genres*, p. 6.
[86] Ryall, p. 23.

television. Critics such as Neale and Staiger have pointed out that, while patterns and predictability are important for genres, variations and deviations within the external epithets, or semantic elements, of the film (characters, settings, plots) are equally present.[87] Neale takes particular issue with 'the idea that characters in genre films as Schatz defines them are always one-dimensional, story patterns always predictable, and settings always familiar'.[88] This is not to suggest such familiarity is not to be found, but more that genres can be recognised even when films deviate from their central characteristics. Neale argues that some genres are more likely than others to contain unpredictable plotlines, suggesting for example that the 'story patterns' of the science-fiction film are less fixed than those of the Western or war film.[89] Due to the changing relationship between film and audiences across history, film genres are prone to evolution, but, as Altman posits, only within certain bounds: 'like a train, genre is free to move, but only along already laid tracks.'[90] Thus, even when evolution is evident in a film genre, several elements of the original remain in either overt or trace form. This particular tendency is significant when examining the role of genre outside of Hollywood production, and helps justify using film and genre criticism of Hollywood when analysing the films of other nations. Where a genre has originated in Hollywood, film industries outside of Hollywood will inevitably reference this tradition: it provides a basic structure with which to work, even

[87] See for example, Janet Staiger, 'Hybrid or Inbred: The Purity Hypothesis and Hollywood Genre Theory', in *Film Genre Reader IV*, ed. by Barry Keith Grant, 203-217.
[88] Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, p. 196.
[89] Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, p. 197.
[90] Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 22.

if deviations and local variants exist. The film analyses in this thesis examine and trace this very occurrence in the Russian and Serbian contexts, where Hollywood genres and Hollywood-style production – big budgets, special effects, and reliance on popular film stars – are becoming increasingly prevalent.

As the audience is a key actor in dictating the use and popularity of film genres, the repetitive quality of genres can prove an inhibiting factor. Variations and deviations from these established norms can be read to identify areas that are meant to appeal to specific audiences. Therefore I argue that a further dual approach must be adopted: both reading genre and reading the deviations from genre. As a part of this process, sub-genres have developed to adapt to the changing needs of the audience. Altman has highlighted that, in spite of the view that genres are becoming more fragmented as studios diversify their attempts to combat genre fatigue, 'genre mixing' has long been a key part of Hollywood practice and a primary means of attracting wide audiences, albeit this practice has become more common as the types of genres have proliferated over film history.[91] In addition to this, Altman highlights the way in which recent films 'often use intertextual references and conscious highlighting of genre conventions to stress conflict', where films rely on the traditions of other films to compensate for changes in audience demographics.[92] Films rely on a sense of recognition that goes beyond genre, choosing instead to employ intertextual

[91] Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 141.
[92] Ibid.

references to previous films; Altman suggests that, 'popular film producers have always understood the value of merging the qualities of multiple successful films.'[93] Chapters 2-7 indicate that the use of intertextuality and genre-mixing is also crucial in the attempts to create popular Russian and Serbian films. This thesis provides examples of how films are rarely made in one particular genre, as many contemporary genres rely on combinations and/or sub-genres.

While Hollywood has dominated in international criticism on film genre, there is an increasing interest in identifying the interaction between Hollywood and national variants of genres, as well as in genres that cannot be specifically linked to the Hollywood tradition due to their entrenchment within national tradition. Schatz even acknowledges that, throughout his work, he discusses 'Hollywood film genres as formal strategies for renegotiating and reinforcing American ideology', concluding that genre can therefore be seen 'as a form of social ritual'.[94] This identification in turn contributes to the conceptualisation of a 'national cinema', which reworks popular, national stories and cultivates an ideal self-image.[95] In *Film/Genre*, Altman takes this idea further and begins briefly to offer some conceptual points in the discussion of the relationship between genre and nation, suggesting that there is an inherent similarity between the symbols that construct ideas of the nation and those that construct genre. He writes: 'The imagining of the community, like the genrification process, always operates

[93] Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 132.
[94] Schatz, *Hollywood genres*, p, 261.
[95] Ibid.

dialectically, through the transformation of an already existing community/genre.'[96] Here, Altman references prominent theories of nationalism, by re-working the central thesis of Benedict Anderson's work, *Imagined Communities*, and applying it to film genre. Anderson posited that national identity and nationalism 'are cultural artefacts of a particular kind' and that 'to understand them properly we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being'.[97] He termed this process the creation of imagined communities. The creation of genres, like the construction of national identity, is a process where a central foundation is built upon which to create the desired product.

The concept that some genres are unique to societies demonstrates the importance of certain elements of national mythology and story-telling to the narratives of domestic films. As the character of the Westerner might be considered a pure expression of US culture, being born from a specific national-historical occurrence, so there are genres in global cinema that have arisen specifically from the traditions and mythology of other national cultures. Prime examples of these include the Samurai film from Japan or the martial-arts, or *wuxia*, film, originating in mainland China, but most commonly associated with Hong Kong.[98] In turn, these two genres have experienced huge success as Hollywood crossovers and, likewise, Hollywood genres have contributed to the creation of national hybrids. Examples of these cross-

[96] Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 206.
[97] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, revised edn (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]), p. 4.
[98] See, for example: Stephen Prince, *The warrior's camera: the cinema of Akira Kurosawa*, revised edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); and Stephen Teo, *Chinese Martial Arts Cinema: The Wuxia Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

fertilisations of genre include Akira Kurosawa's film, *Yojimbo* (Kurosawa Production Co., 1961), a Samurai film strongly influenced by the Western genre, and *Rush Hour* (dir. Brett Ratner, New Line Cinema, 1998), a US martial-arts comedy featuring Hong Kong actor and martial artist, Jackie Chan.[99] Another key example of genre evolution, particularly for this thesis, is the 'New Year' film, which exists both in China and Russia, and is a reaction to the development of the Western 'holiday' or 'Christmas' films with a version that would suit atheist, communist societies. Shyu Kong notes that the Chinese New Year film was only developed in 1997 and was a key part of the 'conscious endeavour to revive genre film' in China.[100] To a certain extent, the development of both these genres can be seen as a clear example of global film industries, particularly those ruled by other ideologies (in this case, communist), adapting the commercial Hollywood model to their needs.

The emergence and re-emergence cycle that characterises the lifetime of genres more generally, serves as an important means of tracing specific cultural concerns and audience tastes in the cinemas of all nations. While Hollywood-style films may be popular abroad, this thesis emphasises that domestic cultural context is used as a means of fortifying the success of genre films; I argue that genre is not the sole factor dictating success and that contextual references are also significant in the appeal of films. This is

[99] See for example: Rachael Hutchinson, 'A Fistful of *Yojimbo: Appropriation and Dialogue in Japanese Cinema*, in *World Cinema's 'Dialogues' with Hollywood*, ed. by Paul Cooke (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 172-181; and Kin-Yan Szeto, *Martial Arts Cinema of Chinese Diaspora: Ang Lee, John Woo and Jackie Chan in Hollywood* (Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2011).
[100] Shuyu Kong, 'Genre Film, Media Corporations, and the Commercialisation of the Chinese Film Industry: The Case of "New Year Comedies"', *Asian Studies Review*, 31:3 (September 2007), 227-242 (p. 229).

evidenced by the confluence of film genres and societal concerns, including, for example, the proliferation of Hollywood thrillers that appeared in the 2000s featuring terrorism plotlines after September 11 and films made in a variety of genres that explored financial collapse in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008. Film genre, like every area of popular culture, is not immune to fashion, which frequently dictates the prevalence of genre types and cycles within which these genres are used.

1.2 Film genre under and since communism

Considering the size and prominence of the film industries of the Soviet Union and, to a lesser extent, the SFRY, there have been few in-depth overviews of specific genres in either state, particularly in English-language scholarship, but also in domestic scholarship. In the post-communist context, genre film has taken on an entirely different role in the film industries of Russia and Serbia, which has ultimately led to the beginning of a re-assessment of genre types and functions in the Soviet Union and the SFRY. In both states, the increase in the prominence of genre film has become intertwined with the creation of market-driven film industries. Dawn Seckler notes that 'domestic production of genre cinema not only helps Russian cinema compete against the flood of American movies into its theatres but, moreover, it has catalysed annual film production.'[101] In order to understand the rise of genre film and the position that youth film holds in contemporary Russia and Serbia, an overview of the history of genre film is necessary. Unlike in Hollywood, film genres held a very

[101] Dawn Seckler, 'What does *zhanr* mean in Russian?' in *Directory of World Cinema: Russia*, ed. by Birgit Beumers (Bristol: Intellect, 2011), 28-33 (p. 32).

specific function as tool of the state in communist societies, as film itself did, resulting in the sanctioning of a few core genres, some of which had specifically arisen in the communist ideological context. Thus, in both the Soviet Union and the SFRY, a sharp distinction arose between genre films and *auteur* cinema, between low and high culture, and between film as art and entertainment, which has influenced the attitude towards genre film-making and criticism of genre film in both communist-era and post-communist scholarship. It is also clear that genre films are understood to mean something very different in the Russian and Serbian contexts, than in Hollywood or the British film industry. The term 'genre film' in these contexts is not just an analytical category, but is also an ideological one. In order to understand how and why genre film developed in such a way in the post-communist period, it is necessary to return to a brief examination of the history of genre in the Soviet and Yugoslav contexts.

1.2.1 Film genres in Russia and the Soviet Union

Considering that genre film has been linked historically to the profit-making models and ideology of Hollywood, it is unsurprising that genre was treated very carefully in the Soviet Union. However, as Denise Youngblood notes, film genres were 'well established by 1921' dispelling any suggestion that genre film was anathema to Soviet cinema.[102] As film had arrived in the Russian Empire in 1896, long before the 1917 October Revolution, the appeal of entertaining fiction film existed before the Bolsheviks came to power. In the

[102] Denise Youngblood, *Movies for the masses: popular cinema and Soviet society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 71.

1920s, the earliest years of Soviet rule, there was an acknowledgement that genre films, including those from the US, were very popular with Soviet audiences.[103] Lenin himself, in his 1922 'Directive on Cinema Affairs', stated that a proportion of the Soviet filmmaking should be assigned to the creation of 'entertainment films, specially [sic] for publicity purposes and for their receipts (of course without any obscene or counter-revolutionary content)', acknowledging that genres were essential for drawing in audiences and for providing valuable income.[104] These entertainment films appeared in the guise of several officially-approved genre constructions. In the 1920s, Youngblood suggests that entertainment films could be divided into four genres: comedy films, melodramas, adventure films, and the historical or costume genre, within which there existed sub-genres such as Civil War adventure films.[105] Seckler expands this point and details that genres fell into 'three thematic categories – heroic pictures, pictures of everyday life and entertainment films', which provided a 'framework of particular genres'.[106] In later years, these genres expanded to include musical comedies, the Kolkhoz (collective farm) musical, combat war films, historical-biography films or

[103] See, for example, Lev Kuleshov, 'Americanism', 25-31 August 1922, in *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1896-1939*, ed. by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (London: Routledge, 1994), 72-73 (p. 72); Youngblood, *Movies for the masses*, p. 43; and Neya Zorkaya, *The illustrated history of Soviet Cinema* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1989), p. 105.
[104] Vladimir Lenin, 'Directive on Cinema Affairs', 17 January 1922, in *The Film Factory* ed. by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 56. For an extensive discussion of the difference between 'entertainment' and 'enlightenment' in early Soviet film, see Youngblood, *Movies for the masses*, 'Chapter 2: The Entertainment or Enlightenment Debate', pp. 35-49.
[105] Youngblood, *Movies for the masses*, p. 72.
[106] Seckler, p. 29.

biopics, science fiction, horror films, disaster films, animated films, children's films and youth film.[107]

While genres clearly existed in the Soviet Union, the conditions of the state and the application of socialist realism to film after 1934, illustrates that certain genre types were preferred over others and the attitude towards genre film changed under each Soviet leader, as policies towards culture also fluctuated.[108] This was arguably most clearly linked to the severity of Stalin's regime, although the changing relationship between film and censorship influenced the genre landscape under Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachev.[109] In the early years of the Soviet Union, arguments arose between different groups within Soviet film culture centring on what Youngblood terms 'the entertainment or enlightenment debate', which sought to establish what the function of film was within Soviet society.[110] While Youngblood suggests that this debate occurred in other national cinemas, in the Soviet context the debate 'dealt a seemingly crushing blow to popular cinema, ending in 1931 with the apparent victory of the enlighteners.'[111] After 1931, the usage of genre came under the strict control of ideological necessity, largely ignoring considerations of audience

[107] See discussions of genre types in: *Istoriia otechestvennogo kino*, gen. ed. by L.M. Budiak (Moskva: Progress-Traditsiia, 2005), pp. 449-450; Richard Taylor, 'Singing on the Steppes for Stalin: Ivan Pyr'ev and Kolkhoz Musical in Soviet Cinema', *Slavic Review*, 58: 1 (Spring, 1999), 143-159; Aleksandr Prokhorov, 'Cinema of Attractions versus Narrative Cinema: Leonid Gaidai's Comedies and El'dar Riazanov's Satires of the 1960s', *Slavic Review*, 62:3 (Autumn, 2003), 455-472; Maria Belodubrovskaya, 'The jockey and the horse: Joseph Stalin and the biopic genre in Soviet cinema', *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, 5:1 (2011), 29-53.

[108] See, for example: Josephine Woll, *Real Images: Soviet Cinema and the Thaw* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), on the shift from Stalin to Khrushchev, pp. 3-9, and the shift from the Khrushchev to Brezhnev, pp. 201-208.

[109] For a discussion of Stalinist film censorship and genre, see Jamie Miller, *Soviet Cinema: Politics and Persuasion under Stalin* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), particularly Chapter 2, 'Censorship', pp. 53-70.

[110] Youngblood, *Movies for the masses*, p. 35.

[111] Ibid.

preferences. A particularly significant and enduring example of this was the comedy genre, which, although exceedingly popular with audiences, was the 'perennial sore spot' of early Soviet cinema, and presented one of the greatest minefields for directors.[112] The dismissal of the audience's preferences does not necessarily mean that popular genre films were not made, but rather they were co-opted to the needs of the state. This led to a paradox in Soviet cinema in the Stalinist period: 'even as the production of genre cinema was officially advocated in the thematic plans of the 1930s, specific genre labels were villainised as antithetical to Soviet ideological goals.'[113] Film genres were treated with hostility and suspicion in the Soviet Union, whilst also being recognised as an essential part of the film production process.

The arrival of Khrushchev's thaw (*ottepel'*) had 'a number positive effects on cultural life', including the publishing of banned novels and plays, the expansion of theatres and a loosening of strictures placed on the organisation of foreign cultural exhibitions.[114] Josephine Woll notes that, during the thaw, 'film plots and genres reflected the legitimation of private emotions and lives in an emerging focus on ordinary people living everyday lives', as opposed to the focus in the Stalinist years on strong 'leader-figures'.[115] Beumers further explains that, during this era, 'instead of presenting a varnished reality in musicals or hagiography, films should portray

[112] Youngblood, *Movies for the masses*, p. 74. For more on the popularity of the comedy genre, see also Woll, *Real Images*, p. 14.
[113] Seckler, p. 30.
[114] Birgit Beumers, *A History of Russian Cinema* (Oxford: Berg, 2009), p. 113.
[115] Woll, *Real images*, p. xiii.

everyday, ordinary life.'[116] Comedies reappeared, as did a number of more experimental films made by directors who gave preference to art over entertainment. Notable films were made that leaned towards *auteurist* tendencies rather than genre, including *Letiat zhuravli* [*The Cranes are Flying*] (dir. Mikhail Kalatozov, Mosfil'm, 1957), which won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, and Andrei Tarkovskii's debut film, *Ivanovo detstvo* [*Ivan's childhood*] (Mosfil'm, 1962), which marked the beginning of his long career in art film. Although both these films broached the topic of WWII, neither was made in the war film genre, rather their approaches are an exploration of the personal effects of war on individuals. Such films helped develop a form of *auteurist* cinema in the Soviet Union, as a distinct and separate category within film art, signalling a split between genre and *auteur* film.

The relationship between film, genre and *auteurs* shifted again as Brezhnev's stagnation (*zastoi*) set in following the fall of Khrushchev in 1964. Stagnation saw the re-imposition of cultural restrictions, which began to widen the divide between dissident and conformist culture, as well as the rise of the television as a serious rival for the film industry.[117] In particular, 'a divide came about between *auteur* cinema, largely created by filmmakers who were classified as "difficult" or openly "dissident", and "movies for the masses", made by talented filmmakers using more conventional narratives

[116] Beumers, *A History of Russian Cinema*, p. 116.
[117] Beumers, *A History of Russian Cinema*, p. 148.

(although often tackling controversial issues as well)'.[118] Seckler suggests that 'genre filmmaking offered safe, predictable territory, where directors were required to guess less and risk less.'[119] This divide between *auteur* film and genre films is the basis on which genre film is sometimes interpreted as a low cultural form – genre film directors gave in to Soviet censorship whilst *auteurs* suffered to produce their art and were duly censored. However, Seckler highlights a significant flaw in the notion that genre and *auteur* film were, and remain, two separate entities, pointing out that 'certain of the most popular, genre-driven blockbusters bore a distinct authorial stamp', particularly the films of Leonid Gaidai and El'dar Riazanov.[120] Olga Klimova, meanwhile, posits that genre films, especially the youth film genre, rather than serving as tools of the state, actually allowed film directors to hide their subversive messages using allegory, particularly during stagnation. She argues that: 'Under the veil of conforming to the state's demands to form young Soviet citizens through the genre of youth film, filmmakers after 1972 began to produce films about the moral and emotional maturation of teenage characters', rather than depicting them in service of the state.[121] Genre film and genre film directors clearly played a more complex role in the Soviet society than they are sometimes credited with in wider discussions of the film industry.

The question over the divide between *auteur* and genre film, and the perception that genre film is incompatible with true film art is an attitude that

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[118] Beumers, *A History of Russian Cinema*, p. 146.
[119] Seckler, p. 31.
[120] Seckler, p. 32.
[121] Olga Klimova, 'Soviet Youth Films under Brezhnev: Watching Between the Lines' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 2013), p. 65.

has lingered into the present day. Genre film is still considered by some to be low culture or representative of deplorable adherence to American values, with Seckler noting that prominent Russian directors, such as Aleksei Balabanov, Sergei Solov'ev and Andrei Zviagintsev, speak derogatorily of genre film as belonging to the crudeness of Hollywood filmmaking.[122] The outspokenness of Russian directors towards the disadvantages of genre film can be interpreted as a sign of the continuing adherence towards conceptions of high and low cultural forms, particularly considering that Balabanov and Solov'ev both use a variety of genre film influences in their work. In 2002, while Russia was struggling to produce genre films, Dmitrii Komm suggested that the Russian film industry faced a difficult task of trying to create genre film in the immediate post-Soviet period because Russian directors were too concerned with their own image as an artist:

> In their minds, they understand that they have to make commercial audience-friendly cinema and they even make sincere attempts, but in their sub-cortex, academic conceptualisations about the role and status of the artist remain all the same. Even when filming genre film, they worry about their own signature and style, their recognisability to potential followers.[123]

[122] See Seckler, p. 28; and Various, 'Siuzhety i geroi: zapadnye zhanry v rossiiskom kino', *Seans*, 19-20 (2004) <http://seance.ru/category/n/19-20/sujets_and_heroes/sujets_and_heroes-ganry/> [accessed 6 September 2015].

[123] 'Разумом они понимают, что должны делать коммерческое, зрительское кино, и даже искренне стараются, но в их подкорке все равно содержатся академичные представления о роли и статусе художника. Даже снимая жанровое кино, они беспокоятся о собственном почерке и стиле, их узнаваемости для потенциальных поклонников'. Dmitrii Komm, 'Dolzhniki i kreditory: russkii zhanr', *Iskusstvo kino*, 2 (February 2002), <http://kinoart.ru/archive/2002/02/n2-article15> [accessed 6 September 2015].

Here, Komm suggests that the preference for Russian film directors to produce art films remained, and arguably remains, a significant problem for film directors in the post-Soviet period. Directors have not quite reconciled the need for not only genre film, but also the need for 'audience-friendly film (*zritel'skoe kino*)', which considers the preferences of the Russian audience. Unlike the genre film directors of Hollywood, such as Steven Spielberg, some Russian directors seem to have been unable to combine the skill of being an *auteur* and a genre film director.

The problems of implementing a full range of successful genre films can be considered an ongoing difficulty at the time of writing. Nancy Condee has argued that the continuing issues facing the development of genre films in recent Russian cinema is linked to the training of directors, many of whom learn in the masterclasses of Soviet-era directors. She observes that: 'Russian film schools traditionally emphasize skills most easily suited in the early stages of a director's career to auteur cinema rather than to a diverse range of genre films.'[124] There is an insufficient acceptance of the importance of genres or perhaps even understanding of how to make genre films amongst the directorial elites in Russia, which directly translates as an inability on the part of younger directors to successfully create genre films and also a dismissive attitude towards the artistic quality of genre film. This does not negate the fact that some directors have proved very adept at producing genre films, including Timur Bekmambetov, who is one of the most successful and

[124] Nancy Condee, 'Cold Snap (Part II): Russian Film after Leviathan', 23 July 2015, <http://jordanrussiacenter.org/news/cold-snap-part-ii-russian-film-leviathan/#.Vexv5BFVhBf> [accessed 6 September 2015].

adaptive of the Russian genre film directors, directing films such as *Nochnoi dozor* [*Night Watch*] (Bazelevs Production, 2004) and *Ironiia sud'by: Prodolzhenie* [Irony of Fate 2] (Bazelevs Production, 2007). Bekmambetov has worked in both Russia and the US, directing and producing films, which underlines his ability to move between these two spheres. The example of Bekmambetov can be positioned in contrast to the career of another Russian director who made the transition to Hollywood, Andrei Konchalovskii. In one of his attempts at directing Hollywood film, *Runaway Train* (Golan-Globus Productions, 1985), Youngblood argues that, Konchalovskii's 'penchant for philosophizing and "psychologizing" at the expense of plot and pacing bored American audiences.'[125] The move to Hollywood and exposure to that industry's prolific use of genre film does not always remedy the tendency of Russian directors towards *auteurist* film-making.

1.2.2 The scholarship on genres: Russia and the Soviet Union

In spite of the rich and complicated history of genre film in the Soviet Union, there have been few in-depth studies of individual genres. The beginning of each chapter of this thesis therefore offers an introduction to the film genre in question, highlighting formal aspects and briefly tracing the genre in the Russian or Serbian context. However, a number of scholarly works do exist which can contribute to an understanding of film genre in the Russian and Soviet context. The first dedicated exclusively to the discussion of genres in

[125] Denise J. Youngblood, 'The Cosmopolitan and the Patriot: The brothers Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky and Russian cinema', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 23:1 (2003), 27-41 (p. 29).

Russian film was *Zhanry kino* published in 1979 during stagnation.[126] In his contribution to the volume, Sokolov writes that, the 'problem of genres is one of the least-researched and one of the most ambiguous problems of contemporary [Soviet] film studies.'[127] The approach to genre in *Zhanry kino* suggests that Soviet film theorists faced a number of problems connected to the ideological positioning of the state, which can explain the deficit of genre theory in the Soviet and Russian context. In particular, although US and French writers were arguably the most influential writers in the history of film genre theory, the citation of such authors was fraught with political difficulty. Another author in the volume, Leonid Kozlov, further illustrated the wider attitude towards genre in the Soviet Union: 'Genre is not only a topic of great concern, but also a topic of great hopes.'[128] This positioning acknowledges that genre constructions were a source of ideological difficulty, but that it was felt that genre films had much to offer in terms of film production. There is a sense of stress on semantics, rather than syntactics, across the volume. However, there are also similarities to Western film theorists in terms of approach: Kozlov, for example, discusses the roots of film genre theory in literature, but focuses on Pushkin's theories of drama, rather than the poetics of Aristotle.[129] This focus on finding Russian bases for the construction of Soviet film theory would inevitably eschew or delay comparisons with Hollywood models of film-making. The complex connection between Russo-

[126] V. E. Baskakov and V. I. Fomin, eds., *Zhanry kino* (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1979).
[127] 'Проблема жанров - одна из наименее исследованных и одна из наиболее неясных проблем современного киноведения'. V. Sokolov, 'K metodologii issledovaniia kinozhanrov', in *Zhanry kino*, 46-74 (p. 46).
[128] 'Жанр - не только предмет большой озабоченности, но и предмет больших надежд'. L. Kozlov, 'O zhanrovykh obshchnostiakh i osobennostiakh', in *Zhanry kino*, 75-104 (p. 75)
[129] Kozlov, 'O zhanrovykh obshchnostiakh i osobennostiakh', p. 83.

Soviet film production and its historical-political context has understandably influenced a number of scholars, whose studies focus on overviews of how films fit within the wider historical context. As Denise Youngblood outlines, Western scholarship on Soviet cinema 'has tended to focus on *periods*, *styles* and *auteurs*', rather than on specific genres.[130] In this vein, Youngblood, Josephine Woll, and Andrew Horton and Michael Brashinsky, amongst others, examine the film industry as a whole during specific points in Soviet history – the 1920s, the Thaw, and perestroika respectively – examining the complex relationship between Soviet politics and trends in filmmaking.[131]

The divide between *auteur* and genre cinema, and the prominence of Soviet *auteurs*, has resulted in a wealth of literature focusing on individual directors, such as Dziga Vertov, Sergei Eisenstein, El'dar Riazanov, Grigorii Aleksandrov, and Andrei Tarkovskii.[132] Within this literature on *auteurs*, however, there is a clear acknowledgement of the connections between prominent directors and their preferred genres – including, for example, Vertov and the documentary, Riazanov and the tragicomedy, Aleksandrov and the musical comedy, Tarkovskii and science-fiction. Yet these connections are rarely discussed in explicit terms of identifying the way these directors use genre in relation to wider trends in filmmaking and the history of film. In her

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[130] Denise J. Youngblood, *Russian war films: on the cinema front, 1914-2005* (Lawrence Kan.: University of Kansas Press, 2007), p. 2 [emphasis in the original].
[131] For example, see: Youngblood, *Movies for the masses*; Woll, *Real Images*; and Andrew Horton and Michael Brashinsky, *The Zero Hour: Glasnost and Soviet Cinema in Transition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
[132] See: Jeremy Hicks, *Dziga Vertov: Defining Documentary Film* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007); Eisenstein *Rediscovered*, ed. by Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (London: Routledge, 1993); David MacFadyen, *The sad comedy of El'dar Riazanov: an introduction to Russia's most popular filmmaker* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003); Rimgaila Salys, *The musical comedy films of Grigorii Aleksandrov: laughing matters* (Bristol: Intellect, 2009); Nariman Skakov, *The cinema of Tarkovsky: labyrinths of space and time* (London: I.B Tauris, 2012).

work on Aleksandrov and comedy, Rimgaila Salys directly addresses the reluctance of other scholars to elaborate on the connections between Soviet film and Hollywood genre models. Salys writes: 'Scholars have written about the functioning of ideology and myth in the Aleksandrov films, but have largely ignored their roots in the American musical and comedy traditions.'[133] Significantly, Salys discusses not only the overlap between Hollywood and Soviet film genres, but also the deviations from this tradition in Soviet film and the places in which the political context of the Soviet Union made it impossible to faithfully follow Hollywood genres. This thesis will use a similar approach in the film and genre analyses, providing an international genre basis whilst also highlighting the importance of domestic variations.

In recent years, scholars, such as Denise Youngblood, Graham Roberts, and David MacFadyen, have produced book-length studies tracing the history of specific film genres – the war, documentary and animated film respectively – in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, suggesting the beginning of a shift towards the close study of film genres.[134] Youngblood provides some insight into why the context, rather than the form of these genres, is privileged; she writes, 'genre analyses fall into two basic types – formal analysis and content analysis – that are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Film scholars privilege the former, historians the latter.'[135] Youngblood, as a historian, chooses to focus on content as per her discipline. This choice may exemplify why historically-

[133] Salys, p. 4.
[134] For example, see: Youngblood, *Russian war films*; Graham Roberts, *Forward Soviet!: history and non-fiction film in the USSR* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1999); David MacFadyen, *Yellow crocodiles and blue oranges: Russian animated film since World War Two* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).
[135] Youngblood, *Russian war films*, p. 2.

based overviews are frequently given precedence in studies of Russian and Soviet film, rather than in-depth discussions of the formal aspects of genre usage.

There is a movement to deepen the understanding of genre in the Soviet and Russian context. A number of articles have been published, which have laid the field for identifying the major and distinct genres that guided Soviet film, as well as linking the use of specific genres to the different leaderships.[136] Prokhorov, for example, explores the tensions between Soviet and Hollywood models, identifying shifts in the genre production of both industries during the 1950s and 1960s, as well as elucidating evolutions in Soviet genre preferences.[137] Edited volumes of Russian and Soviet film have sought to provide overviews of the different genres over the nation's film history. One major contribution to the understanding of film genres in the Soviet and post-Soviet context arrived in the form of *Noveishaia istoriia otechestvennogo kino, 1986-2000*, which, while primarily detailing the major events relating to the film industry between these years, is a useful source for film scholars to assess industry changes, also contains comprehensive entries giving overviews films and film genres, including the melodrama, war film, and the comedy, including an entry on 'Children's Cinema in the USSR'.[138] In addition to this, the *Directory of World Cinema: Russia* (1 and 2) identifies key

[136] See Prokhorov, 'Cinema of attractions…'; Joshua First, 'Making Soviet melodrama contemporary: conveying "emotional information" in the era of Stagnation', *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, 2:1 (2008), 21-42.
[137] Prokhorov, 'Cinema of attractions…', pp. 455-457.
[138] *Noveishaia istoriia otechestvennogo kino, 1986-2000*, Six Volumes, ed. by Aleksandr Golutva and Liubov' Arkus (St. Petersburg: Seans, 2001-2004), particularly Volume IV (Entry 34), 'Detskoe kino v SSSR', pp. 97-103.

Russian genres and provides lists of films belonging to each genre, including historical, adventure, horror, documentary and animation.[139] Collections such as these demonstrate how scholarship is beginning to move towards the wider identification of genre traits and application of global understandings of film genre to Russian and Soviet film.

Film criticism, however, remains dominated by texts that trace aesthetic trends and/or wider themes in Soviet and Russian cinema.[140] Hashamova, for example, examines how the tensions between Eastern and Western culture play out on the Russian screen, particularly in the post-Soviet period as Russia struggled to re-establishment a national identity. She posits that, in an effort to make up for the 'traumatic experience' during the transition from communism, 'Russia's search for a new national identity finds expressions in films that glorify Russia's uniqueness in history, art, and religion.'[141] The search for national identity is not a specific genre topic as such, but does have a significant impact on the kinds of film genres chosen, particularly when considering the government's preference for historical and patriotic films. While these approaches are important and constantly extend knowledge of film in Russia and the Soviet Union, this tendency leaves much room for close examinations of the history of specific film genres, which offer equally important perspectives on historical, social and political contexts.

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[139] *Directory of World Cinema: Russia*, ed. by Birgit Beumers (Bristol: Intellect, 2011) and *Directory of World Cinema: Russia 2*, ed. by Birgit Beumers (Bristol: Intellect, 2015).
[140] See for example: *Cinepaternity: fathers and sons in Soviet and Post-Soviet film*, ed. by Helena Goscilo and Yana Hashamova (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); *Insiders and Outsiders in Russian Cinema*, ed. by Stephen M. Norris and Zara M. Torlone (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).
[141] Hashamova, *Pride and Panic*, p. 113.

One final and important tendency that has appeared in the scholarship links Russian film genre analysis with the foundations of Western genre research in literary theory, echoing the approach taken by the authors of *Zhanry kino*. In particular, it is evident that analyses of Soviet literature, particularly the traditions of the socialist realist novel, have become an important means of identifying and quantifying Soviet-specific genres and genre evolutions. For example, authors such as Salys and Klimova reference Katerina Clark's work, *The Soviet novel: history as ritual*, arguing that during Soviet era socialist realism, a set of practices defined in relation to literature, was reflected in film production. Salys suggests that 'Clark's work on the Socialist Realist novel and Stalinist culture has produced a number of concepts that are particularly important for Aleksandrov's films', including 'the organizing and legitimizing metaphor of the Great Family' and role of the 'postitive hero' within society.[142] Klimova, likewise, applies Clark's work on socialist realist literature to the film context, particularly Clark's discussion of the development of the 'youth novel' in the 1950s, which was a new literary genre. Klimova notes that, 'youth films of the 1950s through the mid-1960s share similarities in plot and characters with the youth novel.'[143] In particular, these similarities also include common traits, such as the discussion of the 'relations between public and the private'.[144] Thus Kozlov's usage of Pushkin's theories of drama in his contribution to *Zhanry kino* is not unusual in the wider discussion of Russian genre theory. Clark, Salys and Klimova all build on

[142] Salys, p.6.
[143] Klimova, 'Soviet Youth Films under Brezhnev', p. 86.
[144] Klimova, 'Soviet Youth Films Under Brezhnev', p. 87.

these earlier concepts. Soviet and Russian literary theory, echoing the importance placed on literary theory in the global study of film genre, can be seen as a useful means for identifying foundational elements for Russo-Soviet film genres and applied as a general framework for ascertaining cultural specific elements.

1.2.3 Film genres in Serbia and the SFRY

Tracing the history of genre film in the Yugoslav context is even more difficult than in the Soviet context, partly due to a lack of in-depth literature on the subject of film more generally, but also due to the particular interest paid in this limited literature to *auteur* and art cinema in the SFRY in both domestic and English-language texts. This summary of genre film in the Yugoslav and Serbian context will attempt to draw together the brief information that is available on film genres, and will develop areas where there is no information available in an attempt to build a fuller picture of film genre history in Serbia. Dejan Ognjanović directly addresses the lack of scholarship in post-communist Serbia: 'To speak of genre in Serbian cinema is problematic for a number of reasons […] first and foremost because the generic tradition has not been adequately recognised or (re)assessed.'[145] A problem arises with the fact that genres are known to exist, in varying forms, but that these forms are not acknowledged or explored, which leads to a crystallisation of the perception that genre was did not play a significant role in Yugoslav film. Nikolina Dobreva, in her overview of the historical film genre in former communist

[145] 'Govoriti o žanru u okvirima srpskog filma problematično je iz više razloga. Pre svega, žanrovska tradicija nije na adekvatan način prepoznata niti (re)valorizovana'. Dejan Ognjanović, 'Žanrovski filmovi u novijoj srpskoj kinematografiji', in *Uvođenje mladosti: Sami sebe naslikali*, by Goran Gočić and others (Beograd: Filmski Centar Srbije, 2008), p. 69.

countries of Europe, confirms that 'genre is rarely studied in the context of pre-1989 Eastern European cinema'.[146] Ognjanović goes on to suggest that the issue was that genres were incompatible with the Yugoslav form of communism: 'In Tito's Yugoslavia, genre was seen as a Western invention which had no place in our self-management society'.[147] As in the Soviet context, a gap occurs between the assumption that genres were incompatible with ideas of communism and the acknowledgement that genre films did play an important role in the Yugoslav film industry. Yet it must be acknowledged that genre films take on a very different meaning in the communist context, given that they were restricted by ideology and maintained through state support. There is a sense that because some of the genre films were ideologically conformist or of low quality, they must therefore be unworthy of in depth critical attention.

Genres did exist in the SFRY and it can be argued that, rather than being unsuited to the Yugoslav experience, they were of particular importance to Tito, who was an avid consumer of films. In 1986, Petar Volk claimed that: 'All known genres were cultivated in domestic film – especially the war film, film comedies with a contemporary theme, and literary adaptations.'[148] While Volk's view is slightly misleading – there may have been examples of films made in many genres, but some of these examples

[146] Nikolina Dobreva, 'Eastern European Historical Epics: Genre Cinema and the Visualization of a Heroic National Past', in *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas*, ed. by Aniko Imre (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 344-365 (p. 344).
[147] 'U Titovoj Jugoslaviji žanr je smatran zapadnom izmišljotinom koja nema šta da traži u našem samupravnom društvu'. Ognjanović, 'Žanrovski filmovi…', p. 69.
[148] 'Negovani su svi poznati žanrovi u domaćem filmu – posebno ratni film, dela sa savremenom tematikom filmske komedije i ekranizacije literarnih dela'. Petar Volk, *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma* (Beograd: Institut za film, 1986), p. 244.

themselves constituted only a small number – it nonetheless disproves the idea that genres were incompatible with Yugoslav cinema. The use of genres can be seen as something that was fairly unsystematic in the early SFRY and was restricted by the specific ideological-aesthetic needs of the communist regime. Pavičić writes that, 'directors of the 1950s spontaneously adopted Western genre solutions and adjusted them to the local cultural context and system of genres'.[149] Certain genres were favoured at different points and genre film was only considered to play a serious role from the perspective of critics from the 1980s onwards, with the appearance of 'new genre film movement' in Serbia and Croatia.[150] This can explain both the lack of literature and the rapid adoption of film genre by younger directors in the 1990s, who had their training in the 1980s.

It is clear that in the Serbian, as in the Russian, context, genre has a different meaning than the one cultivated in Hollywood. As a means of understanding the changes that took place, Daković provides a 'provisional chronological map' of the different genres that were prominent in different decades in the SFRY:

> 1950s – the dominance of literary adaptations as a site for situating national identity performed according to the classical legacy of the elite arts, and the tradition of folk literature for national self-presentation.

[149] 'reditelji pedesetih spontano prihvaćaju zapadna žanrovska rješenja i prilagođavaju ih lokalnom kulturnom kontekstu i sustavu žanrova'. Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*, p. 214.
[150] 'pokret novožanrovskog filma'. Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*, p. 215.

> 1960s and 1970s – war films, partisan spectacles which glorified the revolution and the succeeding socialist state. In these films, national identity is politically arranged and based on the multi-ethnic [concept of] 'brotherhood and unity'.
>
> 1980s – genre diversification spans contrasts from popular comedies to urban and rock film in an attempt to come closer to a commercial Hollywood model.[151]

This outline provides basic insight into what Daković considers to have been the most important genres at specific times and the way in which these genres themselves were made more prominent because of specific ideological needs during each period. After 1948 and Tito's split with Stalin, 'the heuristic and propagandistic' films, which were devised in the 1940s to support the myth of Partisan victory in WWII and the 'socialist reconstruction' of the state, were replaced by an 'expansion of the range of subject matter and genres.'[152] Meanwhile, the prominence of literary adaptations in the 1950s can be seen as a direct result of the lack of unifying Yugoslav cultural heritage in the immediate aftermath of WWII. Thus the popularity of certain genres in different periods can be seen as having the dual function of being

[151] 'provizorna hronološka mapa žanra'/ '1950. – dominacija literarnih adaptacija kao mesta upisa nacionalnog identiteta u duhu klasičnog nasleđa elitne umetnosti i tradicije samoreprezentacije u narodnoj književnosti. 1960. i 1970. – ratni filmovi, partizanski spektakli koji glorifikuju revoluciju i potonju socijalističku državu. Nacionalni identitet je određen politički i počiva na multietničkom „bratstvu i jedinstvu". 1980. – žanrovska diverzifikacija obuhvata suprotnosti od popularne komedije do urbanog i rok filma u pokušaju približavanja komercijalnom holivudskom modelu'. Daković, *Balkan (kao) filmski žanr*, p. 41.

[152] Daniel J. Goulding, *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience, 1945-2001*, revised edn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 43.

entertaining for audiences, but, more importantly, fulfilling certain ideological ends.

Daniel Goulding contends that 1950s films were not solely represented by literary adaptions, but also resulted in the appearance of a number of other film genres including, 'light comedy and satire, children's films, action-adventure films, and historical literary films'.[153] These genres constituted the officially sanctioned genres of the SFRY, illustrating both similarities and differences in the Yugoslav and Soviet experiences. The 'growth and widening of popular themes and genres' during this decade was accompanied by a 'searching re-examination of the war experience and its aftermath', which signalled the beginning of the exploration of more complex themes in Yugoslav cinema that would rise to the fore during the 1960s.[154] Moreover, a divide in genre film production is seen to have developed between the different constitutive republics of the SFRY, particularly after the establishment of republic-level film production companies. Serbian directors, according to Ognjanović, 'dominated in the open usage of genre elements in their works in comparison to their colleagues from the other republics'.[155] This was likely driven by the fact that the Avala Film in Belgrade was the largest and most advanced of all the republic-level film studios, as well as the fact that Serbia was the most populous of the republics. In addition to this, film production in the SFRY was an integrated affair, being an example of a sphere of Yugoslav culture where ethnic differences did not dominate.

[153] Ibid.
[154] Goulding, p. 47.
[155] 'Srpski autori su još u vreme postojanja SFRJ prednjačili u otvorenom korišćenju žanrovskih stilema u svojim delima u odnosu na kolege iz drugih republika […]'. Ognjanović, 'Žanrovski filmovi…', p. 69.

Meanwhile, the other republics were famous for their own spheres of film, if not for genre film-making; Croatia, for example, excelled in the creation of animated films. The dominance of Serbian directors over genre film production is therefore the result of a number of circumstances.

In the SFRY, the use of specific genres was directly linked to the dominating presence of Hollywood films in Yugoslav society, in which the SFRY differed significantly from the other communist states of Europe in the Soviet sphere of influence – the so-called Eastern Bloc. Yugoslav film-makers responded to the preferences of the audience with the need to create their own domestic, and ideologically significant, films. Perhaps the most prominent genre to have arisen in Yugoslav film was the Partisan war film, a fundamental way in which Tito could promote the communist victory in the 'National Liberation Struggle', as Yugoslavs knew WWII. The first feature-length film to be produced in the SFRY was Vjekoslav Afrić's *Slavica* [*Slavica*] (Avala Film, 1947), a Partisan war film depicting the liberation of Split in Croatia during WWII. However, the enduring necessity and promotion of the Partisan war film over the course of Yugoslav history required the genre to evolve. In the 1950s and 1960s, 'the American Western was one of the favourite film genres amongst the Yugoslav audience' and film-makers used this to their advantage by combining the aesthetics of the Western film with the ideological message of the Partisan war film.[156] This was not without precedent in communist states, with those Civil War action-adventure films in

[156] […] američki vestern bio je jedan od omiljenih filmskih žanrova najšire jugoslovenske publike'. Vučetić, *Koka-koka socijalizam*, p. 125.

the Soviet Union also drawing on the genre aesthetics of the Western film – a key Soviet example of this being *Chapaev* [*Chapaev*] (dir. Georgi and Sergei Vasil'ev, Lenfilm, 1934).[157] Hollywood genre elements can be seen as contributing to the success of film genres, particularly in Yugoslav case, where domestic films were in direct competition with Hollywood films.

The promotion of certain genres was met with some opposition from both alternative film-makers and communist party officials. The dominance of the Partisan war film has been directly linked by some to the appearance of 'New Film' (*novi film*), pejoratively labelled by pro-regime critics as the Black Wave (*crni talas*), in the 1960s, a movement which would have a profound impact on the international standing of Yugoslav film and on the literature concerning film-making in the SFRY.[158] Vučetić writes that the New Film movement is 'remarkably important for an analysis of the relationship towards Hollywood film, but also the official Partisan film'.[159] She sees the movement as a 'the most significant counterpoint to Hollywood, Westerns, American stars and the other characteristics of Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s', as well as a reaction towards what was seen as 'undesirable or desirable for showing to Yugoslav viewers'.[160] Here, the opposition that formed towards genre can be seen as linked to the idea that Yugoslav genre films, particularly

[157] See for example, David MacFadyen, 'Action/Red Western' in *Directory of World Cinema: Russia*, 215-217.
[158] For more on New Film see, Goulding, particularly Chapter 3 '*New Film* and Republican Ascendancy, 1961-1972', pp. 62-83.
[159] '[Ovaj filmski pravac je] izuzetno značajan za analizu odnosa prema američkom, ali i zvaničnom partizanskom filmu'. Radina Vučetić, 'Kauboji u partizanskoj uniformi (Američki partizanski vesterni u Jugoslaviji šezdesetih godina 20. veka)', *Tokovi istorije*, 2 (2010), 129-150 (p. 147).
[160] '[… jer] je bio najizrazitiji kontrapunkt Holivudu, vesternima, američkim zvezdama i ostalim pojavama karakterističnim za jugoslovensku kinematografsku svakodnevnicu šezdesetih godina[, i u odnosu prema njemu moguće je pratiti odnos vlasti prema onome] sta je smatrano poželjnim ili nepoželjnim za prikazivanje jugoslovenskim gledaocima'. Vučetić, 'Kauboji u partizanskoj uniformi', p. 147.

the Partisan film, were imposed upon audiences and the film industry. While these comments rather simplify what was a complex relationship between New Film's desire for freedom of expression and the restrictions of Yugoslav communism, Vučetić's arguments nonetheless offer a perspective on film genres in the SFRY.[161] The rise of New Film was not the only effect that Hollywood film was deemed to have had. Vučetić notes that 'the popularity of American films, and the identification of young people with the heroes of these films, also opened up the frequent "Western" question of the influence of film on youth violence in socialist Yugoslav society.'[162] The dominating presence of Hollywood films in Yugoslav society can therefore be seen as having a stark effect on both the genre choices, as well as illustrating how the relationship between the West, epitomised by Hollywood, and the SFRY, as the communist East, was a complex one.

After the crackdown on alternative filmmaking in the early 1970s, 'Yugoslav cinema entered a period of decreased ideological turbulence during which the stylistic and narrative vocabularies of genre filmmaking substantially developed'.[163] Pavle Levi writes that genre films included, 'action-packed Partisan-war spectacles', 'suspenseful secret police tales', 'urban crime dramas', 'the locally rarely engaged genre of science fiction', and 'commercially lucrative comedies on contemporary and war themes'.[164] The

[161] For more on New Film and common misconceptions, see Nebojša Jovanović, 'Breaking the Wave: A commentary on "Black Wave polemics: Rhetoric as aesthetic" by Greg DeCuir, Jr', *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, 2:2, 161-171.
[162] 'Popularnost američkih filmova, i identifikacija omladine sa junacima tih filmova, otvorila je i u jugoslovenskom socijalističkom društvu učestalo „zapadno" pitanje uticaja filma na nasilje mladih'. Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, p. 116.
[163] Pavle Levi, *Disintegration in Frames* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 57.
[164] Levi, p. 57.

1980s witnessed the return of *auteurist* film fuelled by directors of the Czech School, such as Lordan Zafranović, Emir Kusturica, Goran Marković and Srđan Karanović, who had graduated from the Prague film academy, FAMU, a movement sometimes referred to as 'New Yugoslav Film (*novi jugoslovenski film*)'.[165] The rise of the Czech School directors in the early 1980s coincided with a period of intensified attempts to produce genre films in the SFRY. As Goulding notes: 'It should also be emphasized that liberated cinematic tendencies in Yugoslavia [New Yugoslav Film], as in past periods, existed at the thin edge of a much larger politically conformist and commercially oriented cinema.'[166] Ognjanović notes that, simultaneously, 'a wave of younger filmmakers appeared at that time who were unafraid to show their love for and knowledge of (above all American) genre cinema', including Slobodan Šijan, whose film *Ko to tamo peva* [*Who's singin' over there*] (Centar Film, 1980) was influenced by John Ford's *Stagecoach* (Walter Wanger Productions, 1939).[167] Other examples of film genres that appeared during the decade included science fiction, gangster films, murder mystery films, and *film noir*, although Goulding also comments that these attempts were 'usually not very successful', without elaborating whether he means in terms of box-office success or film-making success.[168] Above all, the most popular genre was 'light social comedies with contemporary settings', including the films of

[165] Goulding, p. 143.
[166] Goulding, p. 148.
[167] '[…kada] se istovremeno javlja talas filomova mlađih autora koji se nisu stideli da pokažu svoju ljubav I poznavanje (pre svega američkog) žanrovskog filma'. Ognjanović, 'Žanrovski filmovi…' , p. 71.
[168] Goulding, p. 148.

Zoran Čalić, who directed *Lude godine* [*Crazy Years*] (Zvezda Film, 1977), which spawned nine sequels.

Paradoxically, more attention has been paid to what Goulding called the 'thin layer' of alternative cinema, rather than the 'much larger' layer of popular genre cinema.[169] The lack of scholarship on film genres is clearly linked to an unspoken assessment that genre films in the SFRY were not worthwhile films for film scholars or critics to analyse, suggested by Goulding's assessment that these genre films were not 'successful'. Such views about genre films can of course be found across global cinema, but are particularly prominent in communist and post-communist scholarship on genres. This points to a number of similarities between the Soviet and Yugoslav treatment of film genres. In both states, and in the literature on their cinema, critics and certain film-makers consider that genre film is a low form of art, whilst *auteur* film is a high form that is more suitable for analysis, as these films are more complex. In the Soviet context, the attention paid to dissident directors, which led to a distinct emphasis being placed on the study of *auteurs* over genre film directors, has echoes in the Yugoslav experience.[170] There are a number of English-language texts, by scholars such as Goulding, Levi, Mortimer, Iordanova and Marković, relating to New Film, New Yugoslav Film and to prominent auteurs, such as Dušan Makavejev, Emir Kusturica and Goran Paskaljević.[171] Yet there are none on Yugoslav genres or Yugoslav

[169] Ibid.
[170] Beumers, *A History of Russian Cinema*, p. 146.
[171] See, for example: Goulding, who covers all of these topics in his *Liberated Cinema*; Lorraine Mortimer, *Terror and joy: the films of Dušan Makavejev* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,

popular film, enhancing the perceived divide between serious art film and genre film.

As was also the case in the Soviet Union however, there is often an unacknowledged connection between genre usage and *auteurs*; one of the prime examples of this is Slobodan Šijan, who prolifically referenced Hollywood genres, including the Western (in *Ko to tamo peva*), and the crime and thriller genres (in *Davitelj protiv davitelja* [*Strangler vs Strangler*], Centar Film, 1984). Šijan's works are highly satirical and employ the black humour that characterised Yugoslav film in the 1980s (which is also a key trait of post-communist Serbian film), but these films also display how genre can be selectively used by *auteurs* to achieve specific ends. Considering the use of genre elements, satire and humour, it is no surprise that Šijan's were some of the SFRY's most famous films; *Ko to tamo peva* is considered one of 'the brightest and most inventive films' of the eighties, but has not been subjected to an in-depth study of its genre bases.[172] Pavičić notes that, 'the new genre filmmakers of the 1980s strove in the Yugoslav context to replant the iconography and myths of different commercial/global genres', such as the Western, the horror film, the action film, the detective film, and the gangster film.[173] Thus, directors began to draw out ways of separating the commercial elements of genre from the artistic merits of genre usage, although arguably this can be seen as a way of justifying the creation of genre films. Significantly,

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2009); Dina Iordanova, *Emir Kusturica* (London: BFI, 2002); *The cinema of Goran Paskaljević*, ed. by Predrag Marković (Belgrade: Stubovi kulture, 2010).

[172] Goulding, p. 167.

[173] '[…] novožanrovci osamdesetih nastoje u jugoslavenski kontekst presaditi ikonografiju i miteme različitih komercijalnih/globalnih žanrova […]'. Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*, p. 215.

the tendency towards genre mixing and referencing in the 1980s mirrors the ways in which genres are frequently used in Serbia in the post-communist period. Serbian films use (sometimes fragmented) elements of established Hollywood genres and are intertextual, with indirect and direct references to international film. The significance of the developments of genre films in the 1980s strongly influenced directors who were trained in the 1980s, including Srđan Dragojević, the subject of Chapter 2.

Leading on from the increase of genre diversity in the 1980s, the 1990s in Serbia saw a continued flourishing of film genres, with many young directors entering the film industry being faithful followers of genre filmmaking. The legacy of genre filmmaking from the 1990s became an important factor in the swift, and often successful, adoption of genre filmmaking in post-communist Serbia. This does not mean genre was universally embraced by film directors. As Pavičić puts it, 'in Serbia, during the 1990s, a sharp division would arise between authors who understood *genre as a cinematic device* and *genre as a mission/intertextual strategy/reservoir of myths*'.[174] Thus the use of genre film is split into two types – the use of genre in a utilitarian way and those who see genre as having deeper aesthetic meanings. The further development of genre film in the late 1990s and into the 2000s in Serbia is discussed at length in Chapters 2, 4, and 7.

[174] 'U Srbiji će tijekom devedesetih doći do oštrog podvajanja između autora koji podrazumijevaju *žanr kao postupak* i *žanr kao zadatak/intertekstualnu strategiju/rezervoar mitema* […]'. Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*, p. 216 [emphasis in the original].

1.2.4 The scholarship on genres: Serbia and the SFRY

Considering that genre is not considered to have played a significant role in the Yugoslav film industry until the 1980s, the scarcity of literature on film and film genres more generally becomes clearer. The rise of genre film can be seen as coinciding with a push to produce more up-to-date literature on film analysis and criticism. However, it is clear that perceptions of the value of genre film until this point also played an important role in limiting the attention paid to film. The first prominent work dedicated exclusively to the study of a particular film genre was Milutin Čolić's two-part *Jugoslovenski ratni film* from 1984, which highlights both the lack of attention paid to genre film until the 1980s and an acknowledgement of the dominant role that war films played in the SFRY.[175] Volk's history of Yugoslav film provides much-needed discussion on the different genres made in the course of Yugoslav film, but also illustrates how the situation of Yugoslav genre is complicated by the different nature of film in each of the SFRY's constitutive republics. While Serbia had the most active fiction film studio, Croatia focused on producing animated films and Bosnia-Hercegovina on documentary films. Volk's volume is split into chapters on the film industries of each republic at different points in Yugoslav history, and provides an overview of Yugoslav film as a whole. Volk also argues that, although Yugoslav film criticism often focuses on the different trends in each republic, Yugoslav film can be seen as a system of internal influence and reference. He writes that: 'The directors that were operating and creatively inventing new forms inside Serbian cinema did not

[175] Milutin Čolić, *Jugoslovenski ratni film* (Beograd: Institut za film, 1984).

blossom in isolation, without participating in the development that was noticeable in Yugoslav film [as a whole]'.[176] This concept on a unified and complimentary Yugoslav film system was understandably lost with the collapse of the SFRY in 1991, and can perhaps even be read as a lament of the rise of nationalist movements during the 1980s. It must also be noted that both Čolić and Volk are film critics, rather than scholars, and this tendency for the majority of Serbian film studies to be conducted by critics has continued into the present. This is not necessarily a negative development, but does influence the types of analyses conducted on Yugoslav and Serbian film, particularly of genres. This tendency may also suggest why there is such a strong focus on more serious, and therefore well made, films.

As was the case in Russia, since 1991, there has been more attention paid to the study of Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav film genres, although this attention has largely been limited to domestic literature and even this attention has been narrow. Some have blamed the ongoing indifference of the Yugoslav state itself for the lack of film scholarship that continues to affect film studies in the present day. Dragan Milinković Fimon writes: 'We [the author] do not believe that there are as many examples of such indifference and negligence about film documentarists and history on the behalf of the state as there is in our nation.'[177] Fimon's work, *Roman u jugoslovenskom filmu 1945-1990*, examines the prominent role that literary-

[176] 'Autori koji su delovali i stvaralački kreiraju nove forme unutar srpske kinematografije nikad se nisu razvijali u izolaciji, mimo kretanja koja su bila uočljiva u jugoslovenskom filmu'. Volk, p. 245.
[177] 'Ne verujemo da u svetu postoji mnogo primera takve ravnodušnosti i nebrige države o filmskoj dokumentaristici i istoriji kako je to kod nas'. Dragan Milinković Fimon, *Roman u jugoslovenskom filmu 1945-1990* (Beograd: Institut za film, 1998), p. 21.

historical films and literary adaptations played throughout Yugoslav cinema. Fimon identifies connections between the important topic of war in the SFRY and literary adaptations, suggesting that the seventy-nine films that were made between 1945 and 1990 can be split into three topics – 'pre-war', 'war', and 'post-war' narratives.[178] This illustrates how representations of war played a dominant role in film genres outside of the Partisan war film and explains why the literary-historical genre was given precedence by the authorities. Fimon also approaches the topic from the perspective of a global understanding of literary adaptations, referencing the traditions of such films in Hollywood.

Many authors focus on the context of genres as a part of wider historical processes affecting the development of the film industry. Vučetić's investigation of the prominent influence that US and Hollywood culture had on the SFRY discusses genre as a part of analysing the wider market motivations of Yugoslav film production. Vučetić examines the key role that Hollywood played in the establishment of the Yugoslav film industry, particularly after the SFRY's split from the Soviet Union in 1948. While Vučetić's work is not dedicated to examining the history of Yugoslav film, she illustrates how US film had a powerful influence on Yugoslav film genres and the promotion of the 'American dream' as a key part of the Cold War arsenal.[179] Much of Vučetić's discussion of this influence is focused on the popularity of the Western film genre in the SFRY and the examination of the

[178] Milinković Fimon, p. 84.
[179] Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, p. 80, for full discussion, see Chapter 3 in the same volume, 'Između ružičastog Holivuda i crnog talasa', pp. 79-162.

creation of Partisan-Westerns, the mixing of Partisan war films with the aesthetics of the Western film. She writes: 'Numerous statistics, analyses of cinema programmes and film reviews organised by film distributers illustrated that the Western film was truly the favourite, and in some ways also privileged, film genre in Yugoslavia'.[180] Vučetić rejects the notion that Partisan-Westerns were one-dimensional, suggesting that the genre can be split into further sub-genres or different 'schools', including, 'drama of consciousness', 'psychological drama', 'epic spectacles', 'comedy', 'thriller' and 'action film'.[181] Thus, both Fimon and Vučetić illustrate the role that local variations and genre-mixing had in the construction of film genres in the SFRY, in order to counteract the effects of the prominence of foreign films.

In recent years, there have been a number of articles and collected volumes featuring analyses of genre film in Serbia, which has contributed to the understanding of genre film as a post-communist phenomenon. One significant example includes the dual-language edited volume *Uvođenje mladosti: Sami sebe naslikali* [*Introducing Youth: Self-reflections on Serbian Cinema*], which features articles on the history of genre film in Serbia, documentary-dramas, and pop cinema. Ognjanović in his article on the history of genre film suggests that it is in the chaos of the 1990s that 'we also find the first authors who embrace genre without shame', counting Srđan Dragojević, Srdan Golubović and Stevan Filipović as being amongst the pioneers in this

[180] 'Mnogobrojne statistike, analize bioskopskih repertoara i revije filmova koje su organizovali distributeri ukazuju da je vestern, zaista, bio omiljeni, a na neki način i privilegovani, filmski žanr u Jugoslaviji'. Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, p. 126.
[181] '[…] partizanskom filmu davane su različite "školske" forme', 'drama svesti', 'psihološka drama', 'epski spektakl', 'komedija', 'triler', 'film akcije'. Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, pp. 137-138.

respect.[182] Ognjanović provides examples of the different types of film genres and sub-genres that have appeared in recent years, including (black) comedy, teenage comedy, horror film, thriller and fantasy. However, Ognjanović pursues the idea that genre films were a specifically late-communist and post-communist phenomenon in Serbia. In the same volume, Dimitrije Vojnov writes about Serbian 'pop film/pop cinema', a term that suggests a genre encompassing popular film and music video culture. Vojnov elucidates the ways in which recent Serbian film has sought to maximise its populist potential amongst film-goers, through combinations of references to popular Yugoslav and Hollywood genres.[183]

Another recent contribution to the understanding of film genre in Serbia includes *Novi kadrovi: skrajnute vrednosti srpskog filma*, which re-examines the work of prominent New Film directors, such as Dušan Makavejev, Jovan Jovanović and Kokan Rakonjac, through the prism of genres, such as the horror, crime and queer film in Serbia.[184] Authors in the volume also seek to address the lack of certain genres in Yugoslav film by connecting their absence to the political atmosphere. Ognjanović, in his article on Serbian horror films, argues that, 'the communist regime of Tito's Yugoslavia regarded any form of fantasy outside of its own rosy utopias of the shining socialist future with an unfriendly eye'.[185] This perspective echoes his

[182] '[…] nalazimo i prve autori koji žanr prigrljuju bez stida'. Ognjanović, 'Žanrovski filmovi…' , p. 74.
[183] Dimitrije Vojnov, 'Uspon i pad srpskog pop filma', in *Uvođenje mladosti: Sami sebe naslikali* by Goran Gočić and others (Beograd: Filmski Centar Srbije, 2008), 97-113.
[184] See Dejan Ognjanović and Ivan Velisavljević, eds., *Novi kadrovi: skrajnute vrednosti srpskog filma*, (Belgrade: CLIO, 2008).
[185] 'Komunistički režim Titove Jugoslavije neprijateljski je gledao na bilo kakvu vrstu fantastike izvan sopstvenih ružičastih utopija o blistavoj socijalističkoj budućnosti'. Dejan Ognjanović, 'Srpski horror film između metafore i stvarnosti', in *Novi Kadrovi*, 13-42 (p. 16).

belief that film genres as a wider concept were not permissible in the Yugoslav political atmosphere, a point that may have been true for the controversial horror genre, but has been proven not to be the case for ideologically acceptable genres.

In post-communist Serbian film scholarship, as with Russian, there is a tendency to explore genres within wider aesthetic themes, rather than focusing on specific genres, something that was intensified in the political atmosphere of the 1990s. A major point of research into post-communist film of the former Yugoslav states has examined how the Balkan Peninsula as a metaphorical concept has influenced film production and genre types in the region. In large part, this trend in post-communist film studies has been driven by specific cultural needs, namely the overwhelming representation in the west of the Balkans as inherently disposed to violence and war following 1991. Maria Todorova's seminal work on 'Balkanism' argues: 'What has been emphasised about the Balkans is that its inhabitants do not care to conform to the standards of behaviour devised as normative by and for the civilised world.'[186] This impression has left a strong mark on the films and film studies in the region. In the literature on Serbian film, Daković has discussed the development of genres in recent Serbian cinema, such as the war film, ghetto and urban films, youth film and melodrama, but through the overarching prism of the Balkans. She suggests that the Balkans can be seen as a kind of supra-genre of their own, which encompasses specific regional types of

[186] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, updated edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 [1997]), p. 1.

established film genres, writing: 'Balkan genre is a system of contaminated and hybridised genres, to which regional productions and subject matters belong.'[187] The emphasis is thus placed on how national cinema and national genre is interwoven 'into the construction of national specificity'.[188] Daković's approach suggests that Altman's approach to national cinema in *Film/Genre* has relevance for the case of the Western Balkans and Serbian cinema, and illustrates the importance of exploring the existence of specific national/domestic approaches to genre film.

Daković's work leads on from other texts that have been dedicated to exploring how national and regional tensions contributed to the representation of the Balkans on screen, and which have contributed to the concept that the region provides a specific frame for film. Iordanova's work explores Balkanism not just as a Western product, but also as 'a process which has been embraced, internalised and partially carried out by many consenting Balkan intellectuals', including film-makers.[189] This leads to 'a specific voluntary "self-exoticism", which becomes the preferred mode of self-representation for many Balkan film-makers', particularly in the post-communist period when these divisions were heightened by the violence in the region.[190] Iordanova does not examine film genre explicitly, but does critically examine a number of film genres as part of her analysis of how the

[187] 'Balkanski žanr je sistem kontaminiranih i hibridizovanih žanrova kojima pripadaju dela regionalne produkcije i dela regionalne produkcije i dela regionalne tematike'. Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 42.
[188] '[Nacionalni film i nacionalni žanr se prepliću u ulozi] u konstruisanju nacionalne specifičnosti'. Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 43.
[189] Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames*, p. 56.
[190] Ibid.

Balkan narrative is constructed, focusing on genres of history and place. She suggests that 'the distinctive travelogue-type narrative structure is characteristic of a large number of "Balkan" plots'.[191] The travelogue serves as a means of delineating the West from the East in both metaphorical and spatial terms, a delineation that remains prominent in Serbian film narratives. In addition to this, Iordanova examines the role of the historical films, which she suggests, in both Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav film, 'offer an intentionally fragmented, and even facetious picture of history'.[192] A key part of the Balkan metaphor revolves around the perceived regional pre-disposition for violence and the actual nature of film representations of violence. Rather than being endemic in Balkan film, Iordanova writes: '[…] violence is not celebrated, but condemned […] wherever present, the acts of violence are treated as ugly, meaningless and self-destructive'.[193] Significantly for any study of genre, *Cinema of Flames* provides categories of character types that have appeared before and in the aftermath of the SFRY's collapse, including the 'villains and victims' of the Bosnian War, featuring, 'the ridiculed and diminished Balkan politician, the intriguing thug, the flamboyant warlord and the retarded killing machine'.[194] While themes of violence and questions of victimhood, as well as a number of these character types, appear recurrently in the films analysed in this thesis, it is essential to note that this reoccurrence is linked to the types of genres being discussed. Rather than seeing violence as a specifically Balkan

[191] Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames*, p. 56.
[192] Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames*, p. 89.
[193] Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames*, p. 161.
[194] Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames*, p. 176.

occurrence in these contexts, this thesis positions violence as a more universal experience.

1.3 Youth film

While all film genres are evolutionary by nature, the genre of 'youth film' is particularly difficult to define. Other genres may be characterised with relative ease, if not always faithfully, through their use of set characters, plots, settings, and structures, youth film is primarily based on the age of its protagonists, which changes the means by which we can consider a film as belonging to the youth film genre. To add extra difficulties in the global context of film studies, the age range that constitutes 'youth' varies from country to country and from time period to time period. Youth cultures and subcultures, fashions and trends, change from year to year, and films respond accordingly to try to represent this new youth. As Thomas Doherty observes, 'in pinpointing the year of release for any given teenpic, the slang, fashion, and music soundtrack of the moment are more accurate than carbon dating', as films reflect the specific societal context within which they were made.[195] This haziness of definition is compounded by the sense that youth film is somehow more trivial than other genres, which has led to a general insufficiency of scholarship in relation to the size of the youth film corpus. The interpretation of youth film as being simplistic is driven in part by past tendencies of film industries in creating such films. Even Timothy Shary, a leading scholar of youth film, refers to Hollywood beach youth films of the

[195] Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), p. 190.

1960s as 'inane'.[196] Yet the lack of attention paid to youth film is particularly strange considering that the youth film, in its various forms, can be considered the most enduring of film genres that can and has been deployed consistently throughout every decade. Within this insufficiency of scholarship, there is an imbalance which favours Hollywood youth films over the youth films of other cinemas. To date, there is very little published work on the study of Russian, Soviet, Serbian and Yugoslav youth film, and that which is published has not taken steps to provide a wider overview of the different subgenres of youth films that exist in Russia and Serbia up to the present day. I argue that the youth film in these industries faces a double bind – youth films are globally considered a flippant genre and genres more generally are also looked down upon. This research therefore relies heavily on the literature on youth film from the perspective of Hollywood, which, although having a very different cultural perspective, provides a comprehensive basis for explorations into Russian and Serbian youth film.

Considering that youth films appeared as early as the 1920s, the study of youth film only began in earnest when Considine published the first major work dedicated to the genre, *The Cinema of Adolescence*, in 1985. Considine gives a thorough introduction to Hollywood youth films, split according to specific time periods that represented landmarks in youth film, as well as introducing the now commonly held view that youth film is intrinsically intertwined with the wider aims of the film industry. Unlike other authors Considine and, later, Catherine Driscoll, drawing on Considine's work,

[196] Shary, *Generation Multiplex,* p. 6.

highlight the existence of youth films in the very earliest years of the Hollywood industry in the 1930s, which predominately focused on the ways in which the economic crises of the previous decade had fractured the family unit.[197] Throughout the history of film, there has been a general assumption that youth film was an invention of the post-Second World War world. It is clear that, from the 1950s onwards, the Hollywood film industry has indeed focused on appealing to the teenage audience as young people are the primary consumers of film.[198] The term 'teenager' itself was an invention of the US after the Second World War, where young people were given freedoms and leisure time that was not afforded to young people at any point in the past. Thus, scholars, such as Considine, Doherty, and Shary, pinpoint the 1950s as the decade in which the youth film came into being as a distinct genre, and Doherty in particular ties the creation of the genre with the concrete creation of the teenage age group.[199] Doherty posits that youth film is an evolution of an earlier form of film for young people, 'teen film' explicitly designed to appeal to young people as an 'exploitation film'.[200] By 'exploitation', Doherty refers to the system in which teen films were made, firstly the advertising and promotion of films that was intended to 'entice' the audience into the cinema and secondly, in the way that the film appeals to its audience.[201] A distinction therefore needs to be made between films that are

[197] Considine, p. 2 and 16; Catherine Driscoll, 'Modernism, Cinema, Adolescence: Another History for Teen Film', *Screening the Past,* 32 (2011), <http://www.screeningthepast.com/issue-32/> [Accessed 2 August 2015].
[198] Considine, p. 1; For more detail on appealing to the teen audience, see also, Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics*, pp. 32-53.
[199] See Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics*, p. 2; Considine, pp. 181-182; Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 2.
[200] Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics,* pp. 2-9.
[201] Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics*, p. 2.

made to appeal to young people, arguably a large proportion of all films, and those that are made about young people. Doherty primarily focuses on 'teen film' as being intended above all for the teenage audience, rather than exploring another clear target for teen and youth film, which is that many of these narratives are aimed at entertaining the adult audience as well.

Since the beginning of dedicated youth film scholarship in 1985, Shary has established himself as an authority on youth film, and has advocated examining youth film not as primarily being intended for teenagers and young people, but as having a much wider function in society. Shary points out,

> one of the telling dilemmas of youth films since cinema began is that while they address young people they are not produced by young people, for children and teens are effectively restricted from the filmmaking process. Thus screen images of youth have always been traditionally filtered through adult perspectives. [202]

This provides a basis for a more detailed exploration into the creation of youth film, and the issues they discuss than is provided by Doherty. In particular, Shary's work is dedicated to exploring the renaissance in youth film in the 1980s, when genres and themes were expanded into what is recognised by most people as being youth film today, and coincided with a new setting of film consumerism – the multiplex cinema.[203] Like Shary's, the analyses in this thesis firmly advocate the position that, while many youth films may seek to attract a youth audience, there is also a conscious

[202] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 2.
[203] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 7.

recognition of the adult world as holding the dominant place in the filmic hierarchy. Youth films since their creation have frequently been sensationalist explorations of what adults perceive as being contemporary youth behaviour and culture. The youth audience enjoys watching these expressions of rebellious freedom, while older audiences either have their fears about youth fed or are allowed a fleeting moment of nostalgia for their own youth. As Christina Lee argues: 'Any study of youth requires a return to the past, whether it is an exercise in historic mapping or reminiscence of seminal events in our own lives.'[204]

The sensationalism of many youth films has elicited parallels between the genre and developments in the field of sociology, something which differentiates the youth film from the history of other genres.[205] As youth film is linked to a specific age group, the study of youth film has always been accompanied by a discussion on the role that youth also has in society. Authors such as Doherty, Shary, Considine, Driscoll and Lee all reference G. Stanley Hall's study of young people from 1904, *Adolescence: Its Psychology, and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*, which 'may be credited as the beginning of youth studies'.[206] In addition to this, when speaking of youth style in society, scholars of youth film also cite the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural

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[204] Christina Lee, *Screening Generation X: The Politics and Popular Memory of Youth in Contemporary Cinema* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), p. 4.
[205] See Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics*, p. 32-39.
[206] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 21, referring to G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology, and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904). See also, Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics*, p. 32; Lee, *Screening Generation X*, p. 13.

Studies, where extensive research on youth subcultures was carried out.[207] Shary suggests that the coinciding 'proliferation of cinema and the founding of youth studies within the same historical generation may not be indicative of a cause-and-effect relationship', but nonetheless, 'the relationship between cinema and youth is significant'.[208] Youth films are linked to fears about the development of young people, their cultures and subcultures, fed by concerns articulated in the media. This thesis discusses the representation and characterisation of youth in Russia and Serbia as a filmic reflection of the social and historical contexts within which the films are made, whilst also illustrating the downside of these assumptions. However, film representations of youth are always an exaggerated reflection of existing youth culture. The analyses in this thesis will clarify where the image of the young person is used to elicit a specific reaction from the audience, by playing on the contemporary fears of adults, and will also examine how a variety of film genres are transformed by their featuring a youth protagonist.

The dominant role of adults in the production of youth films leads to an inherent paradox: youth films are often about young people, but are not necessarily intended for young audiences. There are a body of films that are youth films in essence – if, as this thesis does, you define youth film by the age of the protagonists – but are clearly aimed at the adult audience, including several examples that exclude much of the teenage audience through film classification. Commenting on this phenomenon, Catherine

[207] Lee, *Screening Generation X*, p. 14.
[208] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 21.

Driscoll writes that, 'teen films are often marketed as being realistic, and very often this marketing strategy claims that teen film in general is not realistic'.[209] In other words, the former category of youth films claims to show the real story of youth and suggests that other youth films are offering a sugar-coated or trivial version of this generation. Driscoll uses the term 'teen film for grown-ups', and cites the film *Kids* (dir. Larry Clark, Independent Pictures, 1995) as her central example.[210] *Kids* became notorious for its explicit depiction of the lives of teenagers in New York, which primarily revolve around teenagers having sex, sexually abusing other teens, and taking drugs. While Driscoll sees teen film as being a separate sub-genre of youth film, referring to those protagonists between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, this distinction is an important recognition of the lack of agency that young people have in the creation of youth film.

The fact that youth film has even less clearly-defined parameters than other film genres is not a hindrance to the study of this type of cinema. The genre is defined by its appropriation of other film genres. This frees the analysis from the more rigid restrictions of genre criticism, which might otherwise inhibit a full analysis of any given youth film. The youth film's fluidity is one of its primary appeals for film directors. Youth films can be found in both genre and art cinema, offering a means of bridging the perceived gap between these two types of film-making. The films analysed in this thesis can be considered to be both types. The age of the youth

[209] Driscoll, *Teen Film*, p. 112.
[210] Driscoll, *Teen Film*, p. 112.

protagonist immediately throws up a number of common experiences, which separate the youth and adult worlds, thus there is always a structure of sorts to rely on. In particular, the youth film genre can be taken as an overarching category under which films can be grouped according to their adherence to sub-genres.

The sub-genres of youth film have come into existence in one of two ways. On the one hand, some are off-shoots of genres typically featuring adult protagonists, including the youth horror film, romance film, fantasy film, rock and roll film, and sex comedy, the narratives of which are appropriately transformed by their use of youth protagonists. The youth horror film, for example, concentrates on 'youth fears of being different, becoming sexual, and confronting adult responsibilities'.[211] On the other hand, other genres, such as the 'school film', the 'site of individual growth through not only educational achievements but also the earning of social acceptance', are understandably linked directly to teenagers through their setting.[212] This thesis analyses other subgenres, which have specific relevance to youth film, in particular the juvenile delinquency film, and thus an overview of these genres is provided in each chapter. Within the wider category of youth film, a number of common and recurring themes can be identified that are directly linked to the exploration of growing up. These include: family difficulties and the breakdown of the family unit; schooling, university and college; falling in love; first sexual experiences; the making and breaking of friendships;

[211] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 161.
[212] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 30.

delinquency; experimentation with illicit substances; rebelling against parents or other authority figures; trying and sometimes failing to find a concrete position in the adult world; leaving school and seeking employment. Many of these topics are portrayed in the films analysed in this thesis, but the rites-of-passage of young people are depicted as having been twisted in the post-communist transition, presenting further examples of the different meanings taken on by the genre as a whole.

While the literature on youth film is disproportionately focused on the US, there has been a slow recognition of the important role that youth film plays in global cinema. Welcome additions to the field include Timothy Shary and Alexandra Seibel's edited volume, *Youth culture in global cinema*, which addresses the fact that 'the coming-of-age process is familiar to all cultures and classes of people', in spite of cultural differences.[213] In particular, Shary notes that, across the globe, both the youth film genre and the fears of adults increasingly revolve around concerns over young people's access to information.[214] In addition to this, Murray Pomerance and Frances Gateward's edited volume, *Where the Boys Are: Cinemas of Masculinity and Youth*, explores how narratives of boyhood are addressed across global cinema. In this volume, the contributors explore the relationship between the 'boy's place as inheritor of privilege and command', and how global representations of boyhood form a part of understanding how gendered

[213] Timothy Shary, 'Introduction: Youth Culture Shock' in *Youth culture in global cinema* ed. by Timothy Shary and Alexandra Seibel (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 1-6 (p. 2).
[214] Shary, 'Introduction: Youth Culture Shock', p. 2.

social structures become entrenched in adult life.[215] The latter volume can help to explain why so many youth films revolve around the trials and tribulations of young men and why young women and girls, as supporting characters, are portrayed in one-dimensional forms – the gendered structure of adult life and the filmic worlds of adults are sub-consciously compounded in the gendered structures of youth film.

One of the most useful aspects of Shary and Seibel's volume is the inclusion of a filmography of global youth film that is categorised by 'themes' that these films share. They suggest that films made outside Hollywood are more likely to discuss 'tensions around cultural and national identity' than US films.[216] Other common themes include: abuse, artistic talent, cultural/national identity, delinquency, drugs, family problems, gender switching, heterosexual relations, homosexual/bisexual relations, incest, mental disorders, murder, paedophilia, pregnancy, prostitution, racism, rape, religion, schooling, sports, and war.[217] While some of these topics feature in the Hollywood subgenres above, others, especially war and national/cultural identity, are addressed with particular urgency, and in a completely different manner in Russian and Serbian film, than they are in Hollywood. In particular, global youth cinema distinctly diverges from Hollywood cinema in the depiction of the burgeoning political and ideological consciousness of youth; Shary suggests that, 'unlike US teen films, many international youth films deal

[215] Murray Pomerance and Frances Gateward, 'Introduction' in *Where the Boys Are: Cinemas of Masculinity and Youth*, ed. by Murray Pomerance and Frances Gateward (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), pp. 1-18 (p. 2).
[216] Shary, 'Introduction: Youth Culture Shock', p. 4.
[217] See 'Appendix B: Filmography of Global Youth Films by Theme' in Shary and Seibel, *Youth culture in global cinema*.

with topics of politics and religion.'[218] In the US, 'youth rarely have political affiliations, even if they have clearly political ideas.'[219] The reason for this is unclear, but awakening political and ideological consciousness is one of the topics that have become of supreme importance in recent Russian and Serbian film.

1.3.1 Youth film in Russia and the Soviet Union

To date, there have been no comprehensive studies of the youth film genre in Russia, Serbia, the Soviet Union or the SFRY. Secondary literature on youth film from these two nations gathered for this thesis has been drawn from articles or book chapters that have explored the representation of youth or from brief mentions within texts on wider themes.[220] The rise of youth film genre of sorts in Soviet cinema has been documented as being linked to the thaw era (1956-63) and the creation of the 'youth novel' in the wake of the shifting society focus after WWII.[221] Clark in particular suggests that the youth novel 'first appeared in 1956', the same year as Krushchev's Secret Speech denouncing Stalin.[222] The post-war development of the youth genre provides an interesting, but perhaps coincidental, parallel with Hollywood youth film. Doherty argues that the first 'teen film' was made in Hollywood in 1956.[223] The appearance of the teenager in the US and the increasing consumerism of

[218] Shary 'Introduction: Youth Culture Shock', p. 4.
[219] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 298.
[220] See, for example: Alexander Prokhorov, 'The adolescent and the child in the cinema of the Thaw', *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, 1:2 (2007), 115-129; Julia Vasilieva, '"Becoming-Girl" in the New Russian Cinema: Youth and Valeria Gai Germanika's Films and Television', *Camera-Obscura: Feminism, Culture and Media Studies*, 29:1, 59-79; Olga Klimova, 'Reading Other People's Letters in the 1970s: Reconstructing Soviet Spectatorship in Il'ia Averbakh's *Other People's Letters* (1975)', *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, 40 (2013), 3-37.
[221] Woll, *Real Images*, especially pp. 112-124;
[222] Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: history as ritual* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 226. Clark goes on to discuss the traits of the youth novel, pp. 226-232.
[223] Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics*, p. 54.

Soviet youth can be interpreted as a catalyst for the recognition of the importance of young audiences in the Soviet Union as well. In particular, the youth novel or youth prose movement centred on the cult fiction of Vasilii Aksenov, who became famous for his novel, *Zvezdnyi bilet* [*A Ticket to the Stars*] (1961). Mark Yoffe writes that Aksenov's 'characters spoke in a natural way, using hip lingo, they went to bars and dance halls, had premarital sex, listened to jazz and rock 'n' roll', embodying a new Soviet generation and bringing this generation into popular culture.[224]

Before WWII, youth films had been subsumed by critics into a more general category, 'children's cinema (*detskoe kino*)', and representations of young adults were not offered a separate agenda in Soviet cinema.[225] Children's cinema had a long history in the Soviet Union, dating back to the Revolutionary years, when the new Bolshevik government 'designated cinema to serve as the key tool of extracurricular education and propaganda'.[226] The Soviet Union also became the location of the world's first film studio dedicated to children's cinema with the creation of *Soiuzdetfil'm* in 1936, an initiative led by the efforts of Margarita Barskaia.[227] However, throughout the majority of Soviet film history, youth film remained a part of this wider category of children's cinema, with 'most films about young people and teenagers' being called 'cinema for children and youth' (*kino dlia detei i*

[224] Mark Yoffe, 'Obituary: Vasily Aksyonov', *The Guardian*, 16 July 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/jul/16/vasily-aksyonov-obituary> [accessed 12 November 2015].
[225] Klimova, 'Soviet Youth Films', p. 76-77.
[226] Prokhorov, 'Arresting Development…', p. 130.
[227] Birgit Beumers, Nikolai Izvolov, Natalia Miloserdova and Natalia Riabchikova, 'Margarita Barskaia and the emergence of Soviet children's cinema', *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, 3:2 (2009), 229-262 (p. 230).

molodezhi).[228] Thus, much of the discussion of youth characters has been in the context of, or as secondary to, children's cinema.

Prokhorov notes that, in the aftermath of WWII and the fall of Stalin's cult of personality, the 'adolescent hero became the favourite hero of the 1950s' and that the development of three genres was linked to creation of this hero, 'the family melodrama, the crime film, and the school film.'[229] This trend reached a peak in 1960 and 1961, when 'at least half a dozen films featured children or adolescents.'[230] The rise of youth characters was juxtaposed with the perceived insufficiencies of the adult, and particularly the adult male, world in the post-war period. During the thaw, the adult world was represented as having supported the terrors of Stalin, whilst young people signified a new era in Soviet society. The family melodrama 'reinvented the nuclear family as the community of the rejuvenated Soviet culture that opposed the monumental "great family" of Stalinist culture.'[231] Following this, Prokhorov notes that, 'the crime film emerges as a distinct genre employing a variation of the melodramatic story with an adolescent of young adult as protagonist', in which 'crime ceases being an ideological transgression and is redefined as a traumatic event in an individual's life and a social disease.'[232] Youth film thus served as a metaphor for societal renewal, as well as new fears, in both the Soviet and Hollywood film industries in the 1950s.

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[228] Klimova, 'Soviet Youth Films', p. 76.
[229] Prokhorov, 'The adolescent and the child in the cinema of the Thaw', p. 115.
[230] Woll, *Real Images*, p. 113.
[231] Prokhorov, 'The adolescent and the child in the cinema of the Thaw', p. 116.
[232] Prokhorov, 'The adolescent and the child in the cinema of the Thaw', p. 117.

Screen images of children are associated with innocence or the loss of innocence in the world of adults, whilst representations of youth and adolescents approach far more complex topics. For example, Prokhorov notes that the Soviet school films broached 'religious experience', 'premarital sex', 'juvenile delinquency', and 'the refusal to participate in Soviet public life', that is, topics associated with growing up and navigating the existing social structure.[233] Children on the other hand 'carried a new set of values', having been born after the war or even after the death of Stalin.[234] In spite of the positivity of some youth heroes, not all filmic representations of adolescents and youths revolved around youth as a source of hope and future. There were a number of thaw-era films that depicted 'a younger generation that has no ideals, drifting in life', including Marlen Khutsiev's *Mne dvadtsat' let* [*I am Twenty*] (Gorkii Studio, 1964) and *Iul'skii dozhd'* [*July Rain*] (Mosfil'm, 1966).[235] The shift away from the centralised myths of the Stalin era led to depictions of youth as being alienated from the older generation, not just superseding them; 'adolescents and young people in Thaw films are pursuing personal, not social goals.'[236] This tendency can be seen as an early manifestation of the youth topics that dominated perestroika cinema.

Before perestroika, during the stagnation period, 'the adolescent hero loses the ability to undergo re-education and to be mentored', and the myth of the positive adolescent hero was dismantled in film.[237] This is not to

[233] Prokhorov, 'The adolescent and the child in the cinema of the Thaw', p. 118.
[234] Prokhorov, 'The adolescent and the child in the cinema of the Thaw', p. 119.
[235] Beumers, *A history of Russian cinema*, p. 135.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Prokhorov, 'The adolescent and the child in the cinema of the Thaw', p. 126.

suggest that there were more searching representations in youth film; on the contrary, Prokhorov notes that in the Leonid Gaidai comedies in particular, the 'positive adolescent hero is parodied and becomes a modern version of Ivan-the-Fool'.[238] In the cultural atmosphere of stagnation, youth troubles once again become an indulgent topic, manipulated to suit the spheres of adult interests, in the wider scheme of communist construction. This underlines how the youth protagonists of Soviet films were arguably never given an independent agenda, even during the peak of youth film in the thaw. However, one of the most significant directors of Russo-Soviet youth film, Sergei Solov'ev, began his career during the stagnation period, with the release of his film, *Sto dnei posle detstva* [*100 Days After Childhood*] (Mosfil'm, 1975). Konstantin Shavlovskii, in an interview, suggests to Solov'ev that he is 'the only director who has persistently worked with the genre of "film for children and youth", as it was formerly known'.[239] As with other genres in Soviet film, Solov'ev can be counted amongst those *auteurs* explicitly linked to a specific genre – in this case the youth film. However, writing in 2010, Shavlovskii's comment suggests that 'cinema for children and youth' is no longer a unified category in Russian film.

Since stagnation, the representation of the lives of young people served as a means of alluding to the inherent rot within Soviet society, a topic which I explore in detail in Chapter 3. As Prokhorov notes, 'Gorbachev's

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[238] Ibid.

[239] '[Вы, наверное] единственный режиссёр, который целенаправленно работает с жанром «фильм для детей и юношества», как его раньше называли'. Konstantin Shavlovskii, 'Blagorodstvo bol'she ne rabotaet', *Seans (Blog)*, 28 April 2010, <http://seance.ru/blog/blagorodstvo-bolshe-ne-rabotaet/> [accessed 14 November 2015].

perestroika began precisely with an attempt to accomplish the unfinished agenda of the Thaw, namely to assert a horizontal over the vertical axis.'[240] Thus, the historical experience can be seen as being fundamental to the uses of youth film in the perestroika period and, as the analysis of *Brat* in Chapter 3 demonstrates, to the development of youth film in the post-Soviet period. The fundamental point of this discussion is that, during the ideologically restrictive Soviet period, youth were represented as key to the development of communist society. Later, youth would become the key to the destruction of communism, and then a representative of the ambiguous future, as is detailed in this thesis.

In the post-communist period and in spite of the acknowledgement that young people represent the key market for film, youth film did not fare well in the immediate post-communist period and has clearly only begun to recover in recent years. This situation has been changing from approximately 2005 onwards, with a greater focus being paid on producing successful genre films and an increased prominence of youth protagonists. There have been a number of films produced with youth protagonists in various genres, not all of which could be included for close analysis in this thesis. Some examples include: *Sestry* [*Sisters*] (dir. Sergei Bodrov, CTB Film Company, 2001); *Kremen'* [*Hard-hearted*] (dir. Aleksei Mizgirev, CTB Film Company, 2007); *Stiliagi* [*Hipsters*] (dir. Valerii Todorovskii, Krasnaia strela, 2008); *Vse umrut, a ia ostanius'* [*Everybody Dies But Me*] (dir. Valeriia Gai Germanika, Profit, 2008); *Chernaia molniia* [*Black Lightning*] (dir. Aleksandr Voitinskii and Dmitrii

[240] Prokhorov, 'The adolescent and the child in the cinema of the Thaw', p. 127.

Kiselev, Bazelevs Production, 2009). It is becoming increasingly clear that, rather than thinking youth topics are not an important market in film, directors and production companies are maximising the potential for profits by focusing on youth television programmes. There have been a number of popular youth television series made in recent years, the most famous of which is Valeriia Gai Germanika's *Shkola* [*School*] (2010, Channel One). In fact, *My iz budushchego* (Chapter 5), along with other youth films like *Stiliagi*, have been released simultaneously in the cinema and on television.[241] The private television channels TNT and STS, dedicated to entertainment shows, have produced a large number of youth television programmes in recent years. Youth television programmes is an area that will no doubt prove a productive site for future research.

In the post-communist period, there is a burgeoning interest in youth film, although there is still little recognition or exploration of youth film as a specific genre in Russian film. This thesis enters scholarship on Russian film here and provides an overview of some of the social issues that drive youth representations and the complex role that youth films play in recent Russian cinema. My analysis of Russian youth film shows that the rise of youth film is linked to the increase in the prominence of genre films in Russia. Yet, it must be acknowledged that there are two types of youth films being produced: youth films that hold a specific function in the creation of positive youth heroes, most of which follow the pattern of other 'Russian blockbusters'; and

[241] See, for example, Lilya Kaganovsky, 'Russian Rock on Soviet Bones', in *Sound, Speech, Music in Soviet and Post-Soviet Cinema*, ed. by Lilya Kaganovsky and Masha Salazkina (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 252-272.

youth films that have been produced independently, usually on low budgets, and therefore approach difficult topics that would normally fall outside the state subsidies.

1.3.2 Youth film in Serbia and the SFRY

In Serbia, studies of youth film in Yugoslavia and post-communist Serbia are rarely discussed in secondary literature, in large part due to a lack of development in genre criticism. It is possible, however, to highlight some genres that were connected to youth films in the SFRY and also to provide examples of different types of youth films that were clearly in existence. Youth films played a prominent role in Yugoslav film. In an article from 1989, Čolić stated that of the 815 films made in the SFRY since 1945, 'more than half speak about young people'.[242] One of the first films to be released in the SFRY was a documentary entitled, *Mladina gradi* [*Youth builds*] (dir. France Stiglič, Triglav Film, 1946), which depicted the Youth Labour Brigades that set about reconstructing Yugoslavia after WWII. Children's cinema, meanwhile, also existed as a separate genre, with the children's adventure film *Kekec* [*Kekec*] (dir. Jože Gale, Triglav Film, 1951), spawning a trilogy of popular children's films. Čolić's article 'Mladost je sudbina filma [Youth are the destiny of film]' addresses the fact that, in spite of the clear proliferation of youth protagonists in Yugoslav films, there is no recognition of the importance that these characters or of the different meanings that the use of a youth protagonist predicates. He writes that, young people in the SFRY were

[242] '[U Jugoslavii je posle rata snimljeno 815 igranih filmova.] Više od polovine govori o mladima'. Milutin Čolić, 'Mladost je sudbina filma (1989)', in *Čudi našeg filma* (Beograd: Jugoslovenska kinoteka, 1997), 480-486 (p. 480).

recognised as the primary consumers of film, but the 'topic of "Youth on Film" is complex' and implies the need for a number of perspectives including, 'social, political, pedagogical and others', none of which had then been employed by film scholars.[243]

As with many countries, youth on film played two roles – one of supporting the ideological needs of the regime, and one of addressing contemporary social issues that affected Yugoslav youth. Čolić writes that, 'in the first post-war years: […] young people were that which was then surrounding them: romantics!'[244] Čolić is here referring to the representation of the youthfulness of the Partisan struggle in war film classics of the late 1940s and early 1950s, including *Slavica*, whose protagonists were a young couple who sacrifice love for the higher cause of liberation. Youth also took part in the Partisan struggle on film 'without uniforms', as 'builders', 'activists against saboteurs and spies […] or against smugglers', or 'they were simply overjoyed and in love'.[245] Their roles in the struggle remained within the bounds of the official ideology, 'they were not on the margins of life', but were simply living.[246]

From the 1950s onwards, the SFRY also had its own 'youth prose' movement, which Rade Pribić has suggested is better classified by Aleksandar

[243] '[I stoga] je tema „Mladi na filmu" kompleksna, [te implicira razne oblasti i poglede – kako, sto rekosmo,] socijalne, politicke, pedagoške i druge'. Čolić, 'Mladost je sudbina filma', p. 481.
[244] 'U prvim posleratnim: […] mladi su to što je sve oko njih tada bilo: romantici!'. Čolić, 'Mladost je sudbina filma', p. 482.
[245] '[Mladi u filmovima] bez uniformi […], aktivisti protiv sabotera i špijuna […], ili protiv krijumčara […] ili su, naprosto, razdragani i zaljubljeni'. Čolić, 'Mladost je sudbina filma', p. 482.
[246] 'Nisu ni na marginama života'. Ibid.

Flaker's term, 'blue jeans prose'.[247] Pribić writes that, in this youth or blue jeans prose, 'adolescent opposition to the world of adults is not described in terms of confrontation. Rather, the youthful clique avoids the adult world. Adolescents form their own islands within society and here the protagonists live their usually inactive lives.'[248] This assessment echoes the wider sense that youth culture was not in opposition to communist rule, but was negotiated within society. However, there is a sense that adolescent protagonists lived in a state of inertia. The development of youth prose in the SFRY compounds the idea that youth culture took on a more prominent role not only in Hollywood films during this period, but also in communist societies as well. In the 1950s, František Čap 'introduced the youth comedy genre' to Yugoslav cinema, directing *Vesna* [*Vesna*] (Triglav Film, 1953), a teen romantic comedy about a group of secondary school students.[249] Čap went on to direct a number of other films in the same genre, which proved to be a very popular genre with audiences; *Vesna*, for example, was the 'most watched film of 1954, but also a major cultural touchstone of the Yugoslav 1950s'.[250] For the most part, Čap's films were not seen as disruptive to the established norms of Yugoslav society: 'the conciliatory outcome is guaranteed in advance and everyone will find their proper place and function eventually.'[251] While some may have seen genre film as being a low and socially conservative form of film art, this did not deter audiences for enjoying these types of films, but the

[247] Rado Pribić, 'Blue jeans fiction of Yugoslavia', *Journal of Reading*, 26:5 (1983), 430-434 (p. 431).
[248] Pribić, p. 432.
[249] Nebojša Jovanović, 'My own private Yugoslavia: František Čap and the socialist celluloid closet', *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, 3:2, 211-229 (p. 219).
[250] Ibid.
[251] Zdenko Vrlovec quoted in Jovanović, 'My own private Yugoslavia…', p. 216.

youth films in particular fulfilled their role as a guide to social norms and values. These examples also suggest that the Slovene film studio, Triglav Film, played a key role in the establishment of youth and children's film in the SFRY.

The traditional Yugoslav representation of happy youth changed with the arrival of New Film, which, in its dedication to the depiction of '*savremene teme* (contemporary themes)', frequently focused on the alienation and struggles of youth in the SFRY.[252] Čolić notes that, in addition to the positive depiction of Yugoslav youths: 'Film about young people implies scepticism, control, defiance'.[253] Juvenile delinquency films appeared in the SFRY in the late 1950s, with Čap's film, *Vrata ostaju otvorena* [*The Doors Remain Open*] (Bosna Film, 1959), about a young charlatan who has escaped from prison. Nebojša Jovanović sees *Vrata ostaju otvorena* as a marked departure from Čap's previous youth comedy films, citing that the film has 'an undeniable air of ambiguity', although the protagonist, Petar, is rehabilitated in the end.[254] By the arrival of New Film in 1961, any ambiguity in the representation of juvenile delinquents would disappear; there were a number of shocking depictions of deviancy in the 1960s and very early 1970s. Stark examples include: *Horoskop* [*Horoscope*] (dir. Boro Drašković, Bosna Film, 1969), in which a group of young men on holiday at the seaside commit a gang rape; *Nemirni* [*The Restless*] (dir. Vojislav 'Kokan' Rakonjac, Filmska Radna Zajednica, 1967), where four teenagers go on a fatal joyride; and *Mlad i zdrav kao ruža* [*Young and Healthy as a Rose*] (dir. Jovan Jovanović, Dunav Film,

[252] Goulding, p. 66.
[253] Čolić, 'Mladost je sudbina filma', p. 483.
[254] Jovanović, 'My own private Yugoslavia…', p. 219.

1971), which tells the story of Steve, who goes on a criminal rampage around Belgrade before being killed by the police. These films were designed to shock audiences and attack the Titoist myth of perfect youth; for example, the protagonist of *Mlad i zdrav kao ruža* addresses the audience at the end of the film, saying, 'I am your future', overturning the lofty expectations held over communist youngsters. Other films explored contemporary problems faced by youth, including unemployment and poverty, for example in *Kad budem mrtav i beo* [*When I am dead and pale*] (dir. Živojin Pavlović, Filmska Radna Zajednica, 1967), a film which ends with the image of the protagonist killed by a shot to the centre of his forehead.

After the 'fragmentation and virtual collapse of the [New Film] movement' in 1973, the next notable youth film trend began in 1977 with the release of *Lude godine*. *Lude godine* is a classic youth film about the difficulties of being young, featuring a plot where two teenagers, Boba and Marija, from different class backgrounds fall in love at a summer camp. Marija becomes pregnant and has an abortion, placing the couple's personal and familial relationships under pressure. The film marks a serious attempt at creating both meaningful and attractive films for young audiences, whilst maintaining a pedagogical undertone. *Lude godine* sparked a series of nine sequels, all of which 'were enormous box-office successes'.[255] Whilst Boba and Marija appeared in these later films, the original youth focus of the original plot was subsumed into a comedy film revolving around the grandfathers of the two young people. Teen romance remained a strong

[255] Goulding, p. 148.

subplot, but the interests of youth were overshadowed by the series' transformation into a film for all ages.

Themes of growing up and the trials of youth were not limited to commercially-oriented comedy films. Film narratives of troubled youth prevailed after the fall of New Film, although their messages became more nuanced. Directors belonging the the New Yugoslav Film movement were also interested in the theme of youth and growing up in the SFRY. One example is Goran Marković's first film, *Specijalno vaspitanje* (Centar Film, 1977), about life in a home for juvenile delinquents. When a new educator arrives at the home, he attempts to re-habilitate the delinquents using new methods, demonstrating that 'harsh methods do not lead to understanding'.[256] While significant, the film suggests that youth experience is often filtered through adult structures. Meanwhile, one of Yugoslavia's most famous auteurs, Emir Kusturica, was pre-occupied with the topic of youth and rites-of-passage in the 1980s. Kusturica's first film, *Sjećaš li se, Dolly Bell?* [*Do You Remember Dolly Bell?*] (Kinema Sarajevo, 1981), concerns a sixteen-year-old boy 'whose painful process of growing into young manhood is poignantly assisted by a tender sexual liaison with a young prostitute'.[257] This theme of distorted sexual awakening is mirrored in *Rane* (Chapter 2) and thus Kusturica's contribution to the youth film canon is significant. The director revisited the theme of growing up in *Otac na službenom putu* [*When Father Was Away on Business*] (dir. Emir Kusturica, Centar Film, 1985), a film whose narrative is

[256] 'Žarkovi metodi ne nailaze na razumevanje'. Plot information from Centar Film: http://www.centarfilm.com/movie/special-education [accessed 4 December 2015].
[257] Goulding, p. 160.

told in places 'from the innocent, precocious, and mischievous perspective of the six-year-old narrator Malik'.[258] Perhaps the most significant aspect of these films from the perspective of this thesis is the way in which Kusturica traced the serious social and political problems (including crime and the brutality of the regime) facing Yugoslavia in the 1980s through youth or child protagonists, whose sentimental depictions provide both humour and distance. Young people can be used as a means of critically assessing the adult world, without committing too seriously to these social issues and risking the wrath of censors. Film of the 1980s, though aesthetically innovative in its use of genres, also sought to be so within the strictures of the regime.

While youth film clearly played an important, but under-recognised, role in film-making in the SFRY, I argue in the succeeding chapters that youth film has become even more significant in the post-communist period. Disproportionate numbers of youth films have been made in Serbia since 1991, compared to the relatively small size of the Serbian film industry and youth protagonists are depicted in a variety of situations. Chapters 2, 4 and 7 outline how *Rane*, *Apsolutnih sto* and *Šišanje* fit into the wider youth film canon since the 1990s, and these close analyses will discuss the relationship between these films and other contemporary youth films. The dominance of youth films in Serbia is a topic that has justifiably elicited increasing attention in recent years, but has not yet resulted in published monographs. This thesis

[258] Goulding, p. 162.

will provide an initial framework for examining how Serbian youth films use genres to transform and extend their narrative reach.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief overview of a complex area in Russian and Serbian film studies, as well as Soviet and Yugoslav film studies. Genre film analysis is an under-researched and frequently misinterpreted area in the histories of film in both nations, even though genres played an important political role. Common traits between the study of film in the Soviet Union and the SFRY have revealed that, until recently, there was a distinct focus on *auteurs* and dissident directors in the literature, particularly in English-language writing. It is clear that this trend was largely driven by the political needs of the Cold War, during which Soviet and Yugoslav directors who challenged the regime's control of film were seen as being having produced more influential and imaginative works. The production of genre film is perceived to have been linked too closely to the specific ideological needs of both regimes to have produced notable, high quality films. This perspective misunderstands the basis of genre film analysis, which frequently preferences the symbolism attached to genre film over the quality of genre films. What is key is the methods in which genre is employed to attract or communicate specific messages to the audience, through the capturing of domestic and international traditions. Furthermore, many auteurs used fragments or complete appropriations of film genres, and the study of film genre has been limited by the impression that auteurs are naturally averse to the use of film

genres, or that their use of film genres must always be seen as polemical and/or satirical. This may often be the case, but the use of genres also pre-supposes popularity with audiences, either at home or abroad, and particularly with the younger generation, universally recognised to be the primary consumers of film.

Youth film has arguably been more greatly affected by the ideological role of genre film in the Soviet Union and the SFRY than other genres, being that is based on an age group that presented both hope and challenges from an ideological point of view. Although not identified as a specific genre until very recently, in the Soviet Union, youth films were linked to the fall of Stalinism as the loosening of censorship on culture made youth topics not only more permissible, but expedient. In the SFRY, youth protagonists played a significant role in the early years of Tito's Yugoslavia, where young people were revered as the future of communism. It is possible that the rise of the teenager as a specific generational group internationally after WWII can be seen as the impetus for the creation of more youth films in the Soviet Union and the SFRY as well. Young people in both the West and East were equally concerned with leisure and consumerism, making this genre a particularly important one to champion from both ideological perspectives. However, both the Soviet and Yugoslav industries witnessed the appropriation of youth characters to comment on the conditions of the adult society, and as a means of re-affirming the norms and values of their societies as a whole. Unsurprisingly, certain sub-genres of youth films made rare appearances in

Soviet cinema, particularly the juvenile delinquency sub-genre. In the SFRY, juvenile delinquency became a topic of socially critical New Film, which sought to address problems within Yugoslav society and create fairer conditions.

The discussion on the fate of film genres in the Soviet Union and the SFRY suggests that, in spite of the belief that these two states followed different forms of communism in the twentieth century, their reaction to the potential dangers of film was not so different. In both countries, youth were portrayed as a positive ideological measure. When the New Film directors attempted to deviate from this representation the directors concerned faced difficulties from the regime. On the other hand, such negative depictions of youth protagonists would have been impossible in the much stricter system of censorship. Thus the creation of genre film did indeed serve as a means of control, but also produced the most popular of Yugoslav and Soviet films. In the post-communist context, the remaining chapters of this thesis will demonstrate, there have been marked differences in the successful adoption of and positive reaction to genre films. In Serbia, genre films have been classed as an innovative form of filmmaking, with a number of notable successes in recent years and the positive adoption of genres by, particularly young, film directors. In Russia, the question of the value of genre film has become intertwined with the desire for Russia to differentiate itself from the West and directors, who were never particularly disposed or exposed to genre, remain scathing of its benefits. Youth film, nonetheless, has become an

important gauge for approaching the social issues facing these two societies in transition.

Part 1: The lost generation of the 1990s

The first part of this thesis compares two youth films from Russia and Serbia in the 1990s, Dragojević's *Rane* and Balabanov's *Brat*. These films have been chosen not only because they represent two very important and well-known examples of youth films from each country, but also because they encompass, in various ways, the trials and tribulations that have come to be associated with the passage of the decade. In both Russia and Serbia, the term, 'the 1990s', has become more than a decade, it has become a loaded metaphor for chaos, death, impoverishment, and complete moral collapse. In this atmosphere, both at that time and in the years since, a primary focus of the decade has been on the fate of young people and their development in such an atmosphere. Both societies questioned what kind of young people would emerge from this moral collapse, and, in the years since, how this decade has had a long-term impact on these future generations.

On a basic level, both *Rane* and *Brat* feature youth protagonists who have been irrevocably tainted by the atmosphere of the 1990s and who operate according to the morals introduced to them by their elders in this atmosphere. The protagonists are experienced killers, who only understand the language of violence as a means of enforcing power and respect. These young men are depicted as products of their time, made more shocking by their age, but very much acting within the bounds of acceptable behaviour. *Rane* and *Brat* suggest that concerns about the fate of young people in the transition are justified. Yet their representations remain influenced by the

wider experience of youth. Whilst adopting the violent standards of the time, they are also portrayed in parts as naïve, with the narratives of these films revolving around elements common to the rites-of-passage seen in other, more pedestrian, youth films. They are attempting to carve a position for themselves in the adult hierarchy, superseding the men who should be their paternal figures, testing their sexual prowess, discovering the world of employment, and challenging the adult world. What is significant here is that these rites-of-passage have been twisted during the post-communist transition. Their paternal figures are criminals, their sexual encounters are loveless, their careers are in the world of organised crime, and their challenges to the adult world are proving themselves more dangerous than the older generation.

From a genre perspective, the film industries of Russia and Serbia both displayed a pre-occupation with crime, thriller and gangster genres in the 1990s, which can be seen as a reflection of the sense that organised crime was the defining feature of the transition to capitalism.[259] Both *Rane* and *Brat* can be seen as part of a wider trend, beginning in the late 1980s and continuing into the 2000s that negotiates memory of the transition as being a time when corruption turned to violent crime. However, it is also a period where youth protagonists began to take on roles in which they explored the hypocrisy of the adult-oriented world. The influence of these prominent genres affected youth film in ways that parallel trends in films featuring adult

[259] See, for example: Peter Pozefsky, "Russian gangster films as popular history: genre, ideology and memory in Pavel Lungin's *Tycoon*", *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, 2:3 (2008), 299-325; Serguei Alex. Oushakine, "Aesthetics Without Law: Cinematic Bandits in Post-Soviet Space", *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 51:2 (Summer 2007), 357-390; and discussions in Chapter 2 and 3 of this thesis.

protagonists. *Rane* and *Brat* are not solely gangster films, but are also youth films. The experience of their protagonists is not defined by their corresponding to the mores of the time, but by the fact their youthhood has been tainted by this decade. Ultimately, however, the films offer different conclusions on the fate of young people in the transition that reflect the differing situation in each country. In Serbia, Pinki and Švaba die a chaotic death that mirrors the collective destruction of Serbian civil society during the 1990s. Meanwhile, Danila in *Brat* not only survives, but rises to the top of the hierarchy without falling; his victory is a victory for Russia, suggesting that Russian society can, and should, forget unsavoury aspects of the past.

The differing fates of the youth protagonists and circumstances of society in *Rane* and *Brat* are used as a base from which I employ different generic foci in Chapters 2 and 3. Both films adopt a wide variety of generic and cultural references, which acknowledge the specificity of their national film industries. Thus, they offer key examples of the ways in which youth films are split into sub-genres and adopt mixes of genres to create appeal. The analysis of *Rane* will examine the adoption of and deviation from the gangster genre in the film, assessing how the film's protagonists feed into wider media narratives about the involvement of young people in Belgrade's world of organised crime during the 1990s. Meanwhile, the primary focus of my analysis of *Brat* is exploring the influences of late-Soviet youth films on the narrative, exploring how the film can be seen as an answer to earlier representations of young people. *Brat* has not yet been positioned as a youth

film in critical analysis, but the film contains important references to youth subcultural practices and film narratives in the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Significantly, the film is a key part of the tendency for Russian films in the late-1990s to rehabilitate the past and provide stability for the future. In *Rane*, the past, present and future have merged together in a chaotic mixture of hopelessness. In *Brat*, the contemporary youth protagonist is an evolution of those from the past, suggesting a positive foundation for young people in the future.

Chapter 2: Turning post-communist youngsters into gangsters: *Rane* and youth in the 1990s

Following the expansion of film genres that occurred in the SFRY in the 1980s, the Serbian film industry of the 1990s saw the appearance of younger directors experimenting with genres and film styles as a means of extending artistic repertoires. These directors had trained in the 1980s, a period in Yugoslav film history characterised by an expansion of film genre usage. One of the most significant of these younger directors, and a pioneer of the use of genre film, is the director Srđan Dragojević, whose first film, *Mi nismo anđeli* [*We are not Angels*] (Avala Film, 1992), a teen comedy, was made as the Yugoslav film industry folded along with the SRFY in 1991.[260] Dragojević's work represents one way in which directors in the 1990s sought to expand their means of addressing the contemporary historical context through film genres and other aesthetic influences. Daković writes that, 'directors of the "New Belgrade School"', of which Dragojević can be considered a member, 'link thematic interests with a formal sensibility'; their changing style is seen 'in evocations of Hollywood genre idioms and with a wide allusive spectrum towards popular culture and local generational styles.'[261] In addition to these shared stylistic traits, the 'New Belgrade School' is a coinage used by Daković to suggest an 'analogy' with the Prague School directors of the 1980s, but

[260] For more on the collapse of the Yugoslav film industry, see Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*, pp. 12-14.
[261] 'Reditelje „nove beogradske škole" vezuju tematska interesovanja i formalni senzibilitet' […] 'u evokacijama holivudskog žanrovskog idioma i sa širokim aluzivnim spektrom ka popularnoj kulturi i lokalnim generacijskim fazonima'. Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 174.

denotes those directors who have graduated from Belgrade's Faculty of Dramatic Arts (*Fakultet dramskih umetnosti*).[262] Dragojević's testing of genres and styles laid a path for experimentation in the future, but also proved exceedingly popular with audiences. This chapter will focus on *Rane*, in which the director returned to youth film, but utilised different stylistic influences. The film is a key example of the tendencies for genre mixing that appeared in earnest from the 1990s onwards, and contains a number of complex references to different genres. *Rane* is just one example of the more sophisticated approach taken to genre film in Serbia in recent years, as well as one of the most prominent examples of Serbian youth film. Slobodan Kostić, for example, goes as far as to suggest that the film has become 'part of the collective memory of certain events', suggesting that the combination of historical context and film genre proved a success with contemporary audiences.[263]

This chapter will discuss how Dragojević uses the gangster genre to weave a moral tale about the difficulties of growing up during the transition from communism, through his depiction of two teenagers' seduction by the criminal underworld. This analysis will examine how Dragojević purposefully evokes some of the classical elements of gangster film, whilst also deviating from the genre in order to respond to domestic cultural concerns and experience. These deviations and appropriations are innovatively structured

[262] See also, Nevena Daković, 'Gerilci i luzeri', *Vreme*, 692, 8 April 2004, <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=374591> [accessed 4 December 2015].
[263] 'deo kolektivnog pamćenja o nekim događajima'. Slobodan Kostić, 'Intervju: Srdjan Dragojević', *Vreme*, 469, (1 January 2000), <http://www.vreme.com/arhiva_html/469/12.html> [accessed 9 July 2015].

as a lead protagonist's memory of the time, which invokes the traits of other genres, including *film noir*, and contains intertextual references to global cinema. Many of these archetypal elements are further transformed by the fact that the film revolves around the fate of two youth protagonists during this period, rather than focusing on the adult world. The chapter will explore how the gangster genre allows Dragojević to approach the theme of youth disenfranchisement, a topic which occupies a central role in my discussion on youth in the transition from communism. *Rane*, as an early and important addition to post-communist youth film, provides insight into common themes that continue to preoccupy the other films discussed. As in many youth films, the use of teenage protagonists masks the wider intentions of the film, which explore the suffering of Serbian civilians during the course of the 1990s. The final major aesthetic influence on the film is the use of scenes styled on music videos and from the culture of the MTV music channel, an element that became characteristic of Dragojević's films from the decade.

Rane is a raucous critique of the vulgarity and bizarreness of life under the Milošević regime in the 1990s. The film follows the descent of two boys, Pinki and Švaba, into the criminal underworld of New Belgrade between the years 1991 and 1996.[264] The film is constructed through a chronological series of Pinki's flashbacks of this period, as he narrates his past from his position in the present, in 1996. These flashbacks are selected to illustrate important events in Pinki's personal story, as well as the history of Serbia during the

[264] According to the film, Pinki is named after a local Partisan fighter whilst Švaba is the equivalent of "Kraut" in English. Both names suggest a connection to WWII.

1990s. In 1991, the boys fall under the influence of a local gangster, Kure, who becomes their criminal mentor, introducing them to the organised crime that pervaded Belgrade during the Milošević regime. The boys take to their new roles with relish as they ultimately usurp Kure's authority and become the newest, and most violent, gangsters in New Belgrade's world of organised crime. Yet the film is unable to pan out as a traditional gangster film should, or, even less, as a youth film might – the narrative is steeped in the frenetic atmosphere in Serbia during the 1990s. Pinki and Švaba find that their rise to the top of the hierarchy is severely hindered as roles throughout Belgrade become reversed and confused in the chaos of the transition. After falling victim to jealousy and suspicion, they die at each other's hands, maintaining their masculine bravado. The film narrative is not purely focused on the fate of youth in the years following the collapse of the SFRY, but rather is concerned with depicitng the fate of Serbian society as a whole, highlighting the importance of the timescale being narrated by Pinki. The boys' descent into criminality is mirrored by Serbia's descent into chaos under the extreme conditions of war and economic sanctions, which transform Belgrade's citizens from naive followers, to tragic victims.

2.1 The gangster genre – adherences

Along with the Western film, the gangster genre is one of the oldest of film genres, with a recognisable body of works and evolution in world cinema. Born in the Depression-era in the US, from its beginnings, the gangster genre has revolved around contemporary urban life in major cities, 'a contested

space where forces of social order and anarchy are locked in an epic and unending struggle'.[265] While the cinema of each country lends its own context to the shaping of the narratives of gangster films, the basic tenets of the Hollywood genre have long provided a frame on which directors construct their personal visions. Fran Mason gives this description of early gangster films, which continues to encompass and define the basic foundations of the genre:

> The gangster movie is located in a city of the industrial and technological, where traditional morality has become lax or non-existent, where the pleasure-principle and an easier enactment of sexuality and desire are possible […], where rationalisation and routinisation are dominant motifs (in the systemisation of gang life into corporate structures and the routinisation of violence), and where commodities, consumerism and money form the desiring network in which the gangster locates himself.[266]

In this sense, the gangster genre is inherently linked to the underside of modern capitalist culture, an issue which has contemporary as well as historical significance. Whilst gangster films have become particularly adept at reacting to the needs of the audience and changes in the film industry, they also have a number of elements that are common in gangster films, including: the 'rise and fall' narrative; the manipulation of vast social change for personal, financial advantage; the gangster as a representation of

[265] Schatz, *Hollywood genres*, p. 83.
[266] Fran Mason, *American Gangster Cinema: from Little Caesar to Pulp Ficton* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 15.

disenfranchisement in society; and ghettoization in the city and explorations of urban poverty, amongst other fluctuating trends. These elements can all be traced in the narrative of *Rane*, but the analysis of the film will focus on a selection of these issues, as the use of certain generic elements contain significant intertextual references. Above all, the gangster is a creature of the imagination, and this analysis will focus on how Dragojević creates a domestic tale of crime and morality for contemporary Serbian audiences.

In the case of *Rane*, the use of the gangster genre can also be interpreted as an adherence to wider trends in post-communist cinema from the same period, when gangster films, as well as associated genres such as the crime and thriller film, became prominent influences in filmmaking. Stories of organised crime and criminality have played a prominent part in the social and filmic imagination of post-communist states such as Russia and Serbia. The gangster genre depicts the tensions and relationships between formal institutions, represented by the state, and the manipulation of the informal economy by players outside of these formal institutions. In the former communist countries of Europe, in which capitalism was becoming the new economic programme as these states were simultaneously undergoing huge social changes, these genres had particular resonance in the 1990s and early 2000s. Katherine Verdery, for example, discusses the symbolic role of the mafia in post-socialist Romania, which provides a useful framework for configuring the role of gangsters in other former communist countries. Verdery writes that the 'Mafia is a symbol for what happened when the

visible hand of the state is being replaced by the invisible hand of the market', which reflects on the role that the Mafia had in replacing the collapsed economic, political and social structures in the immediate post-communist period.[267] In the case of Serbia, when the economy collapsed during the financial chaos of the sanctions in the 1990s, the informal economy was perceived to have played a much larger part in the economy of everyday life.

In the cultural output of former communist countries, the symbolic figure of the criminal and organised crime has become an increasingly prominent metaphor for post-communism, led in large part by media coverage of the transition. The symbolic value of the Mafia has become a significant and heightened part of the discourse of communist collapse in popular culture. As Thomas Schatz writes, in the US context, 'the screen gangster was lifted directly from the current newspaper headlines', which Hollywood then exploited to weave narratives to suit the varying narrative tastes of audiences.[268] Serbian film can be seen as no less influenced by such media narratives, but there is a clear development of local evolutions of the gangster character. Iordanova suggests that the Serbian screen and media criminals are largely represented by a character she calls 'the colourful thug'.[269] This thug character can be seen as a Serbian-specific type of gangster, developed on those criminals found in Belgrade in the 1990s. Iordanova writes: 'Criminals have waived many of the stipulations of standard moral behaviour, but as far as patriotic feelings are concerned, they are often

[267] Katherine Verdery, *What was socialism, and what comes next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 216.
[268] Schatz, *Hollywood genres*, p. 82.
[269] Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames*, p. 178.

seen as brave men in possession of an inborn nobility, who care deeply about the national wellbeing.'[270] The historical context of the Wars of Yugoslav Succession did not create gangsters who were specifically combatting the dominant social order in an attempt to be free, but were rather supporting the nationalist aims of the Milošević government. Ultimately, the colourful thug is a paradox: these figures are depicted as both being fiercely patriotic, but they are also responsible for making the desperate situation of society in Belgrade all the worse by fuelling substance abuse, murder, poverty and inequality. This makes them an ideal source of parody and denunciation in filmic representations.

In *Rane*, the colourful thug is represented by Kure, Pinki's neighbour who becomes an idol for the boys when he returns from Germany to take part in the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia. Kure initially impresses the boys with his BMW, designer suits and surgically-enhanced singer girlfriend. He is also a charismatic figure, whose manic lifestyle of excess appeals to the two boys who are living on the edge of poverty under sanctions. However, Kure is Dragojević's parody of this thug culture and an example of the film's wider condemnation of Belgrade's culture in the 1990s, who is treated with increasing disdain in the course of the film. Dragojević's thug character directly engages with the paradoxical myth of the nationalist criminal during the 1990s, making Kure an exaggerated and also recognisable parody of the culture that spawned such figures. Kure is depicted as a poser, who claims to be both a gangster and patriot, whilst making money from the misfortunes of

[270] Ibid.

ordinary people. Kure heads off to Croatia supposedly in the patriotic defence of Serbs, but this is juxtaposed with another scene in which he is shown attempting to steal a shipment of fuel so he can presumably sell this rare commodity to desperate people on the black market. The colourful thug character is revealed in the film to be both an important reference to the media culture of the 1990s, as well as a sign of the infective corrosion of values amongst certain Serbians. A reoccurring theme throughout the film is the suggestion that Serbian norms and values have been twisted and destroyed in the chaos of transition.

Within this atmosphere, *Rane* can be seen as a moral commentary on the effect that such characters and media culture can have on young people growing up in Belgrade during the 1990s. Pinki's narration of his involvement in organised crime reveals the strong influence that the televised presence of criminals had on his decision to become a gangster himself. The boys are obsessed with a fictional television programme called *Puls asfalta* [*Beat of the Street*], in which local criminals are interviewed boasting about their lives and exploits, including crime sprees abroad and internal squabbles in the New Belgrade underworld. The fictional *Puls asfalta* can be seen as a reference to *Crni Biseri* [*Black Pearls*], a talk-show hosted by Vanja Bulić, on which a number of such patriotic criminals were interviewed.[271] Pinki quantifies the popularity of *Puls asfalta* amongst youngsters by declaring that the programme is more popular amongst youths of his generation than the US

[271] Bulić is one of the credited screenwriters on Dragojević's earlier film, *Lepa sela lepo gore* [*Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*] (Cobra Films, 1996).

youth television programme, *Beverly Hills 90210* (Spelling Television, 1990-2000), which follows the lives of a group of teenagers in high school. Whilst Pinki's quip about the popularity of television shows amongst youth in Serbia highlights how the contextual basis of the gangster genre can be adapted to suit contemporary needs and also offers a darkly humorous perspective on the perceived influence that the glamorisation of crime has on young audiences. The scene also highlights changes in youth culture according to cultural context, with Pinki, a representative of Serbian youth, illustrating how his cultural preferences are suited to the atmosphere within which he is living. He has no need to emulate, or strive to emulate, US youth culture, in spite of the common perception that global youths do.



Figure 1 *Rane*: Watching *Puls asfalta*

The film can be read in the context of other prominent media exposure of criminals during the 1990s, where organised crime is depicted as vulgar and highly influential, as well as being intrinsically linked to youth experience. A key example of this is *Vidimo se u čitulji* [*See you in the Obituary*] (dir. Janko

Baljak, B-92, 1995), a television documentary that chronicled the lives of young gangsters in New Belgrade. *Vidimo se u čitulji* was based on the book, *Kriminal koji je izmenio Srbiju* [*The Crime That Changed Serbia*] written by Aleksandar Knežević and Vojislav Tufegdžić in 1994. Whilst the television channel that produced the film, B-92, was well-known for being one of the only sources of independent news sources in Belgrade under Milošević, the release of the film can be seen as contributing the prominence of criminality in the public sphere. In her summary of the film, Daković notes the symbolic role that *Vidimo se u čitulji* has had in Serbian culture, writing that it was the 'first film that attempted to analyse the emerging underworld, painting Belgrade as the town that "unites Chicago of the 1920s, the depression of the 1930s […] and the disastrous hedonism of Vietnam of the 1960s"'.[272] Here, Daković is citing the film's own promotional material, which suggests that the documentary was meant to be an exposé of the culture of the time, but also uses the aesthetics of gangster films to pique the audience's fears and interest in such matters. *Vidimo se u čitulji* was styled as an extended news report, illustrating how these tales of organised crime were sensational, but also a real part of everyday life in Belgrade in the 1990s. The focus in both *Vidimo se u čitulji* and *Rane* is on the involvement of youth in organised crime, which evokes different fears than adult involvement. The criminal culture is deemed as being influential amongst young people, who are depicted in both films as being particularly dangerous. While *Rane* claims no direct similarities

[272] Nevena Daković, 'The crime that changed Serbia: Representations of New Belgrade', in *Postcommunist Film – Russia, Eastern Europe and World Culture*, ed. by Lars Kristensen (London: Routledge, 2012), 134-142 (p. 136).

in aesthetics, a clear line of influence can be drawn between media representations of youth organised crime and the appearance of a number of films exploiting these connections.

Within this representation of the adverse effects of media culture on young people, both *Rane* and *Vidimo se u čitulji* depict young people living fast and dying young in New Belgrade, representative of the toxic combination of youth inexperience and collapsed morals. As Mason notes, in gangster films, 'commodities, consumerism and money form the desiring network in which the gangster locates himself', which mirrors the cravings of young people in Belgrade in the 1990s.[273] In *Vidimo se u čitulji*, the young gangsters live fast and die young, with two of those interviewed having been killed before the film was even released. Moreover, they express no regret at their life choices, instead seeing their brutal crimes as rational choices for gangsters to make. In *Rane*, Pinki and Švaba rise quickly in the crime hierarchy through a combination of extreme circumstances, where criminality is fuelled by the desperation caused by the sanctions, war, and sheer brutality, as they are depicted displaying a level of violence exceeding that of the older generation. They embark on drug-fuelled crime sprees and achieve their aim of appearing on *Puls asfalta*, only to discover how difficult it is to remain at the top of the pile.

The structure of the flashbacks suggests that their fall is inevitable. The present-day Pinki is shown suffering from gunshot wounds that will not

[273] Mason, p. 15.

close, as he and Švaba sit in their BMW reminiscing about the past. The film's narrative is thus constructed as an epic chronicle of their lives, framed by Pinki's memories. The destruction of the boys comes at the tender age of seventeen, by which time they have had no normal experience of growing up, but have achieved their dreams of being gangsters. Compounding the moral fable at the centre of the film, Pinki narrates the closing lines of the film from beyond the grave, taunting the audience by saying, 'In spite of all this, it seems to me that I came out better than you' (see Figure 2).[274] Young people in Belgrade become a metaphor for the lack of future and hope that directors see as the guiding emotion in the 1990s, suggesting the significant position that such an age group can have in screen productions. Their youth suggests they should represent hope for the future, their destruction suggests Dragojević is depicting that the future is likewise destroyed.

[274] 'I sve mi se nešto čini da sam prošao bolje od vas'.



Figure 2 *Rane*: Pinki's death

Rane was not the only film of the 1990s to dwell on the development of New Belgrade's underworld and to combine this metaphor with youth. A cycle of early post-communist films depicted the connections between youth, urban life and crime, including: *Do Koske* [*Rage*] (dir. Slobodan Skerlić, Avala Film, 1997), which features a seventeen-year old entering the Belgrade underworld and was made notorious by its depictions of excessive violence; *Bulevar revolucije* [*Boulevard of the revolution*] (dir. Vladimir Blaževski, Cinema Design, 1992), in which a teenage girl becomes romantically involved with a young criminal, causing a conflict with her policeman father; and, in the early 2000s, in *Nataša* [*Natasha*] (dir. Ljubiša Samardžić, Cinema Design, 2001), another seventeen-year-old attempts to uncover the truth behind the killing of her policeman father, only to be thwarted by corruption in the upper echelons of power.[275] While this might not seem like an extensive number to

[275] Another example highlighting the effects of organised crime on a young person's life can be seen in the film, *Apsolutnih sto*, which is the subject of Chapter 4, and which illustrates how gangster and crime genres fared after the fall of Milošević.

have been produced, taking into account the difficulties and slow-down faced by the Serbian film industry during this time makes it considerable. In addition to this, there were a number of other films featuring crime and gangster generic elements, but using adult protagonists, including: *Ni na nebu ni na zemlji* [*In the Middle of Nowhere*] (dir. Miloš Radivojević, Viktorija Film, 1994); *Bure Baruta* [*Powder Keg*] (dir. Goran Paskaljević, Vans, 1998); and *Vidimo se u čitulji*.

Whilst these films might not be considered gangster films in a classical sense, these examples nonetheless evoke a key element of gangster films, in the sense that 'traditional morality has become lax or non-existent', which leads to a blurring of the boundaries between the worlds of criminals and normal people.[276] Nearly all of the Serbian films of the early 1990s deal with the collapse of their characters' morals, where protagonists are caught between doing what is right and what is admissible in the atmosphere of post-communism. Thus, even when a film is not specifically made in the gangster genre, the city of Belgrade and its inhabitants are frequently operating in residual elements of the genre's structure as this is a refraction of contemporary life in the city. Fran Mason suggests that the gangster film can 'be read as a comment on the turmoil of a modern society that has no conviction in its values, social structures, and ideologies', a concept that is particularly relevant for the cross-section between crime and youth in *Rane*, and for the representation of Belgrade as a whole during this period.[277] Pinki

[276] Mason, p. 15.
[277] Mason, p. 13.

and Švaba's experience of the 1990s reflects Mason's model; they witness the collapse of one system of control and the rise of another, but belong to neither one of them. Ultimately, the film poses uncomfortable questions for the adult audience as well. *Rane*, along with many post-communist youth films, asks who is, or should be, responsible for the outrageous behaviour of youth. Such questions become a recurring topic in later youth film, particularly in *Šišanje*, discussed in Chapter 7, which explores the aftermath of the corrosion of values and moves away from the representation of crime as posing the biggest threat to young people. *Rane*, like *Šišanje*, can be interpreted as an attempt by Dragojević to offer a sociological perspective on the effects of the transition on young people. Moral corruption is positioned by such films as being a social fact that the narrative is merely reflecting, fed by the exploitation of media reports of youth delinquency.

2.2 Gangster film and youth disenfranchisement

Rather than exploring such sociological narratives in *Rane*, it is more effective to explore how the film uses the gangster genre's narratives of alienation and life in urban centres to signify the events leading to the widespread corruption of youth. The classic generic structures of disenfranchisement, marginalisation and individualistic motivations in the gangster film, combined with the enduring fear of youth gangs in the social imagination, easily lend gangster stories to narratives about the younger generation. Warshow writes of the gangster: 'He appeals most to adolescents with their impatience and their feeling of being outsiders, but more generally he appeals to that side of

all of us which refuses to believe in the "normal" possibilities of happiness and achievement'.[278] *Rane* is neither the first youth film nor the last to explore the effects of youth disenfranchisement, an issue that is often depicted as the primary motivator towards crime and involvement with gangs. Lewis, for example, suggests that, in actual societies, 'gangs are popular because they provide disenfranchised youth with a formalised sense of belongingness and fidelity.'[279]

As the gangster genre has evolved, youth gangsters have typically moved away from the traditional narratives of gangster films. This is in large part due to the fact that narratives of youth gangsters are frequently intertwined with an array of political and social issues, as well as being focused on the young person's attempt to locate themselves in the wider society. As Shary writes: 'Not all teens become deviant simply as a means of testing their social acceptability – the etiology of delinquency runs to class and race issues, family dynamics, genetics and psychology, and political conditions.'[280] This leaves youth gangster films traversing a complex metaphorical landscape that, like many youth films, concerns different research disciplines. From a film perspective, youth gangster films can reveal great amounts about the contemporary filmic understanding of urban problems, regardless of the size of the cities involved. Daković confirms that many films of the 1990s focused on the issues that Shary highlights; she writes: 'The [film] texts re-think the phenomenon of the construction of the

[278] Warshow, 'Movie Chronicle: The Westerner', in *The Immediate Experience*, p. 106.
[279] Lewis, p. 42.
[280] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 99.

city, migration, ethnic and class hegemony, alienation, political oppression, [and] changes of identity as situating registers of wide cultural conflicts.'[281] Representations of youth thus serve as a metaphor for the wider alienation caused by the transition from communism, highlighting the significant role that these representations hold in the cultural sphere.

In *Rane*, the narratives of youth disenfranchisement can be seen as one of the most successful elements of the film and provoked an emotional sense of recognition amongst audiences. The development of youth violence is clearly linked to the 'political conditions', which Shary cites as a factor in deviance. The central contradiction presented by *Rane* is that, whilst the film opens an exaggerated discussion about elements from the social-historical world, the narrative suggests that these filmic representations could have really happened, particularly within the experience that contemporary audiences had had. As one reviewer on the IMDb website writes: 'Actually it makes me feel sick, because it is so true. Man [sic] it really was like that' – confirming Kostić's assessment that the film has become part of the 'collective memory' of this period.[282] A review such as this gives a very basic insight into the way that emotive films such as *Rane* were received before and after their release, and also serve as a means of judging what elements prove popular with audience. The narrative of brutal inevitability in the film is tempered by the *laissez-faire* attitude of the two youth protagonists, who

[281] 'Tekstovi promišljaju o fenomenu razvoja grada, migracijama, etno i klasnoj hegemoniji, alijenaciji, političkoj opresiji, promenama identiteta kao lociranim upisima širih kulturnih sukoba'. Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 161.
[282] Review of *Rane* on the IMDb website by user 'Bosko Nicovic', 'This film makes me feel sick…', <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0165546/reviews?ref_=tt_urv> [accessed 25 August 2015].

offer a sense of reasoning behind the wider, societal behaviour. Violence is intermingled with humorous scenes that remind the audience nostalgically of their own experiences of youth, whilst leaving the same audience shocked at how young people were experiencing life at this time. The film's very narrative, structured as it is around the flashbacks of a seventeen-year-old, places the film within the memory of the Serbian viewer. The decision to evoke the contemporary atmosphere is firmly rooted in the desire to appeal to the audience.

Rane, as in other films about youth gangsters, explores how the socio-economic conditions surrounding young people lead them into crime and suggests that there is little alternative for young men living in Belgrade in the 1990s. The connection between a lack of prospects and the effects of the collapse of the SFRY is affirmed by the film's dedication, 'to the generations who were born after Tito'.[283] *Rane* opens with Pinki introducing the audience to the area in which he lives, the Pavilions (Paviljoni), which is an actual suburb in New Belgrade and is the setting for the film. He candidly remarks to the audience that the area is 'seriously fucked-up', suggesting that, in spite of his nonchalant behaviour, he is indeed aware of the inequality he faces. In Serbian crime and gangster films of the 1990s onwards there is particular reference to New Belgrade, a collection of suburbs on the opposite bank of the Sava River to old Belgrade, as the location in which crime was most active. Daković highlights how cinematic representations of New Belgrade range 'from the prosperous new city to the project of social housing in decay and

[283] The full dedication reads, 'Film je posvećen generacijama rođenim posle Tita'.

gangland culture to the recovering reurbanising territory'.[284] The suburb serves as 'an index of the socialist/postsocialist transition', in the separation between the old centre of the city of Belgrade, with its exalted position in Serb history, and the stagnation of the outer, suburban areas of the city, which were built under the auspices of collective, socialist living, and would be transformed into breeding grounds of inequality in the post-communist period.[285] This representation must be understood as an element of post-socialist filmic mythology – the demographic of Belgrade's suburbs in reality is much more varied, with various classes occupying these living spaces. In *Rane*, New Belgrade serves as the epitome of 'the project of social housing in decay and gangland culture', that fed into the prolonging of organised crime in the social imagination.[286] Daković likens the ghettoization of New Belgrade housing blocks to the infamous Parisian *banlieues*, the outer suburbs of Paris that have been characterised by their entrenchment of social inequality between classes and races, and to the New York City boroughs of Queens and Brooklyn, which are also known for their ethnic diversity and for stereotypical representations as crime hotspots.[287]

[284] Daković, 'The crime that changed Serbia…', p. 135.
[285] Daković, 'The crime that changed Serbia…', p. 134.
[286] Ibid
[287] Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 175.



Figure 3 *Rane*: The Pavilions (Paviljoni)

While *Rane* might indeed evoke elements of these films and of the representation of other dangerous big-city suburbs, the close comparison of New Belgrade to these ghettos is diminished by the fact that the troubles in the *banlieues* of Paris and in the suburbs of New York are largely driven by narratives of racial discrimination as a driver for gang involvement – an element that is absent from *Rane*. The inequality the boys are attempting to combat in *Rane* is purely class-based and political, as Serbian film of the 1990s does not represent the same level of ethnic diversity or have the inclination to explore racial tensions as is seen in other examples. This is perhaps due to the sense that, in *Rane*, other issues affecting young people in New Belgrade are considered to be more current and pressing. However, the topic of race, urban life and youth becomes a more prominent topic in Serbian film after the 1990s, particularly with regards to Chinese immigration and treatment of the Roma population. In later years, the depiction of New Belgrade would continue to serve as a metaphor for stagnation and inequality. This comes

across particularly powerfully in *Apsolutnih sto*, in which the camera focuses more specifically on the towering presence of New Belgrade's social housing.

2.3 Film about youth for adults

The gangster may have become a symbol for the transition for post-communism, but the figure was firmly based on and fed by the socio-historical context of the period. There is a focus on the impact of the 1990s on the adult population, even if guided by a youth perspective. Film genre traditionally relies on the mutual recognition of generic elements by film and audience, and the rise of gangster film in the post-communist period actively reflects on the growing awareness of issues of criminality in the public sphere, and thus with film audiences. *Rane* can be seen as an example of what Driscoll called 'the teen film for grown-ups', as the film's narrative is clearly not aimed at a youth audience alone.[288] Considering the foundation of the gangster genre in America's Depression-era, it is clear why the gangster film genre was particularly relevant for a country like Serbia during the 1990s, which experienced similar extreme deprivation, albeit for very different reasons. Considering the small size of the industry in the 1990s, the use of the crime and gangster film genres during the 1990s was significant in Serbia, as was the adoption of such genres in other post-communist countries, including Russia. Serbian film was particularly prone to addressing contemporary social issues in film during this period as most the film production in this period focused directly on issues at hand, mostly without using any veiled references; for example, after the NATO bombardment in

[288] Driscoll, *Teen Film*, p. 112.

1999, there was a spate of films focusing on this event, as there were also a number of films concerning the Wars of Yugoslav Succession. As the target of most films is to gain as many viewers as possible, the use of such genres and topics presupposes that these would be popular with film audiences, but the topics must be chosen carefully. It is possible to argue that, while films about the NATO bombardment, which were often also very critical of this action, and gangster or crime films might have been popular with domestic audiences, war films would more likely have been what Daković deemed 'festival films'. *Rane* is a clear attempt to narrate Belgrade's history of the wars, all the while from a Serbian perspective, appealing to both foreign and domestic audiences.

Whilst *Rane* is shaped by the narrative of a young person, the film is also a powerful representation of the suffering of wider society under sanctions and nationalist hysteria. In an interview regarding the making of the film, Dragojević, stated that, 'crime is only the setting and backdrop' and that his primary focus concerned, 'all of us [Serbians] who survived that period when all the values, morals and norms of the society were flipped, turned on their head'.[289] The importance of societal structure is thus positioned as being an adult and youth issue, where adults justifiably struggle to maintain control over young people in the midst of the crisis. The foundation of the film is shaped around the boys' descent into the criminal underworld, but this descent is dictated by the wider decline in Serbia's economic (and social)

[289] 'Kriminal je samo pozornica i pozadina na koji se odvija […] priča […] o svima nama koji su preživeli taj period kada su sve vrednosti, morale, norme, ova društva okrenuli, prevrnuli na glavi'. *Rane film o filmu* [*Rane film about the Film*], dir. Ivan Živković, Cobra Film Productions, 1998.

fortunes during the 1990s. The further Belgrade falls into economic chaos, the further the boys become intertwined with criminality. Once Pinki's flashbacks begin, they proceed mostly in a chronological order and do not concentrate solely on the brutal revelry of Pinki and Švaba's carnivalesque, and falsely liberating, criminal career; rather, the flashbacks primarily trace the deepening economic collapse, and the intertitles of the film place a strong emphasis on the years in which the events of the film are taking place. The film depicts the imposition of UN sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1992 and, following this, the narrative charts the worsening impact of the sanctions from 1993 onwards. The audience watches as Belgrade's despair deepens through hyper-inflation, only to rise again with the lifting of sanctions in 1995 and the protests against Milošević in the winter of 1996. Pinki is the narrator of his own life story, but, more significantly, he becomes the narrator of Belgrade's history during the 1990s.

2.4 Fragments of genre and intertextuality

While the gangster genre is considered to be one of the classic film genres, this type of film was one of the earliest to evolve and be subject to genre-mixing. Schatz argues that the gangster film in its purest form has failed to exist since the mid-1930s in Hollywood, when 'its evolution was severely disrupted by external social forces, and its narrative formula was splintered into various derivative strains'.[290] This fragmentation can be seen in *Rane*, in which the film unravels as Pinki's clichéd remembrance of his early teenage years as a stylised gangster film and begins to take on darker elements. The

[290] Schatz, *Hollywood genres,* p. 82.

film is constituted of two halves; on the one hand, Pinki remembers a time when he was relatively innocent and chasing the dream of becoming a gangster, and, on the other hand, he remembers what happened when he had achieved that dream and prematurely aged into a violent criminal. While the film evokes elements of the gangster genre, the narrative increasingly draws on elements of *film noir* in the latter half of the film. It is possible to trace the ways in which Pinki's flashbacks are dictating the film's use of different generic influence, enhancing the story as both embellished imagination and moral fable. The fragments of different genres, and the character's awareness of and references to the film world, enhance the hallucinatory style in which the film is being narrated. This can be seen as a characteristic of Dragojević's filmmaking style during the period and an example of the expansion of stylistic influences that are a trademark of post-communist Serbian film.

As *Rane* deals with a disturbing historical and social context, so the narrative requires a generic influence that would be able to evoke the darkest years of Pinki's and Belgrade's lives during the 1990s. The film can be analysed within a sub-genre of the gangster film referred to as the gangster noir, a combination of the gangster genre and film noir. Gangster noir developed in the late 1940s as a reaction to WWII and 'the growing disillusionment with certain traditional American values in the face of complex and often contradictory social, political, scientific, and economic

developments'.[291] While retaining some elements of the classic gangster film, the gangster noir developed specific elements which can be applied with particular success to the films of post-communism in this chapter. The gangster noir focuses on the impossibility of the American Dream, and concerns the darker underside of modernity and the oppression of capitalism. Mason offers this analysis: 'one way of describing *noir* is to see it as an articulation of a crisis in modernity and its ideologies and economic systems, but one that is less a reflection of an actual crisis in modernity than a construction of it.'[292] There is a clear sense that American gangster noir films constructed these crises in modernity from underlying tensions and fears, instead of reflecting upon actual crises in modernity in the present society.

In *Rane*, the problems of modernity are imposed by the collapse of the socialist economy, the rise of individualism, the corrosive nature of cramped urban life, and the failed construction of a new nation in the wake of Yugoslavia's collapse. The crisis of modernity suggested by the *noir* elements in film echo the appropriation of the gangster genre from media reports and the symbolic role of organised crime in Belgrade. The combination of these two genre types serves as a means of providing a critique of the corrupted nature of life in Belgrade during the decade, as well as delivering an ambiguous judgement on the role that the failed transition to a capitalist state has had in constructing these conditions. Belgrade is caught in between two worlds, which serves to underline the film's preoccupation with the

[291] Schatz, *Hollywood genres*, p. 113.
[292] Mason, p. 75.

effects of the sanctions in the construction of the contemporary condition of Serbia. An important source of deviation stems from the use of the gangster *noir*. Mason stresses that 'this does not necessarily mean that gangster *noir* offers a left critique of capitalism because many gangster *noir* films place themselves within a distinctly American ideological economy'.[293] Ultimately, in spite of the difficulties of modern life, Hollywood films predominantly operate within the assumption of the inherent success of the American Dream. Conversely, *Rane* does not place itself within a Serbian ideological economy; in fact, it openly rejects the contemporary ideological economy, which represents the source and cause of all the society's troubles. Nor does the film's narrative present capitalism as a suitable ideological alternative to Milošević's destructive nationalism: Pinki and Švaba, the gangsters exploiting capitalism, express no desire or interest to save their nation.

The metaphorical significance of the *noir* elements in the film, which are based on ideological conundrums, is also manifested physically in the action of the film through the use of *noir* stylistic elements. The ideological use of *noir* serves therefore as a symbolic presence, only made clear on closer inspection; the physical uses of the genre are much more striking in the film. On a foundational level, the elements of the *noir* film are increasingly evoked in *Rane* through the progressively more frequent shots that take place at night, shrouded in darkness. These are a continuation of trends that began in gangster film. Schatz writes that: 'The gangster's milieu is the modern city, generally seen at night, with its enclosing walls of concrete and shadow, its

[293] Ibid.

rain-soaked streets, and its careening black automobiles.'[294] The use of physical darkness in *Rane* becomes a metaphor for the darkening fate of both Pinki and Švaba, and of society as a whole. There are some significant scenes in the film that purposefully use the cover of darkness and evoke the aesthetics of *film noir*. One example is in the scene where Kure is murdered; he is killed at night in a dark stairwell, where the assassin appears as a shadow against the glass, which adds a layer of mystery in an otherwise explicit film.

More significantly, the shots of Pinki and Švaba in their present, 1996, from when Pinki is narrating the story, are all set at night, as the boys find themselves caught in the middle of a protest march. The protests are a re-enactment of protests that did in fact take place in Belgrade throughout the winter of 1996-1997. Whilst the scenes from the protests surrounding them are exaggeratedly bright, the appearance of these characters out of the darkness heightens the sense of surrealism that society has descended into. The darkness of the night, signalling the impending doom of both boys, is distinctly unsettling. In one scene, when Švaba comes to collect Pinki to enact their vengeance ritual, Pinki limps pale-faced out of the darkness and appears lit up in the car's headlights. Once again, Dragojević uses this darkness to weave a more personal story of national crisis as the use of darkness is shaped by the historical context. During the sanction years, Belgrade did suffer under periodic blackouts due to energy shortages, leaving the city in

[294] Schatz, *Hollywood genres*, p. 83.

darkness and without heat for long periods of time.[295] In *Rane*, Pinki's parents are increasingly depicted sitting in darkness, bundled up in layers of clothes to keep themselves warm in their apartment, which is a stark contrast to their son who is depicted dressed in gaudy tracksuits, sitting in his car.

In addition to these literal and metaphorical evocations of darkness, *Rane* appropriates characters from the noir film that also become more stereotypical examples as the film evolves. Lidija is the presenter of the television show *Puls asfalta* and, over the course of the film, she morphs into a classic *femme fatale,* a female character central in film noir, who is a 'new type of woman, manipulative and evasive, as hard-bitten as her environment'.[296] This characterisation is initially enhanced by Lidija's role as a hard-nosed journalist in the film, but also by her sexual appeal. It is Lidija's presence that initiates the rivalry which eventually destroys the friendship of Pinki and Švaba; she is an early sexual obsession that turns into a source of real rivalry once the boys meet her off the television screen. However, the relationship between the boys and Lidija highlights a deviation from the gangster genre, which emphasises the twisted nature of life in Belgrade during this period. Lidija is not only significantly older than the boys, but she is also the mother of their tag-along friend, Dijabola. She finds the violence that the boys partake in brutally fascinating and is entranced by the fact that they can commit such crimes at such a young age.

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[295] See Gordy, pp. 187-192.

[296] Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton, 'Towards a Definition of *Film Noir*' in *The Film Noir Reader*, ed. by Alain Silver and James Ursini (Limelight Editions, 1996), p.22.

The nature of sexual power relations becomes a key factor in establishing the boys' role in the gangster hierarchy, which outlines the role of the *femme fatale* in noir films. Jon Tuska notes that it is the contrast of the gangster's sexuality and the noir woman's sexuality that leads to an imbalance in gender relations that must be remedied; 'she is, or behaves as if she is, independent of the patriarchal order', thus 'the femme fatale must be punished for this attempt at independence, usually by her death, thus restoring the balance of the patriarchal system'.[297] In the process of attempting to find out the most sensational stories, Lidija becomes an integral part in accelerating the downfall of Pinki and Švaba. She is conscious throughout the film of the allure she holds for the boys and exploits their infatuation with her. In an effort to extend her power over them, Lidija has sex with both Pinki and Švaba. In one particularly disturbing scene, she encourages Švaba to have sex with her whilst he has a loaded gun pointed at her. By contrast, she treats her own son, Dijabola, like an innocent baby, even though he is the same age as her teenage lovers. Ultimately, Švaba punishes Lidija for daring to try and compete with the male gangster world and for toying with their affections; he shoots her dead in her luxurious flat where a bereft Dijabola finds her (see Figure 4). The shock of his mother's murder feeds Dijabola's desire for revenge, which brings about the downfall of all three boys at the end of the film. This represents a deviation from the norms of the film noir; the patriarchal order is not deemed to have been restored or triumphed over femininity.

[297] Jon Tuska, *Dark Cinema: American* Film Noir *in Cultural Perspective* (London: Greenwood Press, 1984), p. 199.



Figure 4 *Rane*: Švaba, curled in the foetal position, mourns Lidija's death

One of the more innovative features of the film is the use of intertextual references, in which the narrative references domestic and international films. There is a persistent sense that in the earlier half of the film, Kure and by extension Pinki and Švaba are attempting to act out their own gangster film, or the gangster life they have seen in films, but that ultimately this fails to be realised. Kure not only lives, acts and dresses as a stereotypical 'colourful thug' character, wearing Versace suits and gold chains, detailing his exploits abroad, and enacting routine brutal violence on the boys, he also refers to classic films from Hollywood and the SFRY. In one scene, while Kure is in a drug-induced stupor, Švaba attempts to take his gun from him; Kure stops him just in time and mumbles a misquoted line from Don Siegel's film, *Dirty Harry* (1971, Warner Brothers), in broken English: 'This is Magnum 357, most powerful gun…[he trails off – LT]'. The original line spoken by Clint

Eastwood in *Dirty Harry* is: '[…] this is a 44. Magnum, the most powerful gun in the world […]'. Pinki and Švaba do not understand the gangster code of those of Kure's generation. Kure's self-characterisation as a gangster vacillates between Hollywood crime film and the rebellious hero of a Partisan-Western film, as he compares his sharp-shooting style to be like that of the Partisans in the Yugoslav war film classic, *Bitka na Neretvi* [*Battle on the Neretva*] (dir. Veljko Bulajić, United Yugoslav Producers, 1969), while the enemies run and hide. The film references are lost on the two clueless teenagers, but such episodes are used to illustrate the generational difference between the different gangsters in Belgrade. Kure, the patriotic criminal, styles himself both on the heroes of crime films and on the proud Partisans who were the foundation of Yugoslav filmic mythmaking.

Pinki also references films, but takes a completely different stance towards intertexuality. In one scene, he recounts that thanks to his father, who was an officer in the JNA, he was named after a Partisan war hero. It is presumed that this hero is Boško Palkovljević Pinki, a National Hero of Yugoslavia and important figure in the Partisan resistance, who died heroically in a hail of German machine-gun fire in 1942, whilst allowing others to escape. Pinki's memories transport him to the scene of a Partisan film, clearly based on the life of Palkovljević Pinki, where he states that he in fact could not care less about the Partisans because he is a fan of Red Star (*Crvena Zvezda*). His quip refers to the importance of football teams amongst youths, over old films and national mythology: Red Star and Partisan (both named in

support of the communist Yugoslav mythology) are Belgrade's rival football teams. His image is interposed with a comic animated Red Star fan outfit (see Figure 5). Later in the film, Pinki is rushed to hospital after being shot by Švaba, and when the doctors ask his name he responds in English: 'My name is Bond, James Bond'. Pinki's use of these elements of other films shows a mocking disdain for these filmic traditions, but also suggests the changing patterns of film consumption amongst young people. He is uninterested in ideology, and thus sees the Partisan films as archaic forms of the past, that hold no influence over him. On the other hand, he also sarcastically uses references to the hugely-popular, and enduring, James Bond franchise, which has become a key part of the ideology of the West. Ironically, James Bond is a skilled assassin and romantic hero, who is motivated by patriotism – a point that is also lost on Pinki.



Figure 5 *Rane*: Pinki would rather support Red Star than Partisan

2.5 MTV aesthetics

In the process of extending experiments in style and form in the 1990s, many directors turned to the aesthetics of television, especially music television and music videos as a source of inspiration for their alternative visions. The 'traditions of rock-and-roll films, modern design, and the fragmented narration of music videos are signs of the changes that a generationally distinctive group of directors introduce' to Serbian film in this period.[298] This style epitomised the approach of many directors, including Darko Bajić, Srdan Golubović, Radivoje Andrić and Dragojević, who were trained or were directing films in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s. Dragojević, for example, trained under Darko Bajić at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade in the late 1980s and Bajić is known for his focus on youth film and his innovation in combining film styles. Bajić's first film, *Direktan prenos* [*Live broadcast*] (Art Film, 1982), explored the problems facing young Yugoslavs and framed the narrative through the aesthetics of television news programmes, set off by coverage of a young athlete accused of doping. Thus Serbian film of the 1990s can be seen as adopting not just the style of music television, but producing multi-mediatised texts through a cross-over of film and television aesthetics. The trend has largely disappeared in more recent Serbian film and can be traced as a temporal specific phenomenon with films of the transition period; recent film has gone on to explore other technological developments in the search for up-to-date cultural references for youth. This disappearance coincided with the decline in the global success of music videos, and the

[298] '[…] tradicija rokenrol filma, moderni dizajn i fragmentarna naracija muzičkih spotova znaci su promena koje donosi generacijski distinktivna grupa reditelja'. Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 165.

increasing focus of MTV and other music networks on producing specific entertainment series, including *The Real World*, 'a franchise show that sped a move away from videos'.[299]

This section of the film analysis will focus on identifying what is meant by MTV or music video aesthetics in the Serbian context, identifying connections with the stylistic changes of the 1980s onwards, and establishing how these elements are conveyed in *Rane*. Above all, elements of music video culture serve to underline the youthfulness and rebelliousness of this specific style of film-making, disengaging from the previous modes of alternative film (New Film), as well as forming part of the wider experiments with genres and styles that Daković identified as being markers of the 'New Belgrade School'.[300] The aesthetics of music videos serve as a means of drawing connections between young Serbian directors and their dialogue with global film and media trends. Music video aesthetics were not something new for Dragojević; he uses this style in his first and second film, *Mi nismo anđeli* and *Lepa sela lepo gore*. Music video styling in all these films underlines the pervasive sense of surrealism that Dragojević wants to evoke as being a part of Serbian society in his narratives.

The appearance of music video aesthetics in Serbian film of the 1980s and 1990s is not unprecedented and can be seen within the context of demonstrable global changes in film and television. The emergence of 'music video was one of a number of innovations producing major structural changes

[299] Rob Tannenbaum, 'Introduction' in *I want my MTV: the uncensored story of the music video revolution*, by Rob Tannenbaum and Craig Marks (New York: Plume, 2011), p. xl.
[300] Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 174.

in the music-related industries' during the early 1980s.[301] In particular, this change was epitomised by the appearance of the first television channel dedicated to music video, MTV, which was launched in August 1981, with a target audience of people aged twelve to thirty-four years old.[302] Rob Tannenbaum writes that: 'The MTV aesthetic during its Golden Age of 1981 to 1992 – quick cuts, celebrations of youth, shock value, impermanence, beauty – influenced not only music, but network and cable TV, radio, advertising, film, art, fashion, race, teen sexuality, even politics.'[303] The advent of music television thus had a powerful influence on the culture and products relating to a specific generation of young people, and became a new form of open rebellion against adult norms. The style also had an influence on global film-making, with other contemporary films such as Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo+Juliet* (Bazmark Films, 1996), clearly adopting MTV aesthetics. It is possible to argue that *Romeo+Juliet* could be seen as an influence on *Rane* itself, as their combination of music video aesthetics and youth culture has close similarities. Above all, the target audience of MTV was the 'untapped audience, an invisible power' of television, the teenage audience, who until this time had been the focus of the film industry only.[304] In addition to the wider MTV aesthetic of the period until 1992, other traits of music video aesthetics included, 'aggressive directorship, contemporary editing and FX [special effects], sexuality, vivid colours, urgent movement, nonsensical

[301] Will Straw, 'Pop music and postmodernism in the 1980s', in *Sound and Vision: The Music Video Reader*, ed. by Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Routledge, 1993), 3-21 (p. 4).
[302] Straw, p. 5.
[303] Tannenbaum, p. xxxviii.
[304] Ibid.

juxtapositions, provocation, frolic, all combined for maximum impact on a small screen'.[305] Another key element of the style that must be considered is the channel's use of editing, where MTV pioneered the use of cartoon-style writing and images, overset on different backgrounds, producing a comic layered effect. Most of these elements can be found in *Rane*, as well as Dragojević's other films of the 1990s, forming a significant marker of his filmmaking style during the decade.

In *Rane*, music video and MTV aesthetics are used to heighten the sense of unreality that serves as a metaphor for life in Belgrade during this period. The use of these aesthetics can also be linked to the fact that the scenes from the past are Pinki's memories from this period and, considering that he is a teenage boy, the embellishment of his flashbacks with these aspects underlines the dream-like and nightmarish qualities of the scenes. Some prominent examples of these MTV aesthetics in use include nonsensical juxtapositions, which prove both humorous and unsettling. For example, Švaba's grandmother keeps a number of chickens in her apartment, which feature prominently in scenes filmed in that location both in the foreground and background. In one scene, Pinki, Švaba and his grandmother sit around the kitchen table smoking marijuana, whilst Švaba holds one of the chickens on his lap like a dog. After Pinki is shot by Švaba, the chickens peck gruesomely at his open gunshot wounds. The chickens serve as an exaggerated reference to the rural to urban movement that characterised life in the SFRY; Švaba's grandmother is unable to relinquish her country habits,

[305] Tannenbaum, p. xliv.

which also include her Orthodox religion and fear that any war will be a repeat of WWII. The fact that the boys give Švaba's grandmother not only marijuana, but also cocaine, provides another nonsensical as well as shock element; depictions of elderly people using drugs are not common scenes in film. However, the scenes showing Švaba's grandmother using drugs are also one of the prime sources of black humour in the film, as she clearly enjoys the feeling she experiences whilst on drugs.



Figure 6 *Rane*: MTV aesthetics – Švaba's grandmother offers Pinki an egg

Parts of the film are subjected to the use of quick cuts, urgent movement and unusual camerawork to suggest specific actions are taking place. In particular, the camera becomes distorted to emphasise when Pinki and Švaba are high; their drug abuse is depicted as being fast-paced and manic. By contrast, the ways in which Kure's experience of drug abuse is filmed underlines the depression he experiences; he is depicted as being barely able to move, pale and/or in darkness. In other scenes, quick cuts and urgent movement are

used to emphasise moments of particular aggression or danger, and are frequently accompanied by fast-paced dance music. The camera work becomes heavily distorted, using blurred or slanted shots, for example when Pinki remembers being shot by Švaba and then taken to hospital. This abnormal camerawork serves predominantly as a means of illustrating moments in Pinki's flashbacks that he cannot remember clearly.



Figure 7 *Rane*: MTV aesthetics and vivid use of colour

The use of colour in the film also serves as a means of drawing distinctions between the younger generation and the older generation in the film, including this divide in the gangster community. The 'vivid colours' of MTV aesthetics serve more generally as a symbolic means of identifying the differences between youth and adult culture. In *Rane*, the use of bright colours has a similar function, particularly as Pinki and Švaba become increasingly successful gangsters; their tracksuits become increasingly garish and their gold chains more prominent as a representation of their increasing

wealth. These vulgar outfits are also positioned as being the stereotypical uniform of New Belgrade's gangsters. By contrast, Pinki's parents wear dull colours, predominantly brown, suggesting their age; Kure is initially wears some bright clothing accompanied by leather jackets, but the colour palette of his skin and clothing visibly dulls as he fades into his drug addiction. Vivid colours are further used as a means of signifying when Pinki is in a hallucinatory or disturbed state. This is exemplified in the opening and closing scenes of the film, which are suffused with neon colours. At the beginning of the film, Dragojević's surrealist depiction of the protests is heightened by the use of neon pink, and the protestors are a rainbow blur outside the car. At the end of the film, Pinki lies dead and an orange, green and purple billboard is lit up in neon brightness in the background (see Figure 2). In another scene, Pinki has a nightmare after Švaba shoots him; in the sequence, the boys are depicted in a scene that could have been taken from one of Hollywood's 1960s beach films and again the background is a vivid orange colour.

One final element of Dragojević's appropriation of MTV aesthetics is his use of montage, particularly in the first half of the film. In these scenes, cartoonish writing is used, written over the film background and serves as a means of providing intertitles. One particularly prominent use of this is the intertitle, 'About idols…' ['O idolima'], that serves as a means of Pinki introducing his opinion on the differences between his own and his father's ideas of idols. The writing appears across a flushing toilet and, after a few moments, spins and goes down the toilet with the remaining water (see

Figures 8 and 9). This style of over-writing is prominent in MTV culture and also in teenage television more generally in the 1990s, as it can be considered one of the few special effects that could be made on low budgets. Another example is seen when Pinki imagines himself and his father in the Partisan war film (see Figure 3), a bright red hat and scarf is superimposed onto the black and white film as a stark contrast. The use of editing is explicitly linked to Pinki's memories of his younger years, whilst he still considers himself to be a child. However, this over-writing also signifies the youthful mocking of parents' culture and a symbol of rebellion from adults; through montage, Pinki is effectively able to graffiti over his own memories to produce the image he desires.



Figure 8 *Rane*: 'About idols', the use of cartoonesque intertitles and montage



Figure 9 *Rane*: 'About idols' is flushed

2.6 Conclusion

This analysis of *Rane* has highlighted how the film represents an important marker in the development of new film styles, genres and influences. *Rane* is an example of the evolution of genre adoption in the 1980s and how this strongly impacted innovation in genre films in the post-communist period. In particular, the film adopts key elements of the gangster genre, as a result of the powerful symbolic function that organised crime and gangsters had in the social imagination of Belgrade during the 1990s. This chapter has drawn parallels between the foundations of the gangster genre in media representations of criminals, both in the form of other existing media representations of criminality in Belgrade, but also through the film's suggestion of how young people are being influenced by these representations. *Rane* can be seen as a moral fable about the effects that this cultural atmosphere has on youth and their inevitable inclusion in the world of organised crime. There were a number of films made in crime and gangster

genres during the 1990s which can be connected to the prominence of criminals in the media and also the perceived association between the collapse of communism and the influx of capitalism.

However, as much as the focus of the narrative is guided by its youth protagonist, Pinki, the film becomes a chronicle of the suffering of adults under sanctions. Evoking the gangster genre's foundations in the Depression of the 1920s, Dragojević depicts the suffering of Belgrade's citizens under the financial collapse of the state after the imposition of sanctions on the FRY in 1992. Pinki's flashbacks, while tracing major events from his own life, primarily serve to highlight the deepening suffering of citizens and the euphoria when the sanctions are lifted in 1995. The film can be classified as a youth film that is not solely for youth, but also for adults, as the evocation of national suffering appeals to a wide cross-section of the audience. This appeal is heightened by the film's use of multiple genre as well as intertextual references. The film's narrative, and Pinki's flashbacks, can be seen as consisting of two halves, the second of which is dominated by *film noir* elements, used to highlight the worsening situation both in the boys' lives and also in Belgrade. Throughout the film, generational differences between the boys and adults are suggested through their differing uses of references to other films. The effect of these elements serves to suggest that Pinki has embellished his memories that form the majority of the film's action; he remembers the circumstances that lead to his involvement in crime as a spectacular tale taken straight from the narratives of film.

The final element of the film that signifies Dragojević's role in the expansion of styles and genres in the late communist and early post-communist period is the director's use of MTV and music video aesthetics in his films of the 1990s. This usage, like the expansion of genre experimentation, can be linked to the global and domestic culture of the 1980s. There are a number of different examples of these aesthetics in *Rane*, most of which are used to suggest the unreality of the state of life in Belgrade, signifying both dream-like and nightmarish qualities. The distortions in the film emphasise Pinki's blurred memories of this period, as his mind is addled by drugs or extreme pain. As with the use of genre elements, the use of montage in the film suggests that Pinki is embellishing his personal history to make the story more exciting and rebellious. The style of MTV aesthetics that Dragojević uses is not unique to *Rane* and is a characteristic of the director's other films of this decade. While this style was largely lost after the early 2000s, due to a combination of global developments in fashion and technology, it can be argued that these elements can also be found in parts of the next Serbian film that is analysed in this thesis, *Apsolutnih sto*. However, the influence that the film industry and music of the 1980s had in *Rane* can be traced in Russian films of the same era, including *Brat*, the topic of Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: *Brat* between perestroika and post-Soviet youth film

As Russia settled uncomfortably into its new position of demographic, social and political weakness in the early 1990s, the domestic film industry entered into a period of inertia, with very few quality films being produced on meagre finance. Without the comfortable provisions of Soviet cultural financing, the Russian film industry, like every other sphere in the former Soviet Union, found itself subject to demands for profitability in the free market. Rather than attempting to adjust their genre usage to audience tastes, 'Russian producers and film-makers responded to audience taste with reluctance and some delay', producing thrillers, actions films and melodramas, instead of the comedy and adventure films that are most popular with viewers.[306] This continued a trend which had begun during perestroika, when Russian directors 'largely indulged in the bleakness of life and offered neither alternative nor perspective'. [307] Whilst Russian film floundered in the early 1990s so too did representations of youth on film. The 1980s had been particularly productive for youth film in the Soviet Union, with Anna Lawton noting that '[F]ilm after film deal with the prevalent mood of alienation,

[306] Beumers, 'Cinemarket…', p. 884.
[307] Beumers, *A History of Russian cinema,* p. 204.

estrangement, and disaffection that is particularly disturbing among teenagers'.[308]

In the 1990s, youth film disappeared as a priority choice of narrative, which can be considered as due in part to the general decline in production and the inefficiency of Russian directors to adapt to audience-based models of production. By 1996, the Russian film industry had dipped to a 'near all-time low' in production, with only twenty-eight films being made that year, as opposed to 300 in 1990.[309] Susan Larsen posits that the 'identity crisis confronting the Russian film industry', during the conversion to a free film market, 'shaped the story lines, aesthetic choices, and marketing strategies' of two of Russia's most successful directors, Nikita Mikhalkov and Aleksei Balabanov.[310] Balabanov's third film *Brat,* the subject of this chapter, has become synonymous not only with the revival of the Russian film industry, but also with the transformation of the market model for Russian domestic cinema.[311] *Brat* is perhaps most famous for its unapologetic use of xenophobia, with its frequent derogatory references to people from Central Asia and the South Caucasus, as well as Western foreigners. However, the film is equally well-known for its desire to prove that Russian film could still both popular and profitable in spite of the difficulties facing the film industry.[312]

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[308] Anna Lawton, *Before the Fall: Soviet Cinema in the Gorbachev Years* (Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2002), p. 198.
[309] Susan Larsen, 'National Identity, Cultural Authority, and the Post-Soviet Blockbuster: Nikita Mikhalkov and Aleksei Balabanov', *Slavic Review*, 62:3 (Autumn 2003), 491-511 (p. 491).
[310] Larsen, 'National Identity, Cultural Authority…', pp. 491-492; Hashamova, *Pride & Panic*, pp. 40-41.
[311] Liubov' Arkus and Maksim Medvedev, 'January 4 1992', *Noveishaia istoriia otechestvennogo kino*, Vol. 3 (1992-1996), [pp. 24-27]; Larsen, 'National Identity, Cultural Authority…' (2003).
[312] See, for example, Hashamova, *Pride & Panic*, in particular pp. 296-298; Susan Larsen, 'In Search of An Audience: The New Russian Cinema of Reconciliation', in *Consuming Russia: Popular Culture, Sex and*

In *Brat*, a young man named Danila Bagrov, native of an anonymous provincial Russian town, has been recently de-mobilised from his national service in the Army, during which he claims to have 'served in the headquarters'.[313] Fearing that Danila will become like his father, a thief who died in jail, his mother orders him to St. Petersburg to find his older brother Viktor, who is living there. Their mother is blissfully unaware that Viktor has taken full advantage of the criminal atmosphere of the new Russia by becoming a hitman for hire. Manipulating his younger brother, who has come across as both simple-minded and inexperienced, Viktor persuades Danila to carry out a hit for him for a Mafiosi named Kruglyi. Viktor has become aware that Kruglyi plans to have Viktor killed during the hit so he can avoid paying him for the job. The plan backfires, however, when it becomes apparent that Danila is an accomplished and resourceful killer, contradicting his story that he did a desk job as his national service. Danila's skills and his ability to manoeuvre through the world of St. Petersburg organised crime eventually lead him to the top of the hierarchy, usurping not only Kruglyi, but also his own double-crossing brother. At the close of the film, Danila exiles Viktor to the provinces with their mother, while he leaves for the dizzier heights of Moscow.

As the plot summary indicates, Balabanov harnesses the motifs of three prominent genres – the gangster, vigilante and crime genres – that are implicitly connected with the evocation of the criminal atmosphere of Russia

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Society since Gorbachev, ed. by Adele Marie Barker (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 196 and pp. 199-200; Viktor Matizen, 'Skromnoe ocharovanie ubiitsy', *Seans*, 16 (1997), p. 41.

[313] 'в штабе отсиделся'

in the 1990s, and echoing the use of the gangster genre in *Rane*. As a result, much of the scholarship of the film has focused on identifying and discussing these generic motifs, as well as discussing the film's role in the construction of post-Soviet nationalism.[314] Before the release of *Brat* and its sequel, *Brat 2* [*Brother 2*] (dir. Aleksei Balabanov, CTB, 2000), Balabanov was known primarily for his work as an *auteur*, rather than for genre films. This was very clear in his first, post-graduation films, *Schastlivye dni* [*Happy Days*] (SPiEF, 1991) and *Zamok* [*The Castle*] (Bioskop Film, 1994), as well as his later film, *Pro urodov i liudei* [*Of Freaks and Men*] (CTB, 1998). *Brat* can be seen as a prime example, then, of how Russian *auteurs* appropriate elements of genre films.

Much of the success of *Brat* was built on Balabanov's desire to illustrate that Russia need not pander to US standards of film-making, whilst also exploiting elements of Hollywood genres. This aversion to/appropriation of Hollywood genre is a tactic that other patriotic Russian directors have used (see Chapter 5), but can also be linked to the difficult relationship between film and genre amongst Soviet directors. The film combines populist elements, such as a good-looking, xenophobic and no-nonsense hero, to ensure success. Susan Larsen writes that Balabanov's approach in *Brat* is 'aggressively commercial', which 'exemplifies the shift in focus that film critics and directors […] insist Russian filmmakers must make if the Russian film

[314] See for example, Florian Weinhold, *Path of Blood: the Post-Soviet gangster, his mistress and their others in Aleksei Balabanov's genre films* (North Charleston: CreateSpace, 2013); Anthony Anemone, 'About killers, freaks, and real men: The vigilante hero of Aleksei Balabanov's films', in *Insiders and Outsiders in Russian Cinema*, ed. by Stephen M. Norris and Zara M. Torlone (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 127-141; Hashamova, *Pride and Panic*, p. 41; Larsen, 'In Search of an Audience…', p. 196.

industry is to survive'.[315] This aggressive commercialism can be read as an example of Balabanov proving one of two points: firstly, that Russian film, with Russian ideas, can be successful, even if this requires an adoption of Hollywood techniques; and secondly, that this appropriation need not sacrifice Russian identity to Western ideals in the process. It is possible to trace the legacy that *Brat* has created in Russian film that can still be seen in more recent Russian cinema, particularly after the success of *Brat 2*, which appropriated gangster film more openly and satirically, and used even more offensive forms of xenophobia. In many ways, *Brat* served as an indicator of audience preferences in post-Soviet Russia which has been emulated in the years since its release.

Yet very little attention has been paid to the fact that the film is also one of post-Soviet Russian film's best examples of a youth protagonist and, more importantly, that the use of this youthful protagonist shaped the success of the film. As was seen in *Rane*, there are multiple generic strains present in *Brat*, as well as clear deviations. On the one hand, the film adopts, and in places mocks, the gangster, vigilante and action genres, but it also clearly references youth film. The importance of *Brat* as an icon for the post-Soviet generation has been touched upon by several Russian critics. Evgenii Gusiatinskii, speaking of *Brat*, has said, 'how we lived earlier without the brother is completely incomprehensible', underlining the individual role that the character of Danila Bagrov has had on the consciousness of the post-

[315] Larsen, 'In Search of an Audience…' p. 196.

Soviet audience.[316] Daniil Dondurei argues that: 'Balabanov compels his young viewers to identify with this character'.[317] Yet there has been no in-depth analysis of why the film is significant both for its representation of youth and for the genre of youth film in post-Soviet Russia. This is doubtless due to the wider lack of attention to the youth film genre in Russian and Soviet scholarship, but this lack does not negate the importance of this genre to the film industry as a whole, or to *Brat*. As Andrew Horton and Michael Brashinsky noted in the early 1990s, during the perestroika period, with its glasnost in culture, 'youth-oriented feature films have become an important part of the discourse between various levels of Soviet society'.[318] It is possible to suggest that the restrictive nature of the Soviet film industry, followed by the outburst of socially critical youth film of the perestroika era and the decline of the film industry during the 1990s, created very difficult conditions for the continuation of youth film and for representations of youth in the post-Soviet period. However, this analysis posits that as perestroika-era film was the most immediate point of reference for Russian film throughout the 1990s, the aesthetics of the period have had a profound influence on *Brat*. Balabanov proves that the models of negativity that plagued film in the 1980s and early 1990s can still be used in inventive ways.

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[316] 'Как мы жили без брата раньше— совершенно непонятно'. Evgenii Gusiatinskii, 'Brat zhil, brat zhiv, brat budet zhiv', *Iskusstvo kino*, 3 (March 2000), <http://kinoart.ru/archive/2001/03/n3-article7> [accessed 17 September 2015].

[317] 'Балабанов заставляет своих молодых зрителей идентифицироваться с этим персонажем […]'. Daniil Dondurei, 'Ne brat ia tebe, gnida…', *Iskusstvo kino*, 2 (February, 1998), <http://kinoart.ru/archive/1998/02/n2-article11> [accessed 17 September 2015].

[318] Horton and Brashinsky, p. 72.

This chapter will explore the narrative of youth in *Brat* and illustrate how *Brat* can be seen, in part, as a youth film. In particular, the film analysis will suggest that, rather than rejecting the aesthetics of perestroika-era film, Balabanov adopts many of the motifs that were present in Soviet youth films of the 1980s and uses these references to create a sense of selective recognition, based on a measured nostalgia for late Soviet culture. This nostalgia centres not only on the appropriation of the aesthetics of perestroika-era films, including chernukha film, but *Brat* also adopts the rebellion of perestroika-era youth film and culture. Balabanov re-works some of the most well-known of these cultural elements, in particular the 1980s rock scene, a site of culture that the director himself was intimately linked to. The rock scene played a significant role in Balabanov's formative training as a director in Sverdlovsk (present-day Ekaterinburg), which evokes the use of rock in *Brat* and the narrative is expanded by a nostalgia for this rock scene. Balabanov mixes his personal experiences and tastes with the fictional world of his youth protagonist. It is possible to argue that the nostalgia for rock of the 1980s is measured by the two functions that this aesthetic reference has – firstly, this rock nostalgia allows Balabanov to comment on the fate of rock culture in the post-Soviet period; and secondly, rock culture highlights Danila's youth, a key part of the rock subplot in the film. *Brat* is thus constructed as a film of two parts – Danila is a reflection of Russian culture on the one hand while, on the other hand, Balabanov's appropriation of the aesthetics of the gangster genre positions Hollywood as an inauthentic world of kitsch, which has replaced the totalitarianism of the former Soviet

authority with a totalitarianism of its own. This analysis argues that through references to perestroika-era youth film, Balabanov has created an important formula for the promotion of Russian national identity; he aids the re-appropriation of elements of Soviet culture from disrepute and reintegrates them into Russian culture, separate from, but also as part of, their historical context.

3.1 Remnants of chernukha

Writing on the verge of the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Andrew Horton and Michael Brashinsky comment that glasnost 'has initiated a period of replanting that will be both hopeful and painful.'[319] Time illustrated that glasnost in Soviet film was more painful than hopeful. The freedom in artistic creation it brought allowed directors to dream of a brighter, progressive future, but this freedom also led to disparagingly bleak representations of Soviet society. From these explorations of society, the term 'chernukha' arose, referring to the contemporary trend for 'representational art that emphasizes the darkest, bleakest aspects of human life'.[320] Volha Isakava notes that one industry report suggested that '82 per cent of all the films shown in 1989 and 1990 […] project a "negative attitude towards life and human relationships […]"', outlining the vast scale of chernukha during late perestroika.[321] Horton and Brashinsky argue that chernukha is not a genre per se, rather a 'semigenre', highlighting the

[319] Horton and Brashinsky, p.11
[320] Seth Graham, '*Chernukha* and Russian film', *Studies in Slavic Culture* (2000), 9-27 (p. 9.)
[321] Volha Isakava, 'The body in the dark: body, sexuality and trauma in perestroika cinema', *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, 3:2 (2009), 201-214 (p. 202).

controversy that surrounded definitions of chernukha when it appeared.[322] Suggesting that chernukha is a semigenre acknowledges that there were several clear and common similarities between films of this type, but that these alone cannot justify classifying chernukha as a defined genre type. However, Seth Graham points out that 'the significance of its presence in the context of Soviet film history and of Soviet sociocultural life in general produced […] no such consensus.'[323] While chernukha was seen by some as the reaction of artists to the 'complicated façade' of Soviet society, it was argued that chernukha itself was 'a façade, a superficial artistic device', which took advantage of the excesses of perestroika-era freedoms.[324] It is perhaps these varieties of approaches that have made quantifying what chernukha actually is difficult. Each term regardless suggests there is a frame of sorts to be discerned and repetitive elements to be acknowledged.

Horton and Brashinsky, amongst others, sought to identify what they considered to be the common traits of chernukha films by developing a 'formula' rather than a strict genre frame, which emphasises the importance of discursive as well as aesthetic elements in genre:

> The chernukha formula is at once simple and intricate. Its necessary ingredients are:
>
> 1. The family, agonizing or already collapsed.

[322] Horton and Brashinsky, p. 163-164.
[323] Graham, '*Chernukha* and Russian film', p. 11.
[324] Ibid.

2. Average Soviet citizens unmasking their animalistic natures, ultimate immorality, and unmotivated cruelty […]
3. The death of all former ideals, leaving no hope for the future after the closing credits.
4. Packed everyday conditions in "communal apartments" where several families live sharing all utilities […] with the attendant "communal" psychology and forms of communication.
5. Senseless hysterics and fights arising from nowhere and dying down in the middle of a scream.
6. Usually, a few "adult" scenes.[325]

These traits highlight why chernukha is linked to darkness, as the 'formula' emphasises the negativity both of the Soviet past and the unsure future. Graham clarifies these traits and adds additional epithets of the chernukha film, such as scenes of alcoholism and/or drug addiction, physical violence, abusive sexual encounters, characters living in 'urban isolation', deformed bodies, dirty surroundings, and an emphasis on 'naturalism'.[326] While not present in all perestroika-era films, these attributes came to be seen as the defining traits of films from this period and also highlighted a building sense of hopelessness that pervaded film of the late 1980s. Many, if not all, of these elements are present in the youth films of perestroika, illustrating the close ties between chernukha and filmic agonising over the future of young people. In particular, the loss of all former ideals and the lack of prospects for the

[325] Horton and Brashinsky, p. 163-164.
[326] Graham, '*Chernukha* and Russian film', p. 9.

future encapsulate the fears that adults had for the last generation of Soviet youths.

Chernukha-style films and television series continued to raise such concerns well into the 1990s, with the prominent film journal *Iskusstvo kino* publishing a roundtable discussion on chernukha in March 1997.[327] Chernukha was perceived to have had an almost physically repulsive impact on Russian cinema audiences. Graham provides a damning assessment of its persistent influence on Russian film in the 1990s: 'The year 1991 in many ways was indeed the year of the resounding flush, but not without subsequent *vsplyvanie* [floating – LT]; *chernukha*'s legacy continues to assert itself, both in popular and in "art" film.'[328] Whilst perestroika-era Soviet audiences, having lived under censorship for so long, might have initially craved voyeuristic explorations of the underside of Soviet life, the unrelenting suggestions of hopelessness that ensued destroyed any sense that glasnost brought enlightenment. It was in this atmosphere that *Brat* was conceived and made, and it is for this reason that this analysis of the film will focus on identifying the residual elements of chernukha and perestroika in the film's narrative and aesthetics.

3.2 Youth film from the late Soviet to post-Soviet era

The decision by Balabanov to adopt a youth character as his protagonist has particular importance for references to and distancing from perestroika-era

[327] Daniil Dondurei, 'Konets veka – konets chernukhi', *Iskusstvo kino*, 3 (March 1997), <http://kinoart.ru/archive/1998/03/n3-article29> [accessed 15 September 2015].
[328] Graham, '*Chernukha* and Russian Film', p. 23.

film. During the overhaul of Soviet life that began with perestroika and glasnost in culture, concern about young people increased in prominence. Pilkington notes that 'not only did there emerge a specific perestroika debate on youth, but that debate itself became a central perestroika theme'.[329] It was only after glasnost began in 1985 that the Soviet media began to feature 'revealing information about various aspects of Soviet youth'.[330] Glasnost 'brought to the screen an array of unknown, or forgotten, pictures that had been sitting on the censor's shelf for years'.[331] However, the period also resulted in the creation of a number of prominent youth films. As Horton and Brashinsky note, 'troubled youth present a search for new values and thus a challenge to a crumbling socialist tradition', and there was no greater concern for this topic than there was shown in film.[332] In the late Soviet and early post-Soviet context, representations of youth not only proved to be a metaphor for the transition from communism, but in fact came to encapsulate the period of transition – both its negative and positive aspects. *Brat*, which was made as this period came to an end, is clearly influenced both in subject matter and style by youth films of the 1980s.

The Soviet depictions of youth that appeared during perestroika mirrored concerns about young people that are present in the cinema of other countries, in particular the sense of the alienation of youth from the

[329] Pilkington, *Russia's youth and its culture*, p. 118.
[330] Tanya Frisby, 'Soviet Youth Culture', in *Soviet Youth Culture*, ed. by Jim Riordan (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 1-15 (p. 1).
[331] Lawton, *Before the Fall*, p. 121.
[332] Horton and Brashinsky, p. 68.

adult population, who embodied Soviet rule.[333] Prominent issues relating to Soviet youth that came to the fore in perestroika-era film included: drug and alcohol addiction; sexual experiences; prostitution; abuse; dysfunctional or failed family set-ups; the plight of returning youth veterans of the Soviet-Afghan conflict; unemployment and lack of opportunities; and crime.[334] These elements can be taken as a general framework for defining late-Soviet youth film, along with the age of the films' protagonists. Some of the most well-known youth films of perestroika included: *Vai viegli būt jaunam?* [*Is it easy to be young?*] (dir. Juris Podnieks, Rigas kinostudija, 1987), a documentary which sought to lay bare the realities of growing up in the Soviet Union and became one of the most shockingly honest productions of the time; *Pliumbum, ili Opasnaia igra* [*Plumbum, or a Dangerous Game*] (dir. Vadim Abdrashitov, Mosfil'm, 1987), the dark story of a Soviet teenager who becomes a police informer; *Malen'kaia Vera* [*Little Vera*] (dir. Vasilii Pichul', Gorkii Film Studio, 1988), which explored family breakdown; *ASSA* [*ASSA*] (dir. Sergei Solov'ev, Mosfil'm, 1988), a complex art film with a crime sub-plot, using rock music to represent youth subcultures; *Igla* [*The Needle*] (dir. Rashid Nugmanov, Kazakhfilm, 1988), starring rock singer Viktor Tsoi and introducing a narrative discussing substance abuse and environmental issues; and *Tragediia v stile rok* [*Tragedy, Rock Style*] (dir. Savva Kulish, Mosfil'm, 1990), which grimly portrayed the effects of drug abuse and youth naïveté. The previously taboo topics approached by all of these films, and their sheer bleakness, made youth film one of the most important products of perestroika. Their influence

[333] Lawton, *Before the Fall*, p. 198.
[334] Lawton, *Before the Fall*, p. 188

on filmmaking was acknowledged by the huge amount of attention they received from critics and audiences at the time – *Malen'kaia Vera*, for example, was seen by an estimated 55 million viewers in the Soviet Union.[335] Understanding the tendency in perestroika-era film towards a hyper-realistic portrayal of Soviet social reality for youth helps to explain why *Brat* was seen as so important to the transformation of the post-Soviet film industry, and how *Brat* adopts and deviates from these recent traditions in youth film.

Whilst some have read Danila's simple-minded patriotism (and/or xenophobia) as the primary base for *Brat*'s construction of a new national hero, I argue that Danila's youth is the most significant aspect of his characterisation.[336] One of the many functions of youth film is to resolve youth conflict as a means of reflecting on the future stability of a society or of implying that a society's norms and values are inherently unbreakable, even in times of difficulty. The depiction of society is useful for both young people and adults as youth films can encourage a feeling of stability in times of uncertainty or social change. *Brat* firmly belongs to this type of youth film. Though brutalised by his surroundings and operating with questionable logic, Danila is unusually stable in his beliefs and values, a characteristic which is not normally attributed to youth characters, who seek to define themselves in the adult world. In this aspect, he differs from a number of the other protagonists who are discussed in this thesis.

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[335] Birgit Beumers, 'Soviet and Russian Blockbusters: A Question of Genre?', *Slavic Review*, 62:3 (Autumn, 2003), 441-454 (p. 452).
[336] See, for example, Larsen, 'National Identity, Cultural Authority…', p. 504-505; Hashamova, *Pride and Panic*, p. 296.

Considering the large number of youth films that were made during perestroika, the lack of representations of youth in the 1990s is even starker. The only other clear example of a Russian film that can be counted in the canon of youth film is Pavel Lungin's *Luna-Park* [*Luna Park*] (Bliuz, 1992), in which a young anti-Semite thug and bodybuilder discovers he has a Jewish father. *Luna-Park* notably evokes the surrealism that characterised the more experimental youth films of perestroika, such as *Assa*, as well as the brutality, alcohol abuse, and violence of chernukha film. On closer inspection, *Brat* uses a variety of elements that were prominent in perestroika-era film, including narratives and aesthetics directly drawn from youth films of the 1980s and also from chernukha. This might seem counterintuitive if one accepts the idea that the audience Balabanov was trying to attract had been put off Russian film in the first place thanks to trends such as chernukha.[337] The emphasis in *Brat*, however, remains on the use of these elements to differentiate Danila and his values from this past, dark history. On the other hand, Daniil Dondurei notes that the film 'is full of dirt, ruin, fouled-up communal apartments, toothless old men, deformed, gaunt women, unearned money, eternal violence', but suggests that these elements are more an inversion of socialist realism than a sign of chernukha.[338] In either case, Balabanov's revival of perestroika culture serves as an affirmation that this culture is part of the fabric of Russian life and part of constructing a new Russian culture relies on the integration of even negative episodes from film history into the

[337] Larsen, 'National Identity, Cultural Authority…', p. 492.
[338] '[…] заполнен грязью, разрухой, загаженными коммуналками, беззубыми стариками, уродливыми испитыми женщинами, незаработанными деньгами, вечным насилием'. Dondurei, 'Ne brat ia tebe, gnida…'.

mainstream. To deflect any adverse reactions, Balabanov has sugar-coated any slightly bitter references to perestroika culture with his stylised use of the gangster genre and his appealing patriotism.

3.3 Beyond nostalgia

While *Brat* can be interpreted as representing a renewal of strength, the film evokes much of the darkness, which was taken as a sign of the weakening of Russian culture in chernukha films. On the most basic of levels, the sepia tint in which *Brat* is filmed visually evokes the dirtiness that Graham highlights as a key element of chernukha. Sepia tints are most frequently used in film and photography to give footage an aged effect – for example, Balabanov's later film *Pro urodov i liudei*, set in St. Petersburg in the early twentieth century, uses the tint for this reason, as well as arguably evoking a filthiness of its own. In *Brat*, the sepia tint renders the famously colourful buildings of St. Petersburg a murky, brownish grey, which is mirrored by the moral grubbiness of those inhabitants of the city with whom Danila has contact with. As such, St. Petersburg has from its pre-Revolutionary and post-Soviet revival of Imperial glory chipped away, and replaced with a dull palette of grey. The fact that Danila spends his first days in the city homeless and sleeping rough next to the celebrated canals illustrates Danila's incompatibility with the city, 'a disorientating dream space whose physical map reflects disordered emotional and psychological landscapes'.[339]

[339] Jennifer Day, 'Strange Spaces: Balabanov and the Petersburg Text', *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 49:4 (Winter 2005), 612-624 (p. 613).

Danila's homelessness when he first arrives in St. Petersburg echoes another trait prominent in chernukha and perestroika-era youth film, in Horton and Brashinsky's words, 'the family, agonizing or already collapsed'. Danila has been exiled from his mother's flat to find a better life with his brother in 'Leningrad', as their mother still refers to the city, but when he arrives in the city, Viktor is nowhere to be found. After sleeping rough, Danila is eventually reunited with his older brother, only to given the material means for him to live separately from his quasi-paternal figure. Danila is refused a family home with his brother, which mirrors his wider family situation. At the beginning of the film, after Danila is arrested for fighting with a security guard, the police officer discloses to his colleague that Danila's father was a thief who died whilst in prison. The police officer offers Danila the opportunity to join the police, but Danila declines. Danila's refusal to join the police does not suggest an affinity with his criminal father, but rather reflects on his desire to carve his own path. While not fully collapsed, Danila's family parallels the dysfunctional families portrayed onscreen in the late and post-Soviet period. His father is absent, his mother is agonising over whether Danila's run-in with the police is a reflection of his future in criminality, and his brother Viktor has long left the family behind to pursue a better life in St. Petersburg.

The scenes of conflict and difficulty with parents that characterise Danila's family set-up are some of the closest to those seen in youth film, where the genre's protagonists often strive for independence. When Danila's

mother catches sight of Danila's compact disc player, she tries to take it from him as to her it represents the source of his lack of direction – in doing so, she enacts a stereotypical parental reaction to her child's love for music that has the potential to corrupt. To Danila's mother, his lack of direction contrasts with the model of Viktor, who has left to pursue a better life in far-off Leningrad. The motif of successful older siblings leaving for big cities is seen in *Malen'kaia Vera*, in which Vera's brother, also called Viktor, has left for Moscow to become a heart surgeon. Viktor in *Brat* does not have such an illustrious job, but is a hitman; thus the film mocks the internal movement of young people to big cities in the Soviet Union/Russia and the changes to careers brought about by the transition. Big cities might provide opportunities for people to better themselves, but this betterment is corrupted by the spread of unbridled capitalism. What is significant here is that fact that Danila does not allow his dysfunctional family set-up to affect his own needs and does not sacrifice what he wishes to do for his family. In spite of his familial strife, he remains loyal, in particular to his treacherous brother, and thus displays moral values which had been lost in the dysfunctional families of the perestroika period. Unlike the heroine of *Mal'enkaia Vera*, his previous lack of direction does not inhibit his ability to become more successful than his older sibling.

Communal apartments (*kommunalki*) may have been a key part of Soviet life and remained central to the lives of post-Soviet Russians well into the 1990s. Communal living was a prominent theme in Soviet film and

frequently signified frustration thanks to the claustrophobic set-up of close living. In *Brat*, it is noteworthy that some of the characters, including Sveta, still live as they did in Soviet times. Sveta's *kommunalka* confines her to one room and her neighbours eavesdrop on her when she brings Danila home with her. Danila, meanwhile, does not live with his brother in his flat, but rents a room from an older woman, whose flat is private and lavishly decorated. To further his vigilante activities, he also rents a room from an acquaintance, where a middle-aged unhinged man lives by himself. These different examples allow Balabanov to reflect on the varying changes, or lack of changes, in people's lives in the post-Soviet period. Some people live as before, in Soviet-era communal apartments, complete with the past's nosey neighbours (part of the attendant 'communal psychology' that Horton and Brashinsky describe as being key to chernukha) and cramped living conditions, with households being confined to a single room. Others now live alone in their flats, but take on lodgers who pay in foreign currencies, particularly the dollar, perhaps as a means of making up for low or non-existent pension payments and reflecting on the instability of the Russian rouble in the 1990s. Out of the two set-ups, the *kommunalka* seems more alive, as the audience sees glimpses of the neighbours, hallways and kitchens. On the other hand, Danila's private landlady is seen initially only when she takes rent from him, and the audience does not hear her speak; the flat itself is dark and empty. The St. Petersburg depicted in *Brat* has not quite shaken off the atmosphere of late Soviet claustrophobia and the mentality of communal living, with the attendant pluses and minuses, but it has not yet become accustomed to the

free market either. Even though their mother claims Viktor 'was like a father' to Danila, Viktor's flat does not become his surrogate family home.[340] Instead, Danila is afforded freedom in a private flat.



Figure 10 *Brat*: Sveta's nosey neighbour in the *kommunalka*

The harshness of life facing young people in Russia is depicted as having changed little in the years since the fall of the Soviet Union. *Brat* contains a number of cruel or abused characters, many of whom could have stepped out of perestroika-era film. It must be noted that the type of brutality doled out by Danila, 'the hit man who follows his own moral standards', is depicted differently from that of the other characters in the film.[341] Danila murders with unnerving accuracy and without regret, but this mentality remains within the bounds of his unshakeable sense of what is right and what is wrong. This attitude towards violence is also a sign of the times, the chaos of post-communism in action; after all, as Condee suggests, asking for 'moral

[340] 'в месте отца был'.
[341] Hashamova, *Pride and Panic*, p. 43.

consistency' from film characters during this post-Soviet period, when violence is the presiding principle, is impossible.[342] Youth characters on film should not be expected to act differently, as they are reflections of society. Yet there is a sharp distinction between Danila and the older generation in the film, as these older generations serve out different types of, primarily physical or sexual, violence. On the one hand, the vicious behaviour of Kruglyi and his henchmen is in tune with their gangster styling, particularly their murdering of rivals, threats and hostage-taking.[343] In spite of this stylisation of violence, organised crime has become an associated trait of the wider culture of *bespredel* (lawlessness) in the 1990s, when those in positions of power faced no consequences for their actions, even if laws were broken.[344] Yet some of their actions are reminiscent of those seen in chernukha. Isakava comments that the 'heroines of *chernukha* films are thoroughly muted, crippled and deprived of any sense of self-dignity and identity in the end'. [345] In a reflection of this tendency, in *Brat*, Kruglyi's henchmen beat and rape Sveta when she cannot tell them where to find Danila. Sveta's experience in *Brat*, combined with her age and jaded appearance, suggests a connection with the cruelty of chernukha films and the aftermath of perestroika. The actress that plays Sveta, Svetlana Pismichenko, was thirty-two during filming. If the character of Sveta is the same age as the actress playing her, this suggests that Sveta would have been roughly Danila's age during

[342] Condee, *The Imperial Trace*, p. 234.
[343] Helena Goscilo, 'Introduction: Centrifuge and Fragmentation', *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*, 24:1 (2000), 7-14 (pp. 9-12).
[344] Borenstein, *Overkill*, p. 23.
[345] Isakava, 'The body in the dark…', p. 212.

perestroika.[346] Sveta becomes the epitome of perestroika and Danila the chaos that comes after this period.

The sexual violence inflicted on Sveta is not the character's only connection to chernukha. Horton and Brashinsky state that chernukha has the tendency to depict 'average Soviet citizens unmasking their unmotivated cruelty'.[347] While Kruglyi and his thugs might be cinematic stereotypes, they are also reflection of a wider tendency to depict violence as commonplace in the 1990s. The prominence of the crime film during this time attests to the sense that violence was the norm. In addition to Kruglyi's assault, Sveta is regularly beaten by her alcoholic husband. Throughout the film, she appears on screen with bruises on her face, perhaps echoing the 'deformed bodies' that Graham sees as a foundational trait of chernukha. When Danila beats Sveta's husband, it is Danila's behaviour that disgusts Sveta, rather than the brutality she has come to expect from her husband, even though Danila is attempting to defend her. This sequence highlights differences between Sveta, a representative of an older generation, and Danila, whose youth post-dates the Soviet collapse. Danila leaves Sveta with her husband, rather than truly avenging her by eliminating her husband as a love rival; his unwillingness to remain with the past (represented by Sveta) suggests an implicit rejection of the negativity associated with this recent past. Danila does not have to remain in either his birthplace or St. Petersburg, but can move forward from this film reality. The closing scenes of the film see him en route to Moscow,

[346] Danila's age is not revealed in the film, but his demobilisation from national service suggests he is twenty years old.
[347] Horton and Brashinsky, pp. 163-164.

which Viktor had told him earlier in the film is the real source of Russian power.



Figure 11 *Brat*: Danila with Sveta, bruised and bloodied after Kruglyi's assault

Youth film is often centred on young people discovering and exploring (usually heterosexual) intimate relationships. Danila has two sexual relationships in the film, with Sveta and Ket, but these encounters are not the awkward affairs depicted in Hollywood youth films. [348] On the contrary, Danila is irresistible to both women and this sexual potency serves to emphasise his 'masculine, moral qualities' – which become even more obvious in *Brat 2*.[349] While the teenage protagonists of *Rane* were obsessed with sexual activity, Danila is remarkably blasé about his sexual relationships. Larsen has suggested that his sexual relationships are staged 'almost as afterthoughts' and perform the basic function of providing him shelter.[350] Sexual encounters

[348] See, for example, Shary, *Generation Multiplex,* particularly Chapter Five, 'Youth Romance: Falling in Love and the Fallout of Sex', pp. 221-293.
[349] Hashamova, *Pride and Panic*, p. 44.
[350] Larsen, 'National Identity, Cultural Authority…', p. 508.

on screen, previously a taboo topic in Soviet cinema, became more prominent as they were depicted with increased freedom during glasnost, but Danila's experiences are lacking in intimacy, with no passion and little admiration. Balabanov's scenes fade to black before the audience sees anything explicit. Danila's affair with the older, married Sveta seems unlikely in places: they share little in common and no motivation is offered for their union. In spite of her attraction to Danila, Sveta herself seems to be unconvinced by the situation, which is made particularly apparent in her bemusement at Danila's obsession with Nautilus and then at the Nautilus concert where Ket, who is a girl of his own age, asks if Sveta is his mother.

Yet sex between people of the same age group is depicted as being no less dysfunctional. Danila's sexual experiences with Ket revolve around an exchange of money, thereby bordering on prostitution. Ket asks Danila to contact her when he has money to buy drugs for her; when he does, they go to a rave together, where Ket rewards his financial gift with sex. Emotionless sex can be used as a means of paying for her drug addiction, and this off-hand type of exchange is represented as being integrated into the fabric of life in post-Soviet St. Petersburg. Balabanov does not waste any narrative efforts exploring the roots of Ket's drug use or exploring the effects of her addiction on those around her. The theme of substance abuse that was a prominent part of perestroika-era youth film has become even more commonplace in the post-Soviet era, as a sign of the degradation of youth. Danila stands in contrast to the association between youth and drugs. Moreover, in spite of

his heroic posturing, Danila does not try to save Ket from her addiction; when he leaves St. Petersburg for Moscow, he meets her in McDonalds, a symbol of Americanisation, and gives her money that will enable her to continue her self-destructive behaviour.

Danila's experience of youth has not been entirely different from the young men of the 1980s, in particular in his experience of national military service. Some of the most prominent sequences from the film *Vai viegli būt jaunam*, for instance, feature young veterans of the Soviet-Afghan war struggling to come to terms with the conflict. They have suffered physical injuries and struggle to integrate themselves into normal life; one veteran admits that when he returned, he drank to forget his wartime experiences. Controversial conflicts played a large part in the role of Russia and Serbia in the late and post-communist period, and this is depicted as having had a disproportional impact on the lives of young people.[351] The on-screen discussion of these conflicts is frequently in dialogue with the failures of the military mythology that formed the foundations of communist rule.[352] In the late Soviet period, the Soviet-Afghan war was perceived as a failure of the military might of the Soviet Union, on a par with the Vietnam War. The controversy of the Soviet-Afghan war had a demonstrable effect on the creation of war films in Russia and, as the reference in *Vai viegli būt jaunam*

[351] These issues are discussed in relation to Serbia in Chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis.
[352] See, for example, Youngblood, *Russian War Films*, pp. 185-187.

suggests, this effect was linked to concerns over the effect of war on young men.[353]

In *Brat*, Danila's national service has also forced him into one of Russia's controversial conflicts, this time in the First Chechen War of 1994-1996. Unlike the subjects of Podnieks' film, Danila does not admit any acute moral or psychological damage, and barely acknowledges his role in the war. In the context of accepting national service and the experience of violence as a vital part of the coming-of-age process in Russia, military service starts to lose the infamy of the late-Soviet period. The suggestion of military service as a standard Russian experience melds with the film's wider promotion of strength; *Brat* can be seen as part of a wider impetus to promote military preparedness amongst young men in Russian film (see Chapter 5). Condee notes how *Brat* becomes one in a long series of Balabanov's films that depict characters 'in a permanent war to fend off vulnerabilities left from imperial collapse'.[354]

A major point of departure from the tradition of perestroika-era youth films in *Brat* centres around the dynamic between youths and adults, which was frequently evoked in the youth films of the 1980s.[355] Horton and Brashinsky suggest that perestroika-era youth films 'differ from American teen movies in a notable characteristic: the amount of narrative time and energy given to the interrelationship of the youthful protagonists and their

[353] Ibid.
[354] Condee, *The Imperial Trace*, p. 226.
[355] Lawton, *Before the Fall*, pp. 209-211.

parents and elders'.[356] This narrative focus is a reflection of the importance of paternal figures in Soviet ideology and the breakdown of this paternal ideological system during perestroika.[357] Graham writes: 'The image of powerless youth, doomed not only by the crimes of their grandfathers but also by the passivity and complicity of their fathers, was a common motif in perestroika treatments of generational dynamics.'[358] This connection between the painful death of communism, the figure of the father, and representations of youth, the child, as victims of its legacy is clearly referenced in other films concerning the transition from communism, including *Rane*. *Brat*, however, utterly rejects this model of youth experience. Far from being the 'powerless youth' of the 1980s and early 1990s, Danila is self-empowered and this empowerment guards him from the crimes of his felon father in the past and the passivity/complicity of his brother, who has also become a criminal in the new regime of capitalist corruption. Unlike other youths, he wastes no time arguing, or even considering the opinions, of his parental figures.

Brat, as indicated in title and narrative, is focused on the fraternal, rather than the paternal relationship. Fathers are expected to fail, or are simply not present. This tendency has a long history in Russian film, which can be traced back to the aftermath of WWII. As Aleksandr Sekatskii has argued: 'The negative experience of absence has in some sense left as deep an

[356] Horton and Brashinsky, p. 72.
[357] Horton and Brashinsky, pp. 71-72; Seth Graham, 'Models of Male Kinship in Perestroika Cinema', in Goscilo and Hashamova, *Cinepaternity*, 70-86 (p. 72).
[358] Graham, 'Models of Male Kinship in Perestroika Cinema', p. 75.

impression, as the normal association of fathers and sons, which is handed over in the relay-race of generations.'[359] In this context, the older brother comes to the fore, as figure that should be a reliable and stable influence in a younger sibling's life, but inevitably mimics the father's path to failure. The film's focus on the fraternal signals a shift in the metaphor of youth and a distancing from the tropes which accompanied the collapse of communist regimes. The trials of brotherhood in *Brat* are a metaphor for the rejection of the failures and victimhood of post-communist transition. This is a theme that is also of central importance in *Apsolutnih sto*, which is discussed in the following chapter. Brotherhood, the failed foundation of both the Soviet Union and the SFRY, becomes the central site for moving on from these failed experiments in societal engineering. The analyses of *My iz budushchego*, *Russia-88* and *Šišanje* (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7) will illustrate that familial ties become increasingly insignificant as films become distant from the 1990s and narratives of post-communist transition. In the isolationism of the new capitalist reality, the family framework, as a metaphor for the wider societal family, presents new challenges for youth protagonists, although brothers remain important figures in some films. Friendship groups come to the fore, and this presents even greater opportunities for youth characters to be supported and failed, as is witnessed in the other films that are the focus of this thesis.

[359] 'Негативный опыт отсутствия в каком-то смысле оставлял столь же глубокий след, как и нормальное, переданное по эстафете поколений содружество отца и сына'. Aleksandr Sekatskii, 'Ottsepriimstvo', *Seans,* 21/22 (February 2005), <http://seance.ru/n/21-22/novyiy-geroy-otets-i-syin/ottsepriimstvo/> [accessed 19 September 2015].

Danila's refusal to be a victim, and the complete rejection of victimhood as a form of inexcusable weakness, illustrates the attention paid to the selective appropriation of perestroika-era culture by Balabanov in the film. Ultimately, strength would become the primary focus of the sequel to *Brat*, *Brat 2*, as well as a prominent trait of wider post-Soviet Russian cinema. As Hashamova writes: 'Though lacking a job or any other apparent source of income, Danila possesses confidence and strength and radiates tranquillity – characteristics prized in today's Russia.'[360] The selective use of references to the 1980s in *Brat* reveals a great deal about the position of culture in the post-Soviet period, which favoured reconciliation, as well as an uncharacteristic agreement between different age groups.[361] For adults and young people alike, Danila's strength, derived from his survival of the transition from communism, encompassed what would become the guiding principle of post-Soviet life from 2000 onwards. As Denis Boiarinov recently stated: 'Now *Brat* can be seen as the ideal illustration of the prevailing myth in our heads about the "turbulent 1990s" (which began to be crystallised following this film): the tawdry glitz and humiliating poverty of an unsettled time, […] wild street markets and shoot-outs on the street, escaping from reality with narcotics and the strange music of youth.'[362] Danila is the youth who supersedes adults and becomes a metaphor for the future of the Russian

[360] Hashamova, *Pride and Panic*, p. 56.
[361] See Larsen's discussion of post-Soviet cinema as 'the cinema of reconciliation' in 'In Search of an Audience…'.
[362] 'Сейчас «Брат» смотрится идеальной иллюстрацией господствующего в умах мифа о «лихих 90-х» (с этого фильма и началась его кристаллизация): мишурный блеск и унизительная нищета неустроенного времени […], дикие уличные рынки и уличные разборки, сбежавшая от реальности в наркотики и странную музыку молодежь'. Denis Boiarinov, 'Gde tvoi kryl'ia? Za chto mozhno liubit' 90-e', *Snob*., 18 September 2015, <http://snob.ru/selected/entry/98074> [accessed 19 September 2015].

nation, something that the progressive youths of the 1980s were unable to achieve. To depict a young person in such a way breaks with the traditions of youth film, both in the Soviet Union and from the wider youth film genre; youths are typically depicted submitting to the dominant adult culture of the time. This presents an important consideration when addressing the (lack of) representations of youth in Russia highlighted throughout the rest of this thesis; youth characters are under-represented in Russian film and perhaps this rift with perestroika youth film is a cause, rather than a symptom. Representations of the trials of youth have little room in an industry and a society interested in narratives of strength.

3.4 Measured nostalgia

Helena Goscilo posits that the defining traits of film in the 1990s were 'criminalisation', 'nostalgia', 'sexualisation' and 'stylisation' – traits which influenced every sphere of Russian culture during this period (particularly after 1995).[363] The analysis of the film's references to 1980s youth film and chernukha has discussed criminalisation and sexualisation, as well as discussing the film's stylisation of the post-Soviet world. These references aimed to draw a distance between the 1980s and 1990s. My attention will now turn to an exploration of the film's primary source of nostalgia – rock music. Larsen argues that the film's 'nostalgia-inducing' soundtrack serves as a means of establishing 'a subtle but recognisable distance between the film's implied viewer (or author) and its action'.[364] This analysis will provide a closer

[363] Goscilo, 'Introduction', pp. 9-12.
[364] Larsen, 'National identity, cultural authority…', p. 508.

examination of the relationship between *Brat* and Balabanov's connections with rock. The rock scene was a defining trait of perestroika-era culture and was intertwined with the history of youth culture from this period. By the 1980s, rock music had existed for a considerable time in the Soviet Union, with Artemy Troitsky suggesting that 'the first genuine rock group surfaced in Riga' in 1961.[365] However, during perestroika, rock entered the mainstream and was allowed a public stage on which to perform for the first time, and the soundtracks of youth film from the 1980s featured bands such as Kino and Akvarium, reflecting the tastes of the younger generation.

Rock culture can be seen as formative not only in Balabanov's training as a director, but also in his establishment as a director with firm links to the experiences and culture of the 1980s. The city of Sverdlovsk had a thriving rock scene in the 1980s, which Balabanov entered into in the late 1980s whilst completing his training as a director. In particular, the director became closely connected to the Sverdlovsk Rock Club (Sverdlovskii rok-klub), which was established in 1986 as a part of the mainstreaming of rock culture during perestroika. Whilst rock music was given a more prominent place in Soviet culture, the scene was also brought under the control of Soviet bureaucracy, following the creation of the Leningrad Rock Club in 1981.[366] As one member of the Sverdlovsk rock scene, Andrei Matveev, argued, 'the Leningrad Rock Club was organised in 1981 namely because it was easier to bring this

[365] Artemy Troitsky, *Back in the USSR: The True Story of Rock in Russia* (London: Omnibus Press, 1987), p. 12.
[366] See, for example, Paul Easton, 'The Rock Music Community', in *Soviet Youth Culture* ed. by Jim Riordan, 45-82 (pp. 54-55).

disorderly people under control'.[367] While *Brat* is considered Balabanov's third film, after *Schastlivye dni* and *Zamok*, as a student, Balabanov directed three films which were closely linked to the rock scene of the city. *Ran'she bylo drugoe vremia* [*Earlier it was a different time*] (Lenfilm, 1987) was a short film about a young woman's struggle with male villainy that was set to a soundtrack of Nautilus Pompilius' early hits; another short film, *U menia net druga* [*I have no friend*] (Lenfilm, 1988) depicted the lives of a group of young people, featuring songs by Madness and Billy Idol, amongst others; and *Nastia i Egor* [*Nastia and Egor*] (VGIK, 1989) was a documentary short about the lives of musicians, Nastia Poleva and Egor Belkin, which featured performances by Balabanov's friends from the Sverdlovsk Rock Club.[368] Thus *Brat* was not the first film on which Balabanov worked with the rock group Nautilus Pompilius, who were natives of Sverdlovsk. Balabanov wrote the screenplay for *Ran'she bylo drugoe vremia* and asked the band to perform an impromptu gig for the film in a restaurant in Sverdlovsk.[369] Later, a part of this concert by Nautilus was used by the band to create a music video for the song 'Vzgliad s ekrana' ['View from the screen]', meaning that Balabanov is also credited with helping to create one of the band's first music videos.[370]

Rock counterculture played an important part of Balabanov's artistic mentality well after the influence of rock waned in the early 1990s and

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[367]'[…] Ленинградский рок-клуб в 1981 году организовался именно для того, чтобы легче было этот беспокойный народ под контролем'. Andrei Matveev cited in Mikhail Orlov, *Sverdlovskii rok: pamiatnik mifu* (Ekaterinburg: Parkus, 2000), p. 33.
[368] Mariia Kuvshinova, 'Nachalo: "Schastlivye dni" i "Zamok"' in *Balabanov* ed. by Liubov' Arkus, Mariia Kuvshinova, and Konstantin Shavlovskii (St. Petersburg: Knizhnye masterskie; Masterskaia «Seans», 2013), p. 29.
[369] Ibid.
[370] Ibid.

eventually lost significance in the tumultuous beginnings of post-Soviet life. In a self-interview in 1999, at the height of the fame surrounding *Brat*, the director stated:

> For me, filming normal dramas and melodramas is boring. From childhood, I have written stories – strange ones, radical ones. In general, I have always been against something or other. I think that this pathos remained with me even in the Soviet era. Because, once upon a time, I started from rock-and-roll, I made a film about the Sverdlovsk rock-and-roll bands in 1985 when they were still banned, and at that time I was oppressed, strangled and kicked. And, as such, in some way my cinema is rock-and-roll cinema.[371]

Balabanov elucidates his feeling that, in this period, his cinematic artwork was intrinsically tied to the ideological motivation of rock culture, rather than being a part of the wider structures of the film industry. Mariia Kuvshinova quotes Balabanov's first wife, Irina Balabanova, who stated that '[film] theory did not concern' Balabanov and his fellow students at the Sverdlovsk Film Studio.[372] Balabanov's own declaration confirms this position – his suggestion that filming 'normal' dramas and melodramas is boring highlights the ambivalent relationship that the director has with genre. His lack of concern for film theory is apparent in his selective and kitschy adoption of the

[371] 'Мне скучно снимать обычные драмы или мелодрамы. Я с детства писал рассказы — странные такие, радикальные. Вообще я всегда был против чего-то. Думаю, что этот пафос еще с советского времени у меня остался. Потому что когда-то я начинал с рок-н-ролла, снимал фильм про свердловских рок-н-ролльщиков в восемьдесят пятом году, когда их еще запрещали, и меня тогда давили, душили, пинали. И, собственно, отчасти кино мое — рок-н-ролльное'. Aleksei Balabanov, 'Balabanov o Balabanove', *Seans*, 17/18 (May 1999) <http://seance.ru/n/17-18/portret-4/balabanov-o-balabanove/> [accessed 4 December 2015].
[372] Kuvshinova, 'Nachalo', p. 32.

gangster genre in *Brat*. The concept that he produces rock-and-roll cinema becomes a defining element of his earliest genre film, but also has an influence on his mantra of rebellion in his later works. The inclusion of rock culture in the film suggests that Balabanov is trying to satirise the falsity of film production. By showcasing the music of the Sverdlovsk rock scene and featuring guest appearances from rock stars, Balabanov attempts to position rock music as the element of late Soviet Russian culture worth savouring.

In *Brat*, the clearest manifestation of Balabanov's rock-and-roll connections is in the film's score and the number of references to the 1980s rock scene. Primarily, *Brat* is a film of different subplots and a significant amount of the film is dedicated to Danila's discovery of Nautilus Pompilius, his love of music and his quest to acquire all of their compact discs.[373] With background noise heavily limited, the film is almost silent apart from dialogue and a recognisable soundtrack provided in songs by Nautilus. The group's lead singer, Viacheslav Butusov, makes a guest appearance and his name is listed in the film's opening credits. Butusov is not the only perestroika-era rock musician to appear; he is joined on screen by Diusha Romanov of Akvarium and Nastia Poleva, amongst others. The scene featuring these three figures suggests that the original rock scene continued behind closed doors in private flats in St. Petersburg: when Danila happens upon a party where the real-life Butusov is casually jamming with his friends in the living room. This exposure of the rock community and the blurring of the boundaries between fictional characters and actual people suggest a continuation of the late perestroika

[373] Larsen, 'National Identity, Cultural Authority…', p. 506.

trend for rock music in documentaries. As well as Balabanov's own *Nastia i Egor*, the scene evokes the style of Aleksei Uchitel's documentary *Rok* [*Rock*] (1987), in which the 'Leningrad rock scene is presented through segments from well-known musicians' everyday lives'.[374] Danila, and the audience, are offered a brief glimpse into the past as prominent figures from the rock scene are gathered together again in an apartment, playing for friends and family.

It cannot be a coincidence that Nautilus played such a large role in the film only a year after their music was reissued on compact disc by Moroz Records in 1996 as part of the series 'Legends of Russian Rock', which featured other bands from the 1980s, such as Kino, Akvarium and DDT.[375] The re-release of their music suggests that Nautilus' appeal, and the appeal of 1980s Russian rock, endured well into the post-Soviet period, even though the context behind their music had changed considerably. Nina Beliaeva notes: 'This series [Legends of Russian rock] became a nostalgic expression of love and, at the same time, a tribute to the memory of the golden age of rebellious rock'.[376] *Brat* can also be seen as an expression of Balabanov's appreciation of the music of Nautilus and also an expression of disdain for the way the rebellion of the 1980s rock scene had disintegrated into the mainstream. Polly McMichael writes that: 'The retrospective "re-packaging" [of Soviet rock in the post-Soviet era] is significant in presenting a particular

[374] Polly McMichael, '"A Room-Sized Ocean": Apartments in the Practice and Mythology of Leningrad's Rock Music' in *Youth and Rock in the Soviet Bloc*, ed. by William Jay Risch (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 183-209 (p. 189).
[375] Nina Beliaeva, 'Kontekst: Pop-Muzyka, Rok, Dzhaz (April)' in *Noveishaia istoriia otechestvennogo kino, 1986-2000*, Volume 6, ed. by Liubov' Arkus, (St. Petersburg: Masterskaia Seans, 2001-2004), p. 820.
[376] 'Эта серия [«Легенды русского рока»] становиться ностальгическим признанием в любви и одновременно данью памяти золотым временам бунтарского рока'. Ibid.

view of the recent past, and in attempting to re-write the inheritance passed on to the contemporary Russian rock music scene.'[377] I argue that *Brat* can be seen as an example of the wider attempt to re-write the inheritance of late Soviet rock and present an attractive form of the recent past through the idealisation of Butusov in particular. Danila and his addiction to the 1980s rock has become representative of Balabanov's own refusal to be compartmentalised in the post-Soviet era and also part of the reclaiming of Soviet-era rock for Russia. The use of the music, and the financial success of the re-release of Nautilus' songs, is linked to the film's careful use of populist elements. However, the transformation of Nautilus into nostalgia removes the last vestiges of rebellion that defined their music in perestroika and subsumes the band into the wider appropriation of nostalgia as a form of patriotism in the post-Soviet period.

The rock scene declined rapidly in importance in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Troitskii writes that 'oppositonal rock lost its identification, the protest generation lost its bearings and did not know what to protest against'.[378] *Brat* can be seen as an attempt by Balabanov to highlight the enduring importance of and affection for the bands of the 1980s. In *Brat*, the depictions of the rave scene in post-Soviet St. Petersburg has other more specific meanings in the context of the Russian experience. As Yurchak has argued, the transition to the dominance of club culture 'occurred in the

[377] Polly McMichael, 'Prehistories and Afterlives: The Packaging and Re-packaging of Soviet Rock', *Popular Music and Society*, 32:3, 331-350, (p. 334).
[378] '[…] оппозиционный рок утратил идентификацию, поколение протеста растерялось и не знало, против чего протестовать'. Artemii Troitskii in Aleksandr Gorbachev and Il'ia Zinin, *Pesni v pustotu: Poteriannoe pokolenie russkogo roka 90-kh* (Moskva: AST, 2014), p. 28.

context of the spectacular collapse of the late socialist symbolic order in the early 1990s, and the consequent crisis of independent rock'.[379] While all-night dance parties began as an extension of the rock scene in St. Petersburg, these parties were swiftly brought under the control of 'the state, the market, the Mafia, and their various combinations'.[380] This corruptive transformation is clearly referenced through the contrast between Danila and Ket, the two young people in the film. *Brat* mourns the loss of independent rock and the spirit of rebellion that this style of music signified, as well as referencing the rise of the 'truly new, *post-Soviet* generation of the *novye molodye* [the 'new youth' – LT]'.[381] Danila meets Ket, a member of the *novye molodye*, on the street in St. Petersburg when he is accosted by two American tourists looking for the 'Nora nightclub'; Danila knows no English with which to respond to the tourists and Ket jumps in, offering them directions in broken English. Ket becomes a symbol of the transformation of Russian culture in the post-Soviet period – the semi-successful, but ultimately contrived, transition to Western models of youth culture. Her name is a personally-contrived distortion of the Russian name Katya, for a Western name, Kat, and sounds suspiciously similar to the slang name for the drug ketamine in English. Ket's physical appearance further hints at the corruption of rock-and-roll culture, which transformed into all-night club culture in the late 1980s – an occurrence which Alexei Yurchak calls 'one of the most noteworthy changes in Russian youth culture in

[379] Alexei Yurchak, 'Gagarin and the Rave Kids', in *Consuming Russia: Popular Culture, Sex and Society Since Gorbachev*, ed. by Adele Marie Barker (London: Duke University Press, 1999), 76-109 (p. 79).
[380] Yurchak, 'Gagarin and the Rave Kids', p. 100.
[381] Ibid [emphasis in the original].

the first post-Soviet decade'.[382] Ket appears in a punk-style outfit – with leather jacket, combat boots and a backwards cap – but her outfit choice is contrasted with the style of music she adheres to. Danila meets her at a Nautilus concert, as well as at a rave playing trashy, European trance music (see Figure 14). The dynamic between Ket and Danila, as two very different youth characters, becomes a manifestation of the opposition between cheap, imported culture and the purity of classic rebellious Russian rock.



Figure 12 *Brat*: Danila with Ket (seated centre), smoking cannabis at an all-night dance party

The influence of the 1980s in *Brat* is at once nostalgic and confrontational. Adopting such elements from the highly recognisable culture of the 1980s feeds the film's desire to appeal to the audience. Balabanov's depiction of perestroika-era culture is selective. The overall emphasis in perestroika-era culture on opposition fits neatly with Balabanov's self-posturing as a director

[382] Yurchak, 'Gagarin and the Rave Kids', p. 76.

who breaks the boundaries of film, says things that the dominant cultural structures do not wish him to say and produces films that the average Russian viewer wants to see. The director says of himself: 'I will [continue] to make scandalous, harsh films. For example, everyone accuses me of nationalism. That is absolutely groundless. I reflect the condition of our people.'[383] Yet this use of nostalgia is tempered by the painful proximity of perestroika and the marked turning of Russian audiences away from the era's visions of contemporary Russian existence. Balabanov uses his nostalgic interpretation of the era to depict how the previous adulation of Western culture proved false and how some elements of Soviet culture are worth celebrating. *Brat* becomes an elegy to the changes which took place in both rock culture and the film industry in the late 1980s, and mourns the loss of the freedom of this period.

3.5 Conclusion

This analysis of *Brat* has illustrated that, when examining the film's promotion of national identity construction in Russian transitionary films, it can be productive to move beyond discussions of xenophobic elements. While Danila in *Brat* is indeed positioned, in terms that can be read as nationalist, as a new hero for post-Soviet Russia, this positioning can be linked to the use of a youth protagonist and elements of the youth film genre. In particular, an analysis of Danila's youth highlights how Balabanov has appropriated elements of perestroika-era culture in order to create a sense of recognition

[383] 'Буду снимать кино скандальное, резкое. Например, все меня обвиняли в национализме. Абсолютно безосновательно. Я отражаю состояние нашего народа'. Balabanov, 'Balabanov o Balabanove'.

and separation amongst viewers. This chapter has illustrated that many of the scenes and situations of *Brat* are closely linked to the aesthetics of chernukha film. However, this appropriation of chernukha aesthetics is also used by Balabanov to highlight how Danila deviates from the late 1980s; his appropriation of the violence that has come to characterise late Soviet and early post-Soviet film is a signal of his adaptation to the contemporary atmosphere. Negativity bounces off his straight-forward patriotic shell.

In spite of its dismissal of the past, *Brat* also displays a strong degree of nostalgia for the rock music scene of the 1980s. In featuring stars of the rock scene, Nautilus Pompilius, in *Brat*, Balabanov highlights the inauthenticity of the post-Soviet era, which has corrupted elements of this rock scene. Rather than associating them with perestroika, which appropriated rock music into the mainstream and thus destroyed it, Balabanov brings rock music by these artists of the 1980s into the canon of Russian national culture. Ultimately, nostalgia can be used to reclaim Russian culture from the disaster that befell culture after the collapse of the Soviet Union and prove that not all memories associated with the past are inherently negative. This is a trait that has continued in later Russian film with the rehabilitation of other controversial moments from Soviet history, including the Soviet-Afghan War. Beumers writes that, particularly between 2007 and 2010: 'Filmmakers who largely lack first-hand experience of these times [Soviet] look back with nostalgia – not wanting to return, but attempting to find a reason for their present identity (or lack of it) in a past they share with

the nation.'[384] *Brat* can be considered an early post-Soviet example of this nostalgic view of the past, albeit one that is well concealed. From a youth film perspective, nostalgia can be also used to make the alternative identification of young people part of the mainstream, as is seen in the film *Stiliagi*.

While Balabanov has indeed appropriated elements seen in chernukha films of the 1980s and early 1990s, the director uses these elements to position Danila as moving away from the negativity of the past. If perestroika was defined by its freeing of youth culture, these traces can be read in representations of youth in *Brat*. Danila does not act in any way like a traditional example of a protagonist of a youth film and his fate as a character likewise deviates from the generic norms. Traditionally, youth film characters ultimately come to the conclusion that the values of society are the best means of establishing oneself; in *Brat*, where these societal values revolve around a depraved adherence or acceptance of criminalisation, Danila successfully refuses to align with these norms. This does not mean he cannot use criminalisation to his own advantage, but more that he adheres to his own set of rules, protecting the weak and challenging those in power, which are ultimately more admirable than those of new Russia. The appearance of Danila as a character and the popularity of *Brat* could have strongly influenced the shaping of youth characters in post-*Brat* representations of youth in Russia. Machismo mixed with patriotism is a continuing trait of youth in mainstream Russian film. While it is not possible to say this is solely as a

[384] Birgit Beumers, 'National identity through visions of the past' in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, ed. by Mark Bassin and Catriona Kelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 55-72 (p. 60).

result of the appearance of *Brat*, this chapter has illustrated a number of characteristics of this film that are emulated in later productions.

Part 2: Lessons on memory and war

As the 1990s came to an end, the film industries in both Russia and Serbia turned to representations of young people with a more proactive outlook on life. The year 2000 proved a turning point in the political and social construction of both nations, which signalled the need for a change in genre types and film production. If young people were a significant point of moral concern in the 1990s, they have an even more important role in the 2000s. If the target audience is indeed young people, then youth protagonists must be featured in films that provide more stable moral lessons for youth protagonists and audiences. The guiding principle of youth films remains the same – young protagonists are used as a metaphor for the difficulties of reconstructing national identity in the present, but they also have a pedagogical function. Films increasingly focus on providing lessons on morality in the transition. As before, there are two target audiences for youth films – the younger audience and the adult audience. Representations of youth on film remain as much a concern about the fate of adults, as they are about the fate of the younger generations.

Chapters 4 and 5 discuss how this pedagogical turn in youth films is negotiated through the memory of warfare. In particular, both *Apsolutnih sto* and *My iz budushchego* are focused on informing young people about their relationship with past wars – the Wars of Yugoslav Succession and WWII respectively. Within this, they take different approaches; *Apsolutnih sto* can be seen as an example of what I term 'post-conflict' film, while *My iz*

budushchego is a time-travel film. The former adopts a serious approach to confronting the aftermath of the 1990s, whilst the latter adopts a comedic tone to present young people as naïve and in need of a firm hand. However, both of these films revolve around two central assumptions: firstly, that youth in the present are arrogant towards, or unknowledgeable about, the sacrifices made by their elders in past wars; and secondly, that young people must be taught lessons in humility to become positive figures for the future of both nations.

War as a filmic topic is a significant theme in both Russian and Serbian film, as well as being a dominating feature of both societies. In Serbia, society can be seen as caught between culpability for the atrocities committed in the name of ethnicity during the 1990s and desiring freedom from these memories of war. Film genres mirror this contradiction – conflict is discussed, but is often masked or tempered by shifts in genre use. In Russia, war, and WWII in particular, is a defining aspect of the resurgence of patriotism in Putin's Russia. As Norris writes: 'Throughout the 1990s, numerous Russian political and cultural figures attempted to find a "usable past" that could serve as a means to build a revived sense of nationhood.'[385] A whole industry has developed around the memory of WWII as a point in time where Russians could be proud of the Soviet Union and bringing young people into this memory has been of central importance. It can be argued that both Serbia and Russia are in the process of seeking a 'usable past'.

[385] Stephen M. Norris, "Guiding stars: the comet-like rise of the war film in Putin's Russia: recent World War II films and historical memories", *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, 1:2 (2007), 163-189 (p. 163).

These lessons are intrinsically linked to the concept of nation-building and the promotion of strong national identities, as well as reconstituting something that has been lost. Both films project subtle symbols of nationhood to forward the idea that some elements of the past are worth protecting, regardless of the traumas of transition. The memory of war is used as a means of instilling youth with a sense of belonging, and also responsibility. In this process of rehabilitating (certain) memories of war, *Apsolutnih sto* and *My iz budushchego* reflect on the continuing desire to identify positive aspects in youth culture and national identity, as well as suggesting that a unified society must be drawn from the wreckage of the transition from communism. Both films highlight the contradictions inherent to this transition and manifest them in young protagonists.

Chapter 4: *Apsolutnih sto* and post-conflict film

Owing to the close links between the use of crime genres and the economic collapse of the sanction years, plots involving organised crime did not disappear rapidly from Serbian screens after the collapse of the Milošević regime in the year 2000. The presence of crime remained an important plot device, but was largely displaced as a specific genre influence by the use of other competing, and more successful, adoptions of genre combinations. Rather than the historical and social context becoming less important, these new forms of film have sought to explore the contemporary situation through the focus on individual stories and revitalised use of sophisticated genre appropriations. Youth protagonists remain an important means of analysing society as a whole, with the problems of young people serving as a metaphor for the struggles of the transition from communism in Serbia. Belgrade and its suburbs of New Belgrade continue to be the primary setting for Serbian youth film, and the city functions as a manifestation of the two sides of Serbia's personality in this period. As the capital of Serbia, Belgrade represents the actions of the Serbian government and the site of Serbia's historical prestige, but Belgrade is also the continuing location of civilian suffering at the hands of these institutions of power. Film directors seek to prolong this interpretation. Daković states that, in post-communist Serbian cinema: 'Scenes of urban neorealism (neo-socialist-realism) portray neuralgic social themes, accentuating the tragedy of life. Films are (mis)used so that the audience becomes aware of everyday horrors without relief, speaking of isolation,

aggression, poverty, brutality and evil, revolving around a vivisection of the traumatic war years.'[386] While combat is not frequently present in Serbian films, conflict and the legacy of conflict remain a defining influence in film, and this chapter will examine how war is explored in subtle ways through genre film.

Film narratives of the early 2000s experiment with genre as a way of exploring different interpretations of the previous decade, including how to represent the wars and social chaos that dominated film in the preceding period, and how to make these explorations more palatable for the domestic film audience. In the early 2000s, a number of films portrayed youth protagonists opposing the status quo of inevitability that was depicted in earlier post-communist films such as *Rane*. This chapter will introduce the 'post-conflict film' as a genre that, although not formally recognised, has a clear corpus and presence in global film, and is especially poignant for recent Serbian cinema. I argue that the post-conflict film serves as an overarching frame under which the specific issues relating to nations suffering from the after-effects of a conflict can be examined in film, as well as exploring the re-construction of national identity and culture. This type of film can be seen as being particularly important to youth film as the genre is closely linked to the use of young protagonists, representing the uncertain future after conflicts. However, this chapter will also illustrate how the genre interacts with other

[386] 'Prizori urbanog neorealizma (neo-socrealizma) opisuju neuralgične društvene teme akcentujući tragičnost života. Filmovi su (zlo)upotrebljeni da publiku učine svesnom užasa svakodnevnice bez utehe, govoreći o izolaciji, agresiji, siromaštvu, brutalnosti i zločinu, okrećući se vivisekciji trauma ratnih godina'. Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 164.

film genres to construct a certain narrative of war. In *Apsolutnih sto*, the post-conflict film is combined with elements of the sport film, amongst other genre traces, such as the crime and vigilante genres, as a means of developing a narrative that suggests adversity and survival against the odds. The analysis will examine how the civilian, urban setting of the film aids the positioning of *Apsolutnih sto* as a post-conflict film, primarily through the representation of New Belgrade; and will discuss the implications of employing a youth lead character, who is both connected to and distant from recent history. However, this analysis will also argue that the film's use of sport genre is used as a way of construct a sense of national identity that both acknowledges the legacy of the SFRY and suggests that there is a differentiation from the past.

Apsolutnih sto revolves around one teenager's quest for vengeance and respect, while living in a society that continues to be plagued by organised crime and haunted by the aftermath of the Wars of Yugoslav Succession. The film's protagonist Saša is a young champion in marksmanship, attempting to follow in the footsteps of his father and brother, also champion shooters. Saša finds himself becoming involved in crime when his older brother, Igor, becomes unable to pay his drug debts and sells their family shooting gallery to a local criminal, Runda. After Saša refuses to become one of Runda's henchmen, he is banned from the gallery, leaving him unable to prepare for his competitions. Meanwhile, Igor is accumulating greater debts, causing threats to the lives of both brothers. Determined to take revenge for the humiliation being wrought on his family, Saša feels that he has no choice

but to take the law into his own hands. He takes up his brother's rifle, and eliminates the threats to his and his brother's safety by assassinating the criminals who are ruining their lives. In the process, he risks his own bright future as a champion marksman, his friendships and his relationship with his girlfriend. As the police close in on Saša, Igor sacrifices himself to protect his younger brother's future.

4.1 Post-conflict film as a global genre

Writing on the formation of film genres, Altman notes: 'Before they are fully constituted through the junction of persistent material and consistent use of that material, nascent genres traverse a period when their only unity derives from shared surface characteristics deployed with other generic contexts perceived as dominant.'[387] In Serbian films of the 2000s, the exploration of the aftermath of the conflicts is a recurring theme. These films do not depict combat, but continue a process that Daković has called the 'vivisection of war traumas' that began in the 1990s.[388] This analysis will refer to such films as post-conflict films, which I argue are a form of 'nascent genre', to use Altman's term, whose common elements, characters and themes, are 'deployed with other generic contexts'.[389] *Apsolutnih sto* is one such film, most frequently identified as belonging to crime and urban genres, but which also contains dispersed elements of post-conflict themes, settings and characters. Pavičić, for example, writes that the film is a 'thriller', whilst also placing *Apsolutnih sto* amongst a grouping of other films that he classes as

[387] Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 36.
[388] Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 164.
[389] Altman, *Film/Genre*, p. 36.

'the normalisation "Western" (*normalizacijski "vestern"*)'.[390] Here the normalisation that Pavičić refers to the process of Europeanisation (and thus making normal) that was presumed take place in Serbia following the fall of Milošević. The concept of normalisation, however, should be and is looked upon with a critical eye, as it suggests that Europe is a synonym for normality. Daković, on the other hand, classes the film as the first Serbian example of the 'ghetto (*geto*)' film, arising from the representation of life and death in the urban stagnation of New Belgrade.[391] By focusing on identifying *Apsolutnih sto* as a type of post-conflict film, this chapter argues that the use of urban and crime genres is rather an attempt to diffuse discussions of the post-conflict atmosphere amongst other influences. Saša's situation is not solely the result of organised crime and drug abuse, but can be seen as the complex outcome of a number of issues relating to post-conflict film – his positioning as a young person who is outside the realms of responsibility for the conflict, the consolidation of organised crime as a result of the chaos of the 1990s, and the fact that his brother is a returning veteran, are just a few elements that will be explored within a wider post-conflict culture in the film.

The appearance of the post-conflict film is not unprecedented and can be seen as a continuation of film trends that began during the 1990s. There is a clear tradition of films from the 1990s through to the present day in Serbia, which examine the Wars of Yugoslav Succession and the NATO bombardment, in both abstract and overt ways. Daković labels these types of films, '*neoratni*

[390] Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*, p. 219.
[391] Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 168.

film [neo-war film]', which she divides into three categories: those films which are about the wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo (combat war films and/or with wartime settings); those films representing the Wars from a foreign, perspective (international productions set in war-torn former Yugoslav countries) that are told either from 'the eye of the storm' or from 'outside'; and films which focus on the 'period of the aftermath and the transition to an uncertain future'.[392] The nature of neo-war films are described thus: 'the neo-war epics of the former Yugoslavia are narratives of doubt and dethroning; of ideological and political pluralism; of the deconstruction of the past in order to reconstruct the present.'[393] Daković suggests that a key issue at stake in neo-war cinema is the overwhelming need for the whole region, including Serbia, to reconstitute a sense of identity that has been lost. This need to stabilise identity can be seen as particularly important for the younger generation – in *My iz budushchego* for example, war memory is used to instil a sense of responsibility and belonging that youth are assumed not to have (see Chapter 5).

In this analysis, the post-conflict film is a crystallisation of Daković's latter category of neo-war film, those films that 'focus on the period of the aftermath and transition to uncertain future', a category in which *Rane* is included in Daković's text, but one that can also include *Apsolutnih sto*. Rather than discounting the significance of the neo-war film category, it is possible to

[392] '[Neke priče su prezentovane pogledom] iz 'oka oluje' [a neke su videne] „spolja"'. '[…] neki periodom posledica i tranzicije ka neizvesnoj buducnosti'. Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 98.
[393] 'Neoratne epopeje bivše Jugoslavije jesu narativi sumnje i detronizacije; ideološkog i političkog pluralizma; dekonstrukcije prošlosti radi rekonstrukcije sadašnjosti'. Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, pp. 98-99.

simply narrow down these types of films to focus specifically on post-conflict films, which I argue have a wider tradition in global cinema, as well as have a considerable presence in Serbian film after the year 2000. This tradition of post-conflict film is most clearly seen in nations undergoing a period of recovery after difficult conflicts, including, for example, post-Vietnam War films, which deal with the controversy of the war and the suffering of soldiers in the aftermath. Perhaps the most important of these elements is the use of different genre frames within post-conflict films, as a means of re-structuring narratives of conflict away from their traditional, combat forms. *Apsolutnih sto* was one of a series of post-conflict films produced in the 2000s that aimed to reconfigure these neo-war narratives from the previous decade, as well as overhauling the character types seen for example in *Rane*.

4.2 Problem-solving youth

One of the key narrative traits and character types in the early 2000s was the appearance of the proactive civilian, attempting to navigate life in the new post-Milošević Serbia, as well as in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Pavičić writes: 'Characters in these films take an active attitude to problems, engage themselves in problem-solving, trying to sort out a better future for themselves.'[394] This attitude contrasts with the kind of self-destructiveness seen in *Rane*, where both the older and younger generation accepted that the future was a bleak prospect. One of the most effective ways of drawing distance between the causes and effects of conflicts is through the depiction of the aftermath of conflicts on children and young people; these social

[394] Pavičić, '"Cinema of Normalization"…', p. 47.

groups are not responsible for the initiation of conflict, often disproportionately suffer, and also represent hope. *Apsolutnih sto* is one of the earliest examples of post-communist Serbian film depicting such a youth protagonist. Continuing his discussion of the creation of more proactive characters more generally, Pavičić writes that, 'children who have to solve problems inherited by the elders is one of the recurrent motifs of post-Yugoslav cinema of the 2000s', citing *Apsolutnih sto* as a key example of this trope, as well as *Nataša* [*Natasha*] (dir. Ljubiša Samardžić, Cinema Design, 2001).[395] *Nataša* depicts a teenage girl attempting to find out who is responsible for the murder of her police-man father, but discovers that corruption runs deeply in the structures of Serbia's life, even after the fall of Milošević. The character of Nataša represents a change in the landscape of youth characters that is also seen in *Apsolutnih sto*, young people are shown as being more practical about truth and justice than adults are, even though they hold such limited power. This offers an important moral message for film audiences; the young people depicted in fiction films such as *Rane*, and documentaries, such as *Vidimo se u čitulji* are not the only examples of young people in contemporary Serbia. However, this role reversal in the parent-child relationship on film also suggests that Serbian society is now completely inverted.

In *Apsolutnih sto*, Saša must continually combat the difficulties that are the direct result of the actions of adults, emerging from the 1990s and into the present day. Saša's aim of having the normal life of a champion

[395] Pavičić, '"Cinema of Normalization"…', p. 52.

marksman, a career that his father and older brother were allowed to achieve, is destroyed by the direct influence of adults from the beginning of the film. In the early stages of the film, Saša is removed from the adult sphere of decision-making and thus loses the power to decide his own fate. Igor's selling of the shooting range the brothers inherited from their father to try and pay off his drug debts marks the beginning of the negative impact that the adult world has on Saša's life. In turn, Runda, the shooting gallery's new owner warns that '*komercijalizacija* [commercialisation]' of the gallery is necessary in order to allow the young marksmen to continue training there. The representation of organised crime in Serbian film has long been a symbolic space where the actions of adults and the effects on youth meet, as was seen clearly in *Rane*. Yet there is another layer of criticism within this representation of crime; crime in the post-Milošević period has been concealed behind a layer of privatisation and the commercialisation of public and private assets, and this is depicted as directly affecting the futures of young people. There is a paradox within this portrayal. On the one hand, young people are depicted as being active in seeking solutions to the problems posed by the older generation, but the future of Serbia remains uncertain at best. In *Apsolutnih sto*, Saša is allowed a form of happy ending as he is able to take part in the Junior Championships in Paris as he wanted to, but in order to achieve this dream, he commits several murders. The suggestion that Saša has found a solution to the problem of his elders is ambiguous; the primary solution he has found is to remove these adults from the equation, fulfilling a youthful fantasy of self-reliance.

The representation of young people in post-conflict film can also be interpreted as an attempt to reconcile the problems of the past through a covert redemption of the adult population. Historical differences aside, Pierre Sorlin's analysis of the role of children in the post-war cinema in the defeated Axis countries is pertinent when considering the role of post-war cinema in Serbia. Sorlin writes: 'In postwar films dealing with children, sorrow and hope are interwoven. Out of the ruins, a future can arise, thanks to the children.'[396] Sorlin highlights how youths and children can be used as a metaphor for the wider status of post-conflict societies; youths are depicted as being disproportionately affected, but, as representatives of the future, youth also provide glimmers of hope that the shame of warfare will be dispersed. As such, the appearance of proactive youth characters in Serbian film is grounded within a wider tradition of representing post-conflict societies. Such films representing the effects of war on European youth include: *Irgendwo in Berlin* [*Somewhere in Berlin*] (dir. Gerhardt Lamprecht, Deutsche Film, 1947), where young people live amongst the rubble in post-war Berlin; and *Germania anno zero* [*Germany, year zero*] (dir. Roberto Rossellini, Tevere Film, 1948), in which, 'children, who have to cope alone with an hostile environment, are also obliged to reckon with the adults'.[397] There is an inherent sense here that young people are able to combat the difficulties posed by the adult world, to provide solutions for themselves. The semblance of a future does arise from the rubble for Saša, but this is only after Igor

[396] Pierre Sorlin, 'Children as war victims in European cinema', in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 104-124 (p. 117).
[397] Sorlin, p. 111.

sacrifices himself so that Saša will have a chance to pursue his dreams. The inference in this act of sacrifice is in the atonement of the adult generation for their sins. The adult world ultimately continues to provide a moral frame, though twisted, which provides young people with a future in spite of the circumstances.

4.3 Rubble film

It is clear that while *Apsolutnih sto* features a youth protagonist and features a plot designed to appeal to younger audiences, the film's narrative is one that is again addressed to the wider society attempting to cope with the post-conflict atmosphere. Perhaps one of the starkest images and types of films that developed in a post-conflict film industry was in post-war Germany with the appearance of the *Trümmerfilme*, literally 'ruin films' or 'rubble films'.[398] In the German context, the *Trümmerfilme* 'took stock of a shattered nation and registered a state of physical and psychological ruin', and used the landscapes of Germany's bombed cities as a metaphor for the ruin of the whole society.[399] Significantly, the creation of the *Trümmerfilme* was linked to the rise of the realist aesthetic that was 'adopted as the preferred mode of expression in other national cinemas that all had their different war stories to tell after 1945', including in Italy and France for example.[400] As Daković notes, post-communist Serbian cinema also uses 'urban neorealism' as a means of 'accentuating the tragedy of life'.[401] While the Allied bombing of Germany in

[398] Sorlin, p. 109; James Chapman, *War and Film* (Trowbridge: Reaktion Books, 2008), p. 71.
[399] Eric Rentschler, '*The Place of Rubble in the* Trümmerfilm', *New German Critique*, 37:2 (Summer 2010), 9-30 (p. 10).
[400] Chapman, p. 71.
[401] Daković, p. 164.

WWII reduced a number of cities to ruins, the NATO bombardment of Belgrade did not destroy the city in the same fashion. What is significant here is that the NATO bombardment is remembered, and is depicted in film, as having reduced areas of Serbia to ruins as a metaphor for the wider destruction of Serbian society after the 1990s. Belgrade thus becomes a rubble city of a specific kind, which underlines the significance of film as a form of memory in the early 2000s.



Figure 13 *Nebeska udica*: Belgrade is depicted as Serbia's own 'rubble city'

While Belgrade may have not been entirely reduced to ruins, some of Serbia's post-2000 films did indeed portray rubble cities of their own as a means of reflecting on the effects of the NATO bombardment in 1999. In *Nebeska udica* [*Sky Hook*] (dir. Ljubiša Samardžić, Cinema Design, 2000), for example, a group of Belgrade's citizens are depicted living amongst ruined, bombed-out buildings. By building their own basketball court, the protagonists attempt to combat the psychological damage of the conflict, as urban regeneration becomes a metaphor for collective healing (Figure 13). The film closes with a

scene depicting a young boy playing with a basketball on the banks of the river, compounding the film's connection with other post-conflict films where the younger generation represent hope for the future (see Figure 21). Along with *Nebeska udica*, there was a small burst of films depicting the psychological effects of life during the NATO bombardment, including *Rat uživo* [*War Live*] (dir. Darko Bajić, Cobra Film, 2000), *Zemlja istine, ljubavi i slobode* [*Land of truth, love and freedom*] (dir. Milutin Petrović, Sean Aloysius O Fearna and Sons, 2000), and *Dorćol-Menhetn* [*Dorćol-Manhatten*] (dir. Isidora Bjelica, BP Rezidencija, 2000). *Zemlja istine, ljubavi i slobode*, in particular, draws connections between film as fiction and the factual bombing of RTS (Radio Television Serbia) in Belgrade in 1999, by featuring a protagonist who worked in the bombed studio. The shell of the RTS building, a physical marker of war, can still be seen in Belgrade in 2015, along with a number of other bombed buildings, signifying how the strength of the connection between rubble and the bombardment has endured to the present day. Significantly, many of these films juxtapose the NATO bombardment with psychological damage and madness as a means of expressing the effects of conflicts on the ordinary people caught up in them.

Direct metaphors to the rubble caused by the NATO bombardment are an exception in Serbian film, rather than the norm, which was limited to the year 2000, and thus directors increasingly sought more sophisticated means of reflecting on conflict. Displacement of trauma is common in post-conflict films. Linnie Blake notes that after WWII, the defeated Axis nations of

Germany and Japan ascribed certain locations as sites encompassing the suffering of defeat; in Berlin, the Berlin Wall 'became a site of trauma on which was inscribed […] the horrors of the war years, the nation's military defeat', while in Japan, the city of Hiroshima became 'its own material site of trauma'.[402] I argue that Serbian film after the year 2000 emphasises the indifference and claustrophobia of the suburbs of New Belgrade as a means of representing the past as ruinous and inescapable. In the 2000s, the concrete high-rise blocks of New Belgrade became a prominent metaphor for Serbia's ruin and the trauma of the previous decade. The housing blocks that dominate the skylines of nearly all the films set in Belgrade can be seen as the creation of a Serbian form of the 'rubble city', plagued as the filmic suburbs are by the poverty wrought by the 1990s and ongoing presence of crime as part of the mainstream. The decay signified by these housing blocks, which were built at the peak of Yugoslav communism in the 1960s, also represents

[402] Linnie Blake, *Wounds of Nations: Horror Cinema, Historical Trauma and National Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), p. 20.

the ruins of the socialist dreams of the SFRY. Daković writes that, 'the concrete, ugly and standard blocks are similar to the visible and invisible, psychological and physical scars on the face of the city'.[403] In *Apsolutnih sto*, Saša is frequently depicted against a background of indifferent, grey concrete, with his back to walls, or looking up at a seemingly endless rise of the housing blocks, punctuated with windows. The lack of variation to the scenery suggests the bleakness of past, present and future life in New Belgrade.

Figure 14 *Apsolutnih sto*: the youth protagonists are dwarfed by New Belgrade's concrete



[403] 'Betonski, ružni i tipski blokovi su poput vidljivih i nevidljivih, psihičkih i fizičkih ožiljaka na licu grada'. Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 168.



Figure 15 *Apsolutnih sto*: The characters are often depicted with their backs against concrete walls

In *Apsolutnih sto*, high-rise social housing blocks loom over the characters and many shots pay close attention to the scale and claustrophobic nature of life in the suburbs of Belgrade for young people. The comparison of New Belgrade to a ghetto is a prominent part of other youth films from the early 2000s – for example, *Jedan na jedan* [*One on One*] (dir. Mladen Matičević, Trista Čuda Film, 2002), another film combining narratives of crime and sport, uses almost identical shots of New Belgrade's housing blocks as those depicted in *Apsolutnih sto*. Daković suggests that such urban films 'are concerned with a series of post-war traumas: with the return of the forcibly mobilised […]; with the moral decline of society, with violence and with crime […]; with refugees […]; with poverty […]; with brain drain', topics that are returned to repeatedly

up to the present day.[404] While some issues such as refugees and returnee veterans were less explicitly explored in my analysis of *Rane*, poverty and moral decline in society are two of the most common issues depicted as affecting young people and little changes in the significance of these topics for youth film in the years after the fall of Milošević. The looming presence of New Belgrade's concrete blocks, however, does diminish by the time *Šišanje* is released.

The representation of New Belgrade as a site of inequality and hopelessness, consistently plagued by crime, is not only a hangover from and reference to the preceding decade, but is an intertextual reference to global youth film. Both *Rane* and *Apsolutnih sto* have been compared to Mathieu Kassovitz's urban youth film, *La Haine* [*Hatred*] (Canal+, 1997), which details a day in the life of three young men from the *banlieues* of Paris in the twenty-four hours after a riot motivated by racial inequality.[405] *La Haine* can be considered a classic of the youth film genre; it blends simmering resentment amongst young people with a bleak portrayal of police brutality and societal racism, which is still a key issue in France's major cities, as is evidenced by connected riots in 2005, 2007, and 2015.

Rane shares many stylistic similarities with *La Haine*, including the 'severe title, street-wise dialogue, tough urban setting, [and] "rough"

[404] '[Filmovi] se bave nizom postratnih trauma: povratkom nasilno mobilisanih […]; moralnim propadanjem društva, nasiljem i kriminalom […]; izbeglicama […]; siromaštvom […]; odlivom mozgova […]'. Daković, *Balkan kao (filmski) žanr*, p. 165.
[405] See for example, comparison of *Rane* to *La Haine* in Vojnov, 'Uspon i pad srpskog pop filma', p. 99.

camerawork' of the French film.[406] Kassovitz took his film inspiration from the media story of a young man who was beaten to death in police custody, much like Dragojević found inspiration in media stories of youth gangsters.[407] Meanwhile, Golubović 'has stated that [*Apsolutnih sto*] is modelled on' *La Haine* and Daković stresses that their comparisons lie in their being examples of 'geto (ghetto)' films.[408] In both instances, these films suggest that the disaffection of youth is based on wider structural inequality, caused by both the nature of modern cities and the socio-political situations that are facing young people. *Apsolutnih sto* does feature some scenes that are very similar to *La Haine*, particularly in their depiction of police abusing their power. For example, in *Apsolutnih sto*, when the police are attempting to find proof that Saša is the killer, they bring in his friend, Cvika, for questioning. Whilst in the police station, Cvika is physically and verbally abused by one of the policemen. In a similar scene in *La Haine*, two of the protagonists, Hubert and Saïd, are subjected to assaults by racist police officers. The depiction of police as being abusive towards young people is repeated in other youth films and is also seen in *Šišanje*. The moral corruption of police, who are meant to protect society, suggests that these urban environments are fundamentally broken, as well as drawing a connection between youth films in different national film industries.

[406] Kevin Elstob, 'Review – Hate (La Haine)', *Film Quarterly*, 51:2 (Winter 1997-1998), 44-49 (p. 44).
[407] Elstob, p. 44 and p. 49.
[408] […je sam reditelj, Srdan Golubović,] istakao da je rađeno po uzoru na *Mržnju*'. Daković, p. 168.



Figure 16 *Apsolutnih sto*: The police abuse Saša's friend, Cvika, whilst interrogating him



Figure 17 *La Haine*: The Paris police torture Saïd (left) and Hubert (right)

In spite of the focus of post-conflict films on civilian life, ordinary citizens of Belgrade, those who are not involved in crime, are almost completely absent in *Apsolutnih sto*, with only a few brief depictions of Saša's fellow shooting

competitors. On the streets, there are no figures that can present a sense of normality. New Belgrade is positioned as having been subsumed by the post-conflict aftermath of the 1990s; the streets become the locale of criminals. There are several important contextual references which draw attention to the historical proximity of the decade, leaving traces in the post-2000 period to which the film belongs. Much attention has been paid to the importance of the urban setting of the film, which is linked to the aesthetics of film as an example of what Golubović calls a 'concrete-western (beton-vestern)' – here suggesting that Belgrade is an example of the urban jungle, rather than the Hollywood Western. However, there are basic similarities between Saša and the figure of the Westerner in Hollywood film. Saša is a distant figure throughout the film, interpolating between outbursts of youthful indignation and surly silence; his girlfriend Sanja, for example, finds his moments of silence unbearable, saying to him, 'when it is something important, you are silent' (see Figure 15). Warshow writes that the Western hero 'resembles the gangster in being lonely and to some degree melancholy'.[409] Saša is at the opposite pole of the character spectrum to Pinki and Švaba, who displayed self-centred individualism. Unlike the gangster genre, however, the Western film infers: 'To be a man, as the genre has it, is to be at one with terrain yet able to rise above it.'[410] Saša, like other youth protagonists seeking to address the problems created by their elders, becomes like the criminals, but is not destroyed and rises beyond the fate that might have befallen him had he

[409] Warshow, 'Movie Chronicle: The Westerner', p. 107.
[410] Lee Clark Mitchell, 'Violence in the Film Western', in *Violence and American Cinema*, ed. by J. David Slocum (London: Routledge, 2001), 176-191 (p. 184)

been a youth of the 1990s. Significantly, more broadly in these genres, the gangster is destined to fall, in order to maintain societal balance, whilst the hero of the Western is offered a chance at redemption. Such a pattern can be seen in the different fates of the youth protagonists of *Rane* and *Apsolutnih sto*.

4.4 Genres in post-conflict film

Warfare causes rifts in the collective memory of society and elicits new ways of representing war in film through the transformation of characters, situations and circumstances connected to these memories. Moreover, each instance of war requires its own iconography, filtered through existing representatons of war, which helps to distinguish each conflict from others. The representation of war in film can be seen as an effort to form a consensus on why the war happened and providing justification for its existence. The intertextual and generic references discussed in relation to the depiction of youth in the urban environment are not the only social issues inferred by *Apsolutnih sto*. James Chapman writes that, during WWII, the 'combat movie became a major genre in the cinemas of the participants, as film-makers sought to legitimate their country's role in the war at the same time as providing the action and spectacle that cinema-going publics demanded.'[411] However, the bravado and pride of combat war films does not hold relevance to all nations involved in war, and Serbia can be included in this grouping. Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan speak of the existence of 'negative, disruptive memory traces' associated with loss, as well as 'more "positive" memory

[411] Chapman, p. 62.

traces, in victorious wars', which highlights an intrinsic difference between the approaches towards to the topic of conflict in societies that win or lose in war.[412] Winter and Sivan give the example of inter-war Germany, where the 'celebration of the "war experience", the baptism of fire of a whole generation, took on sombre and defiant tones since its price was the humiliation of the Fatherland.'[413] While the Wars of Yugoslav Succession did not reach the scale of destruction associated with WWI and WWII, they were nonetheless highly traumatic experiences, and it is possible to discern similar traces of negative and disruptive memory in Serbian cinema of the early 2000s. The experience of Serbia in the late 1990s, particularly after the NATO bombardment, can be seen as a humiliation for the nation that also resulted in a defiant reaction from civilians and in film.

This analysis of post-conflict cinema in Serbia does not necessarily seek to examine expressions of defiance, but does attempt to establish which topics were acceptable to cover in Serbian film and how genres were used to subvert direct references to the controversy of the 1990s, in a nation that had been dominated by discussions of war. The use of a youth protagonist, unconnected to the violence perpetrated in the war, begins this process. The success of many post-war European films exploring the effects of conflict was 'partly a function of their catching/exploiting the mood of the audiences who viewed them', although 'an unintended consequence of their work was to

[412] Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, 'Setting the Framework', in *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 6-39 (p. 35).
[413] Ibid.

provide a set of codes about war and victimhood'.[414] Even in post-conflict films, genre selection and film narratives correspond to the needs of the audience, but also helped to establish roles of responsibility. John Whiteclay Chambers II, building on the work of Winter, suggests that directors of anti-war films used other genres, including melodrama, comedy and romance, as a means of making the events of war more understandable. Whiteclay Chambers II writes: 'In mythologizing the war (re-creating the conflict in a form more understandable and acceptable than the complex and chaotic event itself), such films offer a way to organise and contextualise events that are themselves fragmented and traumatic.'[415] Anti-war films could not rely on the bravado of the combat war film genre and frequently went against the grain of national identity, thus they had to disperse their difficult messages amongst more digestible genres.

A similar pattern can be found in the patterns of post-conflict films in Serbia, which sift through the various narratives that arose during the previous decade, and assign roles accordingly. These films regularly recreate aspects of the war from the perspective of different genres, including the thriller genre and the horror genre, both of whose generic frames adapt well to the ambiguity of war.[416] Blake, for example, argues that 'the generic and sub-generic conventions of horror allow for a decoding of traumatic memories already encoded within the cultural, social, psychic and political life

[414] Winter and Sivan, 'Setting the Framework', p. 36.
[415] John Whiteclay Chambers II, 'All Quiet on the Western Front (U.S., 1930): The Antiwar Film and the Modern Image of War' in *Hollywood and War, The Film Reader*, ed. by J. David Slocum (London: Routledge, 2006), 197-205 (p. 204).
[416] Two examples of such films include: *Klopka* [*The Trap*], dir. Srdan Golubović, Baš Čelik, 2008; and *Ustanička ulica* [*Redemption Street*], dir. Miroslav Terzić, FilmKombajn, 2012.

of the nation's inhabitants by shocking historical events'.[417] This analysis will examine the conditions under which such genres become an appropriate means of addressing war by looking more closely at their roots in post-conflict film.

While such genres as the thriller and horror help to disguise problematic narratives of war, others, predominantly the combat war film, present clear difficulties for a post-conflict audience. There is a distinct lack of combat war films in Serbian cinema after the 1990s, which can be seen as a sign that the creation of such films would be seen as inappropriate to the negative recent experience of warfare, but also the genre's closest antecedent is the Partisan war film, a genre which is accompanied by a great deal of ideological symbolism. The lack of combat war films parallels the practice of other nations that are dealing with the controversy of conflict. Doherty for example suggests that one of the key legacies of Vietnam War cinema illustrated that 'the ethos of the World War II combat film proved so devastatingly inappropriate to the Vietnam experience'.[418] Other means of representation are explored, leading to many films ambiguously depicting these controversial war experiences. Michael Anderegg writes: 'As a consequence of the "unrepresentability" of Vietnam, a number of the most significant commentaries on the war did not show – and in some cases did not even mention – Vietnam.'[419] A similar approach is used in *Apsolutnih sto*,

[417] Blake, p. 5.
[418] Thomas Doherty, 'Witness to War: Oliver Stone, Ron Kovic, and *Born on the Fourth of July*', in *Inventing Vietnam: The War in Film and Television*, ed. by Michael Anderegg (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 251-268 (p. 267).
[419] Michael Anderegg, 'Introduction' in *Inventing Vietnam*, 1-14, (p. 4-5).

which deflects the representation of controversial war through the use of elements of the thriller and crime genres, as well as a young protagonist. In the Serbian context, the post-conflict film focuses the narrative not on the action of combat, but rather on the damage that conflicts leave in their wake. In particular, Serbian films frequently imply there has been an integration of criminality into the mainstream as a direct result of the 1990s. Pavičić suggests that: 'In *Apsolutnih sto* above all it is clear how war was and still is the origin of the new structure of power, a time and place where petty thieves have obtained power, property and political relevance.'[420] *Apsolutnih sto* evokes many of the concerns about criminality that were explored in *Rane*, but suggests that thanks to the war-profiteering of criminals and their new wealth, these characters are now part of mainstream culture. Thus the use of crime genres is an integrative part of the post-conflict experience, emphasising how alternative genres can serve as filters for the representation of war.

4.5 The returning veteran

Saša's contact with criminals does not come solely as a result of crime becoming a prominent presence after the 1990s, but primarily because of the difficulties posed by his brother, a veteran of the Wars of Yugoslav Succession, and his brother's drug addiction. The plight of returning veterans and their difficult reintegration into society is a key aspect of post-conflict films and has long played a role in cultural depictions of such characters.

[420] 'U *Apsolutnih sto* posve je jasno kako je rat bio i još uvijek jest ishodište nove strukture moći, vrijeme i mjesto gdje su sitni lupeži zadobili moć, imetak i političku relevantnost'. Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*, p. 221.

Emmett Early writes: 'For most of recorded history discharged soldiers, the veterans of wars, have been regarded with anxiety by the society that no longer needs their services.'[421] *Apsolutnih sto* sub-consciously revolves around Igor's difficulties reintegrating into society and the violent reaction and/or manipulation of him by the other characters in the film. Initially, Igor's drug addiction is unexplained and is presumed to be the result of selfish weakness, an impression driven by the contrast between Igor and Saša, as well as Saša's behaviour towards him. The narrative shows Igor selling the shooting range, a scene which is juxtaposed shortly after with a graphic scene of Igor injecting himself, suggesting that the sale of the range has been to feed an addiction that he is apparently not going to any great lengths to battle. The depiction plays on the traditional interpretation of drug abusers as being pathetic figures. Peter Byrne notes that 'degradation has […] been a key feature of filmic representation of addiction', an impression that extends to Igor.[422] In the earlier stages of the film, the audience witnesses Igor being subjected to verbal and physical abuse for his addiction. Saša repeatedly calls his brother a '*pička* [pussy (vul. coward)]', mimicking the way the drug-dealers also refer to him and emphasising his disappointment in his older brother. Others simply refer to him as '*narkoman* [drug addict]', removing his sense of identity, and prolonging the sense that his addiction is connected to weakness.

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[421] Emmett Early, *The Alienated War Veteran in Film and Literature* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2014), p. 14.
[422] Peter Byrne, '*Trainspotting* and the depiction of addiction', *Psychiatric Bulletin*, 21 (1997), 173-175 (p. 173).



Figure 18 *Apsolutnih sto*: Neške (left) with Igor – the drug dealer and the *narkoman*

In *Apsolutnih* sto, Igor is the epitome of the returning war veteran in post-war films. The film constructs a narrative that portrays him as being alienated by both society and Saša, his remaining family, thanks to his experience in conflict. Igor's personal history as a former shooting champion are woven into the context of the Wars of Yugoslav Succession, during which time he made an ideal and effective sniper. As many audiences lack an experience of warfare, they draw their understandings of conflict and veterans from fiction/film. As Julian Smith suggests, the 'meanings with which we clothe the bare facts of demobilisation will reveal our basic conceptions of the war itself and the reasons for which it was fought'.[423] Smith argues that these basic understandings of a conflict are particularly apparent in the representation of veterans, stating 'the majority of films about veterans of

[423] Julian Smith, 'Between Vermont and Violence: Film Portraits of Vietnam Veterans', *Film Quarterly*, 26:4 (Summer 1973), 10-17 (p. 10).

Vietnam present them as violent drifters, brutalised and threatening figures reflecting (if not created by) unconscious attitudes toward to war and the men who fought it'.[424] This suggests that the understanding of post-conflict life and the role of veterans is driven by the filmic representations through which most people encounter such characters.

In the Serbian context, the figure of the post-conflict veteran is an equally problematic character that is further complicated by the context of filmic representations of Serb soldiers during the 1990s. Iordanova writes that, during the Wars of Yugoslav Succession, soldiers from the warring nations were defined in the popular, Western imagination by their 'face-to-face sadistic fervour involving blood, spilled guts, severed limbs, tortured and mutilated bodies, and one that is certainly far from any hi-tech approaches like sniper-shooting or precision bombing'.[425] Meanwhile, directors from the former Yugoslavia also indulged in such stereotypes, in which 'they address the issue of senseless brutality by depicting violent individuals on the verge of insanity.'[426] Examples of these exploitative types of Serb characters can be found in Dragojević's film *Lepa sela lepo gore*, where soldiers are depicted as both vicious and idiotic. *Apsolutnih sto*, on the other hand, provides a more nuanced interpretation of violence, through the depiction of Igor, who was involved with the 'hi-tech' form of conflict, 'sniper-shooting'. Igor is clearly psychologically damaged by his experience, but does not act in the manner expected of stereotypes of madness from the previous decade. The depiction

[424] Smith, p. 10.
[425] Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames*, p. 162.
[426] Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames*, p. 164.

of Igor fits more into the tradition of Balkan filmmaking that Iordanova suggests depicted violence 'as ugly, meaningless and self-destructive'.[427] Igor's drug addiction has left him physically weak, pale and cowardly, but, in this post-conflict world, he is also morally opposed to violence, haunted as he is by his role in the murder of innocent civilians. In turn, he seeks to stop his brother from experiencing the same fate; the narrative suggests that even Saša's vigilante justice is as equally morally corruptive as wartime murders of civilians. Here, the narrative of *Apsolutnih sto* emphasises the Serbian film industry's movement away from domestic and international stereotypes of soldiers of the previous decade. The re-definition of the Serb soldier and veteran, or 'the meanings with which we clothe the bare facts of demobilisation', serves as a means of re-defining the conflict itself and the way war is understood by film audiences.[428] On the one hand, the film confirms the existence of Serb involvement in the conflict, but also assuages Igor's guilt by depicting him as being remorseful and permanently damaged.

[427] Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames*, p. 161.
[428] Smith, p. 10.



Figure 19 *Apsolutnih sto*: The sacrifice of the returning veteran

Many damaged veterans on film, who have taken part in a controversial conflict, cannot be represented in their traditional, masculine, heroic form as they do not conform to the expectations of post-war society, which frequently need to assert that war is not meaningless. This does not mean however that the redemption of soldiers is not possible in post-conflict Serbian film; in fact, the redemption of soldier-veterans is frequently depicted. As the use of alternative genre frames is used to re-create 'the conflict in a form more understandable and acceptable than the complex and chaotic event itself', the depiction of soldiers and veterans in Serbian film can also be seen as being subjected to reconstruction through genre.[429] In order to avoid alienating the audience, these characters must be separated from their past selves through a shift in genre; combat is converted, and war on the battlefield becomes a war for everyday survival. The thriller, crime and horror

[429] Whiteclay Chambers II, p. 204.

genres have been identified as means of transforming the experience of the battlefield in Serbian film, but these genres also provide distance between the war, the representation of soldiers, and the audience. An example of the reconstruction of the soldier-veteran is seen in the film *Taxi Driver* (dir. Martin Scorsese, Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1976), which adopts a 'revisionary use of *film noir* stylistics […] and thematic concerns' to depict the return of the protagonist, Travis Bickle, from Vietnam.[430] In *Taxi Driver*, similarly to Igor's experience in *Apsolutnih sto*, 'the World he has come back to is indescribably out of balance, but it also exists in a continuum of betrayal and violence'.[431] Igor in *Apsolutnih sto* has likewise returned to a world that is out of balance, his younger brother has become a killer and he is unable to deter him from this course. Further to this, he is betrayed by his best friend, Neške, who persuaded him to go to war in the first place and has since supplied him with drugs. In *Apsolutnih sto*, both brothers live in a cycle of violence that has continued without stopping since the 1990s. In such instances, the returning soldier-veteran can be ambiguously displayed as both a spectacle of shame and sympathy. As Cynthia Fuchs has indicated with the case of *Taxi Driver*, these generic shifts can be seen as being 'revisionary' as they are re-shaping the audiences understanding of both the conflict and the soldiers who took part in it, by constructing a dramatic plot around their experience.

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[430] Cynthia J. Fuchs, "'All the Animals Come Out at Night" Vietnam Meets *Noir* in *Taxi Driver*', in *Inventing Vietnam*, 33-55 (p. 34).
[431] Ibid [capitalisation in the original].

Serbian cinema has adopted generic shifts in other films of the 2000s as a means of re-framing the conflicts of the previous decade and their Serb combatants. This allows soldier-perpetrators to atone for their guilt and offers the audience respite from the cynical depictions of war from the previous decade, seen in films such as *Rane*, *Lepa sela lepo gore* and *Bure baruta*. One such generic shift in the representation of war is illustrated in the film *Četvrti čovek* [*The Fourth Man*] (dir. Dejan Zečević, Viktorija Film, 2007), in which a special-operations soldier, active during the Wars of Yugoslav Succession, is separated from his former life by amnesia, and is trying to piece together his memories after his wife and son are killed. Ognjanović points out that the plotline is very similar to that of the film, *The Bourne Identity* (dir. Doug Liman, Universal, 2002), and suggests this is 'interesting as an indicator of how the genre [the thriller] can be used for a relevant and authentic story relating to the [contemporary] Serbian environment and reality'.[432] Such a statement also suggests how such films are in fact used to reconfigure not just an understanding of a conflict and veterans, but also the present day as well. As with *Rane*, critics and viewers can make connections between the fictional plots of films and contemporary existence in Serbia. As Pavičić has stated about *Apsolutnih sto,* 'war was and still is the origin of the new structure of power, a time and place where petty thieves have obtained power, property and political relevance', so *Četvrti čovek* also follows this

[432] […] zanimljiv kao pokazatelj kako se žanr može iskoristi za relevantnu i autentičnu priču vezanu za srpski ambijent i srpsku stvarnost'. Ognjanović, 'Žanrovski filmovi…', p. 76.

model.[433] Serbia is shown in the grip of powerful and corrupt government institutions, with links to crime and business. This metaphor maintains a powerful grip in Serbian cinema and is seen in *Šišanje* as well. Through the amnesiac soldier-protagonist, *Četvrti čovek* critiques the involvement of state institutions in the Wars of Yugoslav Succession, which presents an opportunity to broach issues of responsibility in the post-2000 period.

Zečević follows this pattern again in his film, *Neprijatelj* [*The Enemy*] (Biberche Productions, 2011). *Neprijatelj* takes place in a combat war setting – the days immediately following the signing of the Dayton Accord in 1995 – and features Serb soldier-protagonists, but the presence of war is filtered through the horror-thriller genre, drastically changing the representation of the soldiers in the film. The adoption of both the horror and thriller genres in *Neprijatelj* also transforms the perception of the war; war in the film is depicted as a form of madness which slowly decays the minds of the protagonists after they discover a strange civilian who has been walled into a basement. The paranoia of the soldiers plays on their minds as they increasingly begin to believe the man is Satan, after meeting the Bosnian-Muslim soldier who originally trapped the man. The film depicts military engagement, but the message is a distinctly anti-war one; warfare is depicted as having a destructive effect on the mind of society as a whole, through the representation of war's effects on the film's everyman-soldiers. Blake notes that:

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[433] Jurica Pavičić '"Cinema of Normalization": changes of stylistic model in post-Yugoslav cinema after the 1990s," *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, 1:1 (2010), 43-56 (p. 52).

> critical engagement with a nation's horror cinema offers a significant means of not only grappling with the traumatic past and in so doing measuring the effects of social, political and cultural transformation of the nation on its citizens, but of exposing the layers of obfuscation, denial or revisionism with which those wounds are dressed in service of dominant ideologies of national identity.[434]

In *Neprijatelj*, as with *Četvrti čovek* and *Apsolutnih sto*, a parallel is drawn between those soldiers who are depicted as being inherently good and those who are inherently bad, thus between professionalism and mercenaries. While it may be over critical to suggest that such delineations can be seen as revisionary, there is a clear tendency to use genre not only as a means of making conflict themes more palatable to the audience, but also to ensure the audience does not feel threatened when films acknowledge Serb involvement in the Bosnian War. In *Apsolutnih sto*, for example, Igor ultimately sacrifices himself for his younger brother, committing suicide to make the police believe he was the vigilante killer, redeeming himself in the audience's eyes in the process. Igor's murders of innocent civilians as a sniper during the conflict are cancelled out by his self-sacrifice and the suggestions that he is a good person in spite of his actions in the past. His death also paves the way for Saša, the youth representative of the uncertain future, to continue his passage to redemption.

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[434] Blake, p. 23.

4.6 Sport and nation

One of the least frequently explored genre traits of *Apsolutnih sto* are its references to sport film, which in fact provides a framework for much of the plotline. Garry Whannel argues that the sport film 'is not a genre or a style of cinema […], but simply a topic, which links a set of otherwise diverse texts'.[435] This section will explore some of the elements of the film that can be seen as constituting a sports generic frame, in particular narratives of victory and loss, romantic involvements, player-coach relationships, and the roots of sport film in historical context. These are all seen in *Apsolutnih sto*, but all also provide an opportunity for Golubović to deviate from the expectations of sports narratives. These deviations link the film with wider trends in post-communist Serbian cinema for producing local variants through changes to generic structures and expectations. Above all, this section of the analysis centres on the opportunities that sport sub-plots offer for exploring issues of nation and national identity, which are often interwoven with the messages of individual identity propagated by sports films.

The references to sport in *Apsolutnih sto* frequently focus on the positioning of Saša as a determined individual, who is using the criminal atmosphere of Serbia in the 2000s to succeed where adults have failed. Aaron Baker writes that, 'one particular version of ideal masculinity [that] has been represented repeatedly in sports films' is the 'heroic individual'

[435] Garry Whannel, 'Winning and losing respect: narratives of identity in sport films', *Sport in Society*, 11:2/3 (March/May 2008), 195-208 (p. 197).

who 'overcomes obstacles and achieves success through determination, self-reliance, and hard work'.[436] This overcoming of circumstances and narrative of 'self-reliance' mirrors the film's wider representation of children solving the problems of their elders. Yet Saša is only depicted as a sporting hero in the earlier stages of the film, which is somewhat diminished, or rather tainted, by the end of the film. Initially, Saša is depicted excelling at his sport, earning the respect of his coach and the adoration of his supportive girlfriend. He illustrates his determination to succeed at his sport, but ultimately reveals he is willing to do anything to achieve his aim of competing in the championships in Paris. His skill as a marksman makes him an ideal murderer and his competitive nature drives him to greater lengths in determining his future. In *Apsolutnih sto*, the determination of the sports hero easily translates into vigilantism.

Saša's transformation from hero to killer is one of several deviations from the sports film narratives the audience might expect. Babington writes that, 'most sports films centre on players and coaches', a trait that is also present in *Apsolutnih sto*.[437] One of Saša's key male relationships, and candidate for paternal replacement, is his shooting coach, Raša. While Raša initiates Saša's competitiveness, he also asks him to sacrifice his dignity to Runda in order to continue using the shooting range. Raša's weakness as a father figure is compounded with the later revelation that he is an alcoholic, putting him in the same league as Igor and underlining the ruin of the older

[436] Aaron Baker, *Contesting Identities: Sports in American Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), p. 49.
[437] Bruce Babington, *The Sports Film: Games People Play* (London: Wallflower, 2014), p. 55.

generation. Meanwhile, many sport films revolve around a sub-plot of 'heterosexual romantic love', between the sportsperson and their love interest.[438] In sports films, 'women generally appear in the secondary role of fan and dependent supporter', driven by the traditionally male focus of films of this type.[439] In *Apsolutnih sto*, Saša's girlfriend, Sanja, appears in the opening scenes as an archetype of this on-screen girlfriend; she appears at Saša's qualifying competition and watches lovingly, as well as trying to act as his confidante. Yet she does not remain in this gender stereotypical role of passive and 'dependent' supporter, Saša's silence over his family's problems and his transformation into a vigilante ultimately alienates the couple. The most overt deviation from this formula is Sanja's desertion of Saša at the end of the film, seeking a life abroad rather than forgiving Saša.

Whannel writes that, the 'celebration of winning, of success of achievement and of fame occupies a significant place in western cultures', forming a key part of the narratives of sports films.[440] Babington notes that this was not solely a trait of Western cultures, but that communist countries also 'sought victory for ideological ends'.[441] He also comments that: 'The basic plot of many, even most, sports films is the overcoming of odds by individual or team, culminating in a final context in which a last minute victory is gained.'[442] In *Apsolutnih sto*, the nature of victory is approached ambiguously, which reflects a wider tendency of post-2000 films towards the

[438] Babington, p. 11.
[439] Baker, p. 50.
[440] Whannel, 'Winning and losing respect…', p. 201.
[441] Babington, p. 17.
[442] Babington, p. 16.

depiction of bittersweet victories. On the one hand, there can be no 'celebration of winning' in the post-conflict Serbian films of the 2000s as this would unseat their criticism of warfare; the emphasis must therefore be on unspoken defeat. This defeat is inflicted by both external forces, in the form of the NATO bombardment, but also internally, by the continuing success of criminal networks in Serbia. On the other hand, there can be no celebration of defeat either, as this would contradict patterns of what Whannel called the 'significant place' assigned to victory in cultural outputs. Instead of assigning a victory or defeat to Saša, *Apsolutnih sto* belongs to 'a third, elastic category of less easily predictable plot forms characterised by their evasion of the winner/loser binarism or, if employing it, rendering it so faintly that it diminishes it to a non-dominating point'.[443] The ambiguous ending of the film sees Saša scoring a victory, by being allowed to compete, but the audience never finds out whether Saša wins the junior championships after all that he has sacrificed. Thus the outcome of victory or loss is indeed diminished to a 'non-dominating point', subsumed under a wider moral message concerning justice, which does not necessarily result in victory for Saša or for Serbia.

[443] Babington, p. 20.



Figure 20 *Apsolutnih sto*: Saša mourns Igor's sacrifice

While there might not be a fixed form of sports genre, and considering that this analysis argues that *Apsolutnih sto* focuses on the post-conflict situation above all, these conditions can still be useful as a means of tracing contemporary social currents. Babington suggests that, 'a single scene in a film not centrally about sport, can embody more intensely some of the meanings of a particular sport than films where the concern is pervasive but the meanings enacted unremarkable'.[444] In *Apsolutnih sto*, the sport of marksmanship is constructed not solely as a source of opportunity for Saša or a personal obsession, but also serves as a reference to conflict through the connections to snipers in war. On the topic of sport embodying meaning, Babington goes on to argue that: 'Every sports film reproduces a historical *zeitgeist*, past or present, or both as present engages with the past'.[445] This reproduction of a historical *zeitgeist* is sometimes manifested as historical

[444] Babington, p. 7.
[445] Babington, p. 30.

films about sporting events or figures, but is also in the connections that a certain sport has with the past and present. The prologue of *Apsolutnih sto* confirms that the film is situated within a historical *zeitgeist* – the Wars of Yugoslav Succession; the prologue reads: 'The year 1992 – war breaks out in Yugoslavia. In that same year of 1992, at the Olympic Games in Barcelona, the only three medals for Yugoslavia were won by representatives in Shooting'.[446] The juxtaposition between war, sport and the perception that the SFRY continued to exist offers a nostalgic interpretation on the part of national identity and a source of particular national pride; collective sporting achievement that was lost by the collapse of the SFRY. These Yugoslav representatives could not in fact present themselves as being so: they competed as international, or stateless, competitors after the International Olympic Committee banned Yugoslavia from competing in the Games. The prologue serves as both a lament and frame for the film's plot, associating the character of Igor both with national pride, as a shooting champion, and national guilt, as a sniper.

The use of a sports narrative in *Apsolutnih sto* can be seen as part of a wider canon of sports-related Serbian films, made in the 2000s, all of which explicitly explore the relationship between sport and national pride. Or, rather, that sport can restore parts of national pride in film. In his discussion of the structure of sports films, Babington suggests that, 'a *poetics* of the genre should cover all important aspects of its films, including […] the

[446] '1992. godine buktao je rat u Jugoslaviji. Te iste 1992. jedine tri medalje za Jugoslaviju na Olimpijskim igrama u Barseloni osvojili su reprezentativci u streljaštvu.'

interconnection of sport, cinema and nation, the positive and negative mythologies they embody, the circle comprising sport, cinema and social context, tradition and change', not just semantic traits, such as romance, player-coach relations, and victory or loss.[447] Vjekoslav Perica echoes this point in his examination of Yugoslav basketball, saying, 'historians of nationalism, thinking about the former Yugoslavia, also need to acknowledge the nation-making and nation-destroying potential of sport myths and heroes'.[448] By focusing on marksmanship, *Apsolutnih sto* deviates from the more common connections that link Serbia to the sport of basketball. In several Serbian films, it is inferred that basketball as the national sport, serves as a representative of hope for the future of the nation. In *Nebeska udica*, for example, the theme of basketball provides a source of pride and optimism, and the film closes with an idealised image of a boy playing with a basketball, unfazed by the rubble surrounding him.

Apsolutnih sto evokes the mythology of national Olympic success to stir up pride in a less prominent Serbian sport, but also one that has been unfortunately tainted by recent history. Golubović has purposefully chosen to focus on the sport of marksmanship, which appears niche in its appeal, but has important symbolic and literal connections to the conflict. The act of shooting provides a brutally accurate encapsulation of the intersection between sport and nation during the previous decade. However, Golubović has also avoided using references to football, another popular and evocative

[447] Babington, p. 9.
[448] Vjekoslav Perica, 'United they stood, divided they fell: nationalism and the Yugoslav School of Basketball, 1968-2000', *Nationalities Papers*, 29:2 (2001), 267-291 (p. 286).

sport, which was charged with symbolic meaning in the early 2000s. After the collapse of the SFRY, a number of works associated football with the first expressions of nationalist conflict in the late 1980s and early 1990s, beginning with Ivan Čolović, an ethnologist, who wrote about the role of football fan clubs in creating paramilitary groups during the Wars.[449] In the years since, the filmic imagery of football matches and culture has continued to hold veiled and overt associations with nationalism in the form of football hooliganism, a topic that has featured increasingly in Serbian youth film and is extensively analysed in Chapter 7 on *Šišanje*. On the other hand, the popularity of football has proven to offer nation-building potential as post-conflict film has faded into the background. For example, the historical sports films, *Montevideo, Bog te video!* [*Montevideo: Taste of a Dream*] (dir. Dragan Bjelogrlić, Intermedia Network, 2010) and its sequel, *Montevideo, vidimo se!* [*See You in Montevideo*] (dir. Dragan Bjelogrlić, Intermedia Network, 2014), revolve around the success of the Serb-dominated Yugoslav international football team and offer an idealised version of the sporting past.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how the Serbian film industry and its films underwent changes in style and narrative in the post-Milošević period. In particular, film directors began to move further away from the tropes of war-

[449] See: Ivan Čolović, 'Football, Hooligans and War' in *The Politics of the Symbol in Serbia: essays on political anthropology*, tr. by Celia Hawkesworth (London: Hurst & Co., 2002), 259-286; Richard Mills, 'It all ended in an Unsporting Way': Serbian Football and the Disintegration of Yugoslavia, 1989-2006', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 26:9 (2009), 1187-1217; Christian Axboe Nielsen, 'The goalposts of transition: football as a metaphor for Serbia's long journey to the rule of law', *Nationalities Papers*, 38:1 (2010), 87-103.

time chaos in the 1990s and produced narratives of the aftermath. This process allows for a greater proliferation of genre experiments as well as revealing that youth film holds a particularly important role in the 2000s. Within this genre history, it is possible to trace the creation of a post-conflict film genre. This chapter has outlined the common traits, situations and themes present in post-conflict film, which suggest that they can be considered as part of a burgeoning generic canon. The post-conflict genre is identified as being focused on the aftermath of war on civilians; concern over the fate of children and young people after war, and as such a concern over the future development of the nation; the failure of the family unit, particularly within the male sphere; the memory of war and the effects of these memories on veterans; and the difficulties of re-constructing identities, both national and personal, in the aftermath of war. In the Serbian context, the genre specifically references the legacy of the 1990s, but filters the depiction of conflict through different generic frames, including the horror, crime, thriller, youth and sports film genres. Serbian directors continue to adapt genres to their specific generic contexts to suit the needs of their audiences.

Children and young people play a prominent role in post-conflict films, as a metaphor for hope and fears over the future of the nation. In Serbian film of the 2000s, youth protagonists continue to represent the difficulties being experienced by society as a whole. As with *Rane*, *Apsolutnih sto* allows Golubović to address these social problems through a youth protagonist, who

is detached from the past, suffering in the present, and representative of the uncertain future. In *Apsolutnih sto*, Saša has to contend with the inequality and the legacy of the 1990s that he has inherited, but for which he is not responsible. His character echoes the appearance of other proactive youth characters from the early 2000s, who refuse to accept the status quo of the adult world. However, their proactivity frequently exposes their naivety; their rites-of-passage are intertwined with the process of transition, providing new sources of conflict between adults and youths. Ultimately, Saša is rescued by the older generation in the form of his brother's self-sacrifice, allowing him a future.

Fractured memory is a particularly significant theme in post-2000 Serbian film. In *Apsolutnih sto*, Saša's brother Igor, as a returning veteran of conflict, represented both an example of the film's adherence to post-conflict film and as a means of providing catharsis for the audience. His drug addiction represented his painful memories of the conflicts of the 1990s and his noble sacrifice offers redemption for the generation who took part in the Wars. As the films of other post-conflict countries, such as Germany, Japan and the US, have used the thriller and horror genres to re-frame narratives of war, so Serbian film has used a wide variety of different genres to discuss conflict. In *Apsolutnih sto*, the generic traits of the post-conflict film were dispersed amongst a narrative focusing on urban crime and its persistent, negative effects on the lives of Serbians. As such, this chapter has argued that in the process of re-constructing national memory of war, Serbian films have

continued to use the setting of New Belgrade as a form of their own ‘rubble films’, which imply ruin rather than directly depicting it. Meanwhile, the tenets of the sport film allow for the diversion of memory away from the negative aspects of conflicts and provide a new source of collective memory and identity. The sport film’s narratives of winning and celebration may not be appropriate to a nation coming to terms with its past, but they do provide a source of national pride and hope that is missing.

Chapter 5: Film forming youth in the past and present: Time travel in *My iz budushchego*

Whilst films like *Brat* had marked the rise of the 'Russian blockbuster', the Russian film industry found itself to be still in fierce competition with the demonstrably more popular Hollywood blockbusters. In the 2000s, the Russian film industry has attempted to strike a balance between fulfilling audience demands for Hollywood films and the needs of Russian filmmakers. There has been an increased acceptance of the need to create *zritel'skoe kino* (audience-friendly cinema), which focuses on the demands of the audience, rather than the artistic preferences of the director. In Russia, comedies, adventure films and the *boevik* (action film) have consistently proved to be the most popular genres amongst Russian audiences, particularly in the year 2008, the year *My iz budushchego* was released.[450] Youth, who are traditionally the main consumers of film, are likewise 'the integral centre of the Russian audience'.[451] Elena Omel'chenko and Ul'iana Bliudina note, at the end of the 1990s, young people 'watched much the same types of films as adults did', including *boevik* films, 'historical adventure films' and 'science fiction movies', most of which were foreign films.[452] While little may have

[450] See, for example, details on box office takings depending on genre on *Kinopoisk*: 'Sbory: Rossiia + SNG/2008 god', http://www.kinopoisk.ru/box/year/2008/type/rus/cur/RUB/; 'Sbory: Rossiia + SNG/2009 god', http://www.kinopoisk.ru/box/year/2009/type/rus/cur/RUB/; 'Sbory: Rossiia + SNG/2010 god', http://www.kinopoisk.ru/box/year/2010/type/rus/cur/RUB/ [all accessed 15 October 2015].

[451] 'Целевое ядро российской аудитории'. Berezin, 'Prokat kak konteksta fil'ma'.

[452] Elena Omel'chenko and Ul'iana Bliudina, 'On the Outside Looking In? The Place of Youth in Russia's New Media and Information Sphere', in *Looking West? Cultural Globalization and Russian Youth*

changed in terms of genre preferences, there is a more concentrated effort to create Russian versions of these films, rather than allowing foreign films alone to gain this audience.

Concerns about the viewing habits of Russian youth audiences are linked to concerns over the popularity of foreign films amongst Russian film audiences more generally. As Norris suggests: 'Hollywood blockbusters may have brought people back [to the cinemas], but they also served as the impetus for patriotic renewal.'[453] US films continue to dominate the Russian box office bringing in much-needed revenues, but this entails that cultural messages are dominated by the depiction of US, rather than Russian, norms and values. The continuing dominance of Hollywood films in the Russian box office has pushed the need not only for more genre films, but also the creation of genre films that might appeal directly to the Russian audience. The success of Hollywood films in Russia is a concern not just from a financial perspective, but also from a moral educational perspective. Film directors and Russian politicians argue that young people in Russia are learning too many of their values from the US, ultimately forgetting the importance of their Russian history and culture.[454] Nonetheless, there have been notable Russian blockbuster successes in the 2000s and the use of genre film constructions has become a more prominent part of the film industry in the mid-2000s.

Cultures, ed. by Hilary Pilkington and others (University Park, P.A: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 21-49 (p. 32).

[453] Norris, p. 3.

[454] See for example: Norris, citing an interview with director, Karen Shakhnazarov, p. 118; interview with director, Renat Davlet'iarov in Nadezhda Kas'ianova, '"Kartina ne ostavit ravnodushnoi sovremennuiu molodezh'": v Rossii snimut remaik fil'ma "A zori zdes' tikhie"', *Ekaterinburg On-Lain*, 2 July 2014, < http://www.e1.ru/news/spool/news_id-407558-section_id-1.html> [accessed 15 October 2015].

Some key examples of successful genre films include, *Admiral"* [*Admiral*] (dir. Andrei Kravchuk, Dago Productions, 2008), *Obitaemyi ostrov* [*The Inhabited Island*] (dir. Fedor Bondarchuk, Art Pictures Studio, 2009), *Nasha Russia: Iaitsa sud'by* [*Our Russia: The Eggs of Fate*] (dir. Gleb Orlov, Comedy Club Production, 2010), which were all counted in the top ten box office earners in the year they were released.[455] *Stalingrad* bucked the trend for Hollywood dominance when the film became the highest-grossing film in Russia in 2013.[456] Such successes are achieved using a fine balance between Hollywood production standards, the adoption of popular genre constructs, and a variety of domestic references.

Andrei Maliukov's film, *My iz budushchego* combines elements of all three of the most popular genres amongst Russian audience, comedy, *boevik* and adventure film, with clear references to Hollywood traditions and a narrative supporting the moral-civic education of young people. *My iz budushchego* is a time-travel film, which sees four young men from St. Petersburg sent back in time to WWII. The protagonists, Bormann, Cherep, Spirt and Chukha, are initially brought together through their morally questionable activity as *chernye kopateli* or *chernye sledopyty* (black diggers or hunters), which sees them digging up the sites of battles to find WWII trophies to sell on the black market. Whilst digging, Spirt stumbles upon a bombed-out shelter, finding a treasure trove of items, including a pistol that Cherep and Spirt attempt to use for target practice on skulls they have dug

[455] Ibid.
[456] 'Sbory: Rossiia + SNG/ 2013 god', *Kinopoisk*, <http://www.kinopoisk.ru/box/year/2013/type/rus/cur/RUB/> [accessed 15 October 2015].

up. Hearing their gunshots, an elderly woman appears and asks them to find the body of her son who went missing in 1942, who she says can be identified by the ruby-encrusted cigarette case he was carrying. Cherep, Spirt and Chukha can barely suppress their giggling, and the woman suggests ominously that they should go and cool off in the lake nearby (*kupaites' na zdorov'e*). Returning to their camp, Bormann is shocked to find military documents from 1942 with their names and pictures inside. Thinking they are drunk and imagining things, the four jump into the lake and as they re-emerge they find themselves in the middle of a battle in 1942. Whilst trying to escape, they are found by Soviet scouts and brought to the nearby camp where they are interrogated, but ultimately saved by a kindly sergeant who claims they are '*kontuzhennye*', shell-shocked, not spies. They are integrated into the unit and are forced to endure the humbling war experience that they were recently digging up. They ultimately learn respect for the living, the dead and the Soviet past.

Compared to those in the other films in this thesis, the protagonists in *My iz budushchego* are the oldest and, with Bormann being twenty-five, are near the upper end of the age range for the categorisation of youth. Nonetheless, the film is firmly created with youth film at the centre of the narrative, characterisations, and moral undertone, particularly with regard to the relationship between young people and society. *My iz budushchego* offers perspective on how, for film directors and audiences, young people can be represented as incapable of conducting their lives responsibly for a

considerable length of time following their official entrance into adulthood. In Russia, by the age of eighteen, young people can drive cars, smoke, drink, have legal sexual relationships, and get married, but they remain inexperienced and thoughtless on screen. Thus youth continue to learn and be taught right from wrong up until the very end of youth. *My iz budushchego* adopts the time-travel genre as a lens on the culture of contemporary Russian youth and forms part of the widespread argument in Russia that youth have a skewed relationship with history. Olga Kucherenko notes that the film 'demonstrates that modern youth, whatever its vices, is also capable of rising to the challenge', yet she also acknowledges that 'the ultimate moral authority and spiritual strength still lie with the older cohort'.[457] The crossing of historical boundaries that is enacted through time-travel prompts discussion of how generational change is approached by *My iz budushchego* and the wider process of change in contemporary Russia. Adults are once again depicted as the supreme authority on questions of norms and values, regardless of the time period that they belong to.

The time-travel genre is an important trend in the youth film canon, and is particularly prominent in film, television and literature for children and young adults.[458] Christina Lee notes that many representations of the young time traveller 'allow an exploration of the strained relationship between power, time, history and (crises of) identity', ultimately capturing the

[457] Olga Kucherenko, 'That'll Teach 'em to Love Their Motherland', *The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies*, 12 (2011). Online < http://pipss.revues.org/3866> [accessed 18 July 2015].
[458] For a discussion of time-travel fiction catering to young people, see Paul J. Nahin, *Time Machines: Time Travel in Physics, Metaphysics, and Science Fiction*, 2nd edn (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1993), p. 2.

'zeitgeist' of eras.[459] As a wider genre, filmic time-travel revolves around questions of history and identity, thus naturally suiting the parallel questions of identity that play a central role in narratives of growing up. Time-travel is an important way for a protagonist – and, for the audience through him/her – to access a stylised period of time they are otherwise unable to have contact with, and this experience is used as a means of self-improvement. In *My iz budushchego*, time-travel dramatises the generational divide between the wartime generation and post-Soviet Russian youth, but also distances the actions of these youngsters from wider Russian society. Maliukov's intentional use of young characters focuses the argument over patriotism onto youth patriotic culture and also onto how filmmaking can be used to reinforce national identity constructs amongst young people through narratives of national history. In the film, Maliukov employs youth stereotypes to provide a representation of contemporary Russian youth and the use of these stereotypes engenders a judgement of the post-Soviet generation through examinations of their behaviour, style and ideology.

This chapter will examine first and foremost how contemporary Russian youth are represented in *My iz budushchego* and how the time-travel genre is central to this representation. This analysis will introduce the particular connections that time-travel films have with youth film and illustrate how narratives of time-travel provide a useful metaphor for growing up. By focusing on the time-travel genre I do not seek to deny the importance of war and the memory of war to the film, but rather to illustrate how the

[459] Lee, *Screening Generation X*, p. 111.

time-travel genre allows the film to explore WWII as a point of historical and cultural importance. The film positions WWII as a period in history with which the younger generation needs to reconnect, a conscious decision by the director. Time-travel facilitates this re-connection. The analysis of *My iz budushchego* will explore two lines of enquiry: firstly, what the genre choice can reveal about contemporary Russian youth film; and secondly, what the representation of youth and youth culture in the film can reveal about the perceived difference between youth and the rest of society in Russia.

5.1 Time-travelling: history, self and film

Time-travel is usually not seen as a specific genre of its own, but as a subgenre of the science fiction genre, featuring prominently in literature and film.[460] In science fiction texts, time-travel usually revolves around the use of a time machine to travel to other time periods and Paul Nahin suggests that since the moon landings in 1969, 'time travel has replaced space travel as the modern "imaginary voyage"'.[461] Time-travel by machine is not the only means depicted though. Fictional characters can be transported via time warps, through dreams, having been awakened from frozen hibernation, through psychic experiences, by blows to the head, and after electrical disturbances, amongst other means.[462] The time warp experienced in *My iz budushchego* provides a more mystical version of time-travel, which brings elements of fantasy genres and fairy-tale aesthetics into time-travel film. In all its forms,

[460] See for example: Nahin, particularly, Chapter 1 'An Overview of Time Travel', pp. 1-95; *Violating Time: History, Memory, and Nostalgia in Cinema* ed. by Christina Lee (London: Continuum, 2008); David Wittenberg, *Time Travel: The Popular Philosophy of Narrative* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).
[461] Nahin, p. 2.
[462] See examples in Nahin, p. 6-11.

time-travel is an exploration of society and self, and falls into two forms, which 'can have very different psychological appeal' – travel to the future and travel to the past.[463] Travel to the future indulges society's fears and desires to see how the world will develop when the traveller and the audience will no longer exist; the focus is thus often on transformations into utopian or dystopian societies.[464] Lee suggests: 'Reverting to the past is always an exercise in nostalgia, loss, and longing intricately intertwined with memory.'[465] Thus in examinations of time-travel to the past, filmic interpretations of the past are not the only consideration: the audience's understanding of the past, as constructed through film, is of great importance.

This analysis is primarily concerned with time travel to the past, as this is the type of journey that the characters make in *My iz budushchego*. Time-travel in all its forms is closely connected with the exploration of history, and the potential for interaction with, and control of, history. As Wittenberg argues, 'the historical past tends to preserve or to protect itself', suggesting why time-travel can be such a pedagogical experience.[466] The act of time-travelling can be seen as exploring the concept that time periods are not as separated as they seem, but rather are co-existing parallel worlds that lie on top of each other, maintained through history and through memory. Many

[463] Wyn Wachhorst, 'Bid Time Return: Travel Romance on Film and TV', 19 April 2013, <http://wynwachhorst.com/bid-time-return-time-travel-romance-on-film-2/> [accessed 2 August 2015]. Originally published as, Wyn Wachhorst, 'Time-travel Romance on Film – Archetypes and Structures', *Extrapolations*, 25 (Winter 1984), 340-59.
[464] Nahin, pp. 7-8.
[465] Christina Lee, 'Introduction' in *Violating Time: History, Memory, and Nostalgia in Cinema*, ed. by Christina Lee (New York: Bloomsbury, 20), 1-11 (p. 2)
[466] Wittenberg, *Time Travel*, p. 150.

time-travel stories thus unfold as narratives of 'the alternate universe or alternate history story, in which the time machine transports its rider not to the past or future but rather into alternate timelines'.[467] In the modern age, time-travel has proved to be an attractive story-telling device as it represents humankind's desire to find a way to gain control over the passage of history. Reflecting on this desire for control over history, Lee writes, 'the ability to alter its [history's] speed and direction reveals not only a fascination with the unbounded potential of scientific theory, but also unveils our deepest desires, dreams and demons'.[468] One of these deepest desires can be seen to be that of understanding, and therefore controlling, both the past and the future. In the post-Soviet context, it is clear why such narratives would be useful: films allow directors to reclaim difficult history in a way that is entertaining and that meets the expectations of the contemporary audience. In the case of *My iz budushchego*, this target contemporary audience is young people.

Time-travel films explore the relationship between the individual and her or his personal history. Lee writes, 'time travel in cinema has featured a viable way of correcting space, society and self', acknowledging the particular significance that the genre can have for youth protagonists.[469] Within this, there is therefore an assumption that the time traveller needs to be corrected. In this sense, the narrative of time-travel in films is a rite-of-passage experience, which explains why a number of the most well-known examples of time-travel have featured youth time-travellers (the epicentre of

[467] Wittenberg, *Time Travel*, p. 14.
[468] Lee, *Screening Generation X*, p. 111.
[469] Lee, *Screening Generation X*, p. 114.

this trend is doubtless the *Back to the Future* trilogy, directed by Robert Zemeckis).[470] The process of travelling back in time, and then back to the present, becomes a means for the characters to learn about their own or their families' history, understand their role in the passage of history, and accept the truth about the parts of history that are exposed to them. By nature, the experience of time-travel in films teaches protagonists to appreciate the past, by transporting the character to a period of important, formative national and personal history, thus positioning the character as belonging to this history. The process changes the attitude and behaviour of the protagonist when they return to their present.

The formation of personal history is achieved through the humbling of a time-traveller, many of whom enter the past assuming they are superior to people in the past. This frequently revolves around knowledge – in *My iz budushchego*, for example, Bormann knows the history of WWII in great detail and informs the soldiers of the past of their inevitable victory over Nazi Germany. There is also a reference in many films featuring young time-travellers to their reliance on technology and technological advances. The experience of time-travel to the past teaches the traveller to appreciate the progress made by society to achieve the present they live in and the sacrifices or difficulties faced to achieve this; time-travelling youth are taught to compare what was lacking in the past, to see what the history of their society

[470] *Back to the Future*, dir. Robert Zemeckis, Amblin Entertainment, 1985; *Back to the Future Part II*, dir. Robert Zemickis, Amblin Entertainment, 1989; *Back to the Future Part III*, dir. Robert Zemeckis, Amblin Entertainment, 1990. For a list of Hollywood time-travel films up to the 1980s, see Andrew Gordon, '"Back to the Future": Oedipus as Time Traveller', *Science Fiction Studies*, 14:3 (November 1987), 372-385 (p. 372).

has constructed for them. The process of self-discovery which is at the heart of time-travel films suits narratives about young people as well. Youth films explore the growing-up of young people as a series of rites-of-passage and whose life experiences prompt this passage into adulthood; time-travel films, with their emphasis on learning, mimic the passage of adolescence. Films about youth and their processes of self-discovery are also a way of identifying young people's wider position in the world, and also positioning youth within national identity constructs. To take the metaphor that time-travel offers further, the transition between different time periods can offer a useful perspective on the changes in society during a period of social transition such as the transition from communism. Youth film once again offers a reflection of society as a whole.

5.2 Time-travel in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia

Soviet film and television includes some notable examples of time-travel, and what Wittenberg calls 'alternate universe or alternate history' narratives, also classified as a type of time-travel story.[471] Key examples include the hugely popular comedy time-travel film, *Ivan Vasil'evich meniaet professiiu* [*Ivan Vasil'evich Changes Profession*] (dir. Leonid Gaidai, Mosfil'm, 1973), based on Bulgakov's play *Ivan Vasil'evich* (1965), and the much-loved children's television series, *Gost'ia iz budushchego* [*Guest from the Future*] (dir. Pavel Arsenov, Gorkii Film Studio, 1985), both of which are characteristic of the types of popular Soviet entertainment films and productions. The latter example is clearly referenced in the title of Maliukov's film, providing

[471] Wittenberg, *Time Travel*, p. 14.

continuity with Soviet traditions of youth and time-travel narratives. These examples are built on the tradition of time-travel, and depiction of future alternate worlds and universes, in Soviet science fiction literature and *nauchnaia fantastika*, which Matthias Schwartz calls 'scientific-fantasy' literature, acknowledging the roots of the genre in the adventure genre.[472] Some significant works exploring time-travel and alternate history include the novels of the Strugatskii Brothers, including *Dalekaia raduga* [*Far Rainbow*] (1963) and *Obitaemyi ostrov* [*Prisoners of Power*] (1969), and the plays by Vladimir Maiakovskii, *Klop* [*The Bedbug*] (1929) and *Bania* [*The Bathhouse*] (1930), which explore the potential for time-travel or transportation to the future. Like the comedy genre, science fiction, and therefore time-travel presented difficulties for the Soviet regime, as 'this mode of modernist imagination has strong dystopian undertones'.[473]

Examples of time-travel in Soviet film and literature frequently focus on travel to the future, fitting into global traditions of time-travel in science fiction literature, but also suiting the context of socialist transformation of society. It is essential to note that from the 1970s onwards Soviet science fiction more generally 'underwent a split between a serious philosophical trend and a trend of youthful entertainment'.[474] Films such as *Moskva-Kassiopeia* [*Moscow-Cassiopeia*] (dir. Richard Viktorov, Gorkii Film Studio, 1974) and *Otroki vo vselennoi* [*Teenagers in Space*] (dir. Richard Viktorov, Gorkii Film Studio, 1974), as well as *Gost'ia iz budushchego*, aimed at the

[472] Matthias Schwartz, 'How *Nauchnaia fantastika* Was Made: The Debates about the Genre of Science Fiction from NEP to High Stalinism', *Slavic Review*, 72:3 (Summer 2013), 224-246 (p. 224).
[473] Prokhorov, 'Arresting Development…', p. 144.
[474] Peter Rollberg, 'Science Fiction', in *Directory of World Cinema: Russia 2*, 126-129 (p. 129).

young audience, 'use science fiction as a vehicle to popularise values such as inventiveness, erudition, and ethical principles'.[475] Like international variants, science fiction, time-travel and alternate history films in the Soviet and Russian context contain a distinct pedagogical function. As Prokhorov notes, in Viktorov's films 'the journey to the future evokes not so subtly the recent Soviet past: Stalinist society', through their depiction of society as 'a social machine devoid of individuality'.[476] This history of science-fiction and time-travel films as entertainment genres primarily aimed at a youth audience is an important consideration when analysing the audience-friendliness of *My iz budushchego*.

When Soviet society began the soul-searching process of the past during glasnost and perestroika, cinema featuring time-travel responded accordingly through depictions of time-travel to the past. The film that Lewis Siegelbaum calls the 'Soviet Back to the Future', *Zerkalo dlia geroia* [*Mirror for a Hero*] (dir. Vladimir Khotinenko, Sverdlovskaia kinostudiia, 1987), is a clear antecedent for an analysis of *My iz budushchego*.[477] Like *My iz budushchego*, *Zerkalo dlia geroia* sends its protagonists, Sergei and Andrei, to the past not by time-machine, but by some kind of mystical time-warp, in which they are forced to live out 8 May 1949 over and over again (pre-dating the US film, *Groundhog Day*, dir. Harold Ramis, Columbia Pictures, 1993). While *Zerkalo dlia geroia* is critical of the failings of the Soviet bureaucracy in the past, in a way that is fairly typical for the perestroika-era (in this case, bureaucratic

[475] Ibid.
[476] Prokhorov, 'Arresting Development…', p. 145.
[477] Lewis H. Siegelbaum, 'Historical Revisionism in the USSR', *Radical History Review*, 44 (1989), 32-61 (p. 35).

negligence in a mining town causes a mine to collapse, killing several people), the film also sees the young engineer, Sergei, learn to understand his father, with whom he has a tempestuous relationship in the present, through his meetings with his father in the past.[478] Without having travelled to the past, the volatile relationship between Sergei and his father would have continued in the present; a lesson has been learnt from the past that improves the present. Meanwhile, the film's other protagonist, Andrei, is unable to comfortably confront his own past in the village, where he had a troubled childhood. Unlike Sergei, Andrei spends most of his time trying to improve the past and avert the mine disaster. Yet this only increases his sense of despair and dissatisfaction. Following his encounter with his child-self, and his dissatisfaction in knowing that life will not become any brighter for him in the Soviet Union, Andrei commits suicide. *Zerkalo dlia geroia* characterises time-travel as a formative learning experience, but also a dangerous one. The ability to visit the past, with knowledge of how the future develops, can enhance dissatisfaction with personal and national history; this is an unsettling conclusion for the audience that chimes with the negativity of perestroika film.

During the perestroika period, there was a rise in the number of films and literature that revisited negative aspects of Soviet history, leading to 'reevaluation[s] of [their] historical subjects'.[479] Siegelbaum includes *Zerkalo dlia geroia* in this perestroika-era trend for the re-evaluation of Soviet history,

[478] See also Elena Gracheva, 'Obraz prostranstva v sovremennoi kinodramaturgii', *Seans (Blog)*, 29 May 2011 <http://seance.ru/blog/prorva/> [accessed 17 December 2015].
[479] Siegelbaum, p. 35.

primarily because of the film's examination of the corrupt Soviet bureaucracy of the late-Stalin period. Yet, this exploration of the past is made more significant by the fact that *Zerkalo dlia geroia* is a time-travel film. As well as addressing elements of personal history, time-travel films also address aspects of national history, as scholars of time-travel film more generally have investigated 'the creative potential and empowerment offered by cinematic time travel where the course of history is, figuratively and literally, altered'.[480] Lee links this to the 'politics of tactical remembering and forgetting', an issue that also surfaced during the analysis of *Apsolutnih sto*.[481] The appearance of a film such as *Zerkalo dlia geroia* during the perestroika period also illustrates how time-travel films can be used to problematise and address uncertainty during the present. Perestroika was the beginning of transition and the re-evaluation of history during this period indicates how transitory contexts can be reflected in cinema. *Zerkalo dlia geroia* suggests that concerns about generational rifts, the understanding of history and young people's knowledge of the past existed long before the release of *My iz budushchego*.

Re-evaluations and explorations of the past through time-travel film and television continued after the fall of the Soviet Union, and became even more prominent again after the Russian film industry recovered from the crisis of the 1990s. Time-travel and alternate history has re-appeared in popular culture, including literature, film and television. Dmitrii Cheremnov writes, 'At the present moment in Russia, a fashion for '*popadanets* ['time-

[480] Lee, 'Introduction', p. 4.
[481] Ibid.

traveller' or 'person out of time' – LT]' literature has appeared, when the hero or heroes end up in the thick of historical events and change their outcome to the greater glory of their country'.[482] In the 2000s, various examples of films, as well as television films in the form of mini-series, have been made which explore the Soviet past. This includes *Nazad v SSSR* [*Back to the USSR*] (Magnum, 2010), and the recent adaptation of the British television series, *Life On Mars* (BBC, 2006-2007), renamed and Russified as *Obratnaia storona luny* [*The Far Side of the Moon*] (dir. Alexander Kott, Kinoslovo Television, 2012). However, the narrative of time-travel in *Nazad v SSSR* is made with a twist: An alcoholic oligarch named Anton is sent back in time to 1975 in order to cure him of the lethargy and lack of emotion that plague him in the present; however, this trip to the past is actually just an elaborate and expensive plot, which has been set up by a friend who re-creates a Soviet village from 1975 in order to try show Anton how to appreciate his life in the present. Anton learns that his alcoholism is just a manifestation of his dissatisfaction with his materialistic, post-Soviet life and he eventually finds his true love through his rite-of-passage in the fake past. Through falsified transportation to the past, lesson-learning can still be enforced, and time-travel becomes a vehicle for change and self-discovery.

5.3 Entering the enemy's territory through production values

While *My iz budushchego* was only the seventh most-popular Russian film of 2008, attracting just over a million viewers, the film can be considered

[482] 'Сейчас в России появилась мода на «попаданческую» литературу, когда герой или герои оказываются в гуще исторических событий и меняют их исход к вящей славе своей страны'. Dmitrii Cheremnov, 'Effekt popadantsa', *Gazeta.ru*, 2 November 2012 <http://www.gazeta.ru/culture/2012/11/02/a_4838813.shtml> [accessed 4 December 2015].

successful by domestic standards.[483] An extended edition of the film was released on the television channel *Rossiia-1* not long after its cinematic release, suggesting it was likely to have reached over a million viewers. It is clear that, from its very inception, *My iz budushchego* was clearly carefully crafted and produced to achieve certain aims in relation to the domestic audience. In an interview, Andrei Maliukov declared that he created the film in order to counteract the dominance of Hollywood film over historical narratives, particularly regarding WWII; he states, 'as I always say with heavy irony, it was Hollywood cinema that won the Second World War.'[484] This statement by the director echoes the perception in Russia that the success of Hollywood films in the post-Soviet period has had a disproportionate effect on the domestic audience's understanding of world, and Russo-Soviet, history. Maliukov is in fact echoing earlier statements made by film directors, including Karen Shakhnazarov, who stated in 2002 that 'the most amazing thing is that even in our country, our young people, deluged by American film productions, which the Americans do very well, seem to get the notion that the victory was not all our achievement.'[485] *My iz budushchego* addresses the deeper layer of concern within this perception: that young people in particular are losing their relationship with their own societal history and with societal values, and that this needs to be counteracted by domestic film. *My iz budushchego* seeks to address this issue using the very cinematic standards

[483] See 'My iz budushchego', *Kinopoisk*, <http://www.kinopoisk.ru/film/260315/> [accessed 4 December 2015].
[484] 'Во Второй мировой войне, говорю я всегда с горькой иронией, победило голливудское кино'. 'My iz proshlogo', *Izvestiia*, 28 March 2008, <http://izvestia.ru/news/334857> [accessed 20 July 2015].
[485] Karen Shakhnazarov quoted in Norris, "Guiding stars…", p. 163.

and ethos that Maliukov sees as usurping Russian film narratives; the issue the director has with Hollywood cinema is concerned with the ways that certain genres can affect the reinterpretation of history, rather than with Hollywood's ability to attract audiences. *My iz budushchego* is therefore an attempt to reclaim the history of WWII from US history, by re-making a Soviet war film as a Hollywood film – and not just any Hollywood film, but as a time-travel film.

An essential part of Maliukov's mission to make *My iz budushchego* successful was to use all the necessary elements that produce popular film and to make sure the film reached the widest possible audience. It is not just in name that *My iz budushchego* closely adopts many of the traits that made the Hollywood youth time-travel film, *Back to the Future*, so popular with audiences. Writing about how *Back to the Future* appealed to audiences, Andrew Gordon writes that the film 'has all the necessary ingredients – comedy, action, suspense, romance, sentiment, fantasy, special effects, and catchy music'.[486] *My iz budushchego* uses all these elements and combines the narrative, meanwhile, with another element that made *Back to the Future* so popular – the youth protagonist and the ability of the time-travel film to induce nostalgia. According to Gordon, 'the teen hero attracts the young, and the theme of reconciliation between past and present, child and adults, attracts their parents as well'.[487] The commonalities between these traits of the Hollywood film and the Russian film offer an example of how genre

[486] Gordon, p. 372.
[487] Ibid.

mixing can be used to make potentially overused narratives more appealing to audiences. While war and war patriotism are widely considered the central concerns and motifs of *My iz budushchego*, Maliukov echoes recent Russian cinema's decision to use defining elements of Hollywood genres in an attempt to subvert the hold of Hollywood film over audiences. More importantly, due to the previous lack of youth film genres in Soviet and early post-Soviet film, *My iz budushchego* becomes a litmus test for the popularity of character stereotypes in contemporary Russia.

Youth protagonists hold different messages for different sections of the audience. *My iz budushchego*, like Zemeckis's film, reflects on the changing nature of youth culture and subcultures, linguistic evolution, the questionable morals of youth, the evolution of musical taste and, most importantly, the rise of consumerist culture and materialism. The film begins in the present, where the characters are introduced in their native setting of St. Petersburg and as prime candidates for the transformational possibilities of time travel. Olga Kucherenko suggests that they can be seen as 'fairly typical representatives of the atomised and amorphous Russian youth'.[488] The four are introduced by nicknames which correspond to their visual identities as individuals. The young historian Bormann, a representative of the intellectual class, is the leader of the group, and he brings weaker minions into his group to use as pawns: neo-Nazi Cherep, gamer Chukha, and rap fan, Spirt. The choice of characters is intentional and even forced: the four represent stereotypical youth characters, based on refractions of Hollywood

[488] Kucherenko, p.6.

stereotypes in Russian culture, and illustrate how youth stereotypes can be used to evoke certain expectations of youth behaviour amongst the audience. The depiction of their attitudes and styles can be seen as a negative reference to the spread of global youth culture in Russia, represented as having corrupted the nobler and more upstanding qualities expected of Russian youth. Yet the use of these characters is a paradox. On the one hand, Maliukov creates highly stylised portrayals of contemporary Russian youth as slavish and obvious imitators of US youth culture; on the other hand, *My iz budushchego* comfortably uses Hollywood values to make his film more successful and recognisable.

The stereotypes in themselves offer a perspective on how audiences and film directors perceive contemporary youth culture in Russia, and some of the characters arise from Hollywood youth films. Chukha can be seen as a straightforward transplanting of the teenage nerd, from Hollywood youth film, such as *WarGames* (dir. John Badham, MGM, 1983) for example: he is glued to a WWII computer game, *Vostochnyi front* [*Eastern front*], in the opening scenes of the film, and later proves to be cowardly and immature.[489] Spirt, whose name is a russified form of the English word, 'Spirit', as well as the Russian word for 'methylated spirit', appears to have a penchant for drug abuse. Spirt's appearance uses a contrived and distasteful stereotype of youth hip-hop styling adopted by a white, Slavic Russian: Maliukov combines African-American rap culture and with symbols of Rastafarianism, in the form

[489] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 38; for a discussion of *Eastern Front* and its creator, Dmitrii Puchkov, see Norris, *Blockbuster history in the New Russia*, particularly 'Chapter Seven: Playing with History', pp. 143-166.

of dreadlocks, baggy clothes; the character has an aversion to work – apparently playing to racist stereotypes. Bormann, meanwhile, can be seen as a reference to the perceived adolescent tendency to take a shock-tactic nickname: the Nazi wartime leader, Martin Bormann, and symbolises his extensive knowledge of WWII. Cherep is the only exception to this direct transplantation of Hollywood stereotypes and he is of particular importance to the narrative of transformation in the film. Ultimately, the use of these nicknames in *My iz budushchego* serves as a means of suggesting the characters' immaturity and the hint that they are living as invented personas in the present. Although the four are all in their twenties they are remarkably similar to the characters that are key to US school films – to use three of Shary's five school stereotypes, the 'intellectually and essentially repressed' nerd; delinquents 'who either pay for their crimes or learn to reform'; '"popular" types whom everyone at school knows'.[490] Their posing and immaturity become particularly clear when they are stripped down to their real names, and thus real personas, during WWII. Nicknames do not suit Soviet soldiers.

Cherep is a stereotype of particular importance to the exploration of youth and society in this thesis, thus requiring extra attention. Cherep, with his name that is translated as 'skull', is a clear reference to the concern over the increasingly prominent neo-Nazi culture amongst post-Soviet youth in Russia. From the wider perspective of youth film, Cherep can be seen as an extension of or deviation from Hollywood stereotypes of darker youth sub-

[490] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 35.

cultures, represented by such characters as goths, rockers, delinquents or rebels.[491] These Hollywood stereotypes are frequently discussed in terms of wider theories on youth subculture, developed by Dick Hebdige in his work *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*.[492] However, this kind of neo-Nazi is a distinctly post-Soviet phenomenon and a particular point of social concern in Russia, although with parallels in other post-communist countries. Mariia Kuvshinova comments that the 'Russian cinematic neofascist' has 'sprouted' its own filmography recently and Cherep is thus 'one of the definitive signs of the present'.[493] The social concern about neo-Nazis and questions regarding how to vanquish this contemporary youth monster is addressed in *My iz budushchego*, as well as in both *Russia-88* and *Šišanje* – Chapters 6 and 7 discuss the context of filmic representations of far-right youth further. In *My iz budushchego*, Cherep provides the main example of how time-travel wields reformative power over the young people in the film.

Maliukov's choices of character stereotypes are marked by their disharmony; it is impossible to see how these four examples of post-Soviet youth culture could be brought together without their occupation as diggers. This occupation underpins the judgement on post-Soviet youths as exhibiting the materialism of post-Soviet society. In Chapter 3, the character of Ket in *Brat* was linked to the establishment of the *novye molodye*, the 'new youth', symbols of the transformation of youth culture in the post-communist period,

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[491] See, for example, Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 40 and 102.
[492] See Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, new edn (London: Routledge, 2003 [1979]).
[493] 'Русский кинематографический неофашист, [впоследнее время] отрастивший себе фильмографию'/ 'одна из безусловных примет настоящего'. Mariia Kuvinshinova, 'Ekho voiny', *Seans*, No. 37/38 (May 2009) <http://seance.ru/n/37-38/melovoykrug-37-38/echovoiny/> [accessed 20 July 2015].

and the characters in *My iz budushchego* can be seen as an evolution of this grouping, the even newer *novye molodye*, whose lives have been improved by the stabilisation of wealth in Russia. The introduction to these four characters in their native environment of post-Soviet Russia strongly suggests the materialism of New Russia and the way this materialism has affected youth. In spite of the shortcomings of these stereotypical youths, materialism and the wealth of New Russia are not always portrayed negatively in the film.

The city of St. Petersburg is central to the representation of the present in the film. In the opening scenes, the four characters drive around the most famous sites of imperial architecture of the city, including across Palace Square in front of the State Hermitage. They are in an open-topped Jeep that would not be out of place in a Hollywood youth film, particularly in representations of life in California, seen for example in *Clueless* (dir. Amy Heckerling, Paramount, 1995). Their tour of the major sites of historical significance underlines the importance of Russian history to world culture and reminds the audience that Russia cannot be remembered only for the nation's Soviet history. The scenes show the city itself to have been restored to its former imperial glory; it is a bustling, well-kept and brightly-coloured metropolis and a far cry from the dingy, muddy St. Petersburg of *Brat*. The sense of importance and self-confidence is in contrast to images often associated with post-communist cities, frequently depicted as grey and depressing sites dominated by buildings symbolising the failures of communal housing. New Russian capitalism, as the film suggests, is not all bad as it has

allowed the city to be restored to its former glory, and it is this restoration which reminds the audience of the historical greatness of the city.



Figure 21 *My iz budushchego*: The foursome in their Jeep, driving in front of the State Hermitage

5.4 The past as a site of personal transformation

While St. Petersburg might have benefitted from Russian materialism and wealth, young people arguably have not. As representatives of the first post-Soviet generation, the characters embody the negative aspects of the transition from communism to capitalism. It is through the over-simplified characters of Cherep and Spirt in particular that ideology, patriotism and nationalism are given a platform for discussion. Cherep and Spirt are depicted as mirror opposites – the former representing an extreme form of Russian nationalism and the latter representing sycophantic adoption of a Western and inauthentic, foreign lifestyle. From the outset of the film, the two physically and ideologically come to blows with one another – including during a particularly symbolic moment when Cherep cuts off Spirt's

dreadlocks, thus removing the most striking part of the rapper's foreign styling. They engage in arguments over ideology, which the other two characters do not. As Greg Dolgopolov notes, Cherep is 'motivated by ideology […] the others are motivated by greed'.[494] While Borman, Chukha and Spirt are digging for profitable items, Cherep is in search of an Iron Cross or a German army knife to keep as a kind of tribute to his Nazi ideology.

In conversation with Spirt, the film's unsuccessful representative of imported culture, Cherep reveals his anti-US ideology, which confusedly suggests that Cherep has been driven to his Nazism through his rejection of Western values, rather than as a result of race hatred. One of Cherep's most striking lines in the film is: 'If I was in Stalin's place, I would have sided with Hitler to bring America down to its knees'.[495] On the one hand, this could be interpreted as a direct admission of Cherep's disappointment in and also ignorance of the Soviet past; he sees Russia as having ultimately fallen in the face of the dominance of the US and does not seem to know about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 or, in fact, why the Soviet Union joined the Allies. Yet this point of view also recalls Maliukov's interpretation that Russian young people are ignorant because the US won the war over WWII history, perhaps suggesting that Cherep does not know about Soviet history because of this cinematic distortion. Rather than condemning racism, the film's characterisation of the neo-Nazi suggests, dangerously, that Cherep has been

[494] Greg Dolgopolov, 'We are from the Future (My iz budushchego, 2008)'. *KinoKultura*, 22 (October 2008), http://www.kinokultura.com/2008/22r-future.shtml [accessed 2 August 2015].
[495] 'Я бы на месте Сталина с Гитлером объединился, чтобы Америку к ногтю прижать'.

driven to neo-Nazism as a means of rebelling against the dominance of US culture and imported Western values.

Cherep's worryingly easy transformation from neo-Nazi skinhead to Russian patriot is the defining makeover of the contemporary young people in the film. This particular conversion is made unnerving by the fact that Maliukov (whether unintentionally or not) suggests that it is a simple matter to transform a neo-Nazi from extreme nationalism to patriotism. It is as if the sentiments of both groups are close, and that youth fascism is merely a misguided and unformed version of patriotism. In another exchange between Spirt and Cherep, not long after they arrive in the past, it is possible to see the extent of the change that Cherep undergoes during the past:

> Spirt: Listen, Cherep, the soldiers are saying that there's going to be an attack soon. We need to get out of here as soon as possible.
>
> Cherep: But what about defending the Motherland?! And who's going to defend the Motherland?![496]

In this exchange, Spirt reveals that he maintains the rebellious, lazy and cowardly position that he occupied at the beginning of the film. The past has clearly not humbled him and thus the narrative suggests that the transformational power of time-travel does not work for all travellers. This is contrasted by Cherep's transformation. At the beginning of the film, Cherep is positioned as the person most in need of transformation, as his cultural

[496] 'Спирт: Слышишь, Череп, солдаты трындят, что скоро наступление будет. Так что сваливать отсюда надо поскорее/ Череп: А Родину защищать?! А Родину защищать, кто будет?!

styling in the present glorifies the very people who are fighting against his fellow soldiers in the past. For example, when the four youngsters are first found by the Soviet soldiers, Cherep shamefully covers his swastika tattoo with mud so he is not mistaken for a Nazi soldier by his fellow Russians. Later, when they are captured by German soldiers, Borman, Chukha and Spirt mockingly ask Cherep to talk to 'his friends', the Nazi soldiers, and persuade them to release him. His transformation is based on his shame arising from the sense that he is betraying his country, rather than from a reaction to the ruthless acts of the Nazi soldiers. Cherep is finally discovering that becoming a neo-Nazi is not the best way to counter his frustration with the dominance of Western culture, but rather he should allow his love for Russia to define his behaviour and ideas.

The return of the four time-travellers to the present compounds their transformation and completes their rite of passage; they emerge from the experience not only humbled, but with a sense of maturity and quiet dignity that they did not possess previously (see Figure 22). When they arrive back to the banks of the lake in the present day, Cherep takes a stone from the shore and scratches the swastika tattoo from his arm, thus completing the cleansing ritual that began during their initial transportation. The others join Cherep as he confronts his neo-Nazi former friends. The foursome's expression of solidarity in the face of fascism represents the final result of their transformation; while they might not have permanently changed their ways, the past has made an impact on them. While in the closing scene they wear

the same attire that they left in, their expressions and body language express the transformation they have undergone and how it has affected their mutual appreciation of their collective experience. In this closing scene, the four present a united front against Cherep's former skinhead gang in St. Petersburg. The young men do not seem empowered by their experience, but chastened. Their faces are hardened and bear the wounds of war, expressing how their time-travel experience has revealed the negative aspects of present-day youth culture both physically and emotionally.



Figure 22 *My iz budushchego*: The humbled protagonists return to the present

The characterisation and the transformation of the film's characters are positioned as a moral fable for the film's audience, particularly the younger generation who may be watching the film. The actor Vladimir Iaglich, who plays Cherep in the film, confirmed this in an interview: 'The number of young kids who idealise that which they actually do not understand is simply

shocking […] Of course, our film will not be able to re-educate fascists [and] skinheads, but I am very pleased they have started discussing about such a pressing problem in Russia.'[497] As this quotation suggests, the narrative of transformation in the film is linked to the wider context of contemporary concerns over the moral development of young people. However, the discussion of this particular social issue relating to youth is supported by filmic practices which will ensure that these questions do not posit any specific moral dilemmas for the audience. Russian patriotism is the overall winner in the representation of youth and the film is entirely supportive of a particular version of national culture as a whole. The analysis of *Russia-88* in Chapter 6 suggests that not all filmic discussions of youth patriotism are popular, particularly when these representations present themselves as authentic.

5.5 Time-travel traits

Fortunately for Maliukov's protagonists, time-travel to the past provides a perfect means of self-improvement and even full transformation. The transportation of Bormann, Chukha, Spirt and Cherep to the past only served to further highlight the deficiencies of these contemporary youths, entrenching the stereotypical positioning of this generation in the film. When the youngsters are removed from their native habitat, their bravado and self-confidence quickly disappears, and their weaknesses are revealed. Time-travel to the past is a rite-of-passage ritual; they are expected to learn a lesson not only about Russian history, but also about themselves. The

[497] 'Количество молодых ребят, которые идеализируют то, о чем на самом деле не знают, просто ошеломляет […] Конечно, наш фильм не сможет перевоспитать фашистов, скинхедов, но тому, что стали обсуждать столь актуальную в России проблему, я очень радуюсь.' Vladimir Iaglich in 'My iz proshlogo'.

experience renders the protagonists as being younger than their years; in their positions as people 'out-of-time', forced to experience a world that is not their own, they are reduced to childish helplessness and must grow up all over again.[498] The process is fantastical, rather than scientific, and *My iz budushchego* clearly reflects a renewed interest in genre combinations of science-fiction, fantasy and what Norris calls 'fantasy histories', in literature, film, television and games in post-Soviet Russia.[499] The use of a time-warp in *My iz budushchego*, as opposed to a time-machine, highlights the role that folklore and fairy-tale narratives can play in time-travel films, which both introduce national identity constructs through folkloric reference and appeal nostalgically to childhood memories of fables. Fantasy is also one of the primary aspects that were identified as making the time-travel film appeal to a wide cross-section of the audience and this is a method that Maliukov also uses.

Bormann, Chukha, Cherep and Spirt's transportation to the past via an enchanted lake openly references elements of Russian folklore. Vladimir Propp notes that the opening of Russian fairytales 'usually includes people from two generations, older and younger'.[500] In *My iz budushchego*, the elderly woman they encounter whilst digging serves as a present-day Baba Iaga, as well as a representative of the older generation, who guards the

[498] Nahin, p. 11.
[499] Norris, *Blockbuster History*, p. 209. For further discussion of this phenomenon, see: Sofya Khagi, 'One Billion Years after the End of the World: Historical Deadlock, Contemporary Dystopia, and the Continuing Legacy of the Strugatskii Brothers', *Slavic Review*, 72:3 (Summer 2013), 219-223; Birgit Menzel, 'Russian Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature,' in *Reading for Entertainment in Contemporary Russia: Post-Soviet Popular Literature in Historical Perspective*, ed. by Stephen Lowell and Birgit Menzel (Munich: Sagner, 2005).
[500] Vladimir Propp, *Russian Folktale*, tr. by Sibelan Forrester (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012), p. 152.

border to the 'distant world' that is one of two kingdoms in Russian folklore.[501] The distant world in *My iz budushchego* is the past and, as Baba Iaga often does, the elderly woman presents both help and hindrance to the four young heroes. Upon meeting them, the elderly woman offers the four milk, an element that runs throughout Russian folklore in varying forms, including instances of characters bathing 'in boiling milk' and emerging 'young and handsome'.[502] Bormann, Chukha, Cherep and Spirt do not recognise the woman's role in their fate immediately and are oblivious as she sets them on their path of self-discovery. When she tells them to bathe in the lake to cool off, she is offering them the chance to undertake a mission to prove their heroism, setting them the task of finding an object of worth (the cigarette case) in order to prove their valour. The youngsters do not realise the task they are being set, and it is only after encountering another elderly woman in 1942, who is carrying milk to the soldiers, that the boys understand that their mission is to find the old woman's son and return his cigarette case to her. The cigarette case belonging to the missing soldier becomes a sacred object, linking the past with the present, and the object of power they must recover in the past to complete their transformation.

[501] Propp, *Russian Folktale*, p. 157.
[502] Propp, *Russian Folktale,* p. 172.



Figure 23 *My iz budushchego*: The cleansing lake and time-travel portal

When the protagonists arrive in the past, they are cleansed of their former identities; having undressed on the shores and dived into the lake naked, they arrive in the past as clean slates and without the signifiers of youth culture that define them in the present. Most potential giveaways, such as Spirt's dreadlocks, have been conveniently removed before the time travel takes place, although, importantly, Cherep's tattoos remain. Nonetheless, the contemporary youths still find it difficult to assimilate themselves with the men of the past, suggesting that their attitudes must be cleansed before they can be fully transformed. In the meantime, they are differentiated by their contemporary nature. The result is a culture clash that is very similar to the experience that the protagonist of *Back to the Future*, Marty McFly, has when he travels in time. One important example of this is their use of language, especially modern slang. When speaking to the lieutenant, Cherep uses the slang term *telek*, short for *televizor* (television), which is baffling for the lieutenant who lives at a time when the television was not a regular feature in

people's homes. In another scene, the film directly references a scene from *Back to the Future*, Spirt and Bormann join in on the song Nina sings, 'Za vse spasibo, dobryi drug' ['Thank you for everything, dear friend'], and update it by adding rap touches and beat-boxing. Unlike in *Back to the Future*, when Marty's impromptu concert of loud 1980s-style rock causes shock amongst his 1950s audience, Spirt's performance does not cause confusion amongst the soldiers and alienate them, as McFly is alienated from his 1950s audience. The updated song is well-received by the soldiers, with the sole exception of the stony-faced *osobist*.[503]

From the early stages of their arrival in the past, Bormann recognises the significance of their destination of time-travel, calling the period of WWII, the 'heroic past (*geroicheskoe proshloe*)'. Bormann's intonation when he says this is bordering on sardonic and he is clearly repeating the epithet by which the war is defined in Russo-Soviet war mythology, without finding any connection to it. Later in the film, Spirt refers to their present as the 'radiant future (*svetloe budushchee*)', mocking both Soviet propaganda and expressing his cynical take on the reality of life in present-day Russia. The process of transformation in the past illustrates the insufficiencies of these modern youths and their lack of appreciation for both the WWII sacrifices and for history itself. The experience of war does not make them braver as they continue to hide from battle and try to escape through the enchanted lake. Yet the experience does humble them (with the exception of Spirt), as they

[503] The *osobist* is member of the *osobyi otdel*, the Special Section, of the NKVD, who were attached to army units during WWII.

are forced to bury the bodies of dead soldiers which they had been heartlessly digging up in the future-present. The experience of their time-travel has added meaning to their actions in the present and has illustrated to them the gravity of their decision to treat the physical remnants of history so callously.

Another particular element of the time-travel film that can be highlighted in *My iz budushchego* is the romance sub-plot that provides a source of relief from the difficulties of assimilating to the culture of the past. Wyn Wachhorst writes that 'the successful time-travel romance on film and television almost always involves a male time traveller in the present who encounters a female inhabitant of the past'.[504] In *My iz budushchego*, Bormann and Chukha find themselves in a love triangle with a beautiful nurse from 1942, Ninochka. Before travelling to the past, they find Ninochka's photograph amongst the items in the bombed-out shelter they discover and are both enthralled by her beauty. This love affair with Ninochka becomes the site of the personal transformations of Chukha and Bormann, who, in fighting for her love, are impressed by her selfless commitment to the cause and ability to boost the morale of the troops. When Ninochka ultimately falls for Bormann, it becomes increasingly clear that the digital watch they have managed to bring back with them to the past is counting down to her death in the bunker. The brutality and unstoppable nature of time hammers home to the characters and to the audience that no-one is able to control the passage

[504] Wachhorst, 'Bid Time Return: Time-travel Romance on Film and TV'.

of time, in spite of fantasies of being able to. The past teaches the youngsters valuable lessons about love and loss.

My iz budushchego can be seen as a complete expression of contemporary Russian concerns about youth culture and the influence of film on youth – an argument as old as film itself. The film's use of time-travel generated a great deal of discussion amongst critics. While there was reference to the use of elements of the war film genre, most of the reception focused on the lesson about the war that the film could provide for society, but primarily for young people. Elena Baraban writes that 'the film invites the viewer to identify with the present-day heroes, and not with the Red Army soldiers from 1942. The distance between the past and the present is underlined.'[505] Baraban posits that the one of the primary aims of the film was to foster a sense of understanding and sympathy between audience and the youngsters on screen, who could easily be the audience themselves. In a sense, this suggests that the audience, in spite of the disrespectful attitude that sent the four modern youths to the past in the first place, are asked to sympathise with the position the protagonists find themselves in. This fulfils Maliukov's stated intentions for the film that: 'For young people, the war is shown through the eyes of their peers.'[506] The emphasis of the film is very much on young people from the present and how they can relate to an historical event such as WWII.

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[505] 'Фильм предполагает идентификацию зрителя с героями сегодняшнего дня, а не с красноармейцами из 42-го. Подчеркнута дистанция между сегодняшним днем и прошлым'. Elena Baraban, 'Pro nostalgiiu i voinu', *Iskusstvo kino*, 11, (November 2012) <http://kinoart.ru/archive/2012/11/pro-nostalgiyu-i-vojnu> [accessed 20 July 2015].

[506] 'Для молодых война показана глазами их сверстников'. Andrei Maliukov in 'My iz proshlogo'.

5.6 Maliukov's personal time machine

Alongside the importance of time-travel and its significance for the transformation of these youths from boys into men, Maliukov has also specifically chosen to base their time-travel destination in the Russo-Soviet war tradition, and specifically WWII or the Great Patriotic War. The war and the time-travel genre constitute a natural pairing: both genres revolve around rite-of passage experiences which facilitate the path to adulthood, or even more explicitly, to manhood. The film displays typical traits of the war film genre, including standard generic references to the military brotherhood (also a site for transformation from boy to man) and scenes of combat, which form the backbone of many war films. The film also positions itself within the Russo-Soviet tradition through references to particular Soviet-era war films. Like the time-travel film, the use of the war film also affects the nature of personal transformation and the combination of these two genres specifically influences film as a site for self-transformation. War enacts a collective transformation of young men, which confirms the way that *My iz budushchego* uses the personal transformation of the boys as a metaphor for the necessary collective transformation of their peer group. War film is thus re-fashioned and popularised for the post-Soviet generation.

The inclusion of war film generic elements was a tried and tested formula for Maliukov; nearly all of the films and television series he has directed since the beginning of his career in 1978 have been war genre productions or films set in wartime. In recent years he has directed television

series such as *Spetsnaz* [*Special Forces*] (Svarog Films, 2002), about Special Forces in Chechnia, as well as the historical sports drama, *Match* (Rekun Cinema, 2012), about a football match in Nazi-occupied Kiev. The inclusion of elements of the war genre is intended to create a sense of recognition amongst the older sections of the audience, whilst the time-travel film reworks these well-worn narratives of war for the younger audience. The presence of the war genre serves to enhance the populism employed by the film to ensure maximum appeal. When the boys are in the past, it is as if they are visiting the set of a war film and Maliukov has clearly intended for it to seem so; the younger section of the audience, having likely never-experienced war, will appreciate the way that the youth protagonists see warfare. While the director uses previously unknown actors for his leads, he brings in a veteran Soviet actor, Boris Galkin, to play the kindly sergeant who is the primary agent in their survival. Galkin starred in Maliukov's first film, the paratrooper action film, *V zone osobogo vnimaniia* [*In the Zone of Special Attention*] (Mosfil'm, 1978), as well as other war genre productions, including the sequel to *V Zone…, Otvetnii khod* [*Hit Back*] (dir. Mikhail Tumanishvili, Mosfil'm, 1981). *Otvetnii khod* was particularly prominent, with viewing figures of thirty-one million in the Soviet Union when it was released. [507] The casting of *My iz budushchego*, combining new and old faces, highlights the emphasis that was placed on reaching a wide audience during the creation of the film.

[507] See 'Otvetnyi khod', *Kinopoisk* <http://www.kinopoisk.ru/film/42857/> [accessed 21 July 2015].

These basic evocations of Soviet-era war film can be seen as an extension of Maliukov's method for combatting the dominance of Hollywood WWII narratives by referencing the long tradition of Soviet-era war films. Whilst this history might seem far off for young people, the use of intertextuality in *My iz budushchego* suggests even the clueless protagonists know some Soviet war films. *My iz budushchego* reworks scenes from the film *Sud'ba cheloveka* [*Fate of a man*] (dir. Sergei Bondarchuk, Mosfil'm, 1959) and Bormann directly refers to *Sud'ba cheloveka* during the film, imagining himself as the lead protagonist, Andrei Sokolov. In one scene, after being captured by German forces, Bormann is brought in front of the German general, but rather than remaining silent as Sokolov does, the modern-day youth proceeds to reveal secrets of the war willingly. In the same scene, *My iz budushchego* re-enacts what can be considered the most famous scene of *Sud'ba cheloveka*, the drinking challenge, in which Sokolov downs glass after glass in front of jeering Nazi soldiers. Bormann gulps down several glasses of vodka, but is unable to hold his drink in the way Sokolov does in *Sud'ba cheloveka*; the modern youth becomes visibly drunk and is unable to finish his second glass. Bormann acknowledges filmic genre and its repetitions, as he purposefully recreates these scenes. He misquotes a famous line from *Sud'ba cheloveka*, in which Sokolov says, 'after the first glass, I do not have a bite [to eat]'; Bormann slurs, 'after the first….[stumbles]…I do not have a bite [to eat]'.[508] The effect of the scene is comical, particularly if the audience recognises the reference to *Sud'ba cheloveka*. The cross-referencing of film

[508] Sokolov: 'Я после первого стакана не закусываю'. Bormann: 'после первый…..не закусываю' [LT – Bormann not only mis-quotes Sokolov, he also makes a grammatical error].

offers an alternative perspective of the layering of history that is evoked by time-travel; Bormann has learnt how to behave in wartime from Soviet war films and the younger generation are likewise learning this film history from Bormann, perhaps without realising.

This referencing of Soviet-era war films is a prime example of how the repetition of generic elements 'breeds crucial familiarity with audiences', and also imposes certain expectations on the audience regarding what they are watching.[509] *My iz budushchego* updates the familiar film genre of war, by tapping into the expectations of a modern audience and by especially considering the experiences and cultural references relevant to a modern young audience. However, Maliukov is not willing to accept all new ways of exposing young people to the war genre, and the director favours filmic reality over newer media using the war genre. An example of this new medium is that of the war genre game, which Maliukov interprets as being equally threatening to young people's understanding of war. According to Maliukov: 'The modern viewer's experiences of war are based above all on computer games. War is a virtual world for them, not a real one.'[510] Chukha the gamer's role in the film is made clearer; he is representative of the drift amongst young people towards virtual reality. The medium of film is positioned as being a more reliable and established art form than modern artistic media in the form of computer games. This concern over the role of technology in everyday life is a continuation of the fears over the growth of

[509] Slocum, 'Introduction' in *Hollywood and war*, p. 11.
[510] 'Знания современного зрителя о войне основываются в основном на компьютерных играх. Война для них - виртуальный мир, не реальный'. Maliukov in 'My iz proshlogo'.

materialist culture, but it also suggests how the history of WWII can be further contaminated by alternative versions of history.

It is significant that Maliukov refers to different forms of historical narrative being born in the era of popular culture through the influence of new media. However, from the war film perspective, there is a clear sense that the film is not exclusively about war, but rather that war is used as the point of destination which highlights the sense of generational tension that Maliukov has spoken of in interviews. My analysis of the evocation of the war film genre in *My iz budushchego* has shown that the historical period of WWII is used to exaggerate the difference between the wartime generation and contemporary Russian youth. War film references also serve as a means of connection between the present-day, the Soviet past more generally (through film references) and WWII. Elements of the war film genre, scenes of battle and contemplation of the experience of war by the military brotherhood, are provided as sources of entertainment and are enhanced by time-travel in the film. The main aim of *My iz budushchego* is to make WWII seem more relevant to young people, but it also highlights issues of ideology in the present social context. The use of war film challenges Cherep's neo-Nazi ideology by sending him to his anti-fascist Soviet past, and it also challenges the contemporary gamer generation and their (lack of) understanding of war.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the relationship between time-travel, narrative re-telling of historical events of historical importance, and contemporary youth.

By positioning *My iz budushchego* as a time-travel film, rather than a war film, it is possible to analyse the representation of the relationship between film itself and history. The nature of film genre dictates a connection between the factual historical past and history as it is presented in film. The time-travel film, with its ability to transport a contemporary protagonist into the past, allows the film director to expose the modern youth to the heroism of the past, as an education in humility and history. The chapter's analysis of time-travel in Soviet and post-Soviet film has also drawn parallels between time-travel on film and societies undergoing periods of historical and social change, making particular reference to the use of time-travel narratives during the perestroika era. Time-travel facilitates a connection between the individual and their national and personal history; the genre shows a character's position in these historical narratives enhancing the sense of self-discovery and discovery of identity. During perestroika, time-travel allowed protagonists to reflect on the historical basis of the contemporary failings of the Soviet Union. However, in the post-Soviet period, time-travel in film and television has tapped into nostalgic sentiment, which suggests the dissatisfaction of Russians with their dislocation from the simple morals and values of the Soviet Union.

My analysis of time-travel in the film *My iz budushchego* argued that genre can be used to explore the relationship between contemporary Russian youth and WWII. The film openly references the techniques used in Hollywood films to make the narrative of time-travel appealing to a wide

section of the viewing audience. Paradoxically, Maliukov uses these techniques in spite of an avowed desire to combat the influence that Hollywood has had over the understanding of history. Maliukov suggests that WWII is a key event in Russian history with which young people need to reconnect and also does so by sending young people's peers back in time. This time-travel experience also allows the director to pass judgement on what he sees as the mores of contemporary Russian youths through stereotypical portrayals of their language, dress and actions. Time-travel in *My iz budushchego* facilitates the transformation of these young people through their experience in the past, with particular emphasis on the transformation from skinhead to patriot. Beyond the narrative of personal transformation, the director and the film pose questions about the relationship (or lack of) between contemporary youth and their national history. The film feeds in to the wider discussion about the role of history in post-Soviet Russian film, and the links between the portrayal of history and youth patriotism.

Part 3: Societal fears

In recent years, a consistent social stereotype has emerged from Western understandings of the transformation of society in former communist countries that has been referenced in Russian and Serbian film. This stereotype focuses on one of the most difficult aspects of transition, which has been the replacement of a collectivised, communist society to one that is dominated by nationalist, or even far-right, elements. A clear example of this occurred in the build-up to the UEFA European Championship, hosted by Ukraine and Poland in 2012, when foreign media was flooded by programmes and reports on the nature of football hooliganism in former communist countries. One episode of the BBC Panorama programme, entitled 'Stadiums of Hate', opened with the words: 'This June, that family [European football] has chosen to pay a visit to Eastern Europe. For the hundred years of football history, they have some of the most passionate fans in the world [….] But, they also have a big problem. A reputation for violence and racism.'[511] This reputation of 'Eastern Europe' in broadcast media is also reflected in the medium of film, in domestic and international contexts. Part 3 of this thesis will examine these new associations through the prism of Russian and Serbian youth film, protagonists and character types. As a part of this, the following analyses of *Russia-88* and *Šišanje* will explore how socio-political issues are discussed in contemporary Russian and Serbian youth films.

Chapter 5 on *My iz budushchego* began a discussion about how the neo-Nazi has become a progressively more prominent character in Russian

[511] 'Panorama's Euro 2012: Stadiums of Hate', *BBC Panorama*, BBC One, 28 May 2012, 8.30pm.

film, but this is a trend that has also appeared in Serbian film as well. The appearance of such characters in Russian and Serbian film at this specific point in their national histories is significant, particularly when it is acknowledged that such youth subcultures existed well before the collapse of communist societies. Richard Stites notes that: 'Neo-Nazi youth had been around [in the Soviet Union] since the 1960s, a product of boredom and alienation. But in the late eighties it surfaced in urban gangs.'[512] These urban gangs included neo-Nazi groups who gathered in Moscow on Hitler's birthday, celebrating with chants of 'Sieg Heil!'[513] Films, such as Pavel Lungin's *Luna-park* first evoked the strange late-Soviet trends for body-building and far-right mentalities amongst young people in the collapse of the USSR.[514]

While neo-Nazism is not a well-documented phenomenon in literature on the SFRY, the symbols of Nazism likewise resurfaced in the SFRY in the 1980s, although taking an entirely different form. Young Slovenian bands occasionally adopted Nazi symbols, such as swastikas, as a means of expressing their dissatisfaction with the authorities. In one notorious incident that was indicative of the difficulties being faced by youth subcultures in Yugoslavia at the time, the 'punk-Nazi affair', two teenage punks were given prison sentences for referring to themselves as '4R', which the Slovene police interpreted to mean the 'Fourth Reich'.[515] The use of such symbolism was met with swift and indiscriminate retribution by Yugoslav authorities, in spite of

[512] Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and society since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 200.
[513] Ibid.
[514] For discussion on appearance of such subcultures, see Stites pp. 198-201.
[515] Mišina, pp. 110-111 (in footnote).

their more complex connotations. In the confusion of the SFRY's violent collapse, conservative commentators from outside Slovenia have taken this rebellion on the part of Slovene punks as an example that Yugoslav neo-Nazist behaviour has roots in Slovenia. However, the adoption of these symbols cannot in any form be taken as an expression of fascist sentiment on the part of these bands, but rather a demonstration of desire for freedom of expression itself. In the 1990s, the spectre of the neo-Nazi was largely considered to be unimportant considering the specific ethno-nationalist conditions of the Wars of Yugoslav Succession. Fascist or nationalist symbols that did appear were limited to those explicitly linked to regional tensions, such as the revivial of Ustaša symbols in Croatia, or Četnik symbols in Serbia, which were primarily used in the context of the Wars in Bosnia and Croatia.

As such, it is essential to question why both Russian and Serbian youth films have recently increased their connection-making between young people and neo-Nazism. Such subcultures undoubtedly existed in the 1990s and early-2000s, but they have only been placed under intense focus in recent years. The depiction of young football hooligans, neo-Nazis, or variations of these characters is an area in which trends in Russian and Serbian youth films are converging – suggesting that common elements of post-communist film can be identified. These characters can be seen as an indicator of directors exploring what has come after the aftermath of the transition, locating these representations in the depiction of Russian and Serbian society as being stuck in a quagmire of corruption, moral inconsistency, and violence.

Neo-Nazist behaviour or youth's adoption of Nazist symbols is positioned as something explicitly connected with the transition from communism. The concept of neo-Nazis existing in communist, and thus inherently anti-fascist society, was considered to be (or was positioned as being) unthinkable, particularly considering the specific suffering of both Russia and Serbia in WWII. However, it is now inferred that young people on film have no such qualms or moral drive. The concerns of how this transition might have effected the younger generation are coming into fruition in terrifying forms according to film narratives. On the one hand, both films blame young people for allowing themselves to let their youthful inexperience guide this drift into hooliganism and/or neo-Nazism; but, on the other hand, both *Russia-88* and *Šišanje* suggest that this behaviour has been driven by widespread nationalist sentiments in society. There is an emphasis on how the conservative (and nationalist) political and social atmosphere, generated in the post-communist search for a common national identity, has caused devastation on the moral upbringing of young people. The films make overt claims about the role of the adult society in fuelling these extremist youth subcultures. In turn, this has a paradoxical effect; they feed into the very stereotypes of young people they are trying to challenge, whilst providing confused conclusions on responsibility.

However, the changes to character types seen in *Russia-88* and *Šišanje* can also be seen as examples of where youth films from Russia and Serbia are converging not just with each other, but also with global representations of

youth. In both films, like in their international generic counterparts, there is a focus on the changes that technology has brought to youth rites-of-passage. Films about young people are increasingly concerned with the ease of access to the Internet and all its accompanying dangers. Both films openly depict the influence that social networks and cheaper filming technologies (in the form of handheld cameras and mobile phones) have on youth experiences and rites-of-passage. There is a clear suggestion that young people have greater access to extremist material or that the ability for self-broadcasting is having a detrimental effect on the social group as a whole. As *Brat* and *Rane* depicted the negative effects of the transition on the lives of youths, so *Russia-88* and *Šišanje* suggest these previous negative effects, unique to the post-communist experience, are combining with global changes in youth culture. These films, along with others discussed in each chapter, are representative of how the lives of young people are apparently increasingly dominated by sexual deviance, drunkenness and/or drug abuse, distortions of subcultural practices, and persistent corruption within the state structures who are supposed to provide support for young people. This is all accompanied by more traditional generic topics, such as familial difficulties, the lack of suitable role models, problems with transitioning into the adult world of work and responsibilities, and the search for their individual identities. As a result, young people on film remain a source of concern for society as a whole, and a representation of the difficulties that society has found in its own norms and values in recent years.

Chapter 6: 'We could make a real film': *Russia-88* and the self-documentation of youth[516]

Brat and *My iz budushchego* focus on the importance of constructing a stable Russian national identity amongst youth in the post-communist period. Yet not all youth films depict the revival of patriotism in a positive light. In fact, concern over far-right youth movements, which can be seen as stemming from an emphasis on national pride, is something that has accompanied this stability. It has become increasingly clear that youth film in Russia is split distinctly. The split is between those that promote a type of youth film that supports the identity-building aims of the state, through film financing, which is seen in many of the blockbuster-style films; and those that explore the troubling experiences of youth outside of this wholesome imagery through auteurist perspectives. Not all youth protagonists are guided by an inherent moral structure, like Danila Bagrov, nor can they be taught the differences between right and wrong, as in *My iz budushchego*. Youth nationalism and extremism have become the focus of a great deal of domestic and international media attention in recent years. Lines have become blurred between fictional stories of youth behaviour and factual depictions of youth behaviour.

In recent years there has been an increase in films and television series, produced with and without state support, that depict youth in a

[516] 'Кино бы снимали/ We could make a real film' is a line said by Edik, a character in *Russia-88.* The English subtitles of the official release imply that Edik does not consider his humble footage to be real cinema.

documentary or fake documentary perspective. These auteurist youth films are turning to the production of 'youth films for grown ups', and support Driscoll's formulation that such films claim to be 'realistic', where other youth films are not.[517] Thus two types of youth film develop: on the one hand are productions which claim to seek the truth about youth experience through screen representation of the difficult trials of growing up; and, on the other hand are those productions, such as *My iz budushchego*, which are positioned as Hollywood-style, fake, representations of youth experience. Neither is in fact realistic, nor can they be considered reality, and both exaggerate youth experience. In recent films, there is an increasing tendency to affirm this realism by referencing the self-documentary practices of youth. In Russia, these self-documentary practices have taken a highly specific and disturbing form: video clips of right-wing extremist violence.

This chapter will analyse Pavel Bardin's *Russia-88*, a film which was made in response to the appearance of neo-Nazi clips on the Runet, the Russian internet sphere, in the mid-2000s, namely those clips which depicted racist violence and murder.[518] The film has a political message, addressing some of the key issues of youth culture and patriotism in Russia in the Putin-era, and is arguably aimed at an international audience. Intended to create a dialogue concerning the rapid proliferation of extremist video-clips on the Runet, as is suggested by the anti-fascist manifesto on the film's personal

[517] Driscoll, *Teen Film*, p. 112.
[518] The film's title is in English in the original. Russian language materials concerning the film tend to use the Russianised title, *Rossiia-88*, but this analysis will refer to the film as *Russia-88* as per the director's intention.

website, *Russia-88* fell victim to its own attempts at depicting the reality of the situation in Russia and the film was banned by the Samara Regional Court in 2010 for supporting the fascism the narrative seeks to condemn.[519] The scandal caused by the film can be read as a direct result of the tensions caused by the film's genre which combines documentary aesthetics and fictionalised reality, and also the sensitive context of Runet videos. Yet the plotline of *Russia-88* also feeds in to wider arguments concerning the increasing conservatism of Russian society, situating the film within later developments of more serious accusations of censorship, particularly regarding the use of obscene language (in Russian, *mat*). This has a particular significance when considering the film's youth protagonists and its suggestion that they can be seen as the by-product of Russia's drive for stability in the Putin era.

Russia-88 poses as the unedited found-footage of a fictional neo-Nazi group named 'Russia-88' that operates in and around Moscow.[520] The use of found-footage creates a layered effect – that of a film within a film. The clips, a series of staged and spontaneous sketches from the neo-Nazism day-to-day lives, are depicted as mainly being filmed by a teenager named Edik, who envisions himself as both the chronicler and propagandist for the group. Filmed on a hand-held camera, in the fictional world of film the footage is intended to be placed as separate on YouTube video-clips of neo-Nazi

[519] See webpage, 'My protiv fashizma', <http://russia88.ru/main.mhtml?Part=2>. Documents relating to the banning of the film can be found on the film's website: the court report <http://russia88.ru/images/process/123.jpg>; the findings of the linguistic analysis of the film <http://russia88.ru/main.mhtml?Part=13>; and the court findings <http://russia88.ru/images/news/2010/01/14/01.jpg> [all accessed 19 October 2015].

[520] Again, the group in the film uses this name in the English form.

propaganda and also to be edited into a feature-length gift for Edik's idol, Russia-88's leader, Sasha, also known as Shtyk (Blade). The passage of *Russia-88* reveals that Edik's footage-film is unfinished and thus unedited, positioning the clips as found footage and affirming their revelatory quality.[521] As a result, the sketches are incongruous, with the group's propaganda being interspersed amongst scenes from the home lives of Edik and Sasha, as well as the pseudo-poetic wanderings of Edik's amateur camera. Yet the seeming incongruity of the clips is shaped by an underlying tragic narrative which uncovers an emerging love story between Sasha's sister and a young man from the Caucasus, Robert. Inevitably, neo-Nazi Sasha does not approve of this relationship, leading to a highly dramatic ending, of a murder-double suicide, compounding the film as a moral fable.

Russia-88 illustrates the connections between film genres and constructions of reality and morality in present-day Russia, particularly with regard to the moral panic surrounding young people and their internet consumption. The film is a fiction film, but it is made in a documentary, home-video style which presupposes that viewers will view the grainy footage as being authentic. Defining the genre of the film provides insight into the reception of films which are based on real events and/or pose to be documentaries in Russia. *Russia-88* has been widely labelled a mock-documentary, a term that acknowledges the film's reworking of documentary

[521] To differentiate between the fictional, outer film, *Russia-88*, and Edik's internal film, this analysis will refer to the former as *Russia-88* or 'the film', and to the latter as 'Edik's film/footage'.

aesthetics for effect.[522] In interviews, the director acknowledged that he studied video clips made by existing neo-Nazi groups in Russia, which are widely available on social networking sites such as YouTube, *LiveJournal* (in Russian '*Zhivoi zhurnal*' or 'ЖЖ') and *Vkontakte* (known as *VK* outside Russia).[523] This creation of a culture of clips in Russia is closely linked to several developments in the expansion of the Runet – the founding of YouTube in 2005, of *VKontakte* in 2006, and of a Russian version of *LiveJournal* in 2006. Whilst racist clips had been surfacing intermittently on various sites, one particular incident in 2007 pushed the clips into the national and international limelight. In August 2007, a clip titled '*Kazn' tadzhika i daga* [The execution of a Tajik and a Dagi (derogatory for Dagestani – LT)]' was posted to a *LiveJournal* blog by a user called 'antigypsyone'.[524] The footage showed the murder of two young non-Russian men by self-declared members of the National-Socialist Party of Rus', who claimed to have 'arrested' the two men.[525] The video clip was a well-staged exercise in propaganda, with a rehearsed script, a carefully-staged execution and an ending which featured neo-Nazi music and the two murderers posing in front of a Nazi swastika. This particular clip, like the many others which followed it, formed a prototype that Bardin sought to recreate in his film. In essence, the sketches from

[522] See for example, Mikhail Trofimenkov, 'Normal'nye patsany so svastikami', *Kommersant" S-Peterburg*, No. 77 (4132), 29 April 2009, <http://kommersant.ru/doc/1163318> [accessed 21 October 2015]; Petre Petrov, 'Russia-88', *KinoKultura*, 26 (October 2009), <http://www.kinokultura.com/2009/26r-russia88.shtml> [accessed 2 August 2015].
[523] Larisa Maliukova, 'Rossiia 88', *Novaia gazeta*, 13, 9 February 2009, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/arts/46233.html> [accessed 2 August 2015].
[524] Andrei Kozenko, 'Razzhiganie natsional'noi kazni', *Kommersant*, 14 August 2007, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/795077> [accessed 2 August 2015].
[525] Ibid.

Russia-88 are intended to be seen as re-enactments of historical events to emphasis their role in contemporary Russian culture.

This basis of re-enactment and fictionalisation of real people brings the film closer to the drama-documentary, a subgenre of the documentary which combines documentary aesthetics with dramatic filler. The distinction between these labels is highly significant. Mock-documentaries mock what Bill Nichols calls the documentary genre's 'discourses of sobriety' in collaboration with the audience; drama-documentaries on the other hand use the privileged position of documentary to strengthen the believability of their often embellished narratives.[526] Believability that these young people exist is Bardin's primary aim for the film's narrative. *Russia-88*'s use of and deviation from the wider fake documentary/mock-documentary genre represent and question the socially and politically complex context of neo-Nazi youth groups in Russia. This questioning allows the director to illustrate the importance of context in the creation of film and uses this context to enhance the self-declared factual base of the film in an attempt to convince the audience that the images they see belong to the real world, rather than the realm of fiction film. *Russia-88* addresses a very modern problem facing filmmaking regarding access to information and technological advance, namely 'the culture of the clip', which has snowballed since the creation of YouTube in 2005.[527] The scale of YouTube's reach is unprecedented in the history of media; with more than a billion users, the website now 'reaches more 18-34 and 18-49 year-

[526] Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 2nd edn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 36.
[527] Lucas Hilderbrand, 'Youtube: Where Cultural Memory and Copyright Converge', *Film Quarterly,* 61: 1 (Fall 2007), 48-57 (p. 49).

olds than any cable network in the U.S'.[528] A Russian version of YouTube, Rutube, was launched in 2006 and reaches more than '30 million unique users'.[529] As the website of *Russia-88* cites the existence of clips on YouTube, this analysis likewise focuses on this particular platform.[530]

The rise of the YouTube generation has widened and problematised the controversy which already surrounded the blurred boundaries between objective documentary and subjective fiction. The website, whose motto is 'Broadcast Yourself', has multiplied the possibilities for 'self-staging and self-stylization', which can be transmitted to a mass audience.[531] In recent years, social networking platforms such as YouTube have transferred the creation of culture from professionals into the hands of non-professionals. As a result, self-documentation is increasingly forming the bulk of material available on the Internet, thus shaping documentary practices as a whole. These concerns have particular significance for youth; YouTube is 'regularly used as a vehicle for rehearsing public debates about new media and the Internet as a disruptive force on business and society, particularly with regard to young people'.[532] *Russia-88* makes reference to the highly publicised uses and abuses of self-documentation by Russian neo-Nazis on YouTube which, along with other social networking platforms, has given extremist groups a public

[528] YouTube Press Statistics, <https://www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html> [accessed 21 October 2015].
[529] '30 млн уникальных пользователей'. Rutube, 'O kompanii "Istoriia"' (2015), <http://rutube.ru/info/about_company/#history> [accessed 21 October 2015].
[530] See the website for *Russia-88*, 'O fil'me', <http://russia88.ru/main.mhtml?Part=3> [accessed 21 October 2015].
[531] Kathrin Peters and Andrea Seier, 'Home Dance: Mediacy and Aesthetics of the Self on YouTube', *The YouTube Reader*, ed. by Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau (Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2009), p. 188.
[532] Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p. 15.

forum in which to display their ideology and potentially attract other idealistic young people to their form of extremism.[533] This creates a context for seeing the film as a youth film – the adult world has long been concerned with the influence that media, and film, have on youth and the Internet provides even greater opportunities for indoctrination.

The narrative of *Russia-88* is as much focused on youth as it is on fascism. The film revolves around the experiences and indoctrinations which lead young people into such groups in post-Soviet Russian towns and cities. The film's use of youth protagonists is an explicit reminder that the 'most active group of internet users in Russia are 18-24 year olds', especially in the social networks where these clips circulate.[534] The geographical reach of the Internet in Russia may indicate that access is mainly centred in larger towns and cities, but research suggests that the makers of racist video-clips come from a variety of Russian regions.[535] The action of *Russia-88* unfolds in Moscow, one of the centres of internet access, neo-Nazi activity and immigration in Russia. The film explores the evolution of youth subcultures on film, and highlights how youth subcultures have developed in the filmic and social imagination of post-Soviet Russia. The effect is sensational. Organised crime and criminality are no longer shown as the primary threat to the moral well-being of young people, as was the case in *Brat*; in place of the threat of

[533] Peter Whoriskey, 'YouTube Bans Videos That Incite Violence', *Washington Post*, 12 September 2008, < http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/11/AR2008091103447.html> [accessed 2 August 2015].
[534] Bruce Etling and others, 'Public Discourse in the Russian Blogosphere: Mapping RuNet Politics and Mobilization', *Berkman Center Research Publication 2010-11,* 19 October 2010, p.10.
[535] For example, a search for 'videoroliki' on the SOVA Centre website reveals bans of racist clips in several regions and cities in 2013, though whether these clips were made in these regions or just distributed there is a separate question.

organised crime, the focus is now on the complete moral disintegration of young people themselves, who are outside the reach of the adult population, and vulnerable to new media and information on the internet. The process of disintegration is depicted as being self-inflicted: young people, due to their lack of judgement and experience, are drawn to ostentatious expressions of self. Yet within this representation of youth subcultures, there is also a discussion about the way in which the wider Russian national identity has developed in recent years, particularly with regard to definitions of patriotism and nationalism. This discussion of nationalism versus patriotism shows a connection with the themes of youth patriotism which emerged in the preceding analysis of *My iz budushchego*. The film actively engages with wide-ranging debates in the domestic and international media about the growth of youth delinquency and neo-Nazi movements in Russia, but also elsewhere in former communist countries – including Serbia's experiences, which are discussed in the succeeding chapter on *Šišanje*.

Russia-88 purports to re-enact existing amateur 'Nazi clips' that the film crew found on social networking sites and as a result mocks the documentary pretensions of these social network documentarists.[536] In this process, the director highlights the dangers associated with certain loopholes in the documentary genre and with technological advances, which have allowed the documentary genre to be corrupted. By mocking the sub-standard application of documentary aesthetics by amateur filmmakers, the

[536] 'ролики нацистов'. See the website of *Russia-88*, 'O fil'me', <http://russia88.ru/main.mhtml?Part=3> [accessed 2 August 2015].

film contains an inherent contradiction – *Russia-88* seeks to realistically re-create a world that the film itself depicts as a fake. The film does not stay aesthetically within the bounds of mimicking documentary. The climactic ending strays into the realms of fictional genres such as the family drama, undoing the director's efforts to suggest that *Russia-88* re-enacts what already exists. The narrative's complex, and also stereotypical, portrayal of youth deviance thus creates an ambiguously sympathetic ending for the young neo-Nazis, particularly Sasha.

This chapter will explore the complex links between documentary, fiction film, and the creation of authentic youth experience in the context of *Russia-88*. The film analysis will examine how the documentary genre establishes a film as a faithful document, and how *Russia-88* uses this aesthetic to construct its own documentary narrative. This chapter will examine how the film's complex use of re-enactments of self-documentation distances the film from traditional mock-documentary. The inclusion of home-video style clips from the home lives of Sasha and Edik situate the film not only within the world of re-enactments, but aims to construct a background and history for the characters that is assumed to be missing from online Nazi videos. The film analysis will conclude with an exploration of the tragic sub-narrative, which feeds distinctly into the concept that the film positions itself as reflecting the real life of youth in Russia. The tragedy that befalls the characters provides a moralistic ending for youth that chimes with official narratives, perhaps more than the production team might wish.

6.1 Manufacturing the real in *Russia-88*

The emphasis of documentary film is on the ability to represent reality, or what Roscoe and Hight call 'the social-historical world', in which audiences live.[537] Due to the variety of styles which the documentary film adopts, the traits and traditions of the documentary film are in themselves difficult to pinpoint. Nichols acknowledges the difficulties of providing an accurate outline for the genre and offers a broad description of the documentary film:

> Documentary film speaks about situations and events involving real people (social actors) who present themselves to us as themselves in stories that convey a plausible proposal about, or perspective on, the lives, situations, and events portrayed. The distinct point of view of the filmmaker shapes this story into a way of seeing the historical world directly rather than into a fictional allegory.[538]

Michael Chanan argues that, in addition to the qualities in Nichols' description, the 'documentary claim on reality is not just a theoretical question but a matter of practical concern to authority, at times a matter of law, and even of state'.[539] Thus, as the genre finds itself addressing difficult social and political debates, it also finds itself coming under suspicion. The authenticity of the documentary genre relies on 'a number of cultural assumptions, and underlying discourses, which serve to reinforce

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[537] Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight, *Faking it: Mock-documentary and the subversion of factuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 22; see also, Nichols, p. 142.
[538] Nichols, p. 14.
[539] Michael Chanan, *The Politics of the Documentary*, (London: BFI Publishing, 2007), p. 37.

documentary's privileged position'.[540] Many of these assumptions are based on 'the cultural belief that the camera does not lie'.[541] Roscoe and Hight detail this concept as being established by Roland Barthes his *Camera Lucida*. Barthes writes, 'the photograph does not call up the past […] the effect upon me is not to restore what has been abolished (by time, by distance) but to attest that what I see has indeed existed.'[542] Thus while other genres rely more on the production and the text of a film, the documentary relies heavily on the way the genre is consumed by the audience.[543]

The documentary genre is underpinned by the assumption that each documentary lies along a 'fact-fiction continuum', suggesting that, in spite of the genre's claim to factual representation, there is a close relationship between drama and documentary.[544] In the case of *Russia-88*, this close relationship is purposefully exploited and used to suggest the reality of a fictional world. Applying the term 'mockumentary' (or 'mock-documentary') to *Russia-88* misplaces the target of the film. The term 'mockumentary', as well as 'fake documentary', explicitly entails that a film is mocking the sobriety of the documentary genre, and that this mockery is performed in collaboration with and for the entertainment of a knowing audience.[545] *Russia-88* does not mock the documentary's seriousness; rather, the film mocks the efforts of the amateur documentary filmmaker (the teenage Edik), by exposing the exploitation of the documentary genre which has arisen from

[540] Roscoe and Hight, p. 7.
[541] Roscoe and Hight, p. 11.
[542] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, tr. by Richard Howard (London: Flamingo, 1984), p. 82.
[543] See Nichols, p. 16; Roscoe and Hight, p. 14.
[544] Roscoe and Hight, p. 6-7.
[545] Nichols, p. 145.

practices of self-documentation. Because it is based on infamous Internet clips, *Russia-88* relies instead on the aesthetics of the docudrama, and on what the production team says are actual events and characters taken from YouTube. Nichols writes that 'docudramas draw much of their plot structure and character depiction from actual events', existing in the space between fiction and non-fiction film.[546] By depicting something that is familiar, Bardin attempts to draw the audience into the narrative and to convince that at least some of the action is real. The filming of *Russia-88*, and the ending in particular, highlights the idea that Edik's film is meant to be experienced as found-footage, rather than as a coherently organised documentary film – thus enhancing the claim to realism.

Manipulation and careful presentation is arguably at the heart of all documents. Whatever the faith of audiences, the documentary's claim to truth is a complicated and even dubious. Each documentary is filmed, edited and often narrated according to the wishes of the director that imposes a frame through which the audience reads the images. This directorial framework exposes how even the documentary genre can be open to influence. Documentary film played a particularly restricted role in the Soviet Union, an issue that I argue has led to difficulties for directors of fake documentary, mockumentary or documentary-style fiction films. Elizabeth Papazian points out that, in the Soviet Union 'documentary was suitable not only as a pedagogical tool […], but as a tool for the dissemination and control of information and, eventually, as a tool for the rewriting of history that was

[546] Ibid.

both the product and part of the process of Bolshevik rule.'[547] From early on in the Soviet period, the documentary became a recognisable form of propaganda, and during perestroika and then the 1990s, the genre became part of the rise of chernukha and the over-exposure of the dire social conditions of contemporary life in the USSR and post-Soviet Russia. As Anna Lawton wrote in that period, 'the documentaries of glasnost have little to offer on the bright side'.[548] Stanislav Zel'venskii comments that the fate of the documentary genre in Russia has been severely affected by global changes in the media sphere, writing: 'falsification and faking, have become so commonplace, that any even the wildest conspiratory theory finds a plethora of followers'.[549] The history of the genre in the Soviet Union and in the global trends influencing post-Soviet Russia offer insight into the slow recovery of post-communist documentary and mock-documentary cinema, but also into the confused reaction to such films by the Russian authorities, particularly in the hunt for extremist materials. Thus it is possible to contextualise the banning of *Russia-88* and the claim of courts that the undiscerning viewer might see it as an extremist 'call to action', rather than understanding that the film was fictional.[550]

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[547] Elizabeth Astrid Papazian, *Manufacturing Truth: the documentary moment in early Soviet culture* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), p. 16.

[548] Lawton, *Before the Fall*, p. 197.

[549] 'Фальсификация, подлог стали настолько привычными, что любая, самая дикая конспирологическая теория находит множество поклонников'. Stanislav Zel'venskii. 'Mocumentary: istoriia voprosa', *Seans*, 32 (August 2007), <http://seance.ru/n/32/mockumentary/mocumentary/> [accessed 21 October 2015].

[550] The film's crew has made the court ban available online: Shamil' Makhmudov, 'Zakliuchenie lingvisticheskogo issledovaniia', available on the film's website: <http://russia88.ru/main.mhtml?Part=13> [accessed 2August 2015]; for further information, see: Andrei Plakhov, 'Genprokuratora RF provedet kompleksnuiu ekspertizu fil'ma "Rossiia-88"', *Kommersant"-Online*, (14 January 2010) <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1303279> [accessed 2 August 2015]; Alexander Verkhovsky, 'Inappropriate enforcement of the anti-extremist legislation in

First and foremost, *Russia-88* depicts the spread of video clips on social networking websites as an undiscerning means of youth self-documentation and publication, an issue which is a part of the 'historical world' and is not a 'fictional allegory'.[551] Bardin positions his film as being based on re-enactments of video clips he found online, establishing a historical background for the story and the familiarity necessary to create recognition. Thus, from the start, the film is connected to documentary practices, even if the narrative revolves around more contemporary manifestations of these documentary practices. The self-documentation referenced in *Russia-88* can be seen as an extension of what is referred to as 'participatory culture', where 'fans and other consumers are invited to actively participate in the creation and circulation of new content' on social networks.[552] This self-documentation concerns the access that extremist neo-Nazi groups have gained to a form of mainstream media during the rise of the Internet, in particular to a form which is popular with young people.[553] These groups, while publishing their own creations, also encourage the practice to spread and take part in the culture of creating their own video clips. In 2008, when *Russia-88* was filmed, the Russian courts began to ban such video clips on the grounds of extremism, reacting to the growing visibility of such clips

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Russia in 2009', *SOVA Center Report,* 13 April 2010, <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/misuse/reports-analyses/2010/04/d18482/> [accessed 2 August 2015].

[551] Nichols, p. 15.

[552] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), p. 290.

[553] Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p. 15.

and acknowledging their potential impact if left in the public sphere.[554] Before analysing the film, it is necessary to examine these foundations in fact, which contribute to the positioning of the film as being more than a fictional teen drama.

In the process of exposing the weaknesses and dangers of the self-documentation of extremist groups, *Russia-88* employs many of the tactics that these groups themselves employ. The film is self-referential and self-promoting, building a public identity in order to extend its message to a wider audience. Traces of this self-promotion can be seen in the sensation that was built around the film's release and the purposeful appeal that was extended outwards towards international audiences, with the aim of forwarding a specific narrative of contemporary Russian youth. *Russia-88*'s dedicated website illustrates how the film positions itself amongst the traditions of the documentary genre as a socio-political, and anti-fascist, project. The website can be seen as existing not only to promote the film itself, but also the film's basis in fact. Telotte, writing about the website of another found-footage film, *The Blair Witch Project* (dirs. Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez, Haxan Films, 1999), notes that a film's website 'can also effectively tell the "story" of the film, that is, as the film's makers and/or distributors see it and want it to be understood.' [555] A similar practice can be identified in the case of *Russia-88*. The title pages of both the Russian and English language versions of the website draw attention to the duality of the factual and fictional elements in

[554] See Galina Kozhevnikova, 'SOVA Center Report: Radical Nationalism in Russia in 2008, and Efforts to Counteract it', 25 April 2009, <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2009/04/d15763/> [accessed 2 August 2015].
[555] J. P. Telotte, 'The *Blair Witch Project* Project', *Film Quarterly*, 54:3 (Spring 2001), 32-39 (p. 32).

the film. The homepage declares: 'The plot of the film comes from the imagination of the author but the imaginary story is based on the facts of present day life in Russia'.[556] The website thus draws attention to the intentional combination of factual and fictional elements constructing the narrative, but also to how the Samara Regional Court, which banned the film, misread the distinction between fact and fiction.

6.2 *Russia-88* as re-enactment

Re-enactment is one of the key devices that *Russia-88* uses to position itself as part of the documentary family and to assert the truthfulness of the story being played out. However, the analysis of re-enactment in *Russia-88* explores the film clips as being borrowed from existing clips rather than re-enacted reality, an interpretation that both connects them to and detaches them from the existing clips. The film presents a central problem of re-enacting a form of media that is ephemeral. *Russia-88* becomes a portrayal of the inherently constructed nature of online video-clips. The re-enactment revolves around performance, pedagogy and the control of history. While history is usually assumed to be a period with some distance from the contemporary period, re-enactments in *Russia-88* employ the assumption that everything that has already been performed or documented is history, thus leaving room for re-enactment.

Re-enactments reconstruct an event that has happened in the past, relying on primary materials to inform the re-enactor about how to faithfully

[556] 'Сюжет фильма — авторский вымысел. Вымысел, основанный на фактах сегодняшней российской жизни'. See mainpage of the film's website, in Russian: <www.russia88.ru>; and in English translation: <www.russia88.com> [accessed 2 August 2015].

recreate the original. Primarily, then, the re-enactment is intertwined with performance, and re-enactments are seen to have a pedagogical function for the audience, where history is not only shown, but relived by an audience that is expected to learn about history. As with documentary, issues of control and presentation are highly significant in the re-enactment. This does not mean that the re-enactment can always be entirely differentiated from the original act. At the core of the use of re-enactment is the tension created between the fidelity of the image and the recognition that that image is a reproduction, rather than an original. Megan Carrigy writes that 'a re-enactment must draw attention not only to itself as the performance of a pre-existing event, but also to the investments it makes in accuracy and authenticity'.[557] Films and television programmes must openly acknowledge their use of re-enactment in case the audience sees these re-enactments as real footage. This is significant as re-enactments of historical events have been widely mistaken for being real, thus damaging and re-shaping the memory of these events.[558] The creation of authenticity in reproduction is linked back to the use of performance in re-enactment. 'Authentic' in this sense refers to settings and sets, props and costumes, which successfully reproduce the moment in which the re-enactment is set. But, as with faith in the documentary, authenticity is also dependent on the audience; what may appear authentic to one audience could be considered stereotypical, hackneyed or outright unrecognisable by another.

[557] Megan Carrigy, 'Performing History, Troubling Reference: Tracking the Screen Re-enactment' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of New South Wales, 2011), p. 6.
[558] Carrigy, p. 58.

A comparison between the original situations, and clips and their re-enactments in *Russia-88* is not possible: there are hundreds of such clips on the Runet, and the activities of law enforcement agencies and the management of social networks make most of the clips inaccessible. The director understandably attempts to assert that his film is an authentic portrayal of the situation which was developing on the Runet before 2008. However, classifying the clips in the film as re-enactments is controversial. Not only are the clips ephemeral, but they are highly constructed performances in the first instance. In order to unseat the documentary pretensions of neo-Nazis, *Russia-88* allows intermittent material and dramatic fillers that would in all likelihood never make the final cut in the neo-Nazi clips available on the Internet. Indeed, in *Russia-88*, the narrative revolves around the unfinished nature of the footage; the clips are left as raw materials and exposés of neo-Nazi posturing. The raw nature of the clips is attributed to the footage being the unfinished project of the main internal filmmaker, Edik. The film opens with a close-up of Edik the filmmaker, establishing that there is a documentary filmmaker at work and that this filmmaker is separate from Bardin.

In his position as an aspiring, professional filmmaker, Edik is shown seeking to portray all aspects of the life of the neo-Nazi group faithfully, often filming at inopportune moments. Through Edik, the film presents a telling portrayal of the documentary filmmaker, as Edik demands that his natural subjects perform to his documentary expectations. This in turn reflects the

practices of self-documentation. Edik's footage illustrates the staging of his documentary world, but also unwittingly he provides an un-staged document of socio-historical events, albeit events which are fictional. Edik's camera runs fairly constantly, and captures a series of events which are intended to be seen and those which catch the protagonists unguarded, serving to illustrate the unglamorous nature of neo-Nazi self-documentation. Sasha is embarrassed by these potential out-takes that Edik's staging of these clips entails, saying: 'If I see that on the 'net, I'll kill you'.[559] There is an incongruous mix of staged clips, revelatory hidden-camera style shots and artistic wanderings of the camera, which serves to suggest how many of these clips being found online are produced by inexperienced young people.

The adoption of the device of Edik as filmmaker allows Bardin access to the construction of these video clips and to the world which his protagonists inhabit. Part of Bardin's efforts to construct authenticity in the video clips of *Russia-88*, and position them as re-enactments of real clips, is based on the use of costume, settings, music and intercultural references. These indexical traces, in the form of remnants from the historical world of neo-Nazi culture in Moscow, form a part of the 'referential devices', which are central to the use of re-enactment in film.[560] The purpose and effect is two-fold. David Moore writes that '[D]ifferent visual styles are associated with different modes of skinhead activity' and '[I]nstead of being described in

[559] 'Увижу в сети, убью'.
[560] Carrigy, p. 24.

elaborate speech, style of action is expressed in dress'.[561] *Russia-88* re-enacts the 'visual style' of skinheads in a way that is not only recognisable for an audience, but also forms a part of the Russian neo-Nazi movements' own aesthetics of self-recognition.[562] The film's website states that all the costumes were bought from a 'real' shop in Moscow and the music was sourced from CDs openly available in Moscow's Gorbushka shopping centre, referencing the songs of bands like the neo-Nazi icons, Kolovrat.[563] These details in props and costumes are significant as they also form a part of the film's argument that neo-Nazi culture is not hidden, but merely ignored; extremist materials and visual styles are openly available in Moscow, revealing the inherent passivity of the authorities towards extremism. The 'sets' of the film are also referential devices in the re-enactment. The action of *Russia-88* is set in places seen as neo-Nazi stomping grounds: the Metro, the *elektrichka* (electrified suburban train), training camps in secluded forests, headquarters which pose as martial arts gyms, suburban streets and football matches. There is a palpable overlap between these 'sets' and everyday life, and a more significant overlap with other locations that are assumed to be sites of neo-Nazi presences in Russia, football stadiums – the significance of which will be discussed in more detail in the analysis of *Šišanje*.

The majority of re-enactment in the film is based around references to another part of neo-Nazi culture, which is their 'performative aspects of

[561] David Moore, *The Lads in Action: Social Process in an Urban Youth Subculture* (Aldershot: Arena, 1994), p. 17.
[562] Moore, p. 17.
[563] See the film website, 'O fil'me': <http://russia88.ru/main.mhtml?Part=3> [accessed 2 August 2015].

style'.[564] Moore stresses that 'skinhead authenticity is rooted in participation and the proof of participation lies in stories of performance', that is to say, in the actions that are considered to prove their skinhead belonging.[565] In Russia, video-clips have become a vital part of the performative style of neo-Nazis. Bardin describes how he studied neo-Nazi video clips on the Runet to recreate a referential 'system', used by real neo-Nazis and, which, in his conceptualisation, is split into different 'genres'.[566] These genres include 'staged, fictional, [and] comic', illustrating the styles on which the various clips in the film are based.[567] These designations might seem odd as staging or choreography is usually associated with fictional practices, as well as theatre and dance, but distinctions are made in the film between these two styles. The 'fictional' clips refer primarily to those which show fictional or mock attacks (usually with a member of the group posing as a victim), differentiated from those which show real attacks. In *Russia-88*, there are a large number of 'staged' clips and this 'genre' is the one in which Bardin invests the most mockery towards his protagonists. The 'staged' clips suggest that posturing is central to the performative style of neo-Nazis – the way in which they can show off their best, and most menacing, side.

Choreography in video clips is not limited to the affectation of neo-Nazis. Staging can be seen as a wider practice of self-documentation in new media and is an extension of the editing used by mainstream media. In *Russia-88*, those clips which fall into the 'fictional' category are usually

[564] Moore, p. 35.
[565] Moore, p. 20.
[566] 'система'/'жанры'. Bardin in Maliukova, 'Rossiia-88'.
[567] 'постановочные, игровые, шуточные'. Ibid.

combined with either the 'staged or 'comic' types of clips. The 'staged' types are also those engaged most directly with the kinds of clips produced by neo-Nazi groups in Russia. They illustrate the propagandistic nature of the videos and highlight the wider practice not only of propaganda but also pedagogy in Russian neo-Nazi movements.[568] The choreographed clips can be split into sub-types: those which adopt a deliberately pedagogical manner, informing followers how to engage in attacks, explaining the reasoning behind the group's mentality and so forth; those which feature performances, such as songs, chants or macho, frozen posturing; and those which show choreographed attacks. The latter contain explicit references to the constructed nature of neo-Nazi action, or manipulation, which feeds into the sense that the influence of these clips on youth is part of a vicious circle. The threatening and lecturing tone of the neo-Nazis offers a justifiable excuse for their fairly significant influence; youth that do not find these answers from the mainstream media, seeking their sources of knowledge elsewhere. These staged clips are accompanied by even more sinister un-staged attacks, where the group prowl the streets for random targets, including non-Russians and also rival youth subcultural groups. In a scene that is reminiscent of the scene in *My iz budushchego*, in which Cherep cuts of Spirt's dreadlocks, the neo-Nazis attack a young man with dreadlocks for belonging to youth subcultural group that represents a different ideological group.

[568] Pilkington, Omel'chenko and Garifzianova, *Russia's Skinheads: Exploring and rethinking subcultural lives*, p. 138.

One of the first scenes in the film constitutes one of these instructive sketches, and is a combination of the visual and performative styles of neo-Nazis. The camera is shooting a close up of a balaclava-clad figure, shouting into the lens. The man declares: 'Parasites are dangerous. Parasites smell bad […] I'll teach you how to fight parasites'.[569] In the ensuing scene, a group of men in balaclavas attack and beat a man of Central Asian appearance. While the scene introduces the group 'Russia-88' (they mark their territory with graffiti), the sketch also introduces the group's self-designated mission of instructing people on how to engage in xenophobic attacks. This educational theme is continued throughout the film and also introduces the topic of dissemination which is central to the arguments surrounding the influence of such clips on the Internet. Watching such instructive clips is contentious for the audience: there is a sense that in agreeing to watch, the audience is somehow colluding with the scene. These clips also reflect what is readily available on the Internet for those who seek to watch them. Choreography and posturing are crucial to even these scenes. Shortly after the conclusion of this beating, a member of the group is seen removing face paint from his face, which had been used to make his skin look darker, and presumably as if he is from the Caucasus, suggesting that the act was in fact a fake. Sasha asks Edik why he is filming, insinuating that the clip will constitute evidence of the gang's affectation.

The clips posing as instructive staged clips most explicitly purport to reveal the nature of the neo-Nazi groups, their reliance on image and

[569] 'Паразиты вредные. Паразиты плохо пахнут […] Я научусь тебя, как бороться с паразитами'.

posturing and their inherent stupidity. While documentary gives neo-Nazis the ability to portray themselves in a propagandistic way, by revealing the making of a documentary film, their methods and weaknesses are inevitably exposed in *Russia-88*. This is both intentional and unintentional. Edik follows some of the group with a camera, filming them at awkward moments, but the footage is also obviously unedited; Edik jealously guards his footage and continually reminds the characters that the film is not ready. Many of the scenes are clearly what would be outtakes if a final cut were to appear (as Edik clearly intends), but he draws attention to their failure as successful clips by filming a scene again, or changing the staging or dialogue of his protagonists. The understanding of what constitutes an outtake in these films is as much based on Edik's supposed input as it is dependent on the audience's understanding of what a finished film looks like.

The ultimate power lies with the creator of the re-enactment, Bardin, as he has control over Edik's found footage. Bardin seeks to exposes the choreography inherent in these video clips. When preparing the separate clips, Edik, as their director, goes to great lengths to ensure they fit the image he personally expects his idol Sasha to fulfil. Edik effectively positions Sasha as an actor, in spite of Sasha's belief that he is controlling how he and the rest of the group are documented. The instructive types of choreographed clips primarily feature Sasha informing his audience of the correct way to train, prepare and take part in actions against enemies. Some of the information is based on physical preparation, such as finding yourself a boxing trainer and

learning 'Slavic wrestling' (the latter is an obscure sport that, judging by internet forums, has links to nationalism). Sasha frequently intersperses German slogans and idioms amongst these instructions, an element that Pilkington identifies as being indicative of Russian neo-Nazi culture.[570] The result is farce, displaying Sasha's incongruous simultaneous support of supposedly pure Russian past-times such as Slavic wrestling and Nazi traditions by using idioms such as 'Den Sack schlägt man, den Esel meint man (To kick the dog when you mean the master)'. Bardin illustrates that the re-enactment of reality is not the sole aim of his narrative; the other aim is to mock the neo-Nazis by ridiculing their techniques.

In another such instructive scene, Sasha is positioned speaking directly at the camera whilst wearing a balaclava against a black background. Edik has prepared a speech for him on the purposes and actions of their group, and of neo-Nazis more generally. The scene hints that there is a more universal message to be heard about extremist propaganda. However, the structure of the staged scene is again revealed and the nightmare unravels. The threatening image of the extremist is spoilt by Sasha's inability to read the speech given to him by Edik, and he appears woefully ignorant, his front of bravado damaged, and displayed as a puppet on someone else's stage. Yet this time Sasha becomes angry at the image that Edik has chosen for them. Edik, as director, is attempting to mould the group into what he expects them to be, but this is not necessarily how the group envisage themselves. The

[570] Hilary Pilkington, 'Introduction: Re-thinking skinhead lives', in *Russia's Skinheads: Exploring and rethinking subcultural lives*, by Hilary Pilkington, Elena Omel'chenko and Al'bina Garifzianova (London: Routledge, 2010), 1-22 (p. 5).

forcing of a documentary frame onto a constructed scene is not successfully carried out and the clip is never finished, as is the case with many of the other sketches in the film.

As *Russia-88* develops, there is increasing emphasis on the lack of success that Edik has in faithfully documenting the group. In one such failed scene, the group arranges to meet on a bridge. They approach and salute each other, shouting 'Sieg Heil!', but Edik does not think the clip is right and he demands that they perform the scene over again. This particular example highlights the highly constructed nature of their image and reveals the efforts that the group go to in order to maintain the illusion of intimidation. The scene re-affirms the control that Edik has as director/filmmaker over the image portrayed by the group, highlighting the inconsistencies within the documentary genre. By exposing the weaknesses in documentary, this example goes beyond mockery of the documentary pretensions of neo-Nazis, but employs methods used by mock-documentary. The documentary's superiority of narrative and claims to reality are discredited. The re-filming of this clip takes place several times, causing the group to complain that they need to hurry up and move from the bridge as soon as possible. This admission (the result of the candour of the un-cut film) reveals a different side of the posturing. While it is not made clear why they need to get away as soon as possible, there is a clear allusion to the unacceptableness of their actions.



Figure 24 *Russia-88*: The group pose for a propaganda shot and are interrupted

To enhance the sense that the clips are re-enactments of reality, Bardin allows the banality of everyday life to seep into the footage. The choreographed scenes are rarely completed without interruptions of various types, beyond the control of even the filmmaker, Edik. One time, a scene is interrupted by a policeman, another by a member of the public walking into their staged shot, in another Sasha is greeted by a family friend. This latter scene in particular ruins the bravado of the group as they pose for a photo-call against a graffiti-covered wall in macho positions (Figure 25). As a frequent reminder of Edik's youth, his phone rings and his mother asks him where he is and what he is doing. The choreographing of the group in *Russia-88* pointedly suggests that if the fictional group is staging itself in such a way, existing neo-Nazi groups posting on the internet are also doing the same. Documentary techniques can be used to edit and polish the footage to

achieve the image desired by the filmmaker. This levels a criticism at the constructed nature of the documentary genre and the genre's ability to be manipulated by unworthy directors such as Edik and other amateur filmmakers. However, the deficiencies of Edik as director can be seen as an allegory for *Russia-88* as a whole, which itself faced criticism for mismanaging the documentary elements of the film by allowing the successful documentary aesthetics of the narrative to slip into unconvincing drama; Petre Petrov, for example, calls the dramatic ending a 'mawkish crescendo'.[571]

Bravado-fuelled propaganda is not the only focus of the neo-Nazis, who also produce a large number of 'comic' clips, albeit adhering to offensive neo-Nazi humour. A key element of these clips revolves around mocking the documentary genre, with the group exaggerating stereotypes, dressing up and manipulating comedy devices. One example involves a member of the group dressing up as a stereotypical Russian *babushka* (granny), complete with headscarf, and selling pickled cabbage. The mock-*babushka* sits disconsolately outside a market, when Sasha approaches her and they discuss how she has been pushed out of the market by non-Russians. When a group of these villains appear nearby, the woman regains her vitality and joins the fight against these intruders, beating them with a broom. The scene is intentionally humorous, but also sinister, suggesting that the Nazi ideology is intentionally being spread to other disillusioned people. In another such 'comic' scene, one of the members dresses up as an over-exaggerated stereotype of an Orthodox Jew, complete with foreign accent. After declaring

[571] Petrov, 'Russia-88'.

that Russians are ‘slaves’ to Zionists and ‘pigs’, the man is faced by Sasha who steps in to protest, beating the man with a stuffed toy pig. The act of beating someone with a toy does not suggest much harm can be done, but the combination of parody and racism is chilling.

To cement the film’s links and references to factual events, in spite of the film’s attempts to position the clips as farcical, *Russia-88* ends in a particularly sober way. In the place of crew credits, the film closes with a silent, rolling list of all the names of people who died as a result of racist attacks in 2008 in Russia. The simplicity of including these names drives home the point that the re-enactments attempt to make, by furnishing the fictional film with factual statistics. The list is harrowing; it not only compiles the names and dates of those murdered, but often also includes graphic detail about the acts which resulted in their death. Replacing the credits of the crew with a roll-call of the dead can be seen as an affirmation of why the film was made, in a kind of reverse dedication. The dedication also serves to remind the audience that the film is intended as a re-enactment, affirming the fictional recreation of factual events and confirming the authenticity of the re-enactment scenes.

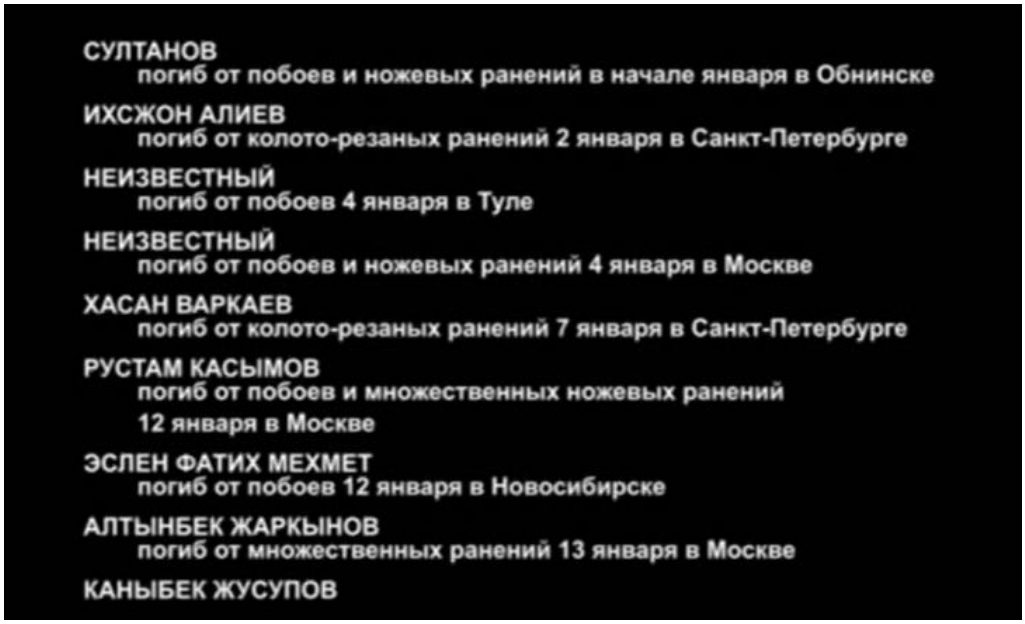


Figure 25 *Russia-88*: a roll-call of those killed in racially-motivated attacks in Russia

6.3 Documenting youth

In spite of the message that Bardin is trying to transmit about the factuality and also the fictionality of these online clips, *Russia-88*'s narrative is focused on the lives of the people involved in the making of these clips, particularly Sasha and Edik. From the beginning of the film, Sasha is positioned as a role model for Edik, who plays a significant role in latter's involvement with the group. Edik, in his interviews with the group members, tries to extract background information about their path to fascism and why they decided to become neo-Nazis; he asks repeatedly, and naively 'how did you become a fascist?', mimicking the enquiries central to documentary film, but also trying to learn more about the ideology for himself.[572] To this question, Sasha sarcastically responds, 'I watched *Romper Stomper'*; the suggestion that he

[572] 'Как ты стал фашистом?'

was inspired by Geoffrey Wright's controversial film of 1992, which depicts the life of an Australian neo-Nazi youth, echoes a persistent concern about youth film – that young people are influenced by the violence they see in films and on television. Pilkington also refers to films such as *Romper Stomper* as being part of the 'knowledge of internationally recognised signifiers of "skinhead"'.[573] While this scene can be read as Bardin's mockery of such concepts, in fact Sasha's reasoning is to do with deep underlying fears; and this concern over the influence of certain phrases in the film indeed led to the film being banned.

Bardin joins a series of directors who have depicted a skinhead character as a 'misguided, though passionate and rather intelligent, rebel'. [574] The list of such depictions includes *Romper Stomper*, *American History X* (dir. Tony Kaye, Turman-Morrissey Company, 1998) and *The Believer* (dir. Henry Bean, Fuller Films, 2001), but can also be extended to two other films discussed in this thesis, *My iz budushchego* and *Šišanje*. While neo-Nazis and their extremism are condemned in everyday life, filmic depictions have been known to portray skinheads as 'tragic, alienated and wounded' characters, with film allowing these characters a site for redemption.[575] The problems of portraying one-dimensional and universally repulsive neo-Nazi characters are exacerbated by the youth of the protagonists discussed here and also the tendency for neo-Nazi characters to be youths; young nationalists are

[573] Pilkington, 'Introduction: Re-thinking skinhead lives', in *Russia's Skinheads: Exploring and rethinking subcultural lives*, p. 5.
[574] John Marmysz, 'The Lure of the Mob: Contemporary Cinematic Depictions of Skinhead Authenticity', *The Journal of Popular Culture,* 46:3 (2013), 626-646 (p. 626).
[575] Ibid.

compartmentalised within the wide ranging category of youth delinquents. Sasha's views are repulsive, but he rejects formal authorities, such as political movements and the police, because of their corruption and lies – an assessment which uncomfortably matches the liberal views of these organisations in present-day Russia. Bardin thus complicates the narrative that he establishes: on the one hand, he seeks to depict these characters as posers and fakes, and, on the other hand, in order to make the film more complex, he allows the characters depth.

The narrative of *Russia-88* is deeply personal and develops the concept of the neo-Nazi being a complex, intelligent and misguided person, epitomised above all in the characterisation of Sasha. Even while Edik is filming the propaganda clips for Russia-88, a significant part of the film centres on developing background filler about Sasha's life and family through clips shot in their homes and amongst their non-neo-Nazi families. Eventually, these filler shots feed into the tragic sub-narrative of the story. These home-video sections display another form of self-documentation, reflecting the technological developments which have made the creations of home video an accessible activity. Thus the narrative not only seeks to represent how young people become involved in fascism, but also explores the concept of the amateur document as an easily-corrupted expression of youth culture and the search for identity. Edik, like other young people partaking in self-documenting culture before him, attempts to carve out a position for his own voice amongst the world of others. This in turn is a central aspect in the

creation of youth films, which focus on the young person's attempt to develop their individuality with the restrictions of the adult world. The success of this motive for power through self-expression can be questioned; many of the clips simply reveal Edik's physical and mental immaturity, and thus his weakness and vulnerability. In spite of his misguided adoration of Sasha, the audience can only pity him.

What is of primary interest concerning these dramatic fillers is that these clips from the home lives of Sasha and Edik, as well as the personalisation of the rest of the neo-Nazi crew, develop a narrative about young people and their involvement in subcultures. Just as Sasha's relationship with his sister is the main reason for developing the dramatic subplot, the home-video scenes primarily revolve around Sasha at home, interacting with his family. Initially, it seems as if Sasha's family see his 'visual style' and his 'performative style' as two separate issues; there is an implicit explanation that perhaps he is going through one of the typical phases of youth experimentation. His sister mocks his adoration of Hitler, and seems unfazed by his tattoos and other outwardly neo-Nazi stylings, even when he tries to impose moral restrictions on her own appearance. However, on Sasha's twenty-first birthday, the clips record an altercation between Sasha and his family about his life and their expectations of him. His father declares that now Sasha is officially a grown up, he hopes that Sasha will start to find a place for himself in the world and a career. The genre expectations of parents towards their children are unchanged despite this child's adherence to

extremism; the narrative highlights commonalities in the passage of growing up. It is apparent that, until this birthday scene, Sasha's family have not realised the extent of his extremism: until this point they had clearly just assumed he was unemployed and disaffected. The film's narrative ensures that the audience is well-aware how disgusted his family become with his ideology, particularly his father. Sasha, like Edik, seeks a role model who is not his parent and who does not belong to any state institution. This alienation from his family serves as a backdrop for Sasha's involvement with Kliment Klimentevich, referred to as *diadia* (lit. uncle, a term from Russian military slang denoting a senior non-commissioned officer).[576] *Russia-88* recycles the common youth film theme that, in the absence of a connection with their own families, young people seek support and a sense of belonging elsewhere. This search drives their entrance into subcultural spheres. *Russia-88*, like many youth films, can be seen as using this depiction of youth behaviour to exaggerate differences between the older and younger generation.

[576] The English subtitles of the film translate *diadia* as 'master', which offers insight into the tone behind the term's usage in *Russia-88*, but negates the importance of the military subtext and Kliment's experience in the Chechen conflict.



Figure 26 *Russia-88*: Sasha celebrates his birthday with his family

The family narrative questions which influences are placed on young people like Sasha prompting their involvement in sub-cultural groups, reinforcing Edik's childish questioning of his adopted family, 'how did you become a fascist?' While Edik seeks affirmation of why people become neo-Nazis, Sasha's aunt also wants to know how Sasha ended up as a fascist, considering the family background he comes from. The interaction between Sasha and his family also underlines the unpredictability of influence and how there are no filmic (or social) formulas for the kinds of backgrounds and family set-ups which drive young people into certain groups. This is contrast with the narratives of films such as *American History X*, and in *Šišanje*, as is argued in the following chapter, which discusses representations in which parental weakness and trauma influence the passage to neo-Nazism. *Russia-88*, on the other hand, suggests that a child from a caring family can become a neo-Nazi as easily as a child whose nurture has been neglected. When Edik asks him to

give him a serious answer about how he became a fascist, Sasha responds that he was scared of non-Russians taking his sister, his jobs and his housing. It sounds as though Sasha has reacted to the common rhetoric of populism with extremism, highlighting the film's wider concern with the influence of barely-veiled nationalist rhetoric in everyday life in Russia. His passage is also a political one, influenced by a deep youthful sense of injustice. Performing an impromptu rock concert for his friends on his birthday, Sasha sings a rebellious polemic against politicians and the treatment of youth by the authorities sandwiched between racist songs (Figure 29). One line declares, 'and those on the top/ don't give a shit [vulg.] about youth'.[577] The tirade recalls other impassioned protestations by youth, an image perhaps made most famous by punk bands and their aggressive, anti-establishment lyrics, such as the Sex Pistols.



Figure 27 *Russia-88*: Sasha performs for his friends

[577] '[…] и тем кто на верху/плевать на молодежь [vulg.]'. The website credits the actor Petr Fedorov, who plays Sasha, as creating the original score: <http://russia88.ru/main.mhtml?Part=4> [accessed 2 August 2015].

To emphasise the inherent immaturity of the film's subjects, the dramatic fillers also offer insight into the character of Edik, who is positioned as being the most easily influenced of all the young people in the film. Edik idolises Sasha, to the point where his lingering close-ups of his hero come across as homoerotic – something which Sasha himself brings up at the end of the film, calling him a '*pedik*/faggot [vulg. homosexual]'. The integration of this unlikely candidate, a Jew, into a neo-Nazi grouping also hints at the wider irony of Russians imitating Nazism in the first place; the original Nazis considered Slavs as belonging to the same breed of sub-humans (*Untermenschen*) as Jews were. Edik performs a part to ingratiate himself with the neo-Nazis, among whom he clearly does not belong. This is not an unusual theme however for films about skinheads; the involvement of an unlikely, younger candidate with skinhead groups is seen, for example, in the film *This is England* (dir. Shane Meadows, Warp Films/Film4 Productions, 2006), as well as in *Šišanje*.

Bardin highlights Edik's innocent regurgitation of Sasha's beliefs and emphasises his naivety. In one scene, the audience witnesses a clip from Edik's bedroom. Edik's weakness of stature is displayed as he films himself posing in his bedroom mirror, trying to produce muscles from his puny arms and passionately raising his arm in a 'Sieg Heil' salute to a recording of Hitler. His posing is of a completely different nature to the hyper-masculine posturing of the rest of the group and from the image Edik himself tries to sculpt of the group from his footage. Edik becomes distracted from his posing by picking a spot, trademark behaviour of adolescence, and he is caught in

the act by his mother, who comes in to chide him and pick up his dirty laundry. She patronisingly asks her offspring how his film is going; at which he protests against this invasion of his privacy. This incident suggests that Edik's mother has seen the footage of the gang Russia-88 and naively assumes the clips are the result of some kind of childish/teenage whim or phase.



Figure 28 *Russia-88*: Edik practices his Nazi salute in his bedroom mirror

The whole scene is constructed to emphasise the adolescence of the filmmaker and also to represent the linkages between self-documentation and youth. The clip is reminiscent of the exposing self-made video clips made by young people and published widely on social networks, contributing to the moral panic concerning the internet consumption of young people which is being explored with increasing urgency in global youth film.[578] The association of social and moral decline with social networks, especially YouTube, is not a

[578] Mary Madden and others, 'Teens, Social Media, and Privacy', *Pew Research Report,* May 21 2013, <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Teens-Social-Media-And-Privacy/Summary-of-Findings.aspx> [accessed 2 August 2015].

panic limited to Russia, but is a global issue, and one predominantly focused on youth.[579] This conflation derives from the spread of amateur video on the Internet and access to self-publication, rather than the products of professional clip-makers.[580] Amateur videos show how technology has opened up documentary film to non-professionals, and has also provided a further way in which youth culture can be dissected by the adult world.

Despite his complete lack of credentials, Edik's acceptance into the group is under Sasha's protection (the circumstances of their meeting are unexplained) and the influence Sasha has over Edik is also based on this relationship. This pattern of male bonding and defence is common in youth films about young men. In the drunken aftermath of Sasha's birthday, Sasha turns the table on Edik and asks why he became a fascist. Edik's reply suggests that his path is more traditional for narratives of film about youth: he was bullied at school and had no friends, and thus Sasha became 'like a relative' to him after taking him under his wing and into their inner circle.[581] As in the clichéd narratives of the youth gang films, Edik naively promises that if Sasha ever needs help, he will be there for him. This promise foreshadows Edik's involvement in and filming of the tragic shootings at the end of the film: by swearing himself to Sasha, Edik ends up in the wrong place at the wrong time, and loses all of his adolescent innocence in moments. Thus the progression of Edik's adulation for Sasha also serves to hasten the dramatic climax of the film. The importance of the film's re-enactments is steadily

[579] See, for example, Burgess and Green, pp. 17-19.
[580] Ibid.
[581] 'ты стал для меня близким человеком'.

overshadowed by this impending tragedy, changing the nature of the film's use of documentary aesthetics and focussing on a narrative of adolescence.

Innocence versus guilt becomes one of the key debates concerning youth in the film, contributing in part to the confused representation of Sasha. Many of his actions – fighting with his father, being over-protective of his sister, stealing his father's van, playing rebellious rock songs – belong to a narrative of adolescence that would not be uncommon in teen films. In *Russia-88,* there is an emphasis on home life and the conflict between behaviour at home and behaviour abroad. To illustrate this point, the clips are interspersed with home-video style clips of Sasha's dog as a puppy, which are dated from 2003. These clips are in a distinctly different style from the others; instead of the grayscale palette of the other clips, the home video is suffused with warmer tones and slightly blurred (Figure 29). This footage forms the final video clip in the film, intentionally drawing attention to the loss of innocence the film as a whole narrates. The final clip emphasises death and loss; three figures in the film, Sasha, his sister and Sasha's beloved dog, have been killed as a result of Sasha's actions and misguided youthful adoption of neo-Nazism. The home video represents memory, rather than re-enactment, and depicts how self-documentation has developed in recent years. The self-document is no longer an attempt to hold onto memories; instead the documents are used to publish and distort everyday life, in real time. The film becomes a reliquary to the innocence that youth lose during

their desire to self-document; they leave themselves exposed and vulnerable to those who would lead them astray.



Figure 29 *Russia-88*: Home video footage

6.4 The vox populi

One the central arguments of this thesis concerns the use of youth characters to turn a mirror on society. The credits of the murdered are one part of *Russia-88*'s mission to turn this mirror on the audience, by combining documentary aesthetics and factual elements. The film has a political and moral message, which does not necessarily target a youth audience, but rather the adult audience. *Russia-88* serves as a constant reminder of how the film reflects on life in contemporary Russia. Several scenes in the film use the fake documentary practice of *vox populi*, literally 'the voice of the people', where an interviewer takes to the streets to ask random members of the public their opinion on an issue or event. The *vox populi* is a derivative of practices used in broadcast journalism, particularly in news programmes and the discussion of public affairs. In spite of the inclusiveness that this practice

might seem to apply, the results are not as democratic as they might appear. *Vox populi* is as much a method of exposure as it is a means of providing a public platform for opinion. The practice is widely used as a comedy device, which can be seen as a mockery of what Nichols calls the 'participatory mode' of the documentary genre, which often relies on interviews with people as a means of sourcing oral history.[582] The participatory mode of the documentary appeared in the 1980s in response to filmmakers' perceptions of documentary film as being a hegemonic practice, where the filmmakers' voice was given an exclusive position over the subjects.[583] Nevertheless, *vox populi* is associated with mock-documentary as heavy editing of the interviewee's answers is frequently practiced. This principle of interaction and reaction is important in the use of *vox populi*. The answers of the interviewees are shaped according to how the question is framed, how the question is asked and by whom.

In *Russia-88*, the actor Petr Fedorov, as his character Sasha, takes to the streets to interview members of the general public. In this fictional film, these interviews are a rare moment of the fictional world interacting with what Nichols calls the 'socio-historical' world. The people interviewed in *Russia-88* are not actors and are not participants in the fictional tale, but they are interacting with a fictional character, which shapes their responses. The interviews featured in the film took place on Pushkinskaia Square in Moscow

[582] Nichols, p. 31.
[583] Nichols, pp. 159-160.

and on *elektrichki* around the city.[584] The sites chosen are meaningful. Pushkinskaia Square is a popular meeting place, which coincidentally, and conveniently for the film, later became famous as the site of mass protests in March 2012 against the re-election of Putin, but has now been claimed by all sides of the political spectrum.[585] The *elektrichki*, meanwhile, have become a well-known setting for neo-Nazi attacks, but are also a prominent part of the ordinary lives of city-dwellers.[586] The recognisability of these settings is significant for the audience, deepening the sense that the interviewees were chosen from amongst the general public. Yet the factuality of the interviews cannot be seen as reality. The questions are framed by the character that is asking them and the responses without a doubt correspond to this frame as well. Petr Fedorov is not just acting his character in speech, but also in costume. It is possible to see the reaction of people to being approached by a neo-Nazi in their faces and in their body language, particularly in the young people Sasha interviews.

[584] 'Интервью на Пушкинской площади в Москве и в подмосковной электричке — подлинный и достоверный документ'. See 'O fil'me', <http://russia88.ru/main.mhtml?Part=3> [accessed 2 August 2015].
[585] Kommersant", 'Zavershen miting oppozitsii na Pushkinskoi ploshchadi', 5 March 2012, <http://kommersant.ru/doc/1887534?isSearch=True> [accessed 2 August 2015]; RIANovosti, 'Miting LDPR na Pushkinskoi ploshchadi sobral bol'she tysiachi chelovek', 4 November 2013, <http://ria.ru/moscow/20131104/974593307.html> [accessed 2 August 2015].
[586] For example, a search for '*elektrichka*' on the SOVA Center website gives numerous results of violence on suburban trains, with information provided from mainstream news reports, forums and blogs.



Figure 30 *Russia-88*: Sasha interviewing a young man on the *elektrichka*

The answers of the interviewees are also shaped by the types of question being asked by Sasha. He mostly asks variations of the question: 'Do you agree with the slogan "Russia for Russians"?'[587] The question is a purposeful evocation of the present status of nationalism, patriotism and xenophobia in Russia. The slogan 'Russia for Russians' is not limited to the far-right; it is a statement which has seeped into everyday parlance and Bardin clearly wants to draw attention to this.[588] At other points in the film, the characters express consternation that their form of patriotism is seen as fascism; they reserve the term fascist for the government and police instead. The responses in the film to this question are interesting. The majority of the people Sasha interviews agree with the statement and also repeat the slogan out loud when he asks them to. This request to repeat 'Russia for Russians' serves as a

[587] 'Вы поддерживаете лозунг "Россия для русских"?'

[588] Levada Centre, 'Kak Vy otnosites' k idee 'Rossiia dlia russkikh'?', October 2011, <http://www.levada.ru/archive/mezhetnicheskie-otnosheniya/kak-vy-otnosites-k-idee-rossiya-dlya-russkikh> [accessed 2 August 2015]. The majority of respondents agreed with the statement, 'Её было бы неплохо осуществить, но в разумных пределах/ The idea would not be bad to put into effect, but within bounds', but the second place answer was 'Отрицательно, это настоящий фашизм/ Negatively, this is real fascism'.

way in which people publicly condemn themselves. But the treatment of respondents is selective. When one respondent protests that, 'Russia has always been a multi-ethnic country', the tape is cut off, excluding this opinion from the footage.[589] While the effect is to reiterate that the footage is controlled by Edik and his adoration of Sasha's extremist views, such cuts in the filming rely on bias to make their point. It is not just bias on the part of Edik, but Bardin, who made the ultimate decision to interview people on the street using a character from the fiction film, also framed the incident carefully. Being asked such a loaded question by someone who looks like a stereotypical neo-Nazi would perhaps shape the responses of the interviewees. The flaws in the *vox populi* technique, as for amateur documentary as a whole, are reiterated.



Figure 31 *Russia-88*: Sasha's interviewees gaze into the camera

By depicting Fedorov interacting with the real general public as Sasha, the fiction of the film is exposed and from this early stage in the film the audience sees Sasha as a character, not as an element of the factual world. The body

[589] 'Россия всегда была многонациональная страна'.

language of the interviewees when questioned by Sasha reveals a certain level of discomfort – Fedorov was not as well-known an actor in 2008 as he is at the time of writing in 2014 so would not have been recognised by many as an actor. The unscripted answers of the people Fedorov interviews serve to highlight how scripted the dialogue is between the characters in the rest of the film, in spite of the candidness of the camera. The footage is distinctly different from the clips constituting the rest of the film, and the result is both successful and jarring. The use of *vox populi* re-affirms the intention that the film is to create a dialogue about issues which are not being discussed openly. The target of the film is revealed as being as much the pretensions of neo-Nazis as xenophobia amongst the general public. This interaction with dialogue is connected to the political statements made by the film, most of which are integrated into its dramatic subplot.

6.5 Conclusion

This analysis has examined the role of film genre, reality and morality in the film *Russia-88*. The film reflects on the rise of amateur documentary by using elements of the documentary genre and mock-documentary to create a voyeuristic look at the constructions behind self-documentation. In order to establish why the use of re-enactments and documentary style in the film are important, it was necessary to elucidate the background of the film's making and release. To this end, this chapter has examined the socio-historic context, which was used by Bardin to establish the authenticity of his claims to re-enactment and also to persuade the audience to read the film as depiction of

real historical events. In this sense, the film rejects the parody used by the mock-documentary and adopts the sobriety of the documentary to create a factual narrative.

Bardin has stated that he considers his film to be a re-enactment of real events that have been publicised in the mainstream national and international media and of the short-lived clips which appear online. The re-enactments construct authenticity through indices of the real, including the use of sets and costumes, but they also rely heavily on the recognisability of the video-clips on which they are based. The original video-clips belong to the socio-historical, yet ephemeral, world of self-documentation culture on the internet, and more specifically on the Runet. Thus the film explicitly discusses the role of new media technologies and the access to information that these technologies have brought. *Russia-88* not only debates the role and influence of neo-Nazis in contemporary Russian youth culture, but also examines the role of the Internet in everyday life.

The fate of the film illustrated the dangers posed to filmmakers who manipulate the fact-fiction continuum inherent to documentary and documentary style films. The misuse of the re-enactment can lead to a film to be read as a form of hyper-reality that confuses the boundaries between fact and fiction. The re-enactment must simultaneously declare itself as both a fictional version of reality and also an authentic representation of reality. In the case of *Russia-88,* the Russian authorities cynically misplaced the target of the film and read the dialogue as an example of extremism, something which

was at odds with the anti-fascist roots of the film. Thus the banning of the film embroiled *Russia-88* in a much wider argument about the potential for censorship in Russian cinema, a discussion which has continued and intensified since. The history of the release of the film firmly demonstrates the importance of context to the creation of film as this context dictates the reading and understanding of film narratives.

Not all of *Russia-88*'s narrative revolves around re-enactments of pre-existing clips, nor is the action solely dedicated to an exploration of the neo-Nazi subculture. A significant part of the film narrative is dedicated to the creation of a dramatic sub-narrative, revolving around the family lives of the main character Sasha and, to a lesser extent, the film-maker Edik. These dramatic filler clips laid the foundation for the film's dramatic climax, drawing the film completely away from the factual roots. Within this fictional storyline, the film explores the themes of youth film, adolescence and influence, focusing on the development of subcultures in post-Soviet Russia. This sub-narrative offers a clear example of the representation of young people and youth culture. Primarily these comparisons revolve around discussions of influence and pressure on young people, the role of the family and the development of subcultures. *Russia-88* has an overt political message, similar to those seen in other films and television programmes featuring neo-Nazis, particularly in the wider context of post-communist Europe. The next chapter will discuss the commonalities between the Russian

film and a Serbian counterpart, *Šišanje*, as a means of addressing the wider depiction of neo-Nazis in post-communist film.

Chapter 7: 'Slobo is not responsible for everything': *Šišanje* and the new juvenile delinquents[590]

To a greater or lesser extent, all of the films discussed in this thesis have been concerned with what might be considered displays of juvenile delinquency and the decline of moral standards amongst young people in the post-communist period. The delinquent is such a central character to youth film that it is not surprising that these protagonists have appeared repeatedly in an industry that produces a considerable number of youth films. However, in the Serbian context, the use of the juvenile delinquency sub-genre is also a means of discussing the perceived negative influences on young people during the post-communist period. The preceding analyses have suggested that the delinquency of these youth characters has thus far been more a means of reflecting on declining or non-existent moral standards in society as a whole, rather than focusing exclusively on how young people suffer in these circumstances. In *Rane*, *Brat* and *Apsolutnih sto*, in particular, the behaviour of the protagonists can be seen as echoing the models of misbehaviour set by adults, rather than rebelling against society. Their actions are depicted as a sign of the time, rather than deviance. In this aspect, Russian and Serbian post-communist cinema in the 1990s and early 2000s represents juvenile delinquency in a different manner from other youth films. There is an implicit acknowledgement that if order does not exist in society, the behaviour of

[590] 'nije Sloba kriv za sve'. Slobo is the diminutive of Slobodan, and here refers to Slobodan Milošević. Ana Kržavac, '"Šišanje" – Ne samo srpska priča', *B92*, 7 October 2010, <http://www.b92.net/kultura/moj_ugao.php?nav_id=463681> [accessed 30 October 2015].

these young people cannot be judged as delinquent. The actions of these protagonists are abhorrent, but it is a part of wider societal breakdown, not separate as delinquency usually is.

This chapter will discuss how there have been demonstrable changes to the representation of young people and an expansion of the youth film genre around the time that *Šišanje* was released in 2010. This shift has coincided with the appearance of a new generation of young directors, following on from the work of Dragojević and Golubović, who regularly create films with youth topics at the centre. This grouping includes Stevan Filipović, the director of *Šišanje*, as well as others, such as Ivan Ikić (*Varvari* [*Barbarians*] Sense Production, 2014), Maja Miloš (*Klip* [*Clip*], Baš Čelik, 2012) and Nikola Ležaić (*Tilva roš* [*Tilva rosh*], Kiselo dete, 2010). These directors have focused on filmic topics that seek to depict the nature of contemporary youth mores, as well as referencing sub-genres and locations more closely defined as belonging exclusively to youth protagonists. It is increasingly common for this new generation of directors to produce films evoking elements of the juvenile delinquency and school film sub-genres of youth film. Many of these protagonists are of school-age and thus are depicted in relation to the contemporary problems facing young Serbians in recent years – unemployment, higher education, burgeoning sexuality, peer pressure, and, a very current issue, the dilemmas of living a life dominated by technology. This is a sharp contrast to the narratives of *Rane* and *Apsolutnih sto*, which focus as much on the past and issues of memory as they do on their filmic

present. Recent Serbian films, however, explore the aftermath of this post-conflict culture.

Šišanje tells the story of maths genius Novica who finds himself drawn into the world of a skinhead/neo-Nazi gang led by a fellow student named Relja. Novica undergoes a baptism of fire as he begins a life as a skinhead football hooligan, and a probationary member of Relja's gang. The experience culminates in Novica viciously murdering a Roma boy on the encouragement of his love interest, Mina, who is the gang's only female member. Novica's act of murder sets in motion a psychological and moral downward spiral. He rejects redemption by choosing not to confide in the adults in his life: a police officer, Lidija, who takes it upon herself to provide him with guidance; his father, a distanced academic who pays little attention to the whims of his teenage son; or his teacher, who pushes him to fulfil his academic potential. His intelligence sees him ascend the hierarchy of the group, pushing them to become more extreme and organised in their activities. Ultimately, however, Novica discovers there is a price to pay for his ascent to power as he finds himself becoming a pawn in the hands of the real sources of power: the political and intellectual authorities, represented by shadowy politicians and corrupt policemen, controlled by a nationalist intellectual named Professor Hadži-Tankosić, who is manipulating youth extremism behind the scenes.

The film addresses the very public issue of the increasingly violent displays of youth nationalism and hooliganism in Serbia, whilst combining this image with the enduring contemporary urban mythology about corruption

and extremism in Serbian society, and the role of intellectuals and the authorities in fuelling these problems. As Filipović argues in one interview, 'political manipulation, extreme nationalism and, above all, exploitation, are themes which indirectly or directly address all the people who live in Serbia'.[591] The film's narrative is peppered with an exhaustive series of sub-narratives, used to establish what Filipović considers to be the most pressing political and social attitudes of the day: the corrupt ownership of football clubs, which is depicted as being linked to war profiteers of the previous decade; ongoing corruption within the police, including violence towards those arrested; the ownership of bars and clubs by criminal syndicates; the brutal treatment of ethnic minority groups and racism, particularly towards the Roma population; the involvement of nationalist intellectuals in promoting intolerance in public life; and the close relationship between politicians and extreme nationalist groups. *Šišanje* continues the efforts of the other youth films in this thesis, in which the genre is used as a vehicle to discuss widespread problems in society and serves as a reflection of the adult world as much as a representation of youth experience.

Defining what constitutes delinquent behaviour on film, however, poses a problem, as signs of rebellion change according to societal norms in different decades. Shary writes, 'what in one cultural setting or period is considered transgressive (say skipping school) may be more acceptable in other settings, in which teens would have to commit rather dramatic offenses

[591] 'Politička manipulacija, ekstremni nacionalizam i eksploatacija svega toga, jesu teme koje posredno ili neposredno dotiču sve ljude koji žive u Srbiji'. Radmila Radosavljević, 'Kad život imitira film', *Večernje novosti*, 9 October 2010, <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/kultura.71.html:303151-Kad-zivot-imitira-film> [accessed 28 October 2015].

(such as violent crimes) in order to demonstrate their deviance from the norm'.[592] Yet thus far the preceding analyses have avoided labelling the youth protagonists solely as delinquents, largely because there were genre elements that had been deemed more significant for analysis, but also because their deviance was positioned as part of the norm. *Šišanje* is different in that it openly seeks to represent '*maloletnička delikvencija* (juvenile delinquency)' as a social issue, juxtaposing fictionalised scenes of television discussions of youth behaviour with a narrative that explores Novica's transformation into a violent neo-Nazi-hooligan. The film, like *Russia-88*, makes reference to factual instances, such as the riots over Kosovo's independence in 2008, uses clips of '*huliganstvo* (hooliganism)' on the streets and in football stands, and images of the nationalist graffiti that peppers Belgrade's walls, intertwining these elements into the fictional narrative of the youth protagonist. As with *Russia-88*, such instances serve to persuade the audience that the film could have been taken from the socio-historic world, rather than being fiction alone.

This chapter will investigate recent trends in the Serbian juvenile delinquency genre, a sub-genre that is in itself a quintessential part of youth film. In particular, the focus will be on the example of juvenile delinquency as provided in *Šišanje*, a film that seeks to define and characterise the changing nature of youth culture in contemporary Serbia, and which amalgamates many of the elements and screen concerns seen in other films analysed in this thesis, *Rane*, *Apsolutnih sto*, and *Russia-88*. This analysis will also examine

[592] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 99.

how *Šišanje* uses and also inverts the generic paradigms of the juvenile delinquency film genre as a means of highlighting the unpredictability of youth experience, especially in the Serbian context. This reading of *Šišanje* suggests that juvenile delinquency is not simply a narrative device or a film genre, demonstrating how Filipović uses the film's narrative to chronicle recent developments in youth subcultures and the dangers they pose. This chapter situates *Šišanje* at the beginning of a wider trend of depicting troubled children and young people in Serbian film. Extremist, nationalist youth have become an increasingly prominent character type in Serbian cinema since the release of *Šišanje*, and Novica is part of an emergent series of screen representations of skinheads, football hooligans and neo-Nazis. In recent film, these three very different youth subcultural types are often used interchangeably or together in hybrid form. The increasing focus on far-right youth in Serbian cinema draws attention away from previous on-screen stereotypes, such as the gangster youths of *Rane*. Pinki and Švaba's deadly obsession with money and power pales in comparison to Novica's fascism. The closing section of this analysis will examine how depictions of far-right youths have become a significant new character type in Serbian youth cinema as a sign of the times.

7.1 Liminality and transgression in recent Serbian film

Considering that most youth films revolve around the depiction of young people undergoing rites of passage in a transitional life phase, Lee writes that: 'Liminality and transgression are characteristics that define the cultural

construction of youth.'[593] Deviance from social norms is therefore something that defines youth film more generally, not just the juvenile delinquency sub-genre. There is a certain expectation that youth films will depict their protagonists rebelling, pushing the boundaries of adult society, and experimenting with life. This process of experimentation allows the directors of youth films to establish what the boundaries of acceptable and un-acceptable behaviour is in the society they are portraying. However, while the juvenile delinquent character may be counted as one of a cast of other youth protagonists in a film, the sub-genre of juvenile delinquency films often explores the motivations behind delinquency and offers a sense of closure on dealing with misbehaviour.

Juvenile delinquency films have had a long history in global cinema, particularly in Hollywood where 'the rise of post-World War II moral panics around wayward youth originally led Hollywood to begin celebrating and capitalising on the image of juvenile delinquency'.[594] It is therefore more important to establish what codes youth films use to define delinquent behaviour and why these specific actions are judged to be delinquent. Lewis notes that teen film narratives as a whole, 'historicise youth, contextualise youth, re-contextualise youth, re-present youth', suggesting that the very basis of youth protagonists is filtered through social needs and is objectified by the film industry.[595] As representations of delinquency change constantly,

[593] Lee, *Screening Generation X*, p. 36.
[594] Shary, 'Bad boys…', p. 27.
[595] Lewis, p. 2.

the sub-genre of juvenile delinquency film can be used to assess the situation within the contemporary society as a whole.

One of the most contested points that critics and audiences question about juvenile delinquency film is the potential impact that these films can have on their young audiences. Both Shary and Doherty cite the studies of the Payne Fund (1929-1933) as a key example of the early inquiries into the effects of films on young people.[596] The history of the juvenile delinquency film has been punctuated with condemnation and banning of certain films. After a spate of high school shootings in the US in the 1990s, Hollywood film directors began to shy away from producing films about ultraviolent juvenile delinquents, which had been increasingly common, as they were afraid of the effect they might have on their youth audience.[597] Serbia likewise has experience with juvenile delinquency films proving problematic for authorities. An example of controversial juvenile delinquency film from the SFRY is *Mlad i zdrav kao ruža*, which was banned upon its release until after the fall of communism in 1991.[598] *Mlad i zdrav kao ruža* is an important example as not only did it depict an exaggerated form of Yugoslav juvenile delinquency, but it also referenced the Titoist idealisation of youth, juxtaposing images of Youth Day with the protagonist's rejection of Yugoslav society.[599] In spite of the genre being regularly exploited by adults as a means of judging youth values and culture, this same adult audience is concerned

[596] Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics*, p. 94; Shary, 'Bad boys…', p. 23.
[597] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p.135.
[598] See DeCuir, Jnr, *Yugoslav Black Wave*, p. 240.
[599] See DeCuir, p. 235 for discussion.

with the effect that the filmic damnation can have in influencing young people.

The representation of juvenile delinquency in *Šišanje* must therefore be contextualised within the specific culture of the period in which the film was made, or rather Filipović's representation of that culture, rather than relying solely on the scholarship of juvenile delinquency film genre in Hollywood and global cinema. Shary notes that, 'such behaviours as swearing, stealing, vandalism, and fighting have been somewhat common among youth for centuries, while the sophistication of these particular acts develops within their social contexts.'[600] Shary continues, 'vandalism [also] changes its nature with its surroundings, since young people need to be told what objects are of most value (schools, churches, cars) in order to select their targets'.[601] Therefore, it is essential to ascertain what the narrative of *Šišanje* considers valuable and inviolable in the contemporary Serbian context, as well as identifying which actions appear particularly outrageous for the film audience. In order to examine the elements relating to juvenile delinquency effectively, it is necessary to identify what constitutes delinquent behaviour in the first instance.

Chapter 1 of this thesis discussed how, in the SFRY, juvenile delinquency films were made by New Film directors to represent the failures of the socialist regime. Young people were depicted violating the state-sponsored idealisation of youth as the future of communism, as well as the

[600] Shary, 'Bad boys…', p. 21.
[601] Ibid.

wider social order by partaking in violent crimes and debauchery. However, these films also addressed serious concerns over the lack of employment and opportunities for young people in the SFRY, as well as referencing how Tito's claustrophobic treatment of young people presented a schism in the cultural foundations of society. The analyses of *Rane* and *Apsolutnih sto* can be used to determine the social boundaries of their filmic Serbian societies. As Dragojević stated, in *Rane* the protagonists were living in a period where 'norms and values had been turned on their head', and this is a statement that is relevant for *Apsolutnih sto* as well. In *Rane*, Lidija stated that was most shocking about Pinki and Švaba, her guests on *Puls asfalta*, was 'their [young] age'; their actions in themselves, though terrible, were situated within an acknowledgment that they mimicked the wider culture of criminality in Belgrade in the 1990s. The film suggests that the last thing of value left for Pinki and Švaba to destroy was the innocence of youth, which they duly corrupt with their behaviour and which is epitomised by their violent end. In *Apsolutnih sto*, Saša's decision to murder petty criminals was styled as vigilante action and an attempt to solve the problems of his elders, providing a sense of justification for his behaviour. These youths could not be considered as rebelling, as films from this period suggested that there was no order to rebel against.

Šišanje can be contextualised within the culture that Filipović, as well as other directors from the same time, see as being key issues for youth at the end of the 2000s. Since 2010, an increasing number of films have been made

which seek to depict their young protagonists as a grotesque by-product of the social chaos that dominated during the 1990s and the on-going difficulties of the early 2000s. These young people do not technically belong to the troubled past, but nor do they show signs of Serbia's expected social recovery either. Juvenile delinquents and deviants play a prominent role in these new representations of young people, with subcultural groups appearing on film corresponding to the development of new character types. According to film, the behaviour of young people is not getting better; in fact, their twisted past-times are becoming more extreme in several cases. Several new films have led the push towards critical and box-office success for films either directly about Serbian juvenile delinquency, or featuring juvenile delinquent characters, including: *Klip*, which details the exploits of an out-of-control seventeen-year-old girl, Jasna, who partakes in sadistic sexual exploits, filmed by her boyfriend on his phone, and who spends an increasing amount of time playing truant, drinking and taking drugs; *Tilva roš,* a film that blends documentary techniques with drama film, chronicling the experiences of a group of skaters who have to face the difficulties joining the adult world in Bor, Eastern Serbia; *Parada* [*The Parade*] (dir. Srđan Dragojević, Delirium Films, 2011), where the planning of a gay pride parade in Belgrade is threatened by a group of young, homophobic neo-Nazis; and *Varvari*, which depicts the involvement of small-town youngsters in football hooliganism and petty criminal syndicates. These films are marked as different from previous examples as the behaviour of the young people in these films does not mirror that of adults, but is in rebellion to these adult norms. Significantly, there is a

clear shift in the setting of youth film narratives, moving away from the capital Belgrade and the suburbs of New Belgrade, and depicting life in smaller cities and towns outside the capital, as well as elsewhere in Serbia. Youth problems therefore become de-centralised and offer a shift in perspective away from the dominating presence of Belgrade.

While *Šišanje* has a political sub-narrative throughout, the very presence of juvenile delinquency films in recent Serbian cinema suggests that in the period that *Šišanje* was made there was an order of sorts, as well as certain norms and values that can be breached by Novica in the film. This is compounded by the appearance of other films explicitly discussing juvenile delinquency and is a paradox considering that several of these films seek to portray Serbia is being trapped in a vicious circle that began in the 1990s. From the opening scenes of the film, *Šišanje* makes it explicitly clear that the film will be about juvenile delinquency, which then serves as a frame within which the audience interprets the images that follow. The first minutes of the film use a series of clips that have been taken from real news reports, which depict violence in football stands and on the streets of Belgrade. Some of this newsreel footage depicts a particularly notorious incident, after the declaration of independence by Kosovo in 2008, when a group of young men broke off from the main protest and descended on the US Embassy in Belgrade, setting fire to parts of the building and causing extensive damage. Filipović integrates his fictional characters into the footage to suggest that

they were present at the destruction of the embassy; the film infers that the hooded Novica is silently surveying the violence as part of his fictional world.



Figure 32 *Šišanje*: Novica oversees the riots in Belgrade

In a similar way to *Russia-88*, Filipović uses this newsreel footage, which would be immediately recognisable to a domestic audience, to suggest that the film's narrative will approach a problem that is part of the socio-historical world and is not solely fictional. The boundaries between fact and fiction are further blurred by the film's merging of this newsreel footage with a fictional television conversation, which is discussing the violence. Lidija is introduced as a representative of the fictional Foundation for Juvenile Delinquency, who has been brought in to comment on the violence the television is depicting. This simple juxtaposition of the images of violence and Lidija in her role as mentor to juvenile delinquents suggests that the narrative will focus on juvenile delinquency and the genre of the film is read within this context of onscreen discussion. These opening scenes suggest that what the film

considers to be juvenile delinquency is the behaviour of groups of 'hooligans (*huligani*)', largely consisting of 'football fans (*navijači*)'. This description references the ways in which the Serbian media described the actual incident, by suggesting that football hooligans were pre-dominantly responsible, and thus channelling the blame onto this group. What develops later in the film is Filipović's connection between these football fans and neo-Nazism, creating a fearsome hybrid of different strands of youth subcultural identity for a sensational effect.

These scenes also serve as a means of defining how different parties view the sources of juvenile delinquency and *Šišanje* seeks to represent some of the excuses used to explain away delinquent behaviour in contemporary Serbia. The film also suggests that the 1990s and the post-conflict atmosphere of the early 2000s, can no longer be used as the sole explanation of youth misbehaviour, as Filipović suggests the situation has escalated. This can be seen as an example of how juvenile delinquency is historicised and then contextualised, to adapt Lewis' assertions on constructions of youth culture on film. In the same opening scenes, Hadži-Tankosić attempts to persuade the television host that the behaviour of these young hooligans is driven by poverty and the spectre of the 1990s, something that might have previously served as an excuse for the corruption of youth. He says: 'Before we begin to judge, let us just think for a minute under what circumstances these children grew up – on the one hand, Milošević, on the other hand, wars,

anti-Serb madness.'[602] Aside from his comments on 'anti-Serb madness' that is driven by nationalist views, Hadži-Tankosić's explanations for the roots of youth behaviour echo the perceptions discussed in the chapters on *Rane* and *Apsolutnih sto*. This is particularly the case for Dragojević's film, in which it was implied that the Milošević regime was responsible for the chaos in Belgrade and the destruction of young people. *Šišanje*, on the other hand, is openly critical of the intervention of nationalist intellectuals and their discussions of responsibility into public life, which suggests that the film positions Hadži-Tankosić's views as representing an outdated and self-serving perspective on youth experience. Novica, however, presents a more extreme version of previous youth characters, as he has the potential to succeed in pursuing a normal life and chooses not to. However, it is also important to note that Novica's character does not display any particular psychological motivation, an issue that is reflected in the incongruous narrative arcs of the film.

In *Šišanje*, the character Lidija speaks of the different meanings of what Lee discussed as liminality and transgression in youth behaviour. At the end of the film, which mirrors the factual-fictional structure of the opening scenes, Lidija declares: 'A boundary exists and when that boundary is crossed I think that all the background, all the stories about difficult childhoods, poverty, lack of understanding, fall away. An […] unfortunate child goes up to

[602] '[…] Hajde da malo razmislimo pod kakvim uslovima su ta deca rasla – sa jedne strane, Milošević, sa druge strane, ratovi, anti-srpsko ludilo'.

that boundary, but a bad person crosses it.'[603] The juxtaposition of the shots, depicting Lidija speaking and Novica at the riots, suggests that Lidija is once again thinking of how Novica contradicted her expectations of him – throughout most of the film she had refused to consider him a suspect in the murder of the Roma boy precisely because he was a gifted student. When Novica defies her expectations, his crimes seem even more abhorrent to her. He has managed to trick people; Lidija's conclusion is that his behaviour is the work of an adult, not a child. However, this point also illustrates what is meant by transgression in terms of juvenile delinquency. It is acknowledged that contextual information exists – such as poverty, difficult childhood experiences and the legacy of the past twenty years – that can explain certain forms of juvenile delinquency, but even this context has its limits. Novica crosses those boundaries, not so much because he has murdered, but because he has lied about who he is and has consciously given up everything to be a bad person. This might suggest that delinquency in the contemporary Serbian context is behaviour that is considered un-childlike, a point that echoes other representations of young people in Serbian films, particularly the over-sexed protagonist of *Klip*. While films such as *Apsolutnih sto* might have depicted young people trying to atone for the mistakes of adults, in *Šišanje*, youth are no longer reachable.

[603] 'Postoji granica i kada se ta granica pređe, mislim da padaju svi istoriji, sve priče o teškom odrastanju, siromaštvu, nerazumevanju. Do granice dolazi […] nesrećno dete, a prelazi loš čovek'

7.2 Good and bad delinquents

Having contextualised and historicised what *Šišanje* defines as juvenile delinquency, it is possible to trace elements of the juvenile delinquency genre within the film. In spite of the significance of national and temporal issues in the creation of juvenile delinquency films, the genre does have unifying traits. Several of these traits are present in *Šišanje*, although Filipović purposefully deviates from them to suggest the particularly miserable state of Serbian social affairs. McGee and Robertson argue that a central tenet of the juvenile delinquency genre is a focus on two types of delinquents – the 'basically decent if often misunderstood "good"' delinquent and the 'thoroughly reprehensible "bad"' delinquent.[604] The inclusion of both types of delinquents in the genre serves to draw a distinction between teenage rebellion and an enduring predisposition for evil which will presumably extend forwards into adult life – a distinction made by Lidija. The 'good' delinquent runs 'afoul of the law rebelling against the restraints and hypocrisies placed on them by society' while the 'bad' delinquents take part 'in violence and mayhem because of their total lack of conscience'.[605] The possibility of redemption is central to the dichotomy between good and evil in delinquent films with young people frequently being offered the opportunity to re-enter society.

Yet this distinction still calls for judgement to be passed on the behaviour of young people. Film directors and scriptwriters shape the definition of what delinquency is, often without any authority to do so, and

[604] McGee and Robertson, p.viii.
[605] Ibid

frequently at the expense of young people. While film critics, censors, parents and others have moralised over the negative effect that the mayhem of juvenile delinquency films could have on the youth audience, films in this genre are more disempowering than empowering for young people. Shary writes, 'most teen films are artificially providing rebellion for youth who are told that what they do outside the [movie] theatre will be of little consequence'.[606] Thus, juvenile delinquency films often suggest that the choice is to surrender to adult norms and values, or to face permanent social exile. Juvenile delinquency films can be seen as exploitative on more than a financial level; by sensationalising the actions of young people, this youth audience is being given a false sense of power at their own expense.

The narrative of *Šišanje* is centred on this traditional distinction between 'good' and 'bad' delinquents with its pairing of Relja and Novica as prime candidates for these roles. The narrative, however, works to invert this paradigm by asking the audience to question how they define good and bad delinquents. The introduction to Relja is significant as it encourages the viewer to make assumptions about the story they are about to witness and about the role that each character will play. Tough Relja is placed in contrast to the wide-eyed and innocent-looking Novica. Novica is depicted as a normal, albeit geeky, teenager who wears nondescript clothes, and has a shabby haircut and a skinny stature. There is very little to suggest he could present a physical threat to anyone. Relja, meanwhile, is an ideal candidate to be 'bad' delinquent. As the two characters sit in a mathematics exam at school, the

[606] Shary, 'Bad Boys…', p. 25.

camera performs a dissection of Relja's physical appearance as a means of exciting audience stereotypes and expectations. He is positioned as being out of place amongst the more normal-looking teenagers in the room, but, more importantly, his over-exaggerated neo-Nazi appearance seeks to suggest a certain expectation from Relja as a character. He is wearing combat boots, camouflage trousers and a bomber jacket; his head is shaved to represent his adherence to skinhead style and he has a tattoo of an Odal rune on his wrist. He struggles with the examination the group are taking, suggesting that he is not as intelligent as the other students.



Figure 33 *Šišanje*: Relja and Novica, the neo-Nazi and the geek

Yet there is a contradiction in this attempt to construct expectations of who will be the 'good' and 'bad' delinquents in *Šišanje*. In the opening scenes of the film, which precede this introduction to Relja, Novica, hooded and threatening, is worked into newsreel footage of the 2008 riots in Belgrade, which inevitably shapes the way he is read as a character and how his actions will be interpreted (Figure 31). In this opening scene, Novica states: 'If you ask

people about me, the only thing that everyone will confirm is that Novica never fucked up [vulg.]…the calculations'. If I could choose, I would do the same all again.'[607] This cold-hearted declaration of indifference, and the accompanying high-speed rewinding of scenes from his life story, clearly frames Novica's character as a future 'bad' delinquent, suggesting that the narrative of the film will reveal how this came about. The use of the footage from the 2008 riots is also significant; the domestic audience will immediately recognise the scenes of destruction, and the associations drawn between Novica and these events confirms his belonging to this group of hooligans. The link between Novica and these events inevitably colours the audience's reading of him as a character, particularly as he expresses no regret for his actions.

As the film unfolds, the generic expectations of the audience towards the main characters are reversed, challenging the ways in which audiences and society form stereotypes of youth subcultures. The film's narrative swiftly reveals that Relja's styling is based on his own recognition of and adherence to the youth subcultural stereotypes that identify him as a delinquent. His choice of clothing and hairstyle suggest to others in the film, and to the audience, that he belongs to the far-right. However, when Relja tries to avoid being involved in Novica's increasingly violent activities, he admits to Novica: 'Brother. To me, Nazism and all that was just a front, you know, just for

[607] 'Ako pitaš ljude o meni jedina stvar koju ćete svi potvrditi da se Novica nikad nije zajebao…u računici. Kad bih mogao da biram, opet bih sve isto radilo'.

show…to scare people a bit.'[608] Relja's confession reveals the complications behind screen depictions of delinquent behaviour and style. Relja has adopted the neo-Nazi style as he is trying to present himself as belonging to a certain social group; yet this posturing testifies to his immaturity as he has not fully associated how style equates to actions. This can also be another side of the characterisation of the 'good' delinquent: while rebelling against the hypocrisies of the adult world, many youth protagonists are also trying to establish a position for themselves in this world, and experimentation is a key part of youth experience. While Novica's behaviour is un-childlike according to Lidija, Relja is acting as many teenagers might during this period of transition in life.

In juvenile delinquency films, young men more frequently appear as delinquents than young women. Shary argues: 'Delinquency is often addressed within a gendered context as a masculine phenomenon, and unquestionably far more boys than girls are featured committing crimes or disturbing the peace.'[609] Girls, fulfilling many of the screen stereotypes assigned to their gender as a whole, are depicted traditionally as the saviours of these good delinquents. The 'good' delinquents often are saved either by a 'good' girl or by an 'understanding teacher'.[610] Perhaps the most vivid inversion in *Šišanje* is that of the 'good' girl, and therefore of the good gender. Rather than being a source of positivity and redemption in *Šišanje*, the character of Mina deviates from this stereotype. She is not only the

[608] 'Brate. Meni nacizam ta priča to uvek bila fora, znaš, malo imedž….da uteram strah u kostima'
[609] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 104.
[610] Ibid

reason Novica becomes involved with the gang in the first place, but she also encourages him to become more violent. The narrative thus inverts traditional filmic depictions of saintly and innocent young women, whether that be in the juvenile delinquency genre or otherwise, by making her one of the most vicious and ideologically extreme members of the group. While Mina's understanding and employment of extremism is depicted as being based on ignorance, her characterisation suggests a shift in perceptions about the role of girls in racist violence, which is typically depicted as a male realm. Blee writes that: 'Women racists exist in shadow, lurking behind husbands and boyfriends.'[611] Examples of such silent support are seen, for example, in *Russia-88*, in which the female neo-Nazis have almost no dialogue in the film, they are merely present. Mina, on the other hand, is as extreme, vocal and violent as any of the men; in fact, she is not a drunken thug, as the young men in both *Šišanje* and *Russia-88* are depicted, and is instead manipulative. In a particularly evocative scene, Mina plays on the saintly girl stereotype as a way of making Novica do what she wants. During Novica's attack on the Roma boy, when the others try to make Novica stop, Mina places her hands together in a praying motion as if begging him to continue to kill the boy (Figure 34). She rewards his brutality; in a strangely ritualistic way, Mina takes Novica's virginity and afterwards shaves his head to complete his transformation to skinhead.

[611] Kathleen M. Blee, 'Becoming a Racist: Women in Contemporary Ku Klux Klan and Neo-Nazo Groups', *Gender and Society*, 10:6 (December 1996), 680-702 (p. 680).



Figure 34 *Šišanje*: Mina 'prays' for Novica to kill

7.3 Delinquency in schools

Writing about one of the seminal films combining both the juvenile delinquency and the school films, Lewis writes that, '*The Blackboard Jungle* [dir. Richard Brooks, MGM, 1955] is primarily concerned with how teen deviance not only "boils over into our schools" [….], but how the criminality of discontented youth effects and invades the adult world'.[612] The analysis of *Šišanje* has suggested that many of the concerns revolve not around the issues that young people face, but how these issues affect and infect wider society. The images of 'hooliganism' depicted in the opening scenes and throughout the film suggest to the audience that a section of Serbia's youth population is out of control. Novica, like many other teenagers, is depicted as having been part of the school environment, only to prove that schools have little influence over delinquents anymore. Many of the elements of the juvenile delinquency genre and the school film overlap, as the 'delinquent has

[612] Lewis, p. 47.

long been a staple of school films'.[613] According to Shary, 'the vast majority of school films present the educational building as a symbolic site of social evolution, with young people learning from and rebelling against their elders (and each other) in the ongoing cycle of generational adjustment and conflict'.[614] This cycle of generational conflict echoes generic elements of the juvenile delinquency film, which presents young people as trying to damage sites that are considered to be of value to the adult population. A good education is often considered one of the main expectations that parents have for their children, adding a layer of pressure to the theme of academic achievement.

The school as an institution was not a common setting in Serbian youth films in the 1990s and early 2000s, with *Mi nismo anđeli* being a rare example of a film featuring scenes within the school or university environment. In *Rane*, Pinki and Švaba are shown jumping out of their school window to escape the monotony of a lesson on Dostoevskii so they can join the school of life. The representation and reappearance of the school setting is an element of youth culture that has therefore become important again in Serbian screen culture. This can be seen as another example of the sense that a form of order has been re-imposed on Serbian society, linked to the idea that if Novica has rules to break, there must be rules to begin with. School settings, school-age characters, and themes relating to education, have been prominent in a number of other youth films in recent years, including *Šišanje*,

[613] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 50.
[614] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 30.

but also in *Tilva roš*, where best friends, Stefan and Toda will be separated when Stefan leaves for university in Belgrade, while Toda remains at home; *Klip*, in which Jasna skips school to experiment with drugs and alcohol; and *Pored mene* [*Next to me*] (dir. Stevan Filipović, Hypnopolis Film, 2015), in which a group of teenagers are locked in their school without their phones or internet, and are forced to discover more about themselves and each other. The last example underlines Filipović's specific interest in exploring the world of young people on film, but more particularly the brutality of school-age hooligans. The young people in *Pored mene* are locked in the school after their teacher discovers that she and her husband were attacked by a group of hooligans from the school.

While some delinquent behaviour is aimed at other students, 'often teachers are the targets of their [delinquents'] anger, and in the case of a specific type of delinquent film, the teachers' reformation of delinquents is the focus of the plot'.[615] In *Šišanje*, the 'understanding adult figure' that has the potential to save the 'good' delinquent is represented by Novica's teacher, combining elements of the school and juvenile delinquency film.[616] The beginning of the film suggests that Novica's un-named teacher is an important presence in his life, encouraging Novica to fulfil his potential as a mathematics genius and giving him advice. The development of the film's narrative suggests that the teacher is a prime candidate to become a reforming influence on Novica, even after he has become entangled in the

[615] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 50.
[616] McGee and Robertson, p. viii.

neo-Nazi gang. However, as the delinquents do not conform to expectations, neither does the reforming/understanding teacher. When Novica confesses to the murder of the Roma boy, his teacher tells him not to turn himself in and ruin his chances for the future, suggesting that this was not the advice that either Novica or the audience expected. He does not advise Novica to reform himself by atoning for his sins; his obsession is with Novica's intelligence and academic achievements. In a twist of fate and in his psychological confusion over the murder, Novica remembers this emotional conversation and re-imagines it as if the teacher was making a sexual advance on him. Fulfilling his new intolerant and homophobic identity, Novica returns to the school and brutally beats the teacher in front of a class of terrified students, thus completely rejecting any hope for reformation (Figure 35). The incident does not land him in trouble, however, as the other students are too scared of Novica to report him.



Figure 35 *Šišanje*: Novica confronts his teacher in front of the class

One of the uniting elements in many contemporary Serbian youth films, particularly those that feature delinquency and/or are set in schools, is the filmic obsession with young people's consumption of technology. Youth protagonists and their friends are depicted as primarily using phones, videos and pictures as a means of interacting, bullying, or corrupting each other. This is not a point limited to Serbian youth film, but is a significant universal trait in youth film. Shary notes that 'today's digital youth communicate in an immediate world of information and influence, affecting and effecting their senses of reality in increasingly spastic ways'.[617] Shary is, of course, referring not only to the representation of young people as being affected by the spread of technology, but the coincident global cultural trends in perspectives of youth behaviour. *Russia-88* was a key illustration of the concerns of Russian directors about the role that technology plays in youth extremism. Many, if not all, contemporary youth characters are portrayed glued to their smartphones or in constant contact with their friends using different forms of

[617] Shary, *Generation Multiplex*, p. 34.

technology. These depictions suggest an extra layer of detachment has appeared between parents and their children. In *Tilva roš*, the lead characters document their actions as a means of entertainment. However, perhaps the most common use of technology in youth films is to pass around and have access to sexual content, seen, for example, in *Varvari* and *Klip*, through 'sexting' (sexual text messaging). However, in the cases of Serbian and Russian film, there is a clear filmic concern over the ways technology allows young people to access extremist material. *Russia-88* revolved entirely around the problems of the internet self-documentary culture amongst neo-Nazis, but *Šišanje* also references to this practice. When Novica first meets Relja's gang, one of the members is glued to his computer uploading and updating extremist content on their website, as well as on YouTube. Later, when the gang attack the Roma slum, one of the group films the attack on a handheld camera, presumably to self-publish the material and to feed their reputation for violence. As with *Russia-88*, these videos are linked to the indoctrination of naïve young people through internet websites. Thus technology in Russian and Serbian youth film is connected not only to deviant behaviour, but more importantly to the appearance of neo-Nazi and hooligan characters on film.

7.4 New times, new characters

These new trends in Serbian youth film, particularly the re-appearance of the juvenile delinquency and school film genres, have also been responsible for the formation of new youth character types as well. The nature of juvenile

delinquency films, with their focus on contemporary manifestations of delinquent behaviour, adapts constantly to youth fashions as well. *Šišanje* revolves around the amalgamation of three different subcultural entities: the neo-Nazi, the skinhead and the football hooligan. These three characters have been the subject of particular interest in Serbian film in recent years, whilst also coinciding with the appearance of similar youth characters in the cinema of Russia as well. The analyses of *My iz budushchego* and *Russia-88* have already drawn attention to the appearance of a new youth character on Russian screens – the neo-Nazi – who is explicitly linked to the post-Soviet era and the younger generation. Kuvshinova noted that 'the Russian neo-fascist' has 'sprouted' a cinema of its own in recent Russian cinema, and this chapter will argue likewise that the character of the Serbian neo-fascist has also spawned its own tradition in recent Serbian film.[618] The creation of such characters is the result of a complex set of issues. Lee argues: 'Archetypes and familiar narratives of youth are maintained and propagated through the circulation of texts in media, spaces of consumption, and sites of production'.[619] This process can also be found in Serbia, where the representation of far-right and/or hooligan youths is linked to contemporary imaginings of these youth sub-cultures. *Šišanje* is not the only recent film to have depicted far-right youth; these characters can also be seen in *Varvari*, *Parada*, and *Vir* [*The Whirlpool*] (dir. Bojan-Vuk Kosovčević, E.T.M, 2012).

[618] See Kuvshinova, 'Ekho voiny'; and Chapter 5, 6.
[619] Lee, *Screening Generation X*, p. 13.



Figure 36 *Varvari*: Luka the troubled football hooligan

The appearance of new youth characters can be seen as part of a wider process of the stereotyping of former communist nations, by portraying these nations and people as alienated from European values. The character of the far-right youth is firmly linked to wider, media perceptions of life in post-communist countries. The journalist Paul Hockenos has provided an example of how this new stereotype can be seen to have appeared:

> With communism barely behind them, Eastern Europe's democrats confronted an adversary more unpredictable and incalculably more menacing than the unpopular dictatorships that had collapsed like houses of cards. Across the region, deeply conservative, radical nationalist, and even neo-fascist movements arose from communism's ruins.[620]

While clearly sensationalist, Hockenos' perspective is echoed in recent domestic portrayals of post-communist culture in youth films, particularly

[620] Paul Hockenos, *Free to Hate: The Rise of the Right in Post-communist Eastern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 5.

considering the appearance of such characters in Serbian and Russian film. There are explicit links in films such as *My iz budushchego*, *Russia-88*, *Šišanje*, *Vir*, *Varvari*, *Parada* and *Pored mene* not just between post-communist culture more generally and neo-fascism, but predominantly between the youth of post-communist countries and neo-fascism. Whether exactly this phenomenon exists or not, or the extent to which it exists, is beside the point; what is important is that film culture, and also television culture, has depicted the neo-Nazi and/or football hooligan youth as being a regular sight amongst the former communist nations of Europe.[621] As a result, the character has become a prominent means of highlighting the horrors of the new post-communist youth culture. Novica's name, coming from the Serbian word 'new (*novi*)', consciously or not, supports this concept. Not only is he a type of unexpected juvenile delinquent, but he epitomises the number of 'new' associations attached to Serbian youth culture.

As was the case with the filmic construction of juvenile delinquency, *Šišanje* suggests that this new image is born from media representations of young people, by using footage of news events relating to incidents in Belgrade. *Šišanje* is not the only Serbian film to connect the images of hooliganism with young football fans and to refer to the unrest that occurred after the declaration of independence by Kosovo in 2008. In *Varvari*, the youth protagonists are also depicted joining the riots, with the film re-enacting scenes of violence and evoking the chaos seen on the streets of

[621] See for example, British television programmes, such as *Ross Kemp on Gangs: Russia's neo-Nazis* (Tiger Aspect Productions, May 2007).

Belgrade during that period. Once again, *Varvari* suggests that young people were primarily responsible. However, *Varvari* depicts its protagonists as being football hooligans only, eschewing any connections that *Šišanje* has made between hooligans and neo-Nazis. The result is a more nuanced picture of hooligan youths, and the film offers a sympathetic portrayal of the lead protagonist, Luka. While the narrative reveals he is on parole, the film depicts scenes from his troubled family life, makes allusions to the difficulties of peer pressure and the Wars of Yugoslav Succession, and is set in an economically deprived town on the outskirts of Belgrade. As in *Šišanje*, the local football club in *Varvari* is depicted as being run by corrupt owners, who use local youths to commit crimes. Luka finds himself as the chauffeur of an African football player, Mohammad, who is playing for the local team. However, Luka does not show any intolerance towards him, suggesting that his form of extremism is not based around racism, as is that of the neo-Nazi characters. The emphasis in *Varvari* is that these young people drift towards hooliganism due to a lack of opportunities in Serbia and under pressure from local criminals, rather than being the inherently 'bad' delinquents, like Novica.

While Novica is portrayed as a 'bad person' in *Šišanje*, some neo-Nazi characters in Serbian film are depicted with ambiguous sympathy. In *Parada*, for example, the protagonist, Limun, a middle-aged homophobe and former war criminal, finds himself forced to organise security for a Gay Pride event on the orders of his fiancée. The majority of the opposition to the LGBT community is coordinated by Limun's estranged son, Vuk, a neo-Nazi. The film

references the troubled experiences of attempts to hold Gay Pride Parades in Belgrade, which ended in 'running battles' between police and rioters in 2010 and caused severe damage to the centre of Belgrade.[622] As with *Šišanje*, *Parada* briefly shows newsreel footage from the riots in 2001, including a disturbing image of a man bleeding on the ground, to suggest the connections between the fictional world of film and the reality of homophobia in Serbia. However, the depiction of the neo-Nazis rioters seeks to position the issue as being one of troubled youth, whilst the adult population is merely blamed for being generally, but not violently, homophobic. Vuk is one of a mass of identical-looking young skinheads, who don black bomber jackets, like Novica's character, and who wantonly attack anyone who is different or that they think might be gay. The youth neo-Nazi character is contrasted by a return of the 'colourful thug', Limun, who was seen in Dragojević's other films, *Rane* and *Lepa sela lepo gore*, which emphasises the differences between new and old nationalists. However, the film suggests that Limun's desertion of his son and destruction of the family unit is partially responsible for his drift into violence. Ultimately, Vuk is redeemed when he decides to reconcile with his father to protect the parade, a fate that mirrors Limun's early redemption as the protector of the different. However, the film is intended to contain a message for the rest of Serbian society as well. In a statement about the film, Dragojević writes: 'The Parade, in a tragicomic way, tells the story about ongoing battle [sic] between two worlds in contemporary

[622] Associated Press, 'Serbia police clash with far-right rioters at gay pride march', *The Guardian*, 10 October 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/oct/10/serbia-police-rioters-gay-pride> [accessed 28 October 2015].

post-war Serbian society – the traditional, oppressive, homophobic majority and a liberal, modern and open-minded minority'.[623] Unlike in *Šišanje*, *Parada* presents a Serbia where these youth neo-Nazis can be reformed through the power of familial ties and attention.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the changes in the representation of juvenile delinquency that have taken place in Serbian film since 2010. Unlike other film genres, the juvenile delinquency genre relies on an understanding of what constitutes delinquent behaviour in the period in which the film is made. Thus, while many of the films in this thesis featured protagonists who might be considered juvenile delinquents by the standards of some societies, these characters were merely acting in accordance with the mores of the time in which they lived. These films implied that there was no order in place to construct the idea of what delinquency is and thus these youth protagonists were merely playing by the rules set by the adult world. In contrast, *Šišanje* self-declaredly explores the topic of juvenile delinquency in contemporary Serbia, through references to delinquency in character types and through the dialogue of the film. In particular, the film's narrative is framed by newsreel footage and fictional television interviews in which the topic of delinquency is discussed by adults who claim to have a specific interest in the welfare of young people. The combination of factual and fictional footage suggests the blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction that was also seen in

[623] Srđan Dragojević, 'Plot summary: *The Parade*', *IMDb* (2011), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1784575/plotsummary?ref_=tt_ov_pl> [accessed 29 October 2015].

Russia-88. *Šišanje* seeks to present hooliganism in Serbia as being a significant and dangerous part of contemporary youth culture in the socio-historic world, rather than just a plot device on film. However, the film also fits into wider changes within Serbian youth film narratives that suggest that youth behaviour has taken an increasingly dark turn in recent years and displays destructiveness, not seen since films like *Rane*. Yet in *Rane*, Pinki and Švaba primarily presented a threat to themselves, whilst in *Šišanje*, Novica's threat is directed more widely, at society, its institutions, and those who can be considered different. The re-appearance of overt discussions of delinquency in film suggests that, unlike in the past, post-2010 Serbia has a form of order there is a form of order that can be broken. This order can also be seen to be constructed outside the paradigms of the legacy of the 1990s, which the film paradoxically positions as both the reasoning behind contemporary youth wildness and as being increasingly irrelevant to the new generation of young people.

While juvenile delinquency does rely on contemporary understandings of what delinquent behaviour is, there are other elements that can be traced in the wider history of the genre. In particular, I argue that *Šišanje* uses the traditional generic divide between inherently 'good' and 'bad' delinquents, articulated through the characters of Relja and Novica. The 'good' delinquent is a character that can be reformed in spite of their crimes, whilst the 'bad' delinquent has little hope for reform and is defeated by the overarching power of the adult society. However, like many Serbian films, Filipović

subverts the expectations of the genre and the audience; the initial introductions to Relja and Novica suggest that the former will be confirmed as the 'bad' delinquent, as a result of his neo-Nazi styling, whilst the latter is a prime candidate for the 'good' delinquent who has lost their way. Ultimately, and in spite of his appearance, Relja is not the character his styling suggests and Novica becomes the violent criminal no-one expected him to become. The film inverts other characters that are frequently present in the juvenile delinquency film. In particular, the representation of the 'good teenage girl' as a reforming figure is twisted into the form of Mina, who persuades Novica to become increasingly violent and eventually leads to his downfall – Novica becomes a pawn of politicians and corrupt police. The 'understanding adult figure', Novica's teacher, is also not what he should be; his obsession with Novica's academic achievements renders him unable to give Novica advice and/or tell him to surrender himself after the murder of the Roma boy.

Although the overarching frame of the film is supported by the juvenile delinquency genre, the film also uses elements of the school film to depict what Shary calls the topic of 'social evolution' that is characteristic of many school films. The juvenile delinquent is one of the most important characters in the cast of youth stereotypes in school films. *Šišanje* suggests that violence has not only spilt over into the school sphere, but also into the adult world. The film is one of a number of recent Serbian films that have focused on protagonists of school age, who are involved with delinquent and deviant behaviour. The increase in school settings suggests a change from the

other Serbian youth films in this thesis, where schools, colleges and universities, like many other institutions, were absent from the lives of young people. The return of the school setting suggests that a form of social order has now been restored to Serbian society. However, this filmic order must be seen within bounds, as many of the directors of such films also portray young people as having become more dangerous as a result of the collapse of Serbian society in the 1990s. Many school films in the Serbian and global film industries focus on the ways in which young people are becoming increasingly trapped by the spread of cheap technology, adding further distance between youth and adults. Serbian youth films, including *Šišanje*, depict young people being influenced by the information provided by technology that makes them more vulnerable to peer pressure.

The analysis of *Šišanje* closed with a discussion of the role that Novica plays in the creation of new youth characters and stereotypes in post-communist film. The chapters on *Russia-88* and *My iz budushchego* suggested that there was evidence that neo-Nazi youths were playing an increasingly prominent role in the wider youth film genre. This is a trend that is also prominent in Serbian film since the appearance of *Šišanje*. I argue that the creation of such a character is driven by the representation of young people in domestic and international media, with the spectre of far-right youth and hooliganism becoming a stereotypical trait of life in post-communist countries. The appearance of the neo-Nazi youth is also linked to the need in both Serbia and Russia for the development of new film characters who are

more in tune with the contemporary period, and with the widening use of genre film constructions, which rely on the repetition provided by such characters. The persistent references within films to youth characters, which conflate the image of hooligans and neo-Nazis in the media, are used as a way of suggesting that these screen portrayals are based on fact. However, this phenomenon also demonstrated that the portrayal of these youth characters is often a process of sensationalism for the director to achieve certain narrative aims concerning contemporary society in both Russia and Serbia. The representation of youth can thus be seen as a continuing reflection on society as a whole.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, my understanding of youth film has been based on the premise that films featuring young protagonists, which often revolve around issues relating to rites-of-passage, are not intended for youth audiences alone. Youth films are frequently out of the reach of most of the younger audience through film classification and/or unappealing subject matter, and many films targeted at young people in fact have adult protagonists for the group to emulate. More often, the youth film genre is characterised as film for both youth and adults, or, even, as one critic stated of *Igry motyl'kov*, '[…] film for youth, which youth will not go for'.[624] Youth films adopt a variety of strategies, most commonly 'genre mixing' as per Altman's model, but also display strong tendencies towards socio-political topics, to widen the appeal of the film narratives, and to create complex webs of social and filmic references that have wider resonance with society. Many of these genre mixes in fact have more to do with appealing to an adult audience during the transition from communism than the youth audience (perhaps with the exception in this thesis of *My iz budushchego*). As such, the genre as a whole has become a profound expression of the difficulties, inconsistencies, and potential brought about by the transition from communism.

It is clear that many youth films in Russia and Serbia, such as the ones featured in this thesis, can fall into the category of Driscoll's 'youth film for

[624] '[…] фильм для молодежи, на который молодежь не пойдет'. Un-named critic quoted in Konstantin Shavlovskii, 'Durnoe vospitanie', *Seans*, 21/22 (February 2015), http://seance.ru/n/21-22/films2004/igry-motylkov/shavl-motyl/ [accessed 10 December2015].

adults' more than any other category. This has some interesting implications for the development of the genre in the Russian and Serbian context. The focus on the adult audience tallies with the overwhelming needs of the two nations in transition, namely to prioritise the reconstruction of national identity, over providing youth with their own voice. This trend has arguably been broken in Serbian youth film in recent years, but, in the period examined, the role of young people as mere building blocks in the reconstruction of wider society is emphasised in both industries.

In the films I have analysed, there is an interesting combination of responsibility and inevitability that dominates representations of failing/corrupted youths. In the 1990s and into the early 2000s, the adult world was responsible for the transgressions of young people, who fell into patterns of criminality and vigilantism as coping mechanisms against the wider collapse of society, but by the release of *Šišanje* and *Russia-88*, there is a sense that youths have long assumed the mantle of responsibility for their behaviour upon themselves. Throughout this period, young protagonists have remained a metaphor for the difficulties of the transition from communism in all the forms it has taken. Representations of youth as a metaphor for transition are traced in the spread of organised crime in the 1990s, the trauma of war and state collapse on social structures, the ongoing difficulty of reconciling memory in the post-communist present, and youth extremism as an accumulation of all these problems in recent years.

I opened my thesis with a quotation from Considine, a scholar who is seen to have established the foundation for youth film studies across global cinema. Considine states that youth film does not merely reflect on the lives of young people and their rites of passage, but on society as a whole, suggesting that the genre has more complex functions than are sometimes recognised. For Considine, 'film functions as a mirror' of society, but 'in its depiction of adolescents, the motion picture does not serve as a normal mirror […] it functions rather as a distorting mirror'.[625] In this thesis, I have argued that youth film in Russia and Serbia since the 1990s also serves as a mirror of society that is indeed often distorting or exaggerated, particularly in recent years when subcultural representations have come to the fore. My analyses demonstrate that the genre, and its subgenres, strive to suggest that these youth protagonists reflect the declining moral standards of the transition from communism and the loss of a unified guiding identity. If in the communist past youth were seen as the constructors of the future, in the post-communist era young people are disproportionately used as a sign that the future is not only uncertain, but lastingly tainted by collapse.

In Russia, youth films seek to salvage elements of the communist past or demonstrate the negative aspects of national identity reconstruction in the present; in Serbia, the infamy of the 1990s remains a lingering cause for moral collapse amongst the young, albeit the reasoning behind this collapse has expanded in recent years to encompass the difficulties that followed Serbia's darkest decade. In both nations, it is also suggested in some films that a

[625] Considine, p. 276.

generation of young people have been destroyed by the corrupt regimes and socio-political stagnation arising from the collapse of communism. This image of shattered youth is indeed distorted in places, not just by society itself through stereotypes in culture, but by a complex combination of media narratives and filmic reflections. In spite of this use of exaggeration or symbolism, the films in this thesis also aim to present their narratives as the 'real' stories of youth, where teen films with their traditional focus on the humorous awkwardness of the transition to adulthood, and being somehow more superficial, are presumably false. This corresponds to Driscoll's formulation on equivalent constructions in global film, as discussed in Chapter 1. Ultimately, the figure of youth is lost in a quagmire of expectations and projected realities, compounded by domestic and international fears about the status of the societal development in former communist states. There is a sense that no form of 'normal' youth experience is to be found in Russia and Serbia under post-communism, rather there is fragmented set of expectations with youth experiences relegated in favour of the brutal realities of transition.

The primary focus of this thesis has been to show that youth films in Russia and Serbia appear in a variety of different forms that extend beyond the usual paradigms of rites-of-passage narratives, the difficulties of growing up and of the transition into adulthood. This is particularly the case for societies and film industries that are in themselves in the process of transition. The youth films analysed in each chapter have demonstrated that narratives of youth need not take place in the school or in the home, but

focus on the interaction of their protagonists with the contemporary society. The immaturity and/or youthfulness of characters are built into the mythologies surrounding the transition from communism.

Each chapter focused on demonstrating that youth films frequently employ diverse genre models to provide different messages for different sections of the audience. In *Rane*, *Brat* and *Apsolutnih sto*, the directors used alternative genre frames to change the nature of the film's focus, away from the youth protagonist and on to the difficulties facing wider society. *Brat* in particular, borrowed liberally from the iconography of a former generation, that of the director Balabanov and the rebellious rock scene of the Soviet Union in the 1980s. All three films, as well as *My is budushchego*, used motifs of the communist past, such as evocations of Yugoslav Partisan war films, sounds from late-Soviet rock and the liberal quoting from Soviet war films, to conjure images of the past, in attempts at reconciliation or to depict the unpredictability of the present and future. *Russia-88* and *Šišanje*, meanwhile, are positioned very much in the present, and depict the difficulties of life for young people using genres that are explicitly linked to youth culture – self-documentary practice and juvenile delinquency.

The analyses presented here have not attempted to be an exhaustive examination of a complex topic, nor have they striven to analyse every youth film produced in Russia and Serbia since the 1990s, but have instead aimed to read more closely between the commonly understood lines of youth representation, to discover genre diversification and narrative styles, and to

provide insight into the complexities of youth films that has so far been lacking. In the years since 2010, and in particular after the release of *Šišanje*, representations of youth in Russian and Serbian film have only continued to grow in diversity, subject matter and genre styles; this thesis will undoubtedly become one part of an increased focus on the representation of young people in the cinemas of both nations.

Perhaps one of the most significant and common aspects of the films I have examined is the focus on friendships in a period where familial structures have failed. If broken homes in Russian and Serbian youth films since the late 1980s can be seen as a metaphor for the failures of the 'big family (*bol'shaia sem'ia*)' or 'brotherhood and unity (*bratstvo i jedinstvo*)' of communism, then it can be expected that friendship groups might replace these redundant structures in the transition. The making and losing of friends is a key structure to youth films in all their forms, but in Russia and Serbia since the 1990s, these relationships take on different and more serious functions. Friendships exist or are formed, but these are often as broken as families. In *Rane*, *Apsolutnih sto*, *Šišanje* and *Russia-88*, friendships ultimately end in betrayal and the destruction of trust, warped by the day-to-day experience of transition. In *Brat*, Danila is unable to make lasting friendships amongst the corrupted young people of his own age, instead becoming self-reliant – an issue that is remedied in *Brat 2* when he returns to the military brotherhood. In *My iz budushchego*, the protagonists are taught that their friendships are meaningless until strengthened through the martial

experience of brotherhood-in-arms. Within all of these representations is the suggestion that trust has been lost in the transition, to be replaced with self-reliance or acceptance of the status quo.

More significantly, the lasting legacy of communism's focus on masculine aspects of societal unity has had a significant impact on gender roles, seen in the disproportionate amount of attention placed on the role of male friendships on screen. Young women appear most often as supporting characters in Russian and Serbian youth film, as they can be seen as being supporting actors in the construction of communism, in spite of Soviet and Yugoslav official declarations that communist rule had liberated women from a life of domesticity and subservience. Where young women have appeared on screen, they have taken on masculine or hyper-sexualised attributes (*Šišanje*, *Rane*), or have become victims where young men have chosen to fight (*Apsolutnih sto*, *Brat*). In cases such as *Russia-88*, their appearance is so minimal as to have become virtually silent. This is undoubtedly an issue connected to wider issues of gender inequality on screen, but is also impacted by the over-whelming dominance of such 'masculine' genres as crime, thriller, war, adventure, the Russian *boevik*, and action films in both industries during the period examined, and thus as genre mixes in youth films. While the global film industry is acknowledged to be severely impacted by gender inequality, I argue that this inequality is doubly complicated by the lasting legacy and dominance of 'brotherhood' as a communist and post-communist societal

construct.[626] Youth protagonists are disproportionately male, which suggests that the crisis of transition amongst young people is seen mostly in male terms – organised crime, loss of father figures, and lack of opportunities in life, with young women presumably still fulfilling their roles as objects of sexual desire or future wives/mothers, albeit beaten-down versions of these protagonists. However, in the years since 2010, there has been a noticeable shift in the frequency of female youth protagonists, an occurrence that will hopefully begin to address the imbalance in film and in scholarship on film. The transition from communism needs to be represented as an era affecting both men and women, which is shown by films such as *Klip* and *Vse umrut, a ia ostanus'*.

My thesis has revealed that a considerable transformation in youth film has taken place in the small time period that these film analyses cover – essentially a period of just over approximately thirteen years spread over two notorious decades in Russian and Serbian history. Youth films adopt a variety of genre mixes to suit the experience of society during this period. In this thesis, the major genre influences (gangster, chernukha and rock, post-conflict, time-travel, self-documentary re-enactment, and juvenile delinquency) have been related to the spread of organised crime in the 1990s, memories of war, and the representation of negative socio-political influences on young people. Directors have chosen to reflect on their own life experiences, or impressions of the needs of society, and have combined these

[626] For example, information on the campaign to increase gender equality in European film-making can be found in Eurimages, 'Strategy 2016-2017 for Gender Equality in the European Film Industry', March 2016, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/eurimages/Source/GenderBrochure.pdf [accessed 10 April 2016].

with various genre influences and intertextual references to domestic and global film. These genre mixes can be seen as a result of two factors – the adaptation of post-communist directors to the flexibility of genre film production and the use of these genres to evoke reflections of contemporary society.

The analyses in each chapter show that there have been waves, as well as ebbs and flows, in the production of films featuring youth protagonists. In Russia, there was a dearth of youth films in the 1990s, which has transformed into a more concentrated (and largely unsuccessful) effort to produce youth-oriented films, particularly in an effort to attract lucrative youth audiences in the years since. In Serbia, youth films were a prominent part of the 1990s and early 2000s, before sharply dropping in number relative to a wider decline in film production in Serbia as a whole in the mid-2000s, and rising again in even greater frequency around the time of the release of *Šišanje*. In Serbia since 2010, the youth film genre has become the primary means of articulating the underside of Serbia's recent history, both separate and part of the trials of the 1990s. Serbia's recent history is represented as being defined by the younger generation who are struggling to deal with the poor decision-making of their elders.

The rise in Serbian films featuring youth protagonists reveals the importance of generations of film directors in dictating these trends – young directors, such as Filipović, who are more likely to produce youth films in Serbia, are forcing their way into prominence in the industry. Their own direct

experiences of the difficulties of transition have filtered through into new perspectives on life in Serbia; as children of the transition, the reflections on the aftermath become more vivid and more generationally personal, moving away from the problems of adults. This is driven in large part by access to regional film funds (particularly the trend for co-production amongst former Yugoslav states), as well as European initiatives. However, it can be argued that Serbian film directors have understood the need to interpret contemporary life through the tendencies of youth film towards socio-political topics. Russia, meanwhile, lags behind in its creation of youth films, perhaps as a result of the more restrictive nature of film-making in the country, where well-known directors dominate funding and film narratives are overwhelmingly driven (or rather dictated) by governmental institutions and their preferred genre constructs; or even, as is indicated in the discussion in Chapter 1 and in the analysis of *My iz budushchego*, an ongoing lack of understanding as to what audiences seek from their viewing experience

The youth films analysed in this thesis have shown that narratives and genre usages resulted in more limited stylisations in earlier years, only to diversify as post-communist film has developed. The youth film appears in both auteur and blockbuster films, a trait that is unusual in wider genre terms, where genre films are generally connected to the search for box-office revenues and thus with entertainment films. Youth films for the young audience are usually more likely to adopt blockbuster techniques, such as in *My iz budushchego*, whereas those aimed primarily at adults or the wider

viewing audience are frequently auteurist, but nonetheless adopt alternative genre frames to locate their narratives. A difference between the Serbian and Russian film industries must be highlighted here – Serbian youth films are commonly found within the auteurist or low-budget sphere, largely because of their restricted access to big-budget film production funds. Russian youth films can come from either sector of the industry – films for youth and children (read, Hollywood-style films) are a priority funding theme for the Russian government, while auteur directors use youth films to project socio-political problems with Russian society that are unlikely to appear in mainstream cinemas. *My iz budushchego* is an important example of the cross-over between the desires to attract young audiences, whilst maintaining the government-promoted focus on war films. Its inclusion in the film selections made in this thesis is thus essential for understanding the oft contradictory context of Russian youth film production. However, there is also evidence that auteurist film particularly in Serbia uses genre constructs as a means of innovation in style, as indicated in *Rane*, but also in *Apsolutnih sto* and *Šišanje*. In Russia, film directors of all orientations have been slower to adopt genre constructs, as discussed in Chapter 1.

In this atmosphere of change, it is crucial to examine the projected position of youth films in the future of Russian and Serbian cinema. Both societies are reaching a period where the transition from communism can no longer bear the sole blame for the lack of support given to young people and this is reflected upon heavily in film narratives. The Serbian film industry

produces large numbers of youth films. These productions can be seen as a means of trying to make sense of continuing socio-political issues, such as organised crime and corruption, but also as a way of drawing attention away from the 1990s and early 2000s with their wearying dissections of war and blame. This aim to distract attention is not always achieved, the issues of the present day are inextricably entangled with the recent past. Meanwhile, the Russian film industry is still struggling to make headway with attracting young audiences, the 'targeted heart' of the Russian film industry, thanks to their slower adoption of popular genre constructs in the 1990s. Meanwhile, both film industries struggle to separate the past and the present in film narratives even now, with continued references to the Soviet past or the difficulties of the transition continuing into the 2010s.

Youth film production is consistently tied to arguments over how to appeal to young audiences in a time when both Russian and Serbian films find it difficult to compete with the juggernaut that is Hollywood. This is in part because the target of youth films is often confused; discussions of films for and about young people should be distinguished by the term youth film and youth-oriented films – different categories in my formulation. The arguments for creating both types have increasingly focused on the changing role of technology in both the lives of young people and watching habits. Part 3 of this thesis demonstrated that Russian and Serbian films, like their global youth film counterparts, dwell on the role that technology has in changing

youth culture and access to information, as a means of reflecting directly on contemporary youth culture.

Films are no longer the dominant means by which nations can transmit their norms and values to young people, and those films that young people watch are more likely to transmit American norms more than any other. Anna Gudkova, for example, summarises this problem of producing youth-oriented film as being an ongoing inability of the Russian film industry to adapt to audience tastes, chiming with Condee's assertions about the state of inertia in Russian genre film production, quoted in Chapter 1 of this thesis. Gudkova states:

> Our producers [in Russia] have still not completely mastered the language of interacting with online-internet websites, channels and other screens. They do not always understand that without this [interaction] we now cannot actually communicate with the audience, which is young, and, as before, we use tools that became old the moment they began to be used.[627]

The Russian film industry continues to struggle to adapt to the tastes of the audience in the post-communist period, whether this be in terms of creating topics that appeal to the predominantly youth audience, the means of

[627] 'Наши продюсеры пока не вполне освоили язык взаимодействия с онлайн-интернет-сетями, кабелем и другими экранами. Не всегда понимают, что без этого мы теперь фактически не коммуницируем с аудиторией, которая молода, а по-прежнему используем инструменты, устаревшие в момент их применения.' Anna Gudkova commenting in the roundtable, 'Piat' ekranov odnogo zritelia. Kino v okruzhenii konkurentov', *Iskusstvo kino*, 6 (June 2015), http://www.kinoart.ru/archive/2015/06/pyat-ekranov-odnogo-zritelya-kino-v-okruzhenii-konkurentov [accessed 13 March 2016].

transmission to audiences, arguably as well as the use of genre constructions as a part of this.

Youth film directors, arguably, do understand this necessity, as they feature technology as a prominent part of youth culture, particularly in recent years as was seen in the analyses of *Šišanje* and *Russia-88*. Youth films have by and large acknowledged the need to reflect the changing social realities of young people, by suggesting that the only means of communication youths understand is electronic. The problem remains, however, as to who these representations are aimed at – the young audience or the adult audience? The youth audience might recognise their thirst for technology in these representations, as this access to alternative means of information provides freedom from adult control; the adult audience meanwhile sees this technology as a sign that young people are becoming more distant, more easily influenced, and more at risk from deviance than ever before. In terms of youth agency in the film-making process, this does little to further the cause.

Attention in film-making is increasingly turning to the role of the Internet and social media in the production of films and the attracting of audiences, particularly the youth audience. This predominance of technology is an extension of research that suggests that the primary consumers of the Internet, and the Runet, are young people between the ages of 18-24, as discussed in Chapter 6 on *Russia-88*. A number of discussions have taken place in recent years that address issues within film production and the ways

they go about attracting these audiences. This trend can be seen as being linked to the production of earlier youth films and the way these films are designed to appeal to audiences. What is significant in all of this argument is that film workers acknowledge it is genre choices, rather than youth protagonists alone, that make these films attractive for these lucrative audiences. For youth audiences, the desire to be entertained remains paramount, whereas many of the youth films mentioned in this thesis do little to provide a sense of escapism from adult life that is often sought by this demographic. Thus it is possible to question whether youth films are at all aimed at the youth auditorium – a line must be drawn between youth film and youth audiences. They are not mutually dependent areas and young people are unlikely to be attracted to many of the topics approached by the youth films in this thesis. This does not make such a genre as youth film less plausible, but instead suggests film scholars need to look beyond the restrictive view of teen films as being the only form of film about youth.

A range of technological impact on youth culture and film has been represented in each part of this thesis, which has also revealed changes in those technologies perceived to have an influential role on young people. In *Rane*, the television was presented as being an authoritative presence in dictating the ideal lives of Pinki and Švaba, ultimately influencing them to pursue a glamorous life of crime. This was compounded by the use of MTV-style aesthetics fitting with wider trends in contemporary global youth culture and thus the film can be seen as reaching out to youth audiences in ways

others did not. Later, films such as *Šišanje* suggested that it was the violent actions of young men that dominated (adult) media discussions of youth culture on television, as well as influencing the reception of juvenile delinquency amongst the wider population. Young people and television continue to be depicted as a dangerous combination. Meanwhile, Danila in *Brat* was shown as partaking in newly-available technology, such as walkmans and video cassette recorders, as a means of distancing himself from contemporary Russian reality in ways that many young people would relate to. The representation of young people as permanently 'plugged in' to technology is a trend that has endured in the twenty-first century. In *My iz budushchego*, *Šišanje* and *Russia-88*, young people were depicted as having an unhealthy relationship with personal computers and hand-held cameras, which allow them to either lose themselves in a fog of video-game reality, record themselves performing subcultural violence, or using webcams to film teary confessions of violent murders that are supposed to remain private.

The different trends in technological preferences are driven by wider trends in society. As Irina Poluekhtova argues: 'In recent years, conversations about how television-viewing has fallen have not ceased, and young people watch less and less television.'[628] As such, the presence of television as an influencing factor is becoming a less prominent form for the indoctrination of young people into a world of violence. One emerging constant is the replacement of earlier forms of technology by the Internet, and an over-

[628] 'В последние годы не смолкают разговоры о том, что телесмотрение падает, а молодежь все меньше смотрит телевизор'. Irina Poluekhtova, 'Teleprosmotr eshche zhiv', *Iskusstvo kino*, 4 (April, 2014), http://www.kinoart.ru/archive/2014/04/teleprosmotr-eshche-zhiv [accessed 10 December 2015].

whelming pre-occupation with the practices of self-documentation amongst young people. Youths in Russia and Serbia are represented as living predominantly virtual lives. Significantly, rather than Russian and Serbian youths being distanced from the global reality of youth culture, they are in fact depicted as being one and the same generation.

In discussions of cinematic audiences, particularly in Russia, there is an acknowledgement that youth audiences are significant, but arguments as a whole are not dominated by a discussion of how to attract these audiences. A frequent lament amongst directors – as seen in my analysis of *My iz budushchego* – is the influence of Hollywood productions on the tastes of audiences in both Russia and Serbia. There is also an acknowledgement of the prominence of Internet-based viewing, which severely impacts on the film scholars' ability to judge the reception of youth films amongst young audiences. If most young people do indeed prefer to find their information on the Internet, then judging the appeal of youth films from box office reception is becoming increasingly out-of-touch. Oleg Berezin, for example, states that there are three types of screens used by audiences in the present day: the screen of the cinema, designed for 'collective viewing'; the screen for 'group, family viewing' on televisions or laptops; and the 'personal screen (*personal'nyi ekran*)' when 'we watch individually'.[629] In the context of youth audiences, and these reflections in youth films, young people are depicted as preferring the *personal'nyi ekran* provided by their smartphones and computers, which permits them freedom of access to information. This type

[629] Oleg Berezin, in the roundtable 'Piat' ekranov odnogo zritelia…'.

of screen is discussed, and depicted in film, as being a major component of contemporary youth culture, even though it is possible to argue similar trends can also be found amongst the adult population.

The preference for the *personal'nyi ekran* is mirrored in the Serbian context. In a public event organised to discuss the views of young people, one Serbian teenager stated that: 'The (mobile) telephone has become like a right hand to us [teenagers]'.[630] Technology is not just a means of corruption of young people, but rather an extension of their selves. Thus, it is possible to compound these trends as being one that affects global youth culture as a whole, rather than exclusively Serbian and Russian youth audiences. The notion of the telephone as the 'right hand' of teenagers and young adults is reflected increasingly in global youth film, where this cheapening technology permits an unprecedented access to information out of the control of the film industry and society. In this atmosphere, the reflection of these practices in youth films discussed in this thesis is just the beginning of an increased focus on youth and technology in films since 2010.

However, the appearance of new technology and Internet-based entertainment is not solely used by youth film directors to express concerns over young people's access to information. Recent Russian and Serbian films, produced outside of the timeframe analysed in this thesis, have sought to bridge the gap between technology, genre and youth audiences, by engaging

[630] 'Telefon nam je postao kao desna ruka […]'. Participant Milica Stamenović in #TeenTalk2015, cited in '#TeenTalk2015 Mladi svoj san žele da ostvare u Srbiji, ali treba im podrška države', *Svet*, 25 May 2015 http://www.svet.rs/promo/konferencije-i-akcije/teentalk2015-pratite-prenos-iz-minuta-u-minut [accessed 10 April 2016]

with these topics. This is seen in the appearance of films such as *Pored mene*, a school film in which the director Filipović overlays the film's photography with boxes depicting the technological interactions of young people in text messages and so forth. Another interesting development was the US-Russian co-production of the youth horror film, *Unfriended* (dir. Leo Gabriadze, Bazelevs Company and Blumhouse Productions, 2015), produced by one of Russia's best-known genre film directors, Bekmambetov, and in which the action takes place exclusively through a Skype conversation between four friends. Of course, the creation of *Unfriended* begs the question as to why a Georgian director, well-known for directing Russian-language films, and another of Russia's most celebrated genre directors, Bekmambetov, had to make this film in the US, rather than in Russia. It is yet to be seen whether such films can be produced in Russian and whether film directors in Serbia will have access to budgets or studios that will take projects like these further. One significant benefit of the personal technology approach to film-making however, as is seen in *Russia-88*, is that the access of young people to handheld devices provides low-budget opportunities for reflecting on contemporary youth practices.

Above all these developing practices, there remains an over-arching desire for youth films to reach the correct audience – that is, the youth audience itself. While I have proven that many of these works have wider significance as films for both young people and adults, the connections between the genre and the younger audience, which is the key demographic

group, are increasingly becoming intertwined as each film industry continues the path to market-based production. However, in Russia and Serbia there is also a repeated refrain of the pedagogical necessity of youth films as a way of informing young people about the dangers of their behaviour and of suggesting that they must be taught lessons from film. As one user of the website *Kinopoisk* wrote: '*"My iz budushchego" is by genre a fantasy war film, but may its essence not only be in this. Young people, go and watch this picture, it has been filmed for you.'*[631]

[631] «Мы из будущего» по жанру военная фантастика, да только суть не в этом. Молодые люди, посмотрите эту картину, она для вас снята.' User "Tristo" on *Kinopoisk*, "Tam, gde smert' meniaiutsia stereotypy", 29 December 2010 [emphasis in the original].

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