THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

KIRA MURATOVA:

EPISTEMOLOGY OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE ON THE CINEMA SCREEN

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

JOHN U. NEF COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL THOUGHT

AND

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

DAVID GOMIERO MOLINA

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JUNE 2022

Para Teresa e Regina,
Sidney e Olga,
sempre.

Сон,
Странный сон.
Я вижу отражение себя.
Столько лет
Во мне все слова,
Во мне тишина.
Снова дождь,
Стучит свои признания луне.
Этот дождь,
Наверное, не знает обо мне.
Во мне корабли,
Во мне города,
Во мне вся любовь,
Во мне все, что есть.

Земфира, «Во мне»

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Acknowledgements

Although given objective reality by an individual, a doctoral dissertation – even one written in a time of quarantine and social distancing – is never the work of a lonely mind divorced from the world. The manuscript that follows is very much a collective effort, the product of some ten years of contributions from colleagues, friends, family, and mentors, spread across four continents and speaking multiple languages, an educational journey that has informed my thinking in ways I am only beginning to appreciate. There is no question I was dealt a truly exceptional hand, and to all those involved, named and unnamed below, I owe my sincere thanks.

This dissertation would not exist without the invaluable financial support of the University of Chicago's Division of the Social Sciences, the Kathryn Wasserman Davis School of Russian at Middlebury College and, of course, the John U. Nef Committee on Social Thought, whose generosity in funding my language study and research has known no bounds. I am also particularly grateful to Stephanie Sandler and Justin Weir from Harvard University's Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, who opened its doors to me as a visiting scholar in autumn of 2018, and to Moscow's Higher School of Economics (HSE), which supported my visa applications and granted me access to its Moscow campuses and libraries. I owe, too, much of my interest in philosophy and all things Russian to my undergraduate alma mater, Yale College, and without the priceless contributions of Norma Thompson, Kathryn Slanski, Katerina Clark, Marijeta Bozovic, Vladimir Alexandrov, Irina Dolgova, Constantine Muravnik, and Julia Titus, this dissertation could not be what it is.

It was in Marina Rojavina's film class at Middlebury's Kathryn Wasserman Davis School of Russian that I had my first experience writing about Muratova, and without her vision, professional advice and encouragement, this text would not exist. Middlebury would

not be Middlebury, however, without Oleg Proskurin, Vera Proskurina, Alexei Shmelev, Elena Shmeleva, Jason Merill, Oliver Carling, Sergei Kokovkin, Anna Rodionova, Nana Tsikhelashvili, and Maiia Volchkevich, all of whom have significantly shaped my understanding of the subtleties of the Russian language, theater, prose, and verse. Maxim Pavlov, curator of the film program at Moscow's New Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow also deserves named recognition for organizing a nearly complete retrospective of Muratova's films in the fall and spring of 2019-2020, allowing this dissertating Muratova scholar to experience her films on a large screen for the first time.

At the University of Chicago, my academic experience was profoundly shaped by the scholarship of Gabriel Richardson Lear, Jonathan Lear, James Conant, Martha Nussbaum, Sascha Ebeling, Olga Solovieva, Valentina Pichugin, Robert Bird, William Nickell, Yuri Tsivian, Angelina Ilieva, and Haun Saussy, and without the unwavering administrative support of Tracy Davis, Ingrid Sagor, Kathleen Kish, and Anne Gamboa, I would not have succeeded in completing all requirements for a joint PhD in time.

In Brazil, I am also deeply grateful to Editora 34's Alberto Martins and Danilo Hora, and my University of São Paulo colleagues Bruno Gomide, Fátima Bianchi, Elena Vassina, and Jorge Almeida, all of whom have been greatly encouraging of both my academic and translation work.

I have also learned much from fellow travelers in this academic journey, and while there are too many to list, I offer, below, a fairly representative sample that spans all departments and institutions. Thank you very much to Irina Schulzki, Heather Ficke, Eva Faraghi, Matt McWilliams, Anna Ivanov, Masha Shpolberg, Maria Kustova, Nikki Lohr, Alex Droznin, Kiara Alexis, Helen Haft, Hilah Kohen, Helen Stuhr-Rommereim, Austin Jung, Christy Lopez, Zachary Murphy King, Sam Lasman, Shushana Manakhimova, Maya

Nguyen, Chris Clarke, Yael Flusser, Miguel Llanos, Mat Messerschmidt, Johanna Mick, Kaitlin McLean, Ilana Ventura, Aparna Ravilochan, Andrea Ray, David Williams, Pablo Gonzalez, Eliza Little, and Lingwei Cheng.

As for Yuanqi Wang, Robert Stone, Rosaria Munda, Paul Cato, Travis Hutchinson, Elena Bushueva, and Silviya Atanasova: thank you for your friendship, commitment, generosity, kindness, and encouragement. I owe you more than I could ever express here.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I'd like to offer a heartfelt thanks to my dissertation triumvirate: Robert Pippin, Françoise Meltzer, and Daria Khitrova. While Pippin's influence on my thinking is explicit throughout the work – in particular his writings on Manet, Hitchcock, and cinema – what remains invisible to the eye is his astonishing work as an advisor and department chair. Pippin is not only a great philosopher and commentator of academic writing, but someone that goes out of his way to remove hurdles (financial, bureaucratic, administrative) that stand in the way of his students' success. If the Committee on Social Thought is a special place, marked as much by a deep (and very slow) reading of classic texts as by an inventiveness in style rarely experienced elsewhere, it was made that much greater with Pippin at the helm. Thank you so very much.

As one of the figures responsible for my ingress in UChicago's Comparative Literature department, Françoise Meltzer plays a special role in my academic trajectory over the past 7 years. I would like to thank her, in particular, for agreeing to be a part of this project, and for encouraging me to take risks in my scholarship, advice I have taken to heart here and elsewhere.

Daria Khitrova is the only professor I know capable, while teaching a three-hour 9:00 am graduate seminar on a Friday on abstruse theoretical material, of transfiguring everyone awake within just a few minutes. Khitrova dictates the pulse of this dissertation:

forward-moving and alert but never hurried, present and precise. Her support and kindness, like her teaching, is a marvel.

This work is dedicated to my grandmothers Teresa and Regina, and to my parents Olga and Sidney, who instilled in me a love for fiction, for learning, and for family. Muito obrigado.

INTRODUCTION

In *The Philosophical Hitchcock: Vertigo and Anxieties of Unknowingness,*[1] philosopher Robert Pippin begins his own foray into film philosophy by reminding his reader of some of the many functions of the cinematic medium: it can please, cause pain, cause pain even as it pleases, and – most importantly, for him – can render aspects of human existence more intelligible than they might be in ordinarily discursive forms. In presenting a particular interaction in one way rather than another, Pippin claims, cinematic works communicate an implied stance on the represented phenomena such that situations that at first appear unique or idiosyncratic, can be seen to unveil something general, and in this way, properly philosophical.

Underlying such claims is the philosophical tradition of German Idealism, in particular G. W. F. Hegel's approach to art in his 1820s *Lectures on Aesthetics* (compiled in 1835 by his student Henrich Gustav Hotho).[2] There, Hegel argues that artistic achievements such as those of fine art, literature, and music can be properly termed philosophical when (to use Pippin's own paraphrase), they are "neither themselves discursive claims or of philosophical relevance by 'containing' or 'implying' philosophical assertions."[3] Rather unusually, considering philosophy's age-old feud against art as a rival claim to knowledge – Socrates' discussion of poetry in Books III and X of the *Republic* culminates with the banishment of poets from the *kallipolis*[4] – Hegel, for Pippin, claims that philosophy can exist

---

[1] Robert B. Pippin, *The Philosophical Hitchcock: Vertigo and the Anxieties of Unknowingness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017, 5-6).
[2] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art.* Translated by T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1975).
[3] Robert B. Pippin, *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014, 2).
[4] Socrates, of course, does not banish *all* poetry from the *Republic.* Consider the following passage from Book 10 (X.606e): "And so, Glaucon, when you happen to meet those who praise Homer and say that he's the poet who educated Greece, that it's worth taking up his works in order to learn how to manage and educate people, and that one should arrange one's life according to his teachings, you should welcome these people and treat

in artistic achievements without failing to account for such works as *art,* that is, as belonging to a medium fundamentally distinct from tractarian disciplinary philosophy.

Artworks, for Hegel, are not instances of accumulating knowledge claims grounded on evidence, at least not in the way those claims operate in academic philosophy; rather, translating back into Hegel's own terminology, art embodies a distinct mode of intelligibility of the Absolute. In *The Science of Logic,* Hegel writes:

> Since it contains all determinations within it, and its essential nature is a return to itself through its self-determination or particularization, it has various shapes and the business of philosophy is to cognize it in these. Nature and Spirit are in general different modes of presenting its existence, art and religion its different modes of apprehending itself and giving itself adequate existence. Philosophy has the same content and same end as art and religion; but it is the highest mode of apprehending the absolute Idea, because its mode is the highest mode, the Notion.[5]

In Pippin's so-called "non-metaphysical" reading of Hegel – a misnomer, given his insistence on the metaphysical significance of Hegel's greater logic[6] – the Absolute refers to nothing other than that which counts as "reality" in our attempts to render the world intelligible. In his view, to look at the history of philosophy with an eye to the Absolute is to trace how it, as reality-signifier, changes its guise with the passage of time: it is nature for the Pre-Socratics; the ideas for Plato; God for the scholastics; reason, extension and God for Descartes; monads for Leibniz, etc.[7] The radicality of Hegel's claim in the passage, however, lies, of course, not in his affirming of the Absolute – as many critical theorists since have insisted – but in the claim that, as the affective-sensible modality of human (Geist's) self-

---

them as friends, since they're as good as they're capable of being, and you should agree that Homer is the most poetic of the tragedians and the first among them. But you should also know that hymns to the gods and eulogies to good people are the only poetry we can admit into our city. If you admit the pleasure-giving Muse, whether in lyric or epic poetry, pleasure and pain will be kings in your city instead of law or the thing that everyone has always believed to be best, namely, reason." Passages in Book III also support this reading.

[5] George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic.* Translated by A. V. Miller (London; New York: Galen & Unwin; 1969, 824).

[6] See, for example, the implications of logic as metaphysics in Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Realm of Shadows.* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

[7] Pippin, *After the Beautiful,* 5.

knowledge, art is a way of making or understanding claims about ourselves that on one hand *shares content with philosophy,* but on the other *remains modally separate from it.*[8]

Hegel's claim that it is possible to protect art qua medium from philosophy's assaults while still ascribing to it philosophical character represents, for Pippin, a retort to one great methodological pitfalls of interdisciplinary projects allying philosophy and works of art, namely, the predominance of what can be described as a colonial form of interdisciplinarity. In a lecture titled "Transdisciplinarity, Interdisciplinarity, Reductive Disciplinarity, and Deep Disciplinarity"[9] delivered at Emory University on October 24, 2013, Pippin defines a faux or colonizing interdisciplinarity as one in which the particularities and methodological approaches of discipline A are ignored as A becomes the mere locus for application or implementation of approach or discipline B. The relationship between mediums A and B, in such cases, becomes one of *instantiation* (*of a theory or approach*), a method that – although extraordinarily prevalent not only in cross-disciplinary projects within the humanities but also those that bring together the humanities and the sciences, or the humanities and the social sciences – greatly reduces the distinguishing characteristics of the second term of comparison. Put differently, in purportedly engaging in a philosophical reading of a novel or painting, well-meaning interdisciplinary scholars, in fact, often end up inadvertently shrinking the parameters of the aesthetic object down to such a degree that it is rendered into nothing more than *philosophie manqué.*

[8] Affective-sensibility, it is worth mentioning, does not consist, for Hegel, in a brute emotional reaction. Rather, what Hegel means by the claim "art is the affective-sensible modality of Geist's self-knowledge" is that art is conceptually saturated, that is, that it possesses a conceptual framework that can, in interpretation, be articulated or rendered explicit. While interpretation and commentary are, in this view, not themselves aesthetic responses, they can articulate meaning even as they remain informed by affective-sensibility.
[9] Robert B. Pippin, "Transdisciplinarity, Interdisciplinarity, Reductive Disciplinarity, and Deep Disciplinarity," (keynote lecture at the Interdisciplinary Futures Symposium, Emory University, Atlanta, GA, October 24, 2013).

If, in what follows, I endeavor to engage in a philosophical reading of the cinematic opus of Romanian-born Soviet filmmaker Kira Giorgiyvna Muratova (née Korotkova, 1934-2018), focusing in particular on the way in which her characters shed light on the logic that underlies our failures to understand ourselves and others, then the specter of colonial interdisciplinarity is never too far away. How can one achieve a *philosophical* reading of the nature of intersubjectivity in works of film in a way that does not distort or otherwise bypass cinema's uniquely *filmic* (read: non-tractarian, non-propositional) way of presenting such relations? How can one ascribe a philosophical level of generality to Muratova's filmic opus without converting it into makeshift philosophy? And more: for a reading of a cinematic opus to be considered properly philosophical, something in its approach must be generalizable even as the works operate within a particular time, physical environment, and sociopolitical context. For even the most realistic fictional prose, the jump between "this is true of the characters in the novel" to "these characters reveal something of the logic of intersubjective relations in historical time" is not easy (many critics would say, impossible) and this approach becomes even more difficult when the works in question are – as is the case with Muratova – deemed eccentric, grotesque, absurd, surrealistic or even weird.[10]

That many of Muratova's works do justice to these descriptors is difficult to deny, but, in her films, reality and the absurd are not mutually exclusive. Like caricatures –

[10] Muratova's own statements on her own work, too, rendered in interviews and other public forums, also do a disservice to proper interpretation of her films. Particularly averse to social roles and rituals, Muratova is infamous for hating formal exchanges about her work, insisting, in many such interactions, that her images mean nothing, that symbolism and psychology are extraneous to her work, and that, after her second film, *Long Farewells,* her work is characterized by a sense of ornamentality and surface-meaning that are entirely alien to interpretation. On the other hand, her response to the interpretative work of philosopher and film-critic Mikhail Iampol'skii in his work *Muratova: Opyt kinoantropologii* was laudatory, even while admitting that his philosophical approach was not something towards which she directly aimed. The question of authorial intent, thus – as perhaps befits a dissertation that takes seriously the notion of self-deceit – is, here, partially bracketed. This thesis is committed to the claim that Muratova's films, as an oeuvre, do much more than she might acknowledge in any interview.

exaggerating existing features so as to present them writ large, distorted but recognizably so – the eccentricity and excessive performativity that saturate Muratova's mature cinema are not fantasy but an intensification of lived experience.[11] In fact, it is – among other techniques – *through* its systematic use of eccentrism and exaggeration that her cinema fulfills its philosophical potential, magnifying, on screen, aspects of intersubjective relations we fail to notice in the ordinarily-proportioned exchanges of everyday life.

It is worth noting, of course, that categories such as modernism, post-modernism and surrealism are not accounted for in Hegel's aesthetics. Hegel, famously, or perhaps notoriously, ends his account of art with romanticism, with the somewhat puzzling claim that art itself – as significant, indispensable vehicle of human self-knowledge – had come to an end in his own time. This dissertation is committed to the claim that it is possible to preserve something like the spirit of Hegel's aesthetics – extending it across boundaries of medium and period – even while rejecting the specificity of his ultimate conclusion.

The question of how to derive general philosophical insights from particular characters in works of art, however, still stands. In what follows two approaches will be employed. The first is to effect what one might call a "vertical analysis" of Muratova's films, organizing her work not chronologically but thematically, following, where relevant, the unraveling of repetitive phenomena from her first independent work, *Brief Encounters* (1967,[12] to her second to last, *Melody for a Street Organ* (2009).[13] This method not only enables one to uncover the unifying principles that constitute her films' stance on questions of human

[11] A similar point is emphasized by Lilya Kaganovsky in a paper titled "Mono, Dia: Polyphony: Muratova, Sound and Image" (Kira Muratova International Symposium, May 14th, 2021) in which Muratova's emphasis on the stutter and her use of repetitive images is described not as absurd or unreal but as a kind of commitment to a form of hyper-realism, to a documentary approach to the recorded voice that eschews cinema's use of clean, clear dialogue.
[12] *Korotkie vstrechi* (*Brief Encounters*), dir. Kira Muratova (1967; USSR: Odessa Film Studio, 1967).
[13] *Melodia dlia sharmanki* (*Melody for a Street Organ*), dir. Kira Muratova (2009; Ukraine: Sota Cinema Group, 2009).

intersubjectivity, but also allows one to trace thematic development as her influences, aesthetic, and style change over time.[14] The second is to approach characters, situations, and interactions in Muratova's films as Hegelian "concrete universals," that is, as instances of a kind that reveal that kind's essence better than abstract definition.[15] One need not go further than theoretical discussions of Russian cinema to find utterances of this thought. Of Hamlet and Raskolnikov, Tarkovskii writes in *Sculpting in Time:*

> The nihilism of Raskolnikov in historical and sociological terms is of course typical; but in the personal and individual terms of his image, he stands alone. Hamlet is undoubtedly a type as well; but where, in simple terms, have you ever seen a Hamlet?[16]

Many of Muratova's characters, I claim, are typical in exactly this way: they are often such powerfully idiosyncratic iterations of intersubjective failings, that they, dialectically, touch on philosophical universality by shedding light on the very *form* of the phenomena they instantiate.

---

[14] Thus, to use the somewhat tongue-in-cheek division by Isaiah Berlin in his famous essay on Tolstoy, this dissertation aims at a much-needed analysis of the "hedgehog" dimension of Muratova's artistry, to unveil the artistic preoccupations that haunt her work throughout her career despite the many and quite radical changes in style and filmic technique undergone by her work. In this way, this text distances itself from interpretations of Muratova's work that present her as merely descriptive of post-modernist incoherence or as a Dadaist fond of gratuitous cacophony. The philosophy in Muratova's work does not consist in her ability to simply depict situations of chaos and incommunicability, but in her exploration of *how* this chaos arises in the first place. Her cinematic reading of such communicative failures is often very different from that of disciplinary philosophy and for this reason, valuable to it. As counterpoint to my position, see for example Irina Deninschenko's "Muratova's Anti-Art and the Historical Avant-Garde" (paper delivered at the International Kira Muratova Symposium, May 6th, 2021).

[15] My use of the Hegelian term "concrete universality" is a direct counterpoint to Mikhail Iampol'skii's defense of Muratova as a "philosophical ornamentalist" in his keynote lecture "Kira Muratova: A World Without Reality," delivered on May 13th, 2021, at the International Kira Muratova Symposium. There, he argues, with a focus on Muratova's *Change of Fate,* that her mature work is characterized by material objects and hermetic surfaces that defy "deep meaning" and in this sense, undermine a notion of reality readily interpretable from genre-conventions, market demands, and ideology. The objection to Iampol'skii's position, here, consists in the fact that it fails to take seriously what it would mean for Muratova's cinema to be properly "philosophical" in a non-metaphorical way. There is nothing philosophical in the radically particular, in matter that cannot speak. Ornamentalism in and for itself, thus, cannot be the source of philosophical material in Muratova's work; in fact, it discourages philosophical interpretation by providing too ready a solution for interpretative difficulties arising in her films. The term "concrete universality" circumvents the problem by allowing space for Muratova's much lauded preoccupation with marginalized voices, individual speech, physical types, animals, without failing to accede to a wider-reaching conceptuality in her work: her epistemological concern with *how* intersubjective relations fail. Mikhail Iampol'skii, "Kira Muratova: A World Without Reality" (keynote delivered at the Kira Muratova International Symposium, May 13th, 2021).

[16] Andrei Aresen'evich Tarkovskii, *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema.* Translated by Kitty Hunger Blair. (London: Faber and Faber, 1989, 112).

What kinds of philosophical questions does Muratova, qua film-philosopher, explore in her cinematic production? A comprehensive answer is perhaps impossible: Muratova's work features challenges to socio-political conventions and rituals; Freudian musings on the family; subversions of gender roles; disruptions of anthropocentrism of interest to scholars of animal studies; questions of justice, ethics, and morality relevant to both moral psychology and political philosophy; issues of race; theatricality and performativity; and much more. Any one of these questions would merit its own investigation and many have indeed been touched upon in the still nascent scholarly literature on her work. In the five book-length monographs on Muratova's cinematic opus – one in French, two in Russian, and one each in German and English – Jane Taubman touches the theoretical relevance of Muratova's cinema only briefly, offering a much needed biographical overview of her life, work and career;[17] Isa Willinger fuses the philosophically relevant questions of gender, ritual, societal criticism, and the body under the heading *Subversion;*[18] Eugénie Zvonkine provides both a historical analysis of Muratova's reception (Soviet and abroad) and a model for analysis of her films based on dissonant blocks of meaning;[19] Zara Abdullaeva reads Muratova by attending to her most important leitmotifs;[20] while Mikhail Iampol'skii paints a picture of the "kinoantropologiia" of Muratova's work, shaping it through rapidly intercutting theoretical lenses.[21]

Chapter-length and peer-reviewed articles on Muratova coalesce around a somewhat different set of themes. Here, gender and feminism share center stage with the horrifying

[17] Jane Taubman, *Kira Muratova,* KINOfiles Film Companions (London: Tauris, 2005).
[18] Isa Willinger, *Kira Muratova: Kino und Subversion,* Kommunikation audiovisuell; Bd. 44 (Konstanz; München: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2013).
[19] Eugénie Zvonkine, *Kira Mouratova: un cinéma de la dissonance,* Histoire et esthétique du cinéma. (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 2012).
[20] Zara Abdullaeva, *Kira Muratova:* iskusstvo kino (Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2008).
[21] Mikhail Iampol'skii, *Muratova: opyt kinoantropologii* (Sankt-Petersburg: Seans, 2008).

magnificence of *Asthenic Syndrome* (Taubman,[22] Banko,[23] Beardow,[24] Willinger[25]). Analyses of the latter have treated, among other topics: grief, anxiety, social critique, simulation, ideology, and representations of the male body (Berry,[26] Audé,[27] Bodrov & Bollag,[28] Cousins,[29] Roll,[30] Roberts[31]). Scholars have also explored Muratova's relationship to Chekhov (Graffy,[32] Lapushin,[33] Smorodinskaya[34]), as well as her use of music, speech, silence, shrieks,[35] and sounds (Kaganovsky,[36] Challis,[37] Ferguson,[38] Sandomirskaya,[39] and Zvonkine[40]).

---

[22] Jane A. Taubman, "Asthenic Syndrome (Astenicheskii Sindrom). Dir., Kira Muratova. Scenario; Sergei Popov, A. Chernykh, Kira Muratova. Camera: V. Pankov. Odessa Film Studio, 1989.," *Slavic Review* 51, no. 04 (1992): 802–803, https://doi.org/10.2307/2500141.

[23] Anja Banko, "Ruski film odjuge in ženski pogled: Larisa Šepitko in Kira Muratova,"*Druzboslovne Razprave* 33, no. 84 (2017): 29–47.

[24] Frank Beardow, "Soviet Cinema: 'Women's Films'. Part 3," *Rusistika*, no. 11 (1995): 35–42.

[25] Willinger, *Kira Muratova*.

[26] Ellen E. Berry, "Grief and Simulation in Kira Muratova's The Aesthenic Syndrome," *Russian Review* 57, no. 3 (1998): 446–454, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9434.00034.

[27] Françoise Audé, "L'oeuvre et le chaos: Le Syndrome asthénique," *Positif - Revue mensuelle de cinéma; Paris*, May 1991.

[28] Serguéi Bodrov and Brenda Bollag, "Pathology of Contemporary-Life in Russia in Muratova, Kira Le 'Syndrome Asthenique,'" *Positif*, no. 351 (1990): 50–51.

[29] Mark Cousins, "Cinema of Anxiety," *Sight and Sound* 27, no. 3 (March 2017): 11.

[30] Serafima Roll, "Fragmentation and Ideology in Kira Muratova's The Aesthenic Syndrome and Arto Paragamian's Because Why.," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* V, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 49–67.

[31] Graham Roberts, "Re-Viewing Homo Sovieticus: The Representation of the Male Body in the Films of Kira Muratova," *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 1, no. 2 (June 2002): 113.

[32] J. Graffy, "Difficult People: Kira Muratova's Cinematic Encounter with Chekhov," *Essays In Poetics* 31 (2006): 180–212.

[33] Radislav Lapushin, "The Chekhovian Intertext: Dialogue with a Classic," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 51, no. 1 (2009): 161–162.

[34] Tatiana Smorodinskaya, "Adapting Chekhovian Mood," *Post Script - Essays in Film and the Humanities* 23, no. 3 (2004): 74–86.

[35] Muratova's sound design, with its special focus on voices, cries, and whispers, is one of her trademarks in the Russian-language filmic tradition and is as central to her work as it to one of her named influences: Ingmar Bergman. In Bergman, however, the aural landscape is always aesthetictized, psychologized; in Muratova, it is bare, the growling yawp of the human animal. In one of her final interviews, Muratova claimed that the work of past masters, including that of Bergman, no longer pleased her exactly for being lacking in barbarism. This fundamental difference between Bergman and Muratova's authorial voices is audible in their sound design.

[36] Lilya Kaganovsky, "There Is No Acoustic Relation: Considerations on Sound and Image in Post-Soviet Film," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 19, no. 1 (2010): 65–87, https://doi.org/10.5250/quiparle.19.1.0065.

[37] Clare Elizabeth Challis, "'The Piano Is Not Tuned': Music in Two Films by Kira Muratova," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 9, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 40–60, https://doi.org/10.1080/17503132.2015.1011870.

[38] Helen Ferguson, "Silence and Shrieks: Language in Three Films by Kira Muratova," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 83, no. 1 (2005): 38–70.

[39] Irina Sandomirskaia, "A Glossolalic Glasnost and the Re-Tuning of the Soviet Subject: Sound Performance in Kira Muratova's Asthenic Syndrome," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 2, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 63–83, https://doi.org/10.1386/srsc.2.1.63_1.

[40] Zvonkine, *Kira Mouratova*.

Muratova's role in the development of Ukrainian national cinema is one of the welcome novelties in Muratova scholarship (Dabert,[41] Yekelchyk,[42] Chernetsky[43]) and articles by Nancy Condee[44] and Emma Widdis[45] – on the role of texture, clothes and animals – are among some of the most interesting work on the director available in English.

Other than the occasional infusions of Heidegger, Bergson, and Nietzsche in the works of many of the scholars above (especially in Iampol'skii, whose project is also deeply concerned with the philosophical mode of Muratova's cinema), discussions on Muratova have rarely been accompanied by extensive treatments of continental philosophy. The exceptions, however, occur in two doctoral dissertations: that of Sergey Toymentsev (Rutgers 2014) entitled *Deleuze and Russian Film: Transcendental Exercise of the Faculties on the (Post-) Totalitarian Screen*[46] – where Muratova's aesthetic is aligned with the concept of sound-image, underscoring the role of dissonance, repetition, and heteroglossia in her work – and that of James Callow[47] (University of Bath 2010), who, relying on Jean-Luc Nancy, argues that, in its representation of *agon* and its refusal to rely on standard epistemological modes of narration, *Asthenic Syndrome*[48] calls for a type of redemption that rises beyond platitudes and

[41] Dobrochna Dabert, "Cinema on a journey. The situation of Ukrainian cinematography after 1991," *Studia filmoznawcze* 35 (2014): 21–45.
[42] Serhy Yekelchyk, "Thinking Through Ukrainian Cinema," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 56, no. 1–2 (March 2014): 3–5, https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2014.11092751.
[43] Vitaly Chernetsky, "The Pleasures and Problems of Leonid Osyka's Zakhar Berkut: Poetic Cinema and Its Limits," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 56, no. 1–2 (2014): 43–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2014.11092754.
[44] Nancy Condee, *The Imperial Trace: Recent Russian Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195366761.001.0001/acprof-9780195366761.
[45] Emma Widdis, "Muratova's Clothes, Muratova's Textures, Muratova's Skin," *KinoKultura* 8 (2005).
[46] Sergey Toymentsev, "Deleuze and Russian Film: Transcenendental Exercise of the Faculties on (Post-) Totalitarian Screen" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2014), http://search.proquest.com/docview/1655001200/?pq-origsite=primo.
[47] James Callow, "A 'post-Historical' Cinema of Suspense: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Limits of Redemption" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2010), http://search.proquest.com/docview/1033191794/?pq-origsite=primo.
[48] *Astenicheskii sindrom* (*Asthenic Syndrome*), dir. Kira Muratova (1989; USSR: Odessa Film Studio, 1989).

psychological presuppositions.[49] As I write, at least one other full-length doctoral dissertation is being written on the work of Muratova: that of Irina Schulzki (LMU Munich) on the role of gesture in her oeuvre.[50]

This short review of the existing secondary literature on Muratova, thus, yields the following conclusion: that while dissonance and miscommunication have been correctly deemed primary themes in Muratova's filmic production, there has yet been no systematic exploration of the way in which her cinema thematizes what one might call the *problem of mutual interpretability among self-conscious subjects,* namely, the epistemological difficulties that arise in our attempts to understand ourselves and others. Accomplishing this is the goal of this dissertation. Employing radically different aesthetic and technical devices, I claim that the cinema of Kira Muratova, like that of Pippin's Hitchcock, functions as follows: it encourages knowledge of ourselves – Geist's self-knowledge, in Hegelese – as it deconstructs, thematizes and otherwise dissects the struggle for mutual interpretability in human interactions. Among other things, Muratova's films show us *why* it is difficult to understand ourselves and others, the historical and societal factors that influence our ability to know, and how our various social pathologies – our *uvlecheniia,*[51] for example – get in the way of our attempts at mutual recognition.

---

[49] Both Deleuze and Nancy have continued to be read as productive lenses into Muratova's work. Worthy of note, here, is Raymond De Luca's "Becoming Animal with Kira Muratova: Deleuze, Identity, and Animality in Muratova's films" (extract of a dissertation chapter delivered as paper at the Kira Muratova International Symposium, May 7th, 2021), Lida Oukaderova's "Kira Muratova's 'Second Class Citizens' and the Aesthetics of Collecting" (same event, May 14th, 2021), and Anne Eakin Moss's "Inoperative," the third chapter of her book *Only Among Women: Philosophies of Community in the Russian and Soviet Imagination,* 1860-1940, which includes a reading of Muratova's *Chekhovian Motifs* partially inspired on Nancy. Anne Eakin Moss, *Only Among Women: Philosophies of Community in the Russian and Soviet Imagination,* 1860-1940. (Chicago, Northwestern University Press, 2020).

[50] Irina Schulzki, "Kira Muratova: A Cinema of Gesture." (Forthcoming doctoral dissertation, LMU Munich).

[51] A Russian word that translates to "hobbies" or "pastimes" but that in the context of Muratova's eponymous film rings much darker, closer to something like "obsessions." (The film will be cited below under its usual English title, *Passions).*

The following questions – provided by Pippin in his analysis of Hitchcock – are a useful guide to the issues I take to be at the heart of Muratova's work:

> How is self-deceit possible? And again, a question that could be asked as a corollary […]: what does that phenomenon look like? What do we detect when we think we detect the presence of self-deceit, as opposed to deliberate fraudulence, or a lack of self-knowledge? How do we make ourselves intelligible to each other, especially when desire and interest make that very hard to do? How do we figure each other out and why in the most important situations of love, danger, and trust do we often seem so bad at it? What is romantic love; that is, does it exist, or is it a dangerous fantasy? And do we know it when we see it? How important is it in human life?[52]

As a way of accounting for his interest in Hitchcockean situations involving neither complete knowledge nor complete ignorance (of self and other), Pippin's analysis introduces the useful term "unknowingness." "Unknowingness" refers to anything along a spectrum of knowledge: from situations in which we form provisional views about the other only to see them partly confirmed and refuted, to deliberate deceit; from having to take action without full knowledge of responsibilities and commitments to the idealization and fantasy that permeates our relationships to ourselves and our loved ones (in particular with current or potential romantic partners).[53]

It is often in the tensions between who one takes oneself to be, who one is, and who the other takes one to be that conflicts and misunderstandings arise. The fact that each individual is also multiply aware of the mutability and reciprocity of this dynamic leads to an often mind-boggling reflexivity: clashes occur between one's understanding of who the other takes themselves to be, who the one takes the other to be, and how the other sees themselves; or one's understanding of the other's understanding of the one, how the other in fact sees the one, and how the one sees themselves, and so on. Adrift in this sea of unknowingness, our only safeguard is to attend not to what people say, but what they *do,*

[52] Robert B. Pippin, *The Philosophical Hitchcock,* 9.
[53] Ibid, 14.

since what people say is never completely trustworthy even when the speaker is sincere.[54] (Consider the relevance of this insight in the work of a director like Muratova, infamous for her chaotic and repetitive use of speech).[55]

Although unknowingness is not, as Pippin claims of Hitchcock, a condition of possibility of Muratova's world, questions of self-deceit, fantasy, desire, theatricality, unreliability of language, as well as multiply self-reflexive considerations of identity are perennial features of her film-philosophy. If in *Brief Encounters,*[56] such themes are thematized directly by the text – "You should love me blindly, with eyes half-closed," says Maksim to Valentina Ivanovna – in *Long Farewells,*[57] the self-opacity in Evgenia Vasilievna's relationship to her son Sasha (and vice versa) is of primary importance: the mother's fear of her son's parting is motivated by a trauma she is not fully conscious of – being abandoned by her ex-husband – until she interacts with a set of picture slides she projects on the wall. Through Evgenia Vasilevna and her slides, then, Kira Muratova meta-cinematically thematizes the very developments in self-knowledge she hopes her own cinema will incite.

Fantasy and perceived identity in romantic love are at the heart of *Getting to Know the Big Wide World*[58] and *Two in One.*[59] If in the former, the brutish Nikolai – understanding the very real fear of losing Liuba – begins to modify his behavior in an effort to align himself

---

[54] Ibid, 24.
[55] A critique of sincerity, of course, also plays a fundamental role in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness.* For the French philosopher, the very term can be equated with another fraught notion in epistemology of self-knowledge, namely "authenticity." "Authenticity," in Sartre, fails – that is, it crumbles under the weight of a form of duplicity he calls "bad faith" – insofar as it necessarily reifies human subjectivity. When construed as something like "falling into agreement with one's true self," sincerity qua authenticity is, for Sartre, necessarily compromised for it leads us to adopt one of two mistaken positions: taking our social role (as teachers, engineers, lawyers etc.) as coincidental with ourselves or believing that our "true selves" are entirely separate from our social commitments. In his typologies of "bad faith," thus, the existentialist-phenomenologist begins to sound like a dialectician: internal and external motivations for action cannot be separated from one another.
[56] Muratova, *Korotkie vstrechi* (*Brief Encounters*).
[57] *Dolgie provody* (*Long Farewells*), dir. Kira Muratova (1973; USSR: Odessa Film Studio).
[58] *Poznavaia belyi svet, Getting to Know the Big Wide World*), dir. Kira Muratova (1978; USSR: Lenfilm, 1978).
[59] *Dva v odnom* (*Two in One*), dir. Kira Muratova (2007; Ukraine: Sota Cinema Group, 2007).

with what he takes to be Liuba's idealized image of the truck-driver Misha – in the latter, Andrei Andreevich – who is forever fantasizing about sexual satisfaction with some beauty much younger than himself, is unable to come to terms with the fact that Alisa (Renata Litvinova) has no interest in sleeping with him on New Years' Eve. All of *Passions,*[60] perhaps, is an exploration of a single type of egotistical social pathology that gets in the way of self and other understanding: passion or obsession. Characters speak past each other because each is interested only in their own pastimes, be it photographing centaurs, horse-racing, or in the case of Lilya (played by an inspired Litvinova), dying.

Deceit – in its various iterations – is an absolute staple of Muratova's treatment of unknowningness. In this regard, the key works are, of course, *The Tuner*[61] – the plot of which describes a couple's attempt to take advantage of a pair of old ladies through personal charm and musical talent – and *Change of Fate,*[62] a Hitchcockean exploration of murder, passion and manipulation, where the main character, aware of the inherent racism and gender biases of the society in which she finds herself, self-consciously manipulates those around her to avoid being convicted for murder. The final scene of Muratova's final work, *Eternal Return,*[63] is also an investigation of deceit and competition. A film studio attempts to convince a key investor to commit to a project on the spot by fabricating a scene in which a rival investor – who is just one of the actors from the studio – threatens to outbid him.

In the subsequent chapters, I explore the way in which Muratova's films thematize each of the following "anxieties of unknowingness": deceit (Chapter I), self-opacity and self-deceit (Chapter II) and what I have termed, in a borrowing from Flaubert studies,

---

[60] *Uvlechen'ia* (*Passions*), dir. Kira Muratova (1994; Russian Federation/Ukraine, Nikola Film, 1994).
[61] *Nastroishchik* (*The Tuner*), dir. Kira Muratova (2004, Russian Federation/Ukraine: Pygmalion, 2004).
[62] *Peremena uchasti* (*Change of Fate*), dir. Kira Muratova (1987; USSR: Odessa Film Studios, 1987).
[63] Muratova, *Vechnoe vozvrashchenie (Eternal Return).*

Muratova's "kinobovarism," the way in which literary and filmic fantasies interfere in our attempts to properly make sense of the people around us (Chapter III). Each chapter engages in a close analysis of three of Muratova's films: **Chapter I** is devoted to *Three Stories, The Tuner,* and *Change of Fate;* **chapter II** to *Long Farewells, Passions,* and *Melody for a Street Organ;*[64] and **chapter III** to *Brief Encounters, Letter to America* and *Two in One.*

[64] *Melodiia dlia sharmanki* (*Melody for a Street Organ*), dir. Kira Muratova. (2008; Ukraine: Sota Cinema Group, 2008).

CHAPTER I

Deceit as Cinematic Problem: Ophelia (1997), *The Tuner* (2004), and *Change of Fate* (1987)

I. Introduction

Less involved, perhaps, than its cousin self-deceit, deception or fraudulence is not without philosophical complications. In its most basic form, "lying," it appears, at least at first glance, to be quite simple: a person A intentionally communicates something they know to be untrue to a person (or group of persons) B. Cases of this are, of course, familiar to us from everyday experience: if to the question "did you make your bed today?" a child, having not performed the task expected of her by her parents, responds affirmatively, then she deliberately employs verbal material to assert true what she knows is not the case: she lies. That the child acts in a deceitful manner, here, is difficult to deny, but why this form of deceit constitutes a lie is a question more difficult to settle. It is the truth-value of the statement itself, that it is false, that makes the utterance a lie? This does not seem to be the case. If person A were to say to person B "It is raining outside," and A *believes* that the statement is true even though no precipitation is in fact occurring at that time, A would scarcely be thought a liar. A is only lying, it seems, in the case where A claims "It is raining outside" while believing (or "knowing") it to be untrue.

That lying seems to involve knowingly uttering something verifiably false accords with our sensibilities of what the concept entails. If this were not so, politicians would not engage in numerous verbal contortions to ensure that they are not "technically lying" when avoiding questions they do not wish to answer. Consider, for instance, the following car sale described by philosopher Thomas Carson. The buyer asks the seller: "does the car overheat often?" and the seller responds, knowing full well that the car's temperature rises regularly,

"I drove through the Mojave Desert in this car and had no problem. The latter statement is true – the seller did indeed drive the car in the desert – but what he strategically "forgets" to mention is that this occurred four years earlier, before the appearance of the first symptoms of overheating. The reply, thus, is a truth, albeit a misleading one.

From interactions like these, Carson derives two initial prerequisites for lying in human interactions: 1) the utterance of a false statement (by which he means that a person expresses in language some proposition X; that X is false; and that X is uttered to another person or group of people); and 2) that the speaker thinks the uttered statement is false, probably false, or completely untrue.[1] Earlier in this same article, Carson considers yet another condition for lying that is satisfied by the car-salesman example (one he ultimately revises) that the false proposition X is communicated to another person with the *intention* of deceiving them. But even these conditions are fraught with difficulties as shown by a wonderfully intricate scenario proposed by Bruce Russell:

> I go fishing on a boat with a friend, John. He and I both catch fish at the same time. Although we don't realize it, our lines are crossed. I have caught a very big fish and John has caught a little one, but we mistakenly believe that I caught the small fish and John caught the big one. We throw the two fish back into the water. I go home thinking that I caught a small fish. When I return, my father, an avid fisherman, asks me how I did. I say that I caught a very large fish and threw it back into the water, thereby intending to deceive him about the size of the fish that I caught.[2]

Here, the speaker utters a statement to the father that, although intended to deceive turns out to have been true. Has the speaker lied? Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, the answer is yes. Although the truth value of the uttered statement has been reversed, the intention to deceive on the part of the deceiver – the fact that the first-person speaker knowingly and deliberately exaggerated his fishing prowess before his father – renders the statement deceitful regardless of its *actual* truth value. This is particularly clear if one imagines what the

[1] Ibid, 156-157.
[2] Bruce Russell in Thomas L. Carson, "Lying, Deception and Related Concepts," 155.

father's response might have been, had he discovered what the would-be deceiver was trying to do. If the "I" in Russell's example replied "What is the harm? The statement did turn out to be true," that would scarcely do as an adequate response, and the father would be right to feel his son had deceived him.

Sissela Bok and Bernard Williams, on the other hand, accept criteria 1-3 in their own definitions of lying, but include an additional one, namely, that lying can only be thought to occur in situations when the interlocutor has a "right to know the truth."[3] This further specification is aimed at accomplishing a number of things: first, and perhaps most important, it disqualifies as a lie most counter examples to the absolutist claim that "all lying is wrong," namely, cases of lies uttered for altruistic reasons. It also avoids problems with lies told under duress. If a thief, mid-robbery, asks me where my money can be found and I respond untruthfully, my action – under this fourth condition – is a justifiable lie since the thief had no right to know the truth.

As Carson indicates, the greatest problem posed with this account is that it puts the proverbial cart before the horse: in order to determine *whether* something is a lie, we are forced to wade the mire of moral philosophy in search of an adequate response to the question "in what circumstances does my interlocutor have a 'right' to know the truth." As a means of accounting for changes in context without depending on this condition, Carson adds his own fourth criterion for a lie, namely, that it occurs in situations where the "truth is warranted" from the speaker.[4] Warrant is defined by contrast to an adjacent notion: the promise. In the act of promising, the speaker commits to a future action, that is, "to make it the case that X." When warranting the truth of proposition X, however, one does not

[3] See Sissela Bok, *Lying.* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 14-15, Hugo Grotius in Bok, *Lying,* 263-6 and Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 98.
[4] Thomas L. Carson, "Lying, Deception and Related Concepts," 159, 165-170.

commit to making X true – to making it happen – but only to stand by the *truth* of X. Convention dictates that the truth is warranted in most situations, but the great advantage of inserting this criterion in the fabric of the lie is that it does a successful job of accounting for the unusual situations in which this requirement is lifted, that is, when we are so-to-speak "off the record." Irony, acting, storytelling, playing games, and special events or days like April Fool's can lead to situations where the truth-warranting paradigm is modified or altered. What the truth-warranty criterion also achieves is the possibility that the same statement be understood as warranting and not-warranting truth by different members of an audience (consider how borderline sarcasm on social media leads to radically different responses depending on how "honest*"* the speaker is taken to be).

The definition of lie we have in part derived, thus, is a revision of Carson's model in light of the crossed fishing lines scenario by Russell:

A person S tells a lie to another person S1 if:

1. S makes a statement X to S1;
2. S believes that X is false;
3. S states X in a context in which S warrants the truth of X to S1;
4. S does not take herself to be not warranting the truth of what she says to S1.

While lying plays an unusually privileged role in philosophical debates since Plato's γενναῖον ψεῦδος in *Republic* Book III – other notable instances being Kant's essay "Über ein vermeintes Recht aus Menschenliebe zu lügen" (1797)[5] or Montaigne's "Des menteurs"[6] – contemporary philosophers such as Clancy Martin and Robert C. Solomon, propose that it be understood as a special and particularly injurious subset of a much more prevalent form

[5] Immanuel Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie because of Philanthropic Concerns." Translated by James. W. Wellington. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981, 63-69).
[6] Michel de Montaigne, "On Liars" in *Essays*. Translated by J. M. Cohen. (London: Penguin Books, 1993, 28-33)

of deception. To quote Solomon's particularly colorful analogy (that foreshadows our discussion of Muratova's *Change of Fate,* below)*:*

> Lying […] is fully intentional and malicious, at least insofar as it willfully deprives another of something extremely important, the truth. But this presupposes a degree of autonomy, rationality, and transparency that just doesn't hold up to scrutiny. There are, of course, cold-blooded self-interested lies, knowing false answers to such direct questions as "Where were you last night?" and "Who ate all the cookies?" But one might consider the claim that such lies are a special case rather than a rule, like a cold-blooded murder-for-profit in the bloody complex of accidental, negligent, desperate and passionate homicides.[7]

If not the self-interested lie, then what constitutes, for Solomon, the paradigmatic case of deceit in human interactions? In my words (not his), this archetypical instance is "self-deceit from lying." Solomon proposes that – despite being artificially separated as distinct occurrences in this dissertation (in chapters 1 and 2 respectively) – deceit and self-deceit are, in fact, "entangled phenomena"[8] that mutually sustain and engender one another.

The path from deceit to self-deceit is perhaps most succinctly articulated by the early Nietzsche in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (1878):

> Bei allen grossen Betrügern ist ein Vorgang bemerkenswerth, dem sie ihre macht verdanken. Im eigentlichen Acte des Betruges unter all den Vorbereitungen, dem Schauerlichen in Stimme, Ausdruck, Gebärden, inmitten der wirkungsvollen Scenerie, überkommt sie der Glaube an sich selbst: dieser ist es, der dann so wundergleich und bezwingend zu den Umgebenden spricht... Selbstbetrug muss da sein, damit Diese und jene grossartig wirken. Denn die Menschen glauben an die Wahrheit dessen, was ersichtlich stark geglaubt wird.[9]

Each accomplished *Betrüger* says Nietzsche, becomes so entranced by the preparations, voices, sights, gestures and scenery of their confabulation, that they begin to believe in their own deception (or, as he writes, they become "overcome by belief in themselves," *überkommt sie der Glaube an sich selbst).* It is this practiced sincerity – an infusion of honesty that arises

---

[7] Robert C. Solomon, "Self, Deception, and Self-Deception in Philosophy," in *The Philosophy of Deception.* Edited by Clancy Martin. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 24).
[8] Ibid, 25.
[9] "With all great deceivers there is a noteworthy occurrence to which they owe their power. In the actual act of deception, with all its preparations, its enthralling voice, expression and gesture, in the midst of the scenery designed to give it effect, they are overcome by *belief in themselves:* it is this which then speaks so miraculously and compellingly to those who surround them… Self-deception has to exist if a grand *effect* is to be produced. For men believe in the truth of what is plainly strongly believed." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits.* Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 39-40).

from the lie – that allows a deceiver to powerfully move an interlocutor to take them *as* who they present themselves to be. When an actor walks on stage as Hamlet, he – framed by the graveyard and accompanied by all the appurtenances of the role such as Yorick's skull and royal garb – he is only effectively taken for the Danish prince if, at some level, the actor believes himself to *be* Hamlet. The need to deceive, thus, can occasion self-deceit.

Solomon is at his best, however, when discussing the reverse case: deceit engendered by self-deceit.[10] His claim, inspired at least in part by Hegel's practical philosophy, is as follows: since human intentions, motivations, predicated identities, and understandings of others are frequently opaque until given objective reality, that is, until enformed as action or made actual in interactions with others, then humans are prone to contaminate those around them with self-delusive fantasies by performing deeds that uphold these illusions. Though unintentional, this remains a form of pretense: person A believes to be speaking the truth to person B, but since A does not know or is self-deceived about themselves, B is given false information about what is the case. What is perhaps most unintuitive about this form of deceit (at first glance), is that it renders moot a common heuristic for detecting fabrications in human interactions: sincerity. In "deception from self-deceit," a person can *sincerely* believe that they are fit to be senator and can convince you of that, but if they exhibit gross incompetence after taking office, the delusional character of their earlier claims does not make *you* any less duped. The primary difference between this case and the intentional lie, then – if our imagined political leader possesses even a modicum of self-awareness – is that the illusory character of the senator's earlier statements will turn out to be revelatory *for them as well.*

[10] Robert C. Solomon, "Self, Deception, and Self-Deception in Philosophy," 23-25.

Thus far, then, we have established three working models of deceit: 1) the intentional "cold-blooded" lie; 2) self-deception from lying; and 3) lying from self-deceit. It is worth noting that although 1) and 3) are mutually exclusive, 2) follows definitionally from 3) while 1) and 2) can occur simultaneously. Put somewhat less schematically: the intentional cold-blooded liar can, in the act of performance, begin to believe their lie, while the self-deceived liar is, by definition, someone who believes in the truth of their deceit, that is, someone who does not think of themselves as deceiving at all.

Worth mentioning alongside this initial taxonomy of deceit is what one might think of as the "lie from cultural convention." This refers to a kind of deception demanded of or expected from a person by a social situation unfolding in a determined cultural context. Perhaps the most familiar instance of this (in the framework of American cultural norms of interaction) is the socially intelligent reply to the question: "How are you doing?" An individual may be tired, their computer hard drive may have failed erasing the first draft of their dissertation manuscript, their feet may hurt, but still, the appropriate answer to the question, for the sake of politeness, is something in the ballpark of "Fine, thanks." According to norms of interaction dictated by the culture, a lengthy, elaborate explanation of suffered woes might be appropriate for a friend, but is out of place for an acquaintance or professional colleague. Considering the almost required character of this lie, does behaving in this way constitute deceit? In purely abstract terms one might be inclined to say yes. The individual is still uttering something knowingly untrue to another; and yet this formalist reading becomes wholly artificial when one remembers that the social interpretation of an action is as much a part of the act-description of the occurrence as the truth-value of the statement itself. Since, in this particular cultural set up, offering a perfunctory response to

"How are you doing?" is not morally censurable, acting in such a way is not properly understood as deceptive.

The "lie from cultural convention" – like Carson's truth-warranty criterion – unveils, thus, a crucial facet of all deceit: that it cannot be isolated from its social context. Proper analysis of deceit, thus, is incomplete without some consideration of the environment in which it occurs and the way the action is "read" by a society charged with a particular history and social practice. To speak the language of Hegel's practical philosophy, action cannot be divorced from the *ethical life* of the society in which it unfolds.[11]

The importance of "context" in deception is equally confirmed by the work of behavioral psychologists. Paul Ekman's work,[12] for example, which is primarily dedicated to the detection of micro-expressions that signal lying and deceit, emphasizes that adequate interpretation of those signs – easily identifiable in slow-motion footage but also visible to the trained eye – requires an appreciation of four variables: *the nature of the conversational exchange,* that is, whether the interaction is a first meeting, an informal conversation, an interview or an interrogation; the *history* of the relationship between the parties, that is, what has transpired in the conversation itself, in previous contact between the interlocutors, and what each person expects their future relationship to be; the speaker's *turn,* or whether the micro-expression surfaces when the speaker is listening or speaking; and the so-called *congruence* of the micro-expression, that is, whether it contradicts or affirms the speaker (or listener's) accompanying speech content, voice, gestures, and posture. For Ekman, then, certain motions can indicate potential *hot spots* for deceit (to use his own term), but no

---

[11] G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right.* Translated by H. N. Nisbet. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[12] Paul Ekman, "Lie Catching and Microexpressions" in *The Philosophy of Deception.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 130-131).

expression can be labeled a sure-fire mark of lying without awareness of broader social and contextual conditions.

The category "bullshit" is another important item in the spectrum of deceit. Its theorist, Harry Frankfurt, explains the concept by differentiating it from such adjacent notions as "humbug" and the "deliberate lie."[13] "Humbug," says Frankfurt (relying on the work of Max Black) can be defined as "deceptive misrepresentation, short of lying, especially by pretentious word or deed, of someone's own thoughts, feelings or attitudes."[14] It is, accordingly: 1) similar to lying insofar as it is usually deliberate; 2) often accompanied by pretentiousness (though this is by no means a necessary condition for its existence); and 3) represents a mischaracterization of an individual's thoughts in a more than trivial, definitional manner. This last point requires parsing. Any deliberate lie, one might argue, entails misrepresentation of two things: the truth-value of the uttered statement and the mental state of the deceiver ("what the deceiver is thinking about").[15] When person A falsely pronounces the fateful phrase "I love you" to person B, they commit a double deception: not only do they mischaracterize how they feel about the other (they do not in fact love them), but they misrepresent themselves before that person. Person B takes A to be the sort of person that loves B when that is, in fact, not the case. This structural second-order deceit, says Frankfurt, cannot be what is meant by "misrepresentation of someone's thoughts, feelings, or attitudes" in humbug; rather, the phrase indicates that humbug is designed primarily to give its audience not a false understanding of a particular phenomenon (as in a lie), but a fake impression of the speaker themselves. The truth-value of what is actually said,

[13] Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Bullshit.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
[14] Max Black in Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Bullshit,* 6.
[15] This is, of course, not the case when the utterance is *about* the mental state of the speaker. In that case, the first order and second order lies collapse into one.

then, is of no consequence to the speaker. Frankfurt's example is the Fourth of July orator who bombastically discusses their "blessed country" whose "Founding Fathers revolutionized government for all of humankind."[16] This is an instance of humbug not because the speaker believes what they are saying is false – they do not – but because they could not care less about what the audience thinks about the United States government and its Founding Fathers. What is of utmost importance is the audience's impression of the *speaker*: he or she wants to be taken as a patriotic exemplar for all those in attendance.

This blanket disregard for the truth-value of utterances (and a consequent privileging of self-presentation) is, in Frankfurt's account, the biggest point of contact between "humbug" and "bullshit." When "bullshitting," the speaker is absolutely unconnected with a concern for truth. The bullshit utterance is not conducive to the enterprise of properly describing reality; rather, it is a kind of mindless repetition, a making-up that has no regard for how things actually stand. Bullshit, then, occurs when someone is engaged in an activity where the distinction between what is true and false is crucial, but the speaker has no interest in the truth. [17]This is why, in Frankfurt's account, bullshit can be more pernicious than lying: when uttering a deliberate lie, the speaker is at least committed (by dialectical negation) to the truth; bullshit, on the other hand, begs the very question of veracity.

In bluffing, too, the problem of ethical life is pervasive. As with the "lie from cultural conventions," determining the context in which it takes place is imperative for establishing both 1) whether bluffing is morally censurable; and 2) whether it constitutes a form of

[16] Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Bullshit,* 16-18.
[17] Ibid, 33.

deceit. In his article "Deceit in War and Trade," William Ian Miller[18] begins his account of deception in war with the following quote from Sun Tzu:

> All warfare is based on deception; therefore when capable, feign incapacity; when active, inactivity. When near make it appear that you are far away; when far away that you are near. Offer the enemy a bait to lure him.[19]

As he points out, following the advice above is often easier said than done: your enemy is also reading Sun Tzu. The deceit characteristic of war, then, the bluff – a masquerading of one's military hand – initiates a game-theoretical scenario where military leaders try to outwit one another. The same scenario occurs, Miller suggests, in sports and games where a person faces off against one or more opponents. Feinting and disguising intent are primary features of boxing, soccer, football, fencing, car-racing, poker, Risk and others. Within these games, deceit is not only the norm but, in the case of dribbling in soccer can even be aesthetically pleasing.[20] This means that within the *Sittlichkeit* of these games, deceit or bluffing is harmless. Miller claims that bluffing in war unfolds according to a similar code, and Carson extends this account to business negotiations. As long as the opponent is playing by the same rules, mischaracterizing one's position in such a setting is not morally censurable.[21]

"Spinning" and the "half-truth" are notions related to but different from deceit. According to Carson, we say that people spin stories when they are "strongly disposed to place a particular interpretation on them."[22] The paradigmatic case of the spin is the politician or candidate who frames certain stories to make themselves look best while making their opponents look corrupt. Spinned interpretations, says Carson, are usually biased and unreliable but need not be incorrect. This is visible in the most common way of

---

[18] William Ian Miller, "Deceit in War and Trade," in *Philosophy of Deception.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 49-66).
[19] Sun Tzu in William Ian Miller, "Deceit in War and Trade", 50.
[20] Ibid, 50-51.
[21] See Thomas L. Carson, "Deception and Withholding Information in Sales," *Business Ethics Quarterly,* 11(2), 2011: 275-306.
[22] Thomas L. Carson, "Lying, Deception and Related Concepts," 186.

spinning events, namely, by asserting "half-truths." The half-truth, for Carson, is defined as a "true statement… that selectively emphasizes facts that tend to support a particular interpretation or assessment of an issue and selectively ignore, or minimize, other relevant facts that tend to support contrary assessments."[23] One example is the YouTube videogame reviewer who (have been paid by the videogame company) analyzes a new release's features with an eye to what is good, while omitting the game's shortcomings. Another is that of the statistician who omits significant data from the set to confirm their thesis about the phenomenon described. Narratives involving spin, Carson claims, are misleading if they advance unreasonable interpretations of events and incline others to accept them; they are deceptive if the "spinner" knows or believes that the interpretation they defend is implausible or unreasonable. When spin concerns our state of mind (how to interpret events), it usually involves lying, but it is, as Carson states, always reason enough to call into question one's intellectual honesty.[24]

I present this panoramic view of the nature of deceit and self-deceit in disciplinary philosophy as a way of preparing what is the fundamental claim of this chapter, namely, that the cinematic work of Kira Muratova offers an important contribution to this debate in a uniquely aesthetic mode of expression. At times affirming, at times challenging some of the presuppositions of the philosophers cited above, Muratova's work – although not engaged in discursive philosophizing of any kind – can be thought to articulate coherent responses to such philosophical problems as the nature of paradigmatic deceit, the relationship between truth-warranty and self-presentation, and the ties between fraudulence and social context in a way that sheds light on the phenomena themselves. If in "Ophelia*,"*[25] the second part of her

[23] Ibid, 187.
[24] Ibid.
[25] *Ofeliia* in *Tri istorii* (*Three Stories),* dir. Kira Muratova (1997; Russian Federation/Ukraine, NTV-Profit, 1997).

triptych *Three Stories*, Muratova challenges the primacy of the deceiver in situations of mistaken self-representation in her presentation of deception as primarily "second-order," namely, in which the burden of falsity lies with an *interlocutor* who "opens themselves up" to manipulation through poor reasoning, in *The Tuner* (2004)[26] the relationship between deceit and art – of truth-warranting and not-truth warranting performativity – is one of intermingling, leading viewers to question the ways in which standard features of filmmaking, such as soundtrack and genre attribution pave the way to error in cinematic interpretation. Finally, in *Change of Fate* (1987),[27] Muratova explores the ontology of the cinematic image by presenting viewers with scenes that never happen, that is, with images heavily distorted by the subjective experiences of its lead character, Maria. These force us to – like the jurors in the criminal trial that lies at the heart of the work – consider how we ourselves might be deceived by the film, as well as to examine the importance of ethical life in providing an apt context for deceit to thrive. In particular, Muratova encourages us to consider how racism and gender relations in an unnamed central Asian locale sets the stage for the successful performance of innocence and subsequent evasion of justice of Maria, a white woman guilty of a passionate crime.

II. "Ophelia" (1997)

Hoping to circumvent the financial difficulties that had plagued the production history of her earlier post-Soviet films, in 1995-6, Muratova chooses to experiment with the multi-part work, the first of its kind in her oeuvre. The project sought to deviate from her past cinematic trajectory in its exploration of new genre possibilities. According to

[26] Muratova, *Nastroishchik* (*The Tuner*).
[27] Muratova, *Peremena uchasti* (*Change of Fate*).

Zvonkine, Muratova asked her colleagues to write her screenplays focusing on one particular theme: that of crime without punishment, violence without consequence. The plan soon took the form of a tryptic titled *Sad Stories* (*Grustnye istorii*) in which three independent narratives were united by a common theme: death.[28]

In the opening text, titled "Boiler House n. 6" ("Kotel'naia n. 6") as a nod to Chekhov's "Ward no. 6," a man named Tikhomirov (played by Sergei Makovetsky), carrying a wardrobe, arrives at the boiler house of a zoo to visit his friend Gena. Alluding to the long-standing tradition of Soviet artists employed in menial jobs, Gena is, we quickly discover, an aspiring Futurist poet, and as Tikhomirov complains about an annoying neighbor of his, Gena begins to – creatively, poetically – help him brainstorm ways to get rid of her. When Tikhomirov ultimately opens the wardrobe, revealing the body of a woman (the selfsame neighbor) inside, the true motive for Tikhomirov's visit is revealed: he has come to Gena in the hopes that the latter might help him dispose of the body. Despite Gena's aesthetic enthusiasm for violence communicated earlier in the film, when faced with the reality of the corpse, he, to his own chagrin, finds himself horrified, and the story comes to an end without any clear decision about the body's ultimate fate.

"Boiler House n. 6" was the first episode of *Three Stories* to be filmed – the original title was ultimately found to be too sentimental – but not long afterwards (by December of 1996), the project came to a halt due to lack of funds. It was only with the joint contributions of Profit, NTV-Profit, Sudzi Film from Odessa Film Studio, and support from both the Ministry of Art and Culture of Ukraine and Roskomkino that *Three Stories* was completed.[29] The second story, "Ophelia," is written and starred by Renata Litvinova. Ofa

[28] Zvonkine, *Un cinéma de la dissonance,* 125-128.
[29] Ibid.

(Litvinova herself) works at the archive of a maternity hospital and aspires to exact a kind of vigilante justice on all mothers who abandon their children upon birth, including her own. The story features two murders: that of Ofa's mother, which concludes the narrative, and that of Tanya (Natalia Buzko), who, with no guilty conscience, renounces her newborn child shortly after giving birth. The third and final story, titled "The Little Girl and Death" is written by Vera Storozheva and stars famed actor Oleg Tabakov in his first collaboration with Muratova in a feature-length film. (He had, importantly, worked with the director once before as the star of her 1958 *Spring Rain,* her VGIK graduation film).[30] This episode recounts the story of a little girl – named Murlykina (also the actress' last name, derived from the Russian verb "to purr," *murlykat'*) – who kills an elderly man (Tabakov) by serving him rat poison with his medicine.

In "Ophelia," the complex interweaving of social norms, intent, and outward expression of personality is announced as early as the establishing shot of the film. The work begins with a large staircase, crowned by a statue, through which a group of doctors and nurses descends, conversing and removing their facemasks. For the physicians at the end of their shifts, the moment is one of transition between personas, a move from a professional identity, that of the healthcare provider, to a more familial or private self, a metamorphosis that is underscored by the unveiling of the face beneath the mask. Ofa, however, is first introduced as she walks up the staircase, opposing the flow of traffic, while putting *on* her protective equipment. In formally distinguishing Ofa from her surroundings, Litvinova's acting and Muratova's shot composition signal not only the thematic importance of masking and unmasking for the plot to follow – a veritable investigation on the logic of deceit – but also represents, as we come to understand later in the film, a kind of transgression. In

[30] *Vesennii Dozhd'* (*Spring* Rain), dir. Kira Muratova and Aleksandr Muratov, (1958; Moscow: VGIK, 1958).

donning the mask as she prepares to enter the maternity ward, she, unlike the doctors, does not merely step into another authentic dimension of her self, but is engaged in a mode of performative concealment. Ofa works in the archival division of the hospital, has no training or experience in delivering children and thus has, under ordinary circumstances, no reason to wear a mask or be in the ward at all. Ofa's need to hide intent, therefore – by following the expectations of behavior and dress in the ward – is what motivates her masquerade, the film's originary act of deceit.

That Ofa's purpose in entering the ward is not entirely harmless comes into view in her initial conversation with Tanya (Natalia Buzko). Restless, Ofa sits next to Tanya on the bed, removes her mask, signaling a temporary shutting off of her performative persona, and says:

> OFA: Where is your child, Tanya? Did they take it away? Well, how could… What did you decide? What are you thinking now? Tell me right away. You should not be quiet. Don't be quiet, don't be quiet, otherwise everything will turn on you, I know. Tanya, Tanya, Tanya, Tanechka, don't do what I'm advising you against. I am your friend, for now, do not make me the opposite. Listen to me, only me, only to my voice. Don't listen to anyone else, only to my voice, Tanya.[31]

The interchange is hardly a conversation; Tanya remains quiet throughout, aloof to Ofa's attempts to make sense of her decision to give up her newborn child. As so often in Muratova's oeuvre, the most visible manifestation of her characters' inability to understand one another is conveyed through gesture: when Ofa moves to hold Tanya's hand, she abruptly recoils, severing, with a flicker of the elbow, any attempt at contact **(Figure 1)**. That Ofa's presence is subversive is further highlighted when another woman, eating an apple,

[31] Muratova, *Ofeliia* in *Tri istorii* (*Three Stories*). Original text: ОФА: Где твой ребеночек, Таня? Унесли? Ну, как ты…Что ты решила? Что ты сейчас думаешь, скажи сразу. Ты не должна молчать. Не молчи, не мочи, иначе все обернется против тебя, я раз знаю. Таня, Таня, Таня, Танечка, не делай того, что я не советую тебе. Я пока тебе друг и не превращай меня в обратное. Слушайся меня, слушайся только меня одну, один мой голос. Никого не слушай только мой голос, Таня.

enters the room. As soon her gaze falls upon Tanya and Ofa, the latter hurries to cover herself up – with the mask – a motion that disrupts the tête-à-tête.

Figure 1, Still from Ophelia **(Muratova, 1997)**

As an articulation of the logic of deceit, the scene introduces a crucial philosophical paradox. On the one hand, Ofa is honest with Tanya about her intention to punish her if she insists in refusing the child. The threat is voiced with great clarity ("I am your friend, for now, do not make me the opposite")[32] and the murder that ensues suggests it is not empty. Most viewers of the film would agree, however, that the concrete carrying out of Ofa's crime only succeeds because she engages in actions that are unproblematically deceitful towards Tanya, such as lying and misrepresentation (actions we might call, following Solomon, "cold-blooded"). That Ofa announces her intent to violence at the outset, thus, complicates the film's account of what it means to deceive. Muratova's film poses the following philosophical problem: can any future temporal interaction $T_2, T_3, T_4...$ between subjects A and B be *properly* called deceitful, if at an earlier time T_1, subject A tells B the truth of what they will be up to in T_2, T_3? Put differently, does deceit require *absolute* misrepresentation of intent (at every T), or can it still operate despite a clear and truthful articulation of avowed intent at an earlier moment in time?

[32] Ibid. Original text: ОФА: Я пока тебе друг и не превращай меня в обратное.

"Ophelia" seems to propose a particular version of the latter: although Tanya, in one sense, "knows" of Ofa's intention to punish her after T_1, her failure to see that intent as operative in each subsequent T – because she does not take the threat seriously, perhaps – is the condition of possibility for deceit. In "Ophelia," the paradigmatic case of deception, thus, is passive: it arises from 1) Ofa's awareness that Tanya has failed to correctly assess her intent at every interaction following T_1 and 2) from Ofa's failure to *correct* that misunderstanding as it comes into view in Tanya's actions and words. The film, thus, unifies deceit and omission: left to its own devices, subject B mistakenly reads A, providing A with an opportunity for personal gain in allowing the mistake to persist.[33]

When, later in the film, Ofa comes to the realization that despite her warning, Tanya has decided to abandon her child, Muratova presents us with a close-up of Ofa's face that represents, for the film, a point of no return: seething with hatred for Tanya's disregard for her maternal responsibilities, Ofa decides to kill **(Figure 2)**. The scenes that follow, thus, assume the idiom of suspense as Ofa first stalks and ultimately strangles Tanya in the dark entryway of a building.

[33] Muratova's view on deceit, in this way, resonates with that Bernard Williams in his essay "Truth, Politics and Self-Deception": "We then encounter another, and less discussed, question of where the fault in this transaction is located. The standard picture is that the fault lies with the self as deceiver – that we should concentrate on self-deception as a failure of sincerity. But at the ordinary social, interpersonal level, when there are deceivers around, it is at least as important to improve the caution of the potentially deceived as it is to censure the motives of the deceivers. *The virtue of accuracy in listeners is as important as sincerity in informants.* [Emphasis mine] If there is such a thing as self-deception, the same, surely, should apply to it: our failures as self-deceived are to be found more significantly, in fact, in our *lack of epistemic prudence as victims* than in our insincerity as perpetrators." Bernard Williams, "Truth, Politics and Self-Deception" in *In the Beginning was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, 156).

Figure 2, Still from Ophelia (Muratova, 1997)

As Ofa pursues Tanya from a distance, however, Muratova succeeds in translating the emotional logic undergrounding her urge for vigilante punishment in one extraordinary shot: as Tanya makes her way through rubble and shattered houses, she steps over the mangled body of a baby doll, stopping to pick up a sparkling ring lying adjacent to it **(Figure 3)**.

Figure 3, Still from Ophelia (Muratova, 1997)

The image embodies Tanya's inability to properly account for – or *see* – the ethical implications of her decisions: the doll, like the newborn child, is overlooked for a trifle, an image intended to spark a sense of outrage that mirrors Ofa's own. Although the shot is not obviously "first-personal" – Ofa is standing further away – the fact that the whole sequence

is marked by a form of voyeuristic sight allows viewers to feel the weight of Ofa's subjectivity in the shot composition.

When Ofa, at last, approaches Tanya to begin her trickery, it is Tanya that initiates conversation by asking for a cigarette: "Treat me to one as well."[34] In reply, Ofa lights Tanya's cigarette slowly, remaining completely silent. Tanya continues: "Kind Ofa, very kind, only you."[35] Tanya's intent, here, is presumably to thank Ofa for the cigarette, but the form of the utterance suggests something more: a labeling of Ofa's character as "kind." The dramatic irony at the heart of the interaction makes it clear that Tanya has no right to this inference: the cigarette is offered as part of a murder plot, which, if carried through, would render Ofa decidedly "not kind." Deceit begins to come into view, thus, without active misdirection from Ofa; rather it is her interlocutor's overhasty judgment that leads to a misunderstanding about the kind of interaction unfolding between them.

Muratova rhymes this moment with a later scene in which Albina and Elvira, nurses who work with Ofa in the hospital archive, commit the same oversight. Albina asks Ofa: "Aren't you hungry? Or tired? You are always so cheerful, brisk and obliging"[36] to which Elvira adds, "Yes, such a kind girl."[37] Ofa's response, an attempt to charm the women into giving her access to the archive files, is difficult to place. She says:

> OFA: I like handling documents. For example, in 1970 Kosmatova, Zhanna disowned her first-born. One year later the boy Petya was adopted by the Topols, at address 71 Aviation St.[38]

---

[34] Ibid. Original text: ТАНЯ: Угостите меня тоже.

[35] Ibid. Original text: ТАНЯ: Добрая Офа, очень добрая, только вы одна.

[36] Ibid. Original text: АЛЬБИНА: Неужели вы не проголодались? Неужели вы не устали? Всегда такая веселая, бодрая, услужливая.

[37] Ibid. Original text: ЭЛЬВИРА: Добрая девушка.

[38] Ibid. Original text: ОФА: Я люблю касаться бумаг. Например, в 70-ом году некая Косматова, Жанна отказалась от своего мальчика первенца. Его назвали Петей и через год отдали в семью Тополь по адресу улица Авиационная, дом 71.

Here, both Elvira and Albina instantly sense that something ominous lies beneath Ofa's love for personal data. They censor her: "Quiet. That is not professional. Classified information. What if someone were suddenly eavesdropping? Walls have ears"[39] In a line that is somewhat reminiscent of Andrei Bely's nominalization of the word "suddenly" in the modernist novel *Petersburg,* Ofa responds:

> OFA: Suddenly, Albina Vasilievna, never happens. All things are interhooked, have their questions and effects, and there is fate, and if you don't resist it, it takes you in a particular direction, and all your behaviors come through, those you were programmed from the start, and they even help to protect you. […] While you don't fulfill that mission, nothing will happen to you.[40]

Ofa's eloquence earns the key to the archive in a line that encapsulates the epistemological drama unfolding in the nurses' minds: "I disagree, but here is the key."[41] A form of deceit can be thought to operate in this scene only insofar as Albina and Elvira deceive *themselves*. From her love of documents to her belief in human flourishing as the fulfillment of a preprogrammed plan, Ofa tells the nurses nothing that is untrue about herself. The nurses are, in fact, only "deceived by Ofa" insofar as Ofa does not actively assist them in choosing between competing readings of her character. Torn between "Ofa is kind, nice, cheerful and obliging" and "Ofa may have a sordid goal in wanting access to the archive" they wrongly choose the former, a decision that has radical consequences for the remainder of the film. With the key in hand, Ofa hides it between her two palms and lays her head over them like a child ready for bed, a gesture that encapsulates Ofa's need for motherly love and the dynamics of hiding and revealing that are characteristic of both the film and the interaction

---

[39] Ibid. Original text: АЛЬБИНА/ЭЛЬВИРА: Тише, тише. Это не профессионально. Это же секретные данные. А вдруг кого-нибудь прослушает? И у стен есть уши.
[40] Ibid. Original text: ОФА: Вдруг, Альбина Васильевна, никогда ничего не бывает. Все закрючкованно, имеет свои заделы и свои запросы. Есть судьба. И если ты ей не противоречишь, она несет тебя в заданном направлении, к всем тем поступкам, на которые ты запрограммирован изначально. И даже помогает, и сохраняет тебя, Эвелина. […] И пока ты это не выполнишь, ничего с тобой не случится.
[41] Ibid. Original text: АЛЬБИНА: Вот вам ключ, я не согласна, но вот вам ключ.

with the nurses **(Figure 4)**. The gesture also importantly looks forward to the entanglement of rest and death that brings the work to a close: the murder of Ofa's mother, Aleksandra.

Figure 4, Still from Ophelia **(Muratova, 1997)**

It is also worth noting, here, that the "interlocutor-centered" deceit championed by Muratova in "Ophelia" is very much a presence in *Hamlet,* perhaps the crucial literary inspiration for the film. The clearest instance of it occurs when Hamlet writes Ophelia a "love letter," presumably part of his plot to put up an "antic disposition" so that no one will see through his desire to murder his uncle Claudius.[42] Hamlet's letter reads: "Doubt thou the stars are fire. Doubt that the sun doth move. Doubt truth to be a liar, but never doubt I love."[43] Both Polonius and Ophelia, here, perceive the letter as an honest declaration of love. An anachronistic reading of the text – one accounting for the astronomical discoveries contemporary not to the 14th and 15th century Danish court, but to Shakespeare's own 16th century – points, however, in the exact opposite direction.[44] If to "doubt that the stars are fire" or "that the sun doth move" is perceived not as a violation of scientific common sense,

[42] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet.* Ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor. (London: Arden, 2006), 1.5.169-170.
[43] Ibid, 2.2.114-117.
[44] Despite admitting that the Copernican theory was slow in gaining currency in Elizabethan England, W. G. Guthrie in "The Astronomy of Shakespeare" suggests that Shakespeare could have had some familiarity with it through Giordano Bruno. I quote: "Bruno is known to have had contacts with members of the court of Queen Elizabeth, and through these it is possible that Shakespeare derived some knowledge of the new doctrine." W. G. Guthrie, "The Astronomy of Shakespeare." *The Irish Astronomical Journal,* 6(6), June 1964, p. 201.

but as reliable and current scientific thinking, then the parallelism appears to go the other way, that is, to indicate that Ophelia should *indeed* be doubting the truth of Hamlet's intentions towards her. A voice from the future, Hamlet's form of deceit here, is identical in structure to that which one might call *Ophelic,* in Muratova's film. He presents a true albeit ambiguous picture of himself and his intentions before Ophelia and Polonius, allows his interlocutors to err in textual analysis – in our Copernican reading, Hamlet is counting on being misunderstood, after all, Shakespeare has given him privileged access to science unavailable to his contemporaries – but utters no overt lie that can be immediately falsifiable. Like in Muratova's "Ophelia," thus, the burden of deceit, here, is on the interlocutors who, in being too taken with their own contemporary interpretation of astronomical phenomena, are encouraged to stray from the truth. In Shakespeare's play, of course, the crucial moment of correction comes, for Ophelia, in the most ruthless way: when the Danish prince bids her go to a nunnery.[45]

We return to the film. It is worth noting that in the scene with Tanya, there is a clear attempt, on Ofa's part, to correct Tanya's mistaken reading of her character. After Tanya calls her "sweet, sweet Ofa", Ofa's subsequent line reads, fascinatingly: "I would not have called myself kind, I would have called myself humane."[46] The irony, completely lost on Tanya, is that Ofa establishes a distinction between "goodness" and "humaneness" precisely to make space for violence. If, the argument goes, it is inhumane to abandon your newborn child and feel no burden of responsibility after doing so, then vigilante retribution might be in order as a way reinstituting "humaneness." Ofa's correction, here, exacerbates the misinterpretation element at the heart of deceit in "Ophelia"*:* the whole problem has been

[45] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* 3.1.115-129.

[46] Muratova, *Ofeliia* in *Tri istorii* (*Three Stories*). Original text: ОФА: Я бы не назвала себя доброй, я бы назвала себя человечной.

diverted away from whether Ofa is good or humane and towards the unmatching definitions of that humaneness. For Tanya, who despite having been warned, is clearly not expecting to be in mortal peril by talking to Ofa, humaneness precludes violence; for Ofa, it does not. The conclusion of the episode emphasizes the point once more: their conversation is interrupted by a group of destitute women who ask to be given cigarettes, and after being granted their wish, replicate the fallacy of "overhasty" judgment. They, much like Tanya, call the two women "Very kind, very kind, very humane, very humane."[47] Why include this episode, here? As elsewhere in Muratova's oeuvre, the secondary incident expands the issue by presenting her protagonists' failures as a wider social pathology. In showing a series of unnamed characters falling prey to the same mistake as Elvira, Albina, and Tanya, Muratova, inductively, makes the claim that Ophelic, other-directed deceit is paradigmatic, a statement about the logic of the phenomenon itself.

It is only at this point in the interaction that Ofa tells Tanya her first "cold-blooded lie": she claims to want to change out of her stockings and, for this reason, searches around town for a dark entryway. Her true aim, of course, is to lure Tanya out of the streets; otherwise, she will be unable to kill her without being seen. After a few entryways are found unsatisfactory for this purpose, either because they are already occupied, or because, as Ofa says, she would not feel comfortable undressing in that kind of place – we know, however, that she is fact concerned that the entryway is still too public to commit a crime – they find a suitable locale after being accosted by an unknown German man. To better cover up her trail, Ofa then engages in a third mode of deception: she puts on gloves and tells Ofa that she is doing so in order not to puncture her stockings with her nails. Tanya pays no attention

[47] Ibid. Original text: ЖЕНЩИНЫ: Добрые, добрые, очень добрые, очень человечные, очень человечные.

to this. After asking Tanya to hold her bag and turn around, Ofa removes her stockings, wraps them around her hand, and strangles Tanya to death whispering: "it doesn't hurt, it doesn't hurt, it doesn't hurt."[48] Ofa, therefore, makes use of explicit lying on only three occasions leading up to the strangling of Tanya; in every instance before it, lack of correction and self-deceit on Tanya's own part are primarily responsible for her demise.

The dynamics of interlocutor-centered deceit are also manifest in Ofa's interaction with the doctor. After she leaves the ward where she has informed Tanya that there will be consequences if she insists on refusing the child, the doctor approaches her and attempts to court her by saying: "I so fell in love with you, with your voice, your gait. One can always identify it from afar, you are always alone, mysterious Ofa. Where could one invite you? Where do you like to go?"[49] There is no prelude to this interaction whatsoever; in fact, this is how the doctor begins his attempt to woo Ofa, with a series of statements about her character for which he has, it seems, very little supporting evidence. Ofa's body language and verbal behavior, here, seems to indicate that she is not particularly interested in romance, and yet, it is the mise-en-scène that communicates what is on her mind: behind them is an image of the Madonna and child, a stand in for Ofa's own obsession with Tanya's rejection of her motherly duties **(Figure 5)**. Throughout the scene, the doctor is barely visible, for Ofa; the only question that gets a lively response from her is what literary character she likes best. Her answer, naturally enough, is "Ophelia, innocent and drowning, there is no one purer and more beautiful."[50]

---

[48] Ibid. Original text: ОФА: Не больно, не больно, не больно.
[49] Ibid. Original text: ДОКТОР: Я так полюбил вас, ваш голос, вашу походку, по которой вас можно определить из далека. Вы всегда одна, загадочная Офа. Куда вас можно пригласить? Куда вы любите ходить?
[50] Ibid. Original text: ОФА: Я люблю Офелию, невинную и утонувшую, и нет прекраснее и чище ее.

Figure 5, Still from Ophelia (Muratova, 1997)

(As we will see in chapter 3 below, these types of identifications with literary characters are particularly important in Muratova's works, and are themselves a threat to epistemology of self-knowledge). It is only at this point in the conversation that Ofa agrees to go on a date with the doctor. Why she accepts is not entirely clear – she does not seem to truly want to go. Thus far, then, Ofa's interaction with the doctor appears nearly devoid of deceit. She has refused to engage in his flirtation or respond to his romantic interest verbally or otherwise, but accepts going on the date – perhaps she is reconsidering her initial reaction? He, however, takes this as a hopeful sign.

The central interaction between Ofa and the doctor, however, occurs during the date itself. The dialogue, here, is structured primary as a monologue by Ofa in which she answers many of the questions she was asked by the doctor in the previous scene. This delay between question-asking and answering emphasizes the chasm between the characters and a kind of consuming solipsism on both ends. The doctor's empty inquiring and Ofa's mechanical responses – all of which seem true but demonstrate little feeling – characterize their inability to find a common language. Her complaints about her previous hospital job – hatred of the neighborhood, her colleagues' interest in her personal life – are certainly not lies, but it is again the mise-en-scène that suggests that something more menacing than a mere failure to

connect is at play, here. The date is set in a location that is sided by large columns. As the characters walk through the columned path, barely facing one another, the camera lurks furtively behind the pillars, hiding the characters from view at regular intervals **(Figure 6)**.

Figure 6, Still from Ophelia **(Muratova, 1997)**

The dynamic of hiding and revealing underscores our suspicion that Ofa might have reasons for being on a date that have little to do with the doctor, that is, that she herself is masking intent as she answers the doctor's questions. This instinct gets confirmed when the date is abruptly interrupted after the doctor lets slip that Tanya, the new mother, was released from the hospital ward. Ofa then leaves the date site in a hurry, promising to return, leaving us to wonder whether procuring information about Tanya was not her intention from the start.

What is perhaps undeniable is that the date with the doctor transforms, only a few minutes later, into the perfect alibi for Ofa's murder of Tanya. After killing Tanya mid-date, Ofa picks up a public telephone and calls the doctor in what can be thought as the clearest case of verbal deceit in the whole film. She apologizes for having left him, exaggeratedly emphasizes her smallness and weakness amidst a frightening and terrible world, and offers to resume the date, allowing her to cover up her traces. She even lies about writing his address, claiming to be picking up pen and paper when the information is committed to memory.

The telephone exchange then cuts to a scene in which a finger is shown tracing the spirals in a column, following its curves forwardly, from left to right, and then backwards, from right to left **(Figure 7)**. The image presumably is a stand in both for the passage of time and for sex, to which Ofa agrees in order to carry out her deceit convincingly.

Figure 7, Still from Ophelia **(Muratova, 1997)**

The film cuts, then, to a series of artworks on the wall of the apartment (likely by Evgeny Golubenko), many of which depict an explicit erosion between the boundaries of the inner body and the outer world **(Figure 8)**. Many of the works present a kind of x-ray vision of the inner world of the human body, brains, intestines, blood vessels, which appear to be made from a food-like substance, literalizing the process of transformation of the object of appetite into the body itself, that is, the transformation of the outer physical world into the inner. In this way, the images evoke a sense of rendering explicit (or visible) that which is most internal, paralleling the exposé of Ofa's intentions articulated by each passing scene in the film.

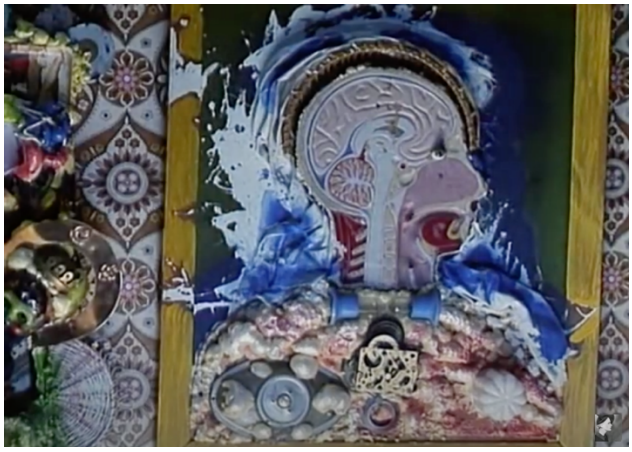

Figure 8, Still from Ophelia (Muratova, 1997)

Upon waking, Ofa is shown with a covering over her eyes **(Figure 9)**. The image, which recapitulates the themes of masking and unmasking presented in the opening scenes of the film, reflects a desire, on Ofa's part, to hide herself to herself, perhaps even to ignore the fact that she has been intimate with someone she cares little for only in order to carry out a plan. As the doctor sleeps, Ofa slips into her clothing and returns to the site of the crime to recover her purse, a nod to Raskolnikov's return to the pawnbroker's apartment after the murder.

Figure 9, Still from Ophelia (Muratova, 1997)

After recovering it, the sliding finger is shown again. The relationship between this image and sex is rendered unmistakable by the post-coital smoking. With her purse safe, and her deceit complete, Ofa, now, is radically honest with the doctor about their relationship, a

sincerity that reflects a complete rejection of social niceties: "I don't want to carry your fetus inside of me. I must build a career."[51] The doctor realizes he has been deceived and asks her, "so you don't love me like you said, in the evening?"[52] Ofa's famous response, which many critics have described as a credo of Muratova herself, reads: "I do not love men. I do not love women. I do not love children. I do not like people. If I had to give this world a grade, I would award it a zero. […] Maybe I like animals."[53] The line appears to be a Muratovian adaptation of Hamlet's own "Man delights not me – nor women neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so."[54] Throughout Ofa's interactions with the doctor, thus, one sees a slow slippage between self-deceit on the part of the doctor – a kind of willful blindness concerning Ofa's lack of interest in him (he gives the impression of ignoring or second-guessing her body language, which projects a sense of boredom while in conversation with him) – towards deliberate deceit, where, by the end of the film, Ofa has told him she loves him only to be able to use their intimate relations as a cover for her murderous activity. As with Tanya, what begins as the doctor's systematic inability to properly read Ofa's feelings for him, is, unbeknownst to him, weaponized against him.

Another view of deceit in "Ophelia," one perhaps even more extreme than those presented thus far, is communicated, again, by the small vignettes that pepper the work and that contribute little to the main plot's development. This view of deceit is primarily a stance towards language and social ritual: in this work and elsewhere, Muratova can be thought to treat words themselves as suspect, as forms of veiling intent that mask the barbarity hidden beneath social conventions.

---

[51] Ibid. Original text: ОФА: Я не хочу вынашивать твоего зародыша в себе. Я должна делать карьеру.
[52] Ibid. Original text: ДОКТОР: Ты меня не любишь уже больше, как говорила мне ночью?
[53] Ibid. Original text: ОФА: Я не люблю мужчин. Я не люблю женщин. Я не люблю детей. Мне не нравятся люди. Этой планете я поставила бы ноль […] Ну, наверное я люблю животных.
[54] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* 2.2.274-275.

In a prominent example, a new father approaches Ofa in the booth of the hospital archive to ask where to find his wife, who has just given birth. The man is completely dumbstruck and presents for all around such ridiculous happiness that the use of his rational faculties appears impaired. In response to his inquiry about his wife, Ofa tells him that she has nothing to do with birthing children, that he is in the wrong place and is probably very happy with the new developments in his life. The man responds thusly: he thanks Ofa incessantly, as many times as he can. The "thank yous" and the joy are instantly replaced by an image of an unknown man who, standing beside the incapacitated joyous father, sings a song titled "Wasted Words" (*"Naprasnye slova"*). The text, which Ofa also sings in her animal-like pursuit of Tanya through the streets, reads: "Wasted words I exhale wearily/The hearth has already gone out/You have not lit a new one/ Wasted words, stories of false nature/ Wasted words, I will soon burn out."[55] This is a romance by David Tukhmanov with words by Larisa Rubal'skaya about words wasted on saving a love destined for failure. In the film, however, they are appropriated by both Ofa and the unknown man as a commentary on what they have just witnessed: the absurdity of the "thank yous" showered by the young father on his interlocutors. The piece, thus, becomes a kind of anthem about how words are used in the film – that they are often incapable of expressing or revealing intent in a way that enables connection – and stands for Muratova's rejection of social niceties. The "thank you" itself, as social lubricant, is wasted language, aimless, and therefore, by definition, *dishonest.* Muratova, here, equates behavioral automatism and social ritual to deceit.

[55] Tukhmanov and Rubal'skaia, "Naprasnye Slova" in Muratova, *Ofeliia* in *Tri istorii* (*Three Stories*). Original text: Напрасные слова я выдохну устало/Уже погас очаг/Ты новый не зажгла/Напрасные слова виньетка ложной сути/Напрасные слова нетрудно говорю/Напрасные слова уж вы не обессудьте/Напрасные слова я скоро догорю.

Other vignettes develop this point. In one short scene, as Ofa and the doctor are ready to leave on their date, the nurses working in the archive say goodbye to each other innumerous times. A third moment – one that, as Muratova states, she had planned to film as early as her graduation work but never found a suitable place for it – features an elderly lady yelling for her mother in the middle of the street. Other than serving as a comic foil to the many mother-child relations present in the film, the passage seems to have no real plot purpose if not to deceive the viewers' expectations. Our first thought upon seeing the lady is that she has likely grown senile and is, in her mind, revisiting the past, reliving a memory in which her still living mother was capable of meeting her needs. Within seconds, however, Muratova proves us to be entirely mistaken: an even older woman comes out of the balcony above the street and begins to call out towards the woman below. Since they are both hard of hearing, communication does not take place, but according to what the film has shown us, the motherly figure *does indeed* physically exist. The viewer is thus able to have his own moment of Ophelic deceit: our expectations about how the world should work do not help us. Muratova allows us to stray, but rather than keep us in suspense for long, she instantly impresses upon us our ability to fall victim to our own assumptions at a moment's notice.

"Ophelia" concludes with Ofa's search for and ultimate murder of her own mother, Aleksandra. The doubling of mother and daughter – the genetic and behavioral connection between them – is emphasized by the mise-en-scène. Ofa and Aleksandra share the same color hair (light-blond almost white), the same color red dress, and, as we soon come to see, a fondness for Shakespeare's Ophelia **(Figure 10)**. As mother and daughter sit by together by the pier – Ofa is trying to get to know her mother even as she is seeks to seize her

mother's only defense, her walking cane – Aleksandra is reading a copy of *Hamlet* in which, on the cover, is the painting *Ophelia* by John Everett Millais.[56]

Figure 10, Still from Ophelia **(Muratova, 1997)**

When asked why she likes Ophelia, Aleksandra tells her daughter that is because of her beautiful death, by drowning. Ophelia's death, thus, becomes the literary script informing Aleksandra's own murder: her identically dressed daughter pushes her into the neighboring pond, and she sinks to the depths. Meanwhile, Ofa says: "Mama, it is a good death. You see, nothing really depends on us. Let us say goodbye. Mom, it is a good death, you yourself dreamt of it, and I fulfilled it for you in real life. Mom, let us say goodbye. You are not to blame for anything. I forgive you."[57] The film then concludes with a final act of deceit: the burning of her mother's files from the hospital. As the paper is consumed by the flames, Litvinova looks with wonderment at it, as aqueous sounds are heard in the audio track. This Tarkovskian juxtaposition of image-fire and sound-water is, however, replaced by

[56] John Everett Millais, *Ophelia.* Oil on canvas, 1851-52. Tate Britain, London.
[57] Muratova, *Ofeliia* in *Tri istorii* (*Three Stories*). Original text: ОФА: Мама, это же хорошая смерть. Ты видишь, ничего не зависит от нас. Давай прощаться. Мама, это же хорошая смерть, ты сама мечтала и грезила о ней, а я воплотила ее в жизни. Мама, давай прощаться. Ты не в чем не виновата передо мной. Я прощаю тебя.

convulsions and whimperings reminiscent of sexual climax, a scene that explicitly rhymes with Ofa's killing of Tanya, which introduces the connection between sex and death. Here, the closest theatrical parallel is not so much Shakespeare's Ophelia but the Elektra of Hofmannsthal/Strauss, whose final post-matricidal dance has overtly sexual undertones. [58]

The concluding shot of the film features two blind men who struggle to move together across the pier. After Ofa gives one of them Aleksandra's walking stick, they walk towards the camera **(Figure 11)**. A film so committed with exploring deceit at an epistemological level (challenging even its most basic paradigm, that of the lie or deliberate fraudulence), "Ophelia" comes to end with an image of "the blind leading the blind." In this film, characters are duped not wholly because of an obscuring of intent on the part of the deceiver (whether deliberate or sparked by self-deceit, as Solomon suggests) but because of the *other's* inability to properly look.

Figure 11, Still from Ophelia **(Muratova, 1997)**

[58] Richard Strauss, *Elektra*. New York: Dover Publications, 1991, comp. 1906-8. For a more reading on the characterization of Elektra in Strauss and Hofmannsthal see David G. Molina, "Sisterly Conflict: Music and Text in Richard Strauss' *Elektra* (1909), Revista Música 20(2), 2020, 99-118.

III. *The Tuner* (2004)

Written by Sergei Chetvertkov in consort with Kira Muratova and her long-time collaborator and life-partner Evgeny Golubenko, *The Tuner* or *The Piano Tuner*[59] is based on a series of short stories titled *The King of the Search* (*Korol' syska*)[60] written by Arkadii Frantsevich Koshko, Moscow chief of police. Koshko was in this position before the 1917 Revolution, so Muratova's film is a conscious adaptation of early 20th century narratives to contemporary times. The two stories from which the screenplay of the film is derived are "Something for the New Year" ("Nechto Novogodnee"),[61] which recounts the plight of an elderly lady victim of a lottery scam arranged by a thug, and "Marriage by Advertisement" ("Brak po publikatsii"),[62] which centers on the tribulations of a woman cheated of her money as she searches for a love match in the newspaper.

Pygmalion Production, founded in 2011 by Sergei Chliiants was primarily responsible for the film, but funds also originated from the Ministry of Culture and Arts of Ukraine and the Federal Agency for Culture and Cinema of the Russian Federation. The total budget of the film was about a million dollars, and the project involved many of Muratova's favorite actors including Nina Ruslanova (Liuba), Renata Litvinova (Lina) and Georgii Deliev (Andrei, who had appeared only episodically in Muratova's previous work).[63] The most relevant addition to the ensemble was the casting of Moscow actress Alla Demidova as the Chekhovian Anna Sergeevna, a role for which she received, in 2005, both the Nika and Golden Eagle awards for best actress. The filming of *The Tuner* began on September 1, 2003, and the ultimate cut – as recounted by Chliants in Zvonkine – was way too long:

---

[59] Arkadii Frantsevich Koshko, *Korol' syska.* (Moskva: Eksmo, 2001).
[60] Muratova, *Nastroishchik* (*The Tuner*).
[61] "Nechto novogodnee" in Arkadii Frantsevich Koshko, *Korol' syska*, 285-292.
[62] "Brak po publikatsii" in Arkadii Frantsevich Koshko, *Korol' syska,* 320-330.
[63] Zvonkine, *Un cinéma de la dissonance,* 132-134.

approximately four hours.[64] Muratova and her producers considered adapting the film for television to preserve the longer format, but ultimately decided to shorten the work to its current size of 154 minutes. The film is shot in black and white.

The Tuner[65] recounts the adventures of Andrei, a poor young musician who engages in all kinds of jobs to support the excessive spending habits of his beloved Lina. One day, when tuning the piano of Anna Sergeevna, a rich elderly woman, he is given access to her lottery ticket and ultimately makes use of it as part of an elaborate scheme to deprive her of her wealth. The subplot of the film centers on Liuba, Anna Sergeevna's best friend, who, in looking for love, is repeatedly deceived by men interested only in her money. Like "Ophelia" before it, therefore, *The Tuner* is deeply concerned with the ontology of deception – how it works – but, here, it explores the possible truth-warranting characteristics of works of art more profoundly than any Muratova film before it.

The original problem of deception posed by *The Tuner* concerns how one should properly interpret the behavior of the film's protagonist, Andrei. Unanimous in the secondary literature on the film are claims that Andrei is a "trickster," a "swindler" or a "rogue" (the standard Russian word is *moshennik).*[66] In what follows, I claim that Muratova's approach to her lead character and his deceit are more complicated than captured by such labels. Although in hindsight, all of the terms do indeed apply – Andrei does create an elaborate ploy to rid Anna Sergeevna of her money – careful attention to his actions before being given access to Anna Sergeevna's lottery ticket suggests that his intent to deceive is not formed as a prefabricated plan from the start of the narrative, but instead, grows slowly

[64] Ibid, 134.

[65] Muratova, *Nastroishchik* (*The Tuner*).

[66] In Zvonkine, for instance, we get the following description of the scammers: "Alor qu'il [Andrei] *se fait passer pour un accordeur* (emphasis mine) de piano chez une dame âgée, Anna Sergeevna, il découvre qu'elle a de l'argent et qu'elle a acheté des billets de loterie à la banque." Zvonkine, *Un cinéma de la dissonance,* 133.

throughout the film, thriving in a form of interpretative ambiguity ("indistinguishability" as Liuba will put it). In this reading, thus, Andrei is not a deliberate swindler from the start, but grows into one throughout the film at the repeated insistence of his lover Lina, a character part Lady Macbeth, part Raskolnikov. That even sophisticated readers of *The Tuner* have failed to identify this structural element in the story is, in fact, a sign of Muratova's own attempt to deceive her viewer. Through camera placement, music, and other technical devices, Muratova provides us, the viewer, with enough confirmation of genre expectations that we cannot help but, from the beginning, to associate Andrei with the *moshennik* archetype of film noir. Muratova, thus, engages in an attempted deceit of her own: her own generic signaling induces viewers into mistaking the actions of a man trying to make extra money for a deceiver many hours before the latter attribution is justified by any concrete action on his part.

We consider, first, the ways in which Muratova's characterization of Andrei early in the film confirms conventions of noir meant to induce a premature reading of his character as a scammer. What do we see Andrei do at the start of the film? He is shown opening bottles of vodka and cognac in the supermarket and drinking from them; he stalks Anna Sergeevna as she buys her food (showing himself particularly attracted to the jewelry on her hand - **Figure 12**); and lastly, he asks a friend for money in exchange for favors, a fact which suggests, perhaps, an existing connection to illicit activity or the black-market.

Figure 12, Still from The Tuner **(Muratova, 2004)**

The association with noir is most fully developed in the crucial first scene in the attic of the theater school in which Lina and Andrei live. Silvestrov's ominous music plays as the camera follows the movement of a fan. As Andrei walks towards the bed, we see that there is something underneath the bed sheet. As Andrei lifts one the edges of the sheet, he reveals the unmoving feet of a woman, and with a somewhat frightened face, abruptly returns the sheet to its original location **(Figure 13)**. Silvestrov's soundtrack and the small misdemeanors observed in Andrei's behavior at this point conspire with the black and white film to lead the viewer into thinking that the feet could belong to a corpse.

Figure 13, Still from The Tuner **(Muratova, 2004)**

As Deliev repeats the feet-unveiling motion, however, limbs begin to move, and our initial reading is undermined. What follows is a lengthy sequence in which Andrei walks around the

attic in an effort to prepare breakfast and a warm bath for the sleeping woman, Lina. Throughout, the music, as well as the play of shadows, light, and sound effects (such as squeaking or screeching) all suggest the presence of ominous activity. Particularly remarkable is Andrei's repeated interaction with an enormous rotating cylinder that produces a play of flickering light on the wall **(Figure 14)**. Muratova, here, codes a man's attempt to spoil his wife in the language of noir as a red herring, to ease us into readily accepting the image of Andrei as a swindler from the beginning. In a film that, as we shall see, is deeply concerned with the deceitful nature of art (and music in particular), it is appropriate that it is the atmosphere produced by Silvestrov's soundtrack that is primarily responsible for the misdirection in the scene.

Figure 14, Still from The Tuner **(Muratova, 2004)**

Most of Andrei's behavior throughout the film, however, *does not* conform to the initial image we have of him. Consider, for example, the vignette – again, unrelated to plot – in which Andrei helps a girl knit as he leaves his friend's apartment. What do we expect to see in the interaction? In a first viewing of *The Tuner,* we believe that Andrei is going to use the fact that the girl is distracted with her scarf to take advantage of her, to steal her wallet or purse. Instead, he notices the girl is struggling to knit, strikes up a conversation, and

selflessly assists her, vocalizing each successive step until she can remember them herself. He departs without asking for anything in return, leaving the girl bewildered and charmed.

Another example: when Andrei arrives at Anna Sergeevna's to tune the piano, he, importantly, does not impersonate a tuner; on the contrary, he *really does* know music and *really does* tune Anna Sergeevna's instrument, a Zimmermann upright. Despite the fact that he learns about Anna Sergeevna's need for a tuner in a somewhat intrusive way, by overhearing her conversation in the supermarket, once in her house, he 1) is competent at playing the piano; 2) is capable of adequately fulfilling the service requested of him; and 3) gives Anna Sergeevna and Liuba information about himself that is never explicitly disconfirmed by other details in the film. Here is their conversation:

> ANNA SERGEEVNA: Tell me, did you study at the conservatory?
> ANDREI: That is right, madam. However, with an endlessly prolonged academic break, a poor student has to find a way to earn his daily bread. My mother and sister died in an accident, while my father, excuse me, is an alcoholic… He doesn't leave the clinics, if he is still alive, that is. It's nothing, what is one to do? It is life. And all of this was long ago.
> ANNA SERGEEVNA: But it is probably difficult to be by one's self, isn't it?
> ANDREI: For whom is it easy in today's world? Let me ask you, Anna Sergeevna, can you point to such a person?
> ANNA SERGEEVNA: You are right.
> ANDREI: Forgive me, your magnanimity, but as far as I understand it, you are also alone…
> ANNA SERGEEVNA: Yes, my husband passed away. And I don't have any children. […] By the way, are you not planning on getting married?
> ANDREI: I have a person in mind. But her parents come from wealth. They suspect that I am after their capital and it is difficult to convince them otherwise. In fact, there is no such desire. [67]

Is Andrei a scammer in this scene? I would argue: not yet. The attribution of this tag by many critics at this point in the film, is in fact, a partial misattribution brought about by

[67] Muratova, *Nastroishchik* (*The Tuner*). Original text: АННА СЕРГЕЕВНА: Скажите, вы учились в консерватории?/АНДРЕЙ: Совершенно верно, сударыня. Однако пребываю в бесконечно затянувшемся академическом отпуске. Бедному студенту приходится зарабатывать на хлеб насущный. Матушка и сестрица погибли в аварии, а папаша, извините, алкоголик. […] Не вылезает из клиник, если еще жив конечно. Да ничего, чего ж поделаешь, это жизнь. Да и давно это было./АННА СЕРГЕЕВНА: Но трудно одному, наверно, а?/АНДРЕЙ: А кому сейчас легко? Позвольте вас спросить, Анна Сергеевна, покажите мне такого?/АННА СЕРГЕЕВНА: Да, вы правы./АНДРЕЙ: Простите великодушно, но насколько я понял, вы тоже одна…/АННА СЕРГЕЕВНА: Что? Да, муж умер. А детей бог не дал. […] Кстати, вы жениться не собираетесь? АНДРЕЙ: Да, есть одна особа на примете. Но ее родители, из этих, очень обеспеченных. Подозревают что я к их капиталам подбираюсь, но переубедить их сложно. Да и желания такого нет, переубеждать.

hindsight bias: the desire to reinterpret each scene in light of Andrei's ultimate and truly devastating scam. The answer the film itself provides, however, is one that fails to accord with the paradigms of deceit presented in the philosophical literature introduced thus far. If we pay careful attention to the manner in which Andrei gains the trust of Anna Sergeevna and Liuba throughout this scene, it becomes clear that his strategy is not only to be respectful and good-humored, but to use the *act of playing* as a path to intimacy. Almost immediately upon entering the house, Andrei acquaints himself with the Zimmermann by performing a sentimental piece on the instrument, one that leads to an awed and somewhat surprised exchange of glances between Liuba and Anna Sergeevna. This act introduces the foundational metaphor of tuning that runs through the work: Andrei gets the women *attuned* to accepting him into their intimate circle by means of his musicianship.

Philosophically speaking, however, this is a puzzling proposition: as a non-discursive art form, music is, at least in principle, incapable of confirming or disconfirming the truth of any particular claim, whether that be an assertion or a self-presentation. In fact, much of the philosophical literature on the dangers of music in Greek philosophy, for instance, focuses on music's effects on the emotions: it, along with poetry, is thought to induce sentiments that might lead to character defects that are poorly conducive to a virtuous life in society.[68] Muratova's *The Tuner,* however, portrays the act of *playing* as conducive not to a form of mimetic fallacy, where the audience that listens is somehow contaminated by the sentiments being projected by the work, but an epistemological one. Like in Max Black's humbug, the great musician, in playing well, can be thought to be making implied statements about

[68] In Book 10 of Plato's *Republic,* for instance, the distinction between diegesis and mimesis – as summarized by Nina Valiquette Moreau in "Musical Mimesis and Political Ethos in Plato's Republic" – is blurred, and the tragic poet, in appealing to our passions and appetites in mix of music and text, creates a product twice removed from the truth of the Forms. Plato, *Republic.* Translated by Tom Griffith. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000: 596d-e, 597e, 600e-601a, and 607d). See Nina Valiquette Moreau, "Musical Mimesis and Political Ethos in Plato's *Republic," Political Theory,* Vol. 45 No. 2, 2017: 192-215.

themselves that are more or less justified by the act itself: that they are hard-working, that they are dedicated, and even – for certain more naïve audiences – that they are especially virtuous. In performing as he does before the women in the opening sequence at Anna Sergeevna's house, Andrei positions himself, in the minds of the women, not only as an artistic talent, but as someone with privileged access to the good. Artistic competence is equated to virtue in the mind of his audience in the act of performance.

That this slippage has occurred is confirmed by two crucial details. The first is that Liuba feels, at least initially, very bothered by the fact that Anna Sergeevna is so taken by this stranger's talent. Throughout much of the initial dialogue in the scene, Liuba tries to call attention to herself and even to get in the way of Andrei's tuning. It is only after they play a duet together, the "Birthday Song" from famed Russian children's cartoon Cheburashka, that Andrei is able to overcome her resistance. Playing together, thus, leads to trust between Andrei and Liuba. The second crucial detail, here, is that only a few minutes after the duet is played, Anna Sergeevna and Liuba leave Andrei, a complete stranger, entirely alone in their living room, granting him ample time to observe the richness of the décor. Music, for Muratova, thus – or more specifically, the act of playing – can be conducive to a form of deceit that induces character misrepresentation if the audience is so inclined: as long as Liuba and Anna Sergeevna ascribe a privileged moral standing to artists, the artistic act itself can become a vehicle for misrepresentation and deceit. This fallacy is explicit in Liuba's judgment of Andrei once he leaves the house: "What a charming young man. Did you see his *touché?* Soft but also confident. His hand doesn't beat around the keyboard; it sort of

dives or drowns in it. That is what they wrote about Mozart, by the way."[69] They allow themselves to be taken in.[70]

The problem of truth-warranty in art is also thematized elsewhere in the dialogue of the film. This is especially visible in an exchange between Andrei and Lina in Anna Sergeevna's house. The scene unfolds as follows: Lina has arrived unexpectedly at Anna Sergeevna's pretending to be a census official while Andrei is visiting. As Liuba, Anna Sergeevna, Lina, and Andrei sit around the kitchen table, Lina asks Andrei a question after she "discovers" – all of this is playacting, of course – that he is a pianist and a tuner:

> LINA: My husband cannot explain this to me. Why do all pianists make such awful faces?
> ANDREI: In what sense?
> LINA: While they play. They cast eyes, make all sorts of faces, and throw themselves over the unfortunate piano like beasts.
> ANDREI Is it only pianists that do this?
> LINA: Pianists especially. What do they want to communicate with that? What does it mean? If it affects them so much, this music, why does it not act upon the listeners in the same way?
> ANDREI: Have you ever paid attention to how you thread a needle?
> LINA: Well, I do it like everyone else.
> ANDREI: You imagine yourself as the eye of the needle and you imagine yourself as the thread that is threaded into the eye of the needle and all this process, you imagine and picture it to yourself.
> LINA: That is a musician pictures the music and this helps them extract the sounds. But this is indecent. Although if you think about it, music is generally such an indecent thing, such an obscenity, but it is a high obscenity.
> ANNA SERGEEVNA: Oh my God, Liuba, what a stupid text. My head even hurts from this rubbish.[71]

---

[69] Kira Muratova, *Nastroishchik* (*The Tuner*). Original text: Какой прелестный молодой человек. Вы не видели какой у него touché? Мягкое и в тоже время уверенное, и рука не бьет по клавишам, а как будто ныряет, утопает в них. Так, между прочим, про Моцарта писали.

[70] Here, again, we hear echoes of Bernard Williams in "Truth, Politics and Self-Deception": as in political deceit, performance deceit of the kind outlined by Muratova requires that the audience participate, collude in the act, disregard disconfirming evidence. Bernard Williams, "Truth, Politics and Self-Deception" in *In the Beginning was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[71] Ibid. Original text: ЛИНА: Мой муж мне этого не может объяснить. А чего все пианисты так ужасно кривляются?/АНДРЕЙ: В каком смысле?/ ЛИНА: Ну во время игры? Закидают эти глаза, корчат всякие лица, бросаются на этот несчастный рояль как звери./ АНДРЕЙ: Разве только пианисты?/ЛИНА: Пианисты особенно. Вот чего они хотят этим сказать? Что это значило? Или если на них это так действует, эта музыка, то почему же она так не действует на слушателей?/АНДРЕЙ: А вы обращали внимание, как вы вдеваете нитку в иголку?/ЛИНА: Ну как все./АНДРЕЙ: Вы себе воображаете игольное ушко и сами представляете себя ниткой, которая вдевается в это игольное ушко и вообще весь процесс вы себе воображаете и представляете./ЛИНА: То есть, музыкант изображает музыку, и это помогает ему извлечь звуки. … Но это же неприлично. Хотя если призадуматься, то музыка вообще такая неприличная штука, даже какая-то непристойная, но это такая высокая непристойность./АННА СЕРГЕЕВНА: О Боже мой, Люба, какой глупый текст. У меня даже голова заболела от этой белиберды.

Lina's insistence that music is a "high obscenity," as she calls it, can be taken as a commentary on the women's earlier reaction at Andrei's playing. For Lina, at the heart of musical deception is an excess performativity communicated by the pianist him or herself in gesture, face, and body. Lina's unusual claim is that the movements themselves, as representations of the music, do not contribute to the appreciation of the work ("if they feel the music this deeply, why doesn't it affect listeners the same way?")[72] but serve, instead, to alter the audience's perception of the *pianist him/herself* as vessel through which music is made flesh. Lina's claim, thus, is that there is something egoic and inauthentic in this kind of behavior on the part of pianists, a form of attention-seeking meant to uphold, as with the humbugging Fourth of July politician, an illusory "portrait of the artist as a servant of the god of music" or as "intermediary for the voice of the genius composer" or even, as *The Tuner* suggests, an individual that could never be thought to scheme or thieve. Lina's use of the term "obscenity," too, adds a carnal dimension to the performative act, one that is reiterated in Andrei's explicitly sexual image of piano-playing as threading a needle. The seductive power of music, thus, shapes perceptions of sexual value and physical attractiveness, yet another layer of the aesthetic-performative deceit that characterizes Andrei's opening gambit with the women.

The complications in interpreting Andrei's intentions only abound as the film unfolds. Andrei's first explicit act of deception with respect to Anna Sergeevna and Liuba is, oddly enough, to replace a set of teacups the women win from a lucky bottle cap with a fancier set more suitable to their high-class status. Crucially, this occurs *before* he acquires any information about Anna Sergeevna's lottery ticket. It follows, thus, that he could not have

[72] Ibid. Original text: ЛИНА: Или если на них это так действует, эту музыку, почему она так не действует на слушателей?

chosen to do this with any explicit intent to take advantage of a pre-existing belief in prize-winning to advance his own lottery scam. If negative intent is present, here, it is much vaguer: "to gain the women's trust" so as to perhaps manipulate them in the future.[73] Harmful intent is, thus, possible in the long run, but in isolation, the act is indistinguishable from a sincere desire to please Anna Sergeevna and Liuba and, from a consequentialist perspective, has a net positive effect. Even though Andrei holds before the women an image of reality that is better than it is – the cups they won are not quite as beautiful as the ones he presents them with – the result is, diachronically, completely harmless.

The fundamental physical indistinguishability of intent at the heart of deceit is further expanded in another potential hot spot for treachery in Andrei's character: the scene in which he attempts to soothe Liuba after she finds herself tricked by her first potential lover, the stranger on the bench. Andrei initially attempts a few distraction techniques: to tell Liuba a story about a diplomat's cat and to show her – in a humorous trick that repeats throughout the film – the backside of his mother's hand mirror, which features the image of a prince and princess. When neither of these raise her spirits, he tries something else: he tells Liuba a story purportedly about a stranger's love woes intended as a poorly veiled self-reference.

> LIUBA: I just really want to trust people. And it always makes me angry, you know, this inability to distinguish the truth from the lie. Not the lie itself, but the absence of difference in the speaker's behavior.
> ANDREI: In the speaker's behavior, the speaker's behavior. Ah, Liuba, Liuba, thank God, this is not yet misfortune. It is bad luck, protracted bad luck. Now imagine a young man, a lonely young man, middle-aged, from an early age almost an orphan who has to achieve everything himself, and rely only on himself. He is poor and lonely but proud and hardworking and full of great hopes, and somehow, in one rich family, he meets a beautiful creature and, unfortunately, falls in love with her, and suddenly notices that the creature is not indifferent to him. And reciprocates his affection. And everything

[73] It is this episode that introduces the elusive problem of "character" in assessing human behavior. The evidence provided, one might argue, might also justify the alternate point of view, namely, that Andrei, despite having a "bad character," does not deceive, here, because he has no occasion yet, no reason. If *Three Stories* is a film about a present that has no future ("crime without punishment"), the *Tuner* is a film without a past. The film neither shows nor confirms any data about the pre-filmic life of the protagonists, dissuading the viewer accustomed to "character-thinking" from readings that more stably define "who Andrei is" based on his previous behavior. Muratova means us to struggle with the limited character knowledge available *in* the film itself, that is, to rise to the challenge of interpreting deception as it unfolds with little to no track record to rely on.

> appears beautiful. While he is tuning an instrument at her parents, he confesses his love to her, and even kisses her to the sound of Monsieur Chopin's nocturne. But very soon, it turns out that no one needs him except for her, with his pride and his hard work. Above all, her parents do not need him. After all, who is he? A pitiful musician worth nothing, and he is given to understand that his presence in the house is superfluous and that his hopes will never come true. He is forbidden to appear and even to see her. He is an outcast, persona non grata, and he cannot imagine life without her, he is delirious between the happiness of shared love and the misfortune of being unable to unite with her, and he understands that apart from his love he has nothing to oppose this hostile force. […] And life for him loses all meaning. And the further he gets, the more he becomes convinced that his only solution is to end all this, he will end this, he will end this once and for all because there is no hope. He is no longer able to endure this torment. Because…why, why…[74]

Liuba's opening lines signal Muratova/Chetvertkov/Golubenko's focus on the ambiguity that lies at the heart of deception. Liuba is, very importantly, not wrong about the difficulty that befalls interpretation of physical actions in this film. More than just a passage about Liuba's own naiveté ("One simply really wants to believe others"), Liuba's words point precisely at the difficulty in reading action that permeates our understanding of Andrei throughout the work: "the absence of difference in the behavior of the speaker." Doing good and doing evil, in this film, *look the same*. This is in fact true of Andrei in this very interaction. The story about his beloved, and playing Chopin is clearly an exaggeration – everything in Deliev's behavior signals an attempt to deceive – and yet, deciding on his ends

[74] Ibid. Original text: ЛЮБА: Просто очень хочется верить людям. И меня всегда вот злит, понимаешь, эта невозможность отличить правду от лжи. Не сама ложь, а отсутствие разницы в поведении говорящего./АНДРЕЙ: В поведении говорящего, в поведении говорящего. … Ах Люба, Люба, это слава богу, еще не несчастье. А невезение, затянувшееся невезение. А вот представь себе молодого человека, одинокого молодого человека, средних лет, с ранней юности почти сирота и всего ему приходиться добиваться самому и полагаться только на себя. Он беден, и одинок, но горд и трудолюбив и полон радужных надежд, и вот как-то в одном богатом семействе он встречает прекрасное существо и на свою беду влюбляется в нее, и вдруг замечает что оно, это существо, к нему неравнодушно. И отвечает взаимностью. И все вроде бы прекрасное. Однажды настраивая у его родителей инструмент он признается ей в любви, и под звуком ноктюрна господина Шопена, даже целует ее. Но очень скоро выясняется, что никому кроме нее он не нужен, с своей гордостью и трудолюбием и прежде всего не нужен его родителям. Да, он кто? Он жалкий ни к чем музыкантишка, ему определенно дают понять, что он здесь лишний и что надеждам его никогда ни суждено сбыться. Ему запрещают появляться и даже и просто видеть ее. Он изгой, персона нон грата, а он же не мыслит жизнь без нее, он как в бреду между счастьем разделенной любви и несчастьем невозможности соединиться с нею, и понимает, что кроме своей любви ему нечего противопоставит этой враждебной силе. […] И жизнь для него, теряет всякий смысл. И чем дальше, чем больше он убеждается в том, что, в том, что, ему остается один, единственный выход - покончить со всем этим раз и навсегда, потому что надежд никаких. А терпеть эти муки, он больше не в силах. Потому что… зачем, зачем…

is nearly impossible. If this is trickery, what does it accomplish?[75] In a cynical view of Andrei's character, the whole story is 100% a fabrication meant to appeal to Liuba's romantic imagination aimed ultimately to gain her trust and then cheat her. Andrei, however, never cheats Liuba. He cheats Anna Sergeevna, her best friend. A cynical objector might again claim that he is only being nice to the friend in order to retain the trust of his primary target and then cheat *her*. Notice, however, how speculative such act descriptions quickly become. No concrete attempt to deceive can be detected at this stage. It is worth mentioning, too, that here– as in the previous scene at the piano when Andrei gives an account of his life – none of the information provided by Andrei about himself is explicitly contradicted by other details in the film. We know nothing about the history of Andrei and Lina's relationship, we do not know if they in fact met during a tuning session, and we do not know if Lina's parents forbade Andrei to date her. We do, however, have details that could be thought to confirm some elements of this story. Lina is, throughout the film, obsessed with money and it is this desire that moves her to push Andrei towards criminal activity. Equally, there is evidence provided by Lina that her parents do not like Andrei, but in the passages in which this is thematized, ethnic or racial prejudice (Andrei is Jewish) seem more significant than poverty. We also know that Andrei loves Lina very much and is willing to do nearly anything for her. In fact, we know him to be deeply concerned she might leave him if he cannot provide her with the wealth she, in her mind, deserves. This is particularly visible early in the film when Lina pretends to call someone on the phone while she and Andrei are sitting on the bed. In the call, which is only playacting on Lina's part – a kind of cruel joke – she suggests she is ready to leave Andrei. His reaction is desperate.

[75] It is worth noting, too, that by 2004, Georgiy Deliev had achieved national recognition (in Ukraine) playing a clown in an Odessite sitcom-comedy titled *Maski Show*. Clownery, of course, is an acting practice that, by definition, counts exaggeration among its most basic devices.

Lastly, even if this account of Andrei's romance is merely an elaborate lie, its effect can still be interpreted in a generous light. In telling the story, he succeeds in distracting Liuba from her own suffering (she begins to worry about his) and feels better. His ability to create images in her mind, a form of storytelling or verbal movie-making, utterly absorbs her and, like many great films, takes her mind away from her pain. If this was the true aim of Andrei's deception, does that not change our reading of his character? In either case, analysis of the scene allows us to see that Liuba is correct to emphasize the physical indistinguishability in the behavior of the good deceiver. Just as she cannot tell what is happening around her – how to read Andrei's behavior – neither can we. We are inclined to attribute bad intent to him only in light of what we see him do at the end of the film.

The near impossibility of accurately determining intent in "other minds," it is worth noting, approximates Muratova – in this film and the next, *Change of Fate* – to the Dostoevsky of *Diary of a Writer*. In his assessment of the Kairova case – the trial and ultimate acquittal of a woman who kills her husband's lover, Alexandra Velikanova, with a razor – Dostoevsky is highly critical of the court's attempt to force considerations of deliberate intent onto the jury, claiming these are nearly impossible "from the outside." He writes:

> But even when a day before, she had bought the razor, though she knew for what purpose she had bought it, nevertheless she still could not have known: "whether she would embark upon the slashing, not to speak of whether or not she would have slashed to death." More probable still that she knew nothing about it even when she had been sitting on the steps of the staircase, already holding the razor in her hand, while her lover and her rival were lying on her bed in the rear, behind her. No one-no one in the world-could have known anything about it. Moreover-even though this may sound absurd – I assert that even when she had started cutting, *she still may not have known* whether or not she wished to murder her victim, and whether she had been inflicting the wounds *with this* specific purpose. Please note that by this I do not at all mean that she was in a state of unconsciousness; I do not admit even the slightest degree of insanity. On the contrary, unquestionably, at the moment when she had been wielding the razor, *she knew that she was slashing,* but did she wish to murder her rival – was this her deliberate purpose? – this she could well not have known at all, and for God's sake, don't consider this an absurdity: she could have been striking, incensed with wrath and hatred, without in the least thinking about the consequences.[76]

[76] Feodor Dostoevsky, *Diary of a Writer.* (New York, George Braziller, 1919, 317-318)

Although Dostoevsky is writing about a crime of passion, his insight about the indeterminacy of intent at every instant leading up to the deed can be thought be a guiding thread for much of my analysis of Andrei in *The Tuner:* until he walks into Anna Sergeevna's living room and announces the lottery win, we cannot be sure if he means to deceive.

We continue our analysis of Andrei's character with a reading of his behavior in the Liuba-Anna Sergeevna reconciliation scene. After valuables begin to disappear from Anna Sergeevna's house (particularly missed is a clock, a family heirloom), Anna Sergeevna accuses Liuba of stealing which leads to a falling out between them. This occurs off camera. The story picks up when Anna Sergeevna and Andrei are on their way to Liuba's house on a diplomatic mission, an attempt to right the wrong committed. On the way to Liuba's, Anna Sergeevna speaks to Andrei as if to a trusted friend, telling stories about herself, her past, and the missing clock. That Liuba is likely not the thief is revealed by Muratova in a spectacular theatrical flourish. As Andrei and Anna Sergeevna approach the house, an enormous curtain blocks our view of the building itself. Meanwhile, Liuba, dressed in her most ostentatious "Hollywood actress on vacation" attire – complete with sunglasses and a patterned shirt – stands on the left side of it **(Figure 15)**.

Figure 15, Still from The Tuner **(Muratova, 2004)**

In order to gain access to the house, Anna Sergeevna and Andrei pull the curtain to the side and when the house is revealed, it is shown to be a palatial villa not unlike the most elaborate of Hollywood sets. That Liuba would have no rational reason to steal anything at all from Anna Sergeevna is, thus, comically revealed: Liuba is shown to be far wealthier than the film has heretofore suggested, and virtually any of the numerous visitors to the house would be a more likely suspect of the crime. Liuba, naturally enough, does not want to negotiate with Anna Sergeevna and it is Andrei, intriguingly, who resolves the impasse by blaming the theft on Lina, claiming that she must have taken the clock when she came to the house in the guise of a census official. This is another fascinating detail in intention-attribution in the film. When Lina is at Anna Sergeevna's house, she is shown to be exceedingly tempted to take something. As she pretends to speak on the phone, she rummages through cabinets, touches exposed trinkets, and opens and closes cupboards, admiring the wealth. Her physical interaction with the space indicates an almost magnetic attraction to Anna Sergeevna's belongings – she moves towards and away from the cabinet in the back of the room multiple times **(Figure 16)**. In the final cut of the film, however, Muratova does not show us whether Lina was in the fact the culprit. Although there is good reason to believe so, we cannot be sure. In either case, Lina certainly had the motive and, as a stranger, was one of the few people left alone in the room in which the clock was supposedly located.

Figure 16, Still from The Tuner **(Muratova, 2004)**

In blaming her for the theft, thus, Andrei not only offers a safe diplomatic resolution to the tension between them – in strategically blaming a stranger, he ends any future strife between Anna Sergeevna and her acquaintances – but also, perhaps, presents them with the truth. If Lina did indeed take the clock, Andrei, of all people, would know. Furthermore, it is impossible to pinpoint any clear gain that could arise from Andrei's diplomacy in this scene. As it turns out, he will benefit from Liuba's trust at the crucial moment in which Anna Sergeevna hesitates to give him $7,000 in advance of receiving her lottery win. Andrei, at this point, has no way of knowing or imagining this moment. Once again, thus, evil intent here, is extant in the still quite indefinite form "gaining their trust," and the behaviors themselves tell us little about what is on his mind.

Andrei's intent to deceive grows, bildung-like, scene by scene as the level of confidence deposited by Anna Sergeevna in him reaches increasingly dangerous proportions. This is literalized, for example, in a tiny detail in the background of the scene that immediately follows Anna Sergeevna's reconciliation with Liuba (underscored symbolically in the older woman's acquiescence to being given a shot by her friend). Anna Sergeevna and Andrei sit on a bench and discuss, among other things, Anna Sergeevna's skepticism towards others. The scene, of course, is deeply ironic, for, in this very interaction, she is shown to be

doing the very opposite: giving Andrei a lot of information about herself. In the background, however, two children are shown to be playing a rendition of the game of Marco Polo **(Figure 17)**. One child, with a blindfold, walks forward, arms outstretched, while the other is guiding him forward with voice instructions we cannot hear.

Figure 17, Still from The Tuner **(Muratova, 2004)**

Such a game, of course, presupposes a high level of trust between friends, a trust that is visually embodied by the blindfold itself. One child willingly relinquishes their ability to see, their faculty of direction, to his friend in the name of fun. Emotionally, the same appears to be occurring in the now mature friendship between Andrei and Anna Sergeevna. Andrei has acquired enough information about sixty-year-old woman that the possibility to abuse his power is on the table. Although this same danger is never overtly represented on screen in the interaction between the playing friends, we are keenly aware of the potential for abuse of as the blindfolded child makes his way slowly through the background of the shot. Anna Sergeevna and Andrei are, in this sense, engaged in game of Marco Polo of their own. Andrei has lured her, blindfolded, towards him. What he aims to do with this trust gains increased determinacy as the film progresses.

The decision to take advantage of Anna Sergeevna is fully articulated in the aftermath of the most important episode in the film: Andrei and Lina's successful recovery of Liuba's money from her second scamming love prospect. The scene begins as follows: Andrei, we discover, has asked Lina to put up an advertisement for herself on the matchmaking section of the newspaper in the hopes to lure Liuba's scammer to strike again. When, in response to one of the letters, Andrei finds a photograph of a friend of Liuba's thief, he sends Lina on a date with the man in the hopes of, mid-conversation, forcing him to reveal the scammer's location. After jumping the friend (a literato), the latter leads them to the hideout of Liuba's thief (and now husband) where, we discover that he – appropriately – works as a film projectionist. The idea of cinema as deception, as an illusion, and the portrayal of our love for movies as something obscene is thus laid bare. Surrounded by a film projector, containers for holding film, and other materials, Lina emphasizes the importance of cinema in the scene by quoting what she calls "an ancient saying…by Lenin": "Film for us is the most important of arts."[77] Here, as elsewhere in her oeuvre (see, for instance, the discussion of *Long Farewells* in chapter 2), Muratova invites us to ask why it is we love the cinematic work as a space of unreality **(Figure 18)**. Whence comes our passion? Is it, as Liuba suggests, from our strong desire to believe people? To take what we see on the screen as true? The Hitchcockean iteration of this question is also built into the episode. In order to force the scammers to relinquish the money, Lina, now dressed as a fashionable noir heroine, blond hair done up, produces a small gun from her purse and shoots against the ceiling, forcing everyone, including Andrei, to the ground **(Figure 19)**.

[77] Kira Muratova, *Nastroishchik* (*The Tuner*). Original text: ЛИНА: «Из всех искусств для нас важнейшим является кино». Это старинное изречение…Ленина.

Figure 18, Still from The Tuner (Muratova, 2004)

As Hitchcock's films before it, *The Tuner* invites us to consider not only what our love for cinematic crime, violence, scams and guns says about *us,* but also to the consider the role of cinema itself in Lina's self-presentation. To what extent is her reckless and violent behavior shaped by her experience of similarly attired cinematic heroines? Chapter 3 of this dissertation is devoted in part to addressing this last question in Muratova's work.

Figure 19, Still from The Tuner (Muratova, 2004)

The film's point of no return, however, occurs when – after having recovered the money – Andrei and Lina argue about what to do with it. Andrei, interestingly enough, *wants to return it.* This is a puzzling detail for those still inclined toward the 100% deliberate forethought reading of Andrei's character. If he is indeed a scammer whose ultimate aim is

wealth from the beginning, why does the film not end here? It is only after witnessing Lina's absolute desolation in parting with Liuba's purse that he chooses to go ahead with the scam. If, up to this point, Andrei's motives were hard to ascertain and his actions had no clear direction, from this point forward, every step is carefully calculated to pull off a truly elaborate stratagem.

Excess is, in fact, the central characteristic of Andrei's scam. Throughout the film, Lina's more straightforward approach acts as a perfect counterpoint: arguing from a parodic utilitarianism, she proposes killing Anna Sergeevna **(Figure 20)** and goes out of her way to create a justification for doing so on the grounds that, being a woman in her sixties, she is likely to have had innumerous abortions which are, in her mind, tantamount to mass murder.

Figure 20, Still from The Tuner **(Muratova, 2004)**

This kind of moral calculus, in the Russian tradition, is – along with a desire to place one's self above morality, to belong to a special group of supermen for whom the dictates of religious or deontological ethics do not apply – the kind of thinking that propels Raskolnikov to kill the old pawnbroker in *Crime and Punishment*. Raskolnikov's own model, of course, is Napoleon Bonaparte who made himself emperor by his own hand, literally and

symbolically.[78] If Lina is thinking in Dostoevskian terms, Andrei is not. He insists on not killing her and on returning money, but in so doing, prepares what can only be described as a *beautiful* swindle.

That Muratova has moved from treating art as deceit to treating deceit as art is multiply emphasized in the final section of the film. As the trick unfolds, Andrei rivals with Muratova as the director of the action. Every move is anticipated, every thought is foreseen so as to uphold, before the women, an image of the world that is both utterly false and yet impossible to unmask. This last point is particularly crucial: from the viewpoint of Liuba and Anna Sergeevna, there is nothing they could have done to avoid being tricked. The scam is so perfect it not only takes into account an understanding of each of their characters and the nature of their past interactions – as Paul Ekman suggests, the context of trust built between the characters[79] – but alters and transforms the material reality around his targets in order to sustain the illusion. When Anna Sergeevna employs the telephone directory to call the bank, the very page she is looking at has been seamlessly altered by computer graphics to support Andrei's version of the events.

Andrei's hoax thus, thus, like cinema itself, has an element indexical to physical reality that seems reliable and yet is entirely fabricated. This is the structure of the scam: Andrei replaces the bank's phone number with a number of his own on the directory; he invents a story about the need to travel to see his girlfriend abroad; convinces Anna Sergeevna to give him an advance of $7000 dollars before telling her he has a surprise for her; Liuba convinces her to agree; he tells her she has won the lottery; Anna Sergeevna calls the number on the falsified telephone book to verify; on the other side of the call is Tanya

[78] Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *Prestuplenie i nakazanie.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1970).
[79] Paul Ekman, "Lie Catching and Microexpressions" in *The Philosophy of Deception,* p. 130-131.

(Natalya Buzko) whose role is to give plausibility to the claim that there are few people working at the bank on a weekend day; Anna Sergeevna is told to return the call in a few minutes; the wait builds anticipation; Anna Sergeevna calls again to confirm the win; on the other end of the call is Lina, who verifies the ticket number; Anna Sergeevna is overjoyed but still hesitant to part with her money upfront; Liuba insists that she do so, and Andrei leaves the apartment with the money knowing full well that, the following day, the two women will visit the bank only to discover that everything that has just transpired was an elaborate show.

In all of this, one episode is particularly remarkable. As in any lottery fantasy, daydreaming about what to do with the money brings about an extraordinary level of joy in Liuba and Anna Sergeevna. Although the women are both well-off, with close-up shots of the both of them sighing with joy, Muratova emphasizes that they are utterly fulfilled by the thrill, that their imagination is running wild with anticipation for the joyous conclusion of the extraordinary film Andrei has projected before them **(Figure 21)**.

Figure 21, Still from The Tuner **(Muratova, 2004)**

The effect of Andrei's trickery thus – and it is in this sense that he is a true scam-*artist* – is to produce a kind of aesthetic joy in Liuba and Anna Sergeevna's lives that would not have existed otherwise. It is for this reason that the unreality of the performance hits them doubly

hard the following day, an exaggerated version of the disappointment that befalls a viewer when an extraordinary film comes to a close.

Alienation and estrangement from the material world, accompanied by radical epistemological malfunction, is the tenor of the second to last scene of the film, at the bank. Although everyone is behaving in expected ways, answering questions bureaucratically and curtly, Anna Sergeevna perceives in each interchange a sense of strangeness, each reply bouncing against the mirror of her consciousness without making its way inside. Not long after, Muratova literalizes the incongruity in Anna Sergeevna's mental framework by duplicating, in the mise-en-scène, the look of many of the minor characters in the scene: we are shown, for instance, two bank workers in close-up, identically dressed, and two similarly-figured women enter the bank in matching black dresses **(Figure 22)**. For Anna Sergeevna, one becomes two. The rift between appearance and reality in the eyes of Anna Sergeevna is reflected in the doubling of the characters around her. She now sees double; the two-facedness of matter itself becomes accessible to the naked eye.

Figure 22, Still from The Tuner **(Muratova, 2004)**

The epistemological damage done by Andrei's deception is thematized one final time as the women go to the police and offer entirely different physical descriptions of the missing Andrei. In Anna Sergeevna's mind, Andrei's face has a wart, is round, and, as such, is reminiscent of anti-Semitic portrayals of the exploiting Jew (we know, from earlier in the

film, she suspects he is not ethnically Russian). Liuba, instead, attacks these descriptions at every turn, but offers no picture of her own. In response, the police officer, in a telling line, angrily reiterates: "Are you talking about one man or many?!"[80] Andrei has so challenged Anna Sergeevna's ability to trust her own perception of the world, that even such things as physical descriptions, dress, and other details are not accurately remembered but correspond, now, to Andrei's new identity, in her mind, as evil incarnate.

The connection between deceit, dream and art is further underscored by a song composed and sung by Natalya Demitrova. If, in its first appearance, at the tram, we only hear the first part of the lyrics, which focus on "spring," the "music of the fields,"[81] and "rainbow dreams," in the second, the concluding lines paint a very different picture of unfolding events:

> We will look around the endless expanses
> We will notice what we did not notice at all before
> Like enormous balls of cloudy snow
> Approaching, take up the size of the sky
>
> And everything that they wanted became ghostly, small
> And all the things they had waited for were too far away
> Before us is only the sky, sky and spring
> Well, okay, wake up, this is only a dream ...[82]

---

[80] Kira Muratova, *Nastroishchik* (*The Tuner*). Original text: ПОЛИЦЕЙСКИЙ: Дамы, извините, пожалуйста, вы об одном человеке говорите или о разных? Продолжайте пожалуйста, прошу вас, вы об одном человеке или о разных, елки-палки?!

[81] Natalya Demitrova, "Mechta" in Kira Muratova, *Nastroishchik* (*The Tuner*). Original text: А когда мы придём — нас встретят ласковые травы/Волны тёплого ветра накроют с головой/ Аромат лесных духов откроет свои чары/Да музыка полей наполнит нас весной/Сквозь тонкие листья зелёных исполинов/Пробиваются лучи, танцуя на росе,/Тыщи маленьких солнц допьяна напоят/Сотни радужных снов нас успокоят./Погрузившись в тишину неведомого храма,/Мы осмотрим себя новыми глазами,/Распластавшись на дне лесного океана/Мы поймём, что мы ещё живы./А ты слышишь над нами сколько голосов?/Это птицы наблюдают за пьяными снами./Они — наши друзья, они живут ветрами./Может быть, им придётся научить нас летать…

[82] Ibid. Original text: Original text: Мы окинем своим взглядом бескрайние просторы/Мы заметим то, что раньше совсем не замечали,/Как огромные шары из облачного снега,/Приближаясь становятся величиною в небо,/А всё то, чего хотели, стало призрачно, мало/И всё то, чего так ждали, слишком далеко./Перед нами только небо, небо и весна./Ну, ладно, просыпайся, это лишь мечта…

By splitting the song exactly in half, Muratova thus, replicates, through montage and interpolation, the structure of her own film: the song too comes to an end by unveiling the illusory quality of the opening.

Anna Sergeevna's concluding lines in the film, however, read as follows:

> ANNA SERGEEVNA: Liuba, Liuba, it's me, I'm to blame for everything. Why did I ask him to copy out those cursed lottery tickets? I will never forgive myself for that. Why put such temptation before someone? What could he do? A poor boy, an orphan who runs around from lesson to lesson, earning only enough for bread, and he could be a good musician. Of course, it is like putting money on the sidewalk and thinking nobody will pick it up. Or thinking that whoever does pick it up is a thief. This is immoral, a mockery.
> LIUBA: Anna Sergeevna, he invented a whole stratagem (*kombinatsia)*!
> ANNA SERGEEVNA: Exactly, invented. Another person might have just ripped me off [more straightforwardly]. I will never forgive myself. For people, Liuba, are weak, you expect something from them, but they are weak, poor, defenseless people. He was a good boy. I am to blame for everything. I will never forgive myself. I am to blame for everything. After all, he was a good boy. Good.
> LIUBA: Good, good, Anna Sergeevna, good, good. [83]

Although, at first glance, the passage appears to simply provide more evidence of the damage done by Andrei to Anna Sergeevna's epistemological apparatus – she fails to blame Andrei even though he is obviously guilty – in retrospect, *The Tuner* at least in part confirms the truth of Anna Sergeevna's claims. Had she not given Andrei access to the lottery ticket, he would not have been able to deceive her. The scene in which Andrei is granted access to the numbers is, in fact, the only moment in the work in which Andrei is portrayed in a truly frightening hue. Copying the figures in close-up, we hear Liuba in the background as the camera becomes completely absorbed in his behavior and the music and shadows

---

[83] Kira Muratova, *Nastroishchik* (*The Tuner*). Original text: АННА СЕРГЕЕВНА: Люба, Люб, это я, я во всем виновата. Зачем я попросил его писать эти проклятые билеты? Я никогда себе этого не прощу. Зачем ставит человеком перед таким соблазном, что ж ему оставалось делать, бедный мальчик, сирота, бегает по урокам, зарабатывает на хлеб, а мог бы быть хорошим музыкантом, конечно, это все равно, что сейчас положить деньги на тротуар и думать что их никто не возьмёт. А кто возьмёт, тот вор. Это безнравственно. Издевательство./ЛЮБА: Анна Сергеевна, ведь, он придумал целую комбинацию./АННА СЕРГЕЕВНА: Вот именно, придумал. А другой мог бы просто обчистить. Никогда себе не прощу. Потому что люди, они, Люба, они же слабы, от них чего-то ждешь, они слабы, бедные беззащитные люди. Он же был хороший мальчик, я во всем виновата. Никогда себе не прощу. Я во всем виновата. Ведь он же был хороший мальчик. Хороший./ЛЮБА: Хороший, хороший, Анна Сергеевна, хороший, хороший.

underscore the dawning of a dark thought **(Figure 23)**. In this way, then, Anna Sergeevna is not, in fact, incorrect in comparing her choice to part with her privacy to leaving money on the sidewalk. Muratova, here, aligns Anna Sergeevna with that other great theatrical elder who brings about his own downfall through excess trust: Lear.[84] In the very act of trusting his empire to his daughters so precociously, the king – his love of flattery notwithstanding – brings about his own demise. Anna Sergeevna too trusted Andrei as a surrogate son, but sabotages their relationship by tempting him with money. This moment, as Anna Sergeevna indicates, is foundational in shaping, within Andrei, the intent to deceive: without it, he would have been denied the chance to act.

Figure 23, Still from The Tuner **(Muratova, 2004)**

Anna Sergeevna's insistence on the musicianship of Andrei here, at the end of the film, as well as her repetition of the word "invented" (*pridumal)* underscores her awareness of the cinematic or aesthetic nature of his deceit. Although victimized by the plot, Anna Sergeevna is still capable of appreciating the technical mastery required to trick her as he did; Andrei's creativity and attention to detail, she seems to suggest, is not that different from his piano-playing or from Muratova's own filmmaking. Echoing Demitrova's musical number,

[84] William Shakespeare, *King Lear.* Ed. R. A. Foakes (London: Arden, 1997).

Anna Sergeevna appears to say: yes, this was all a lie, but how beautiful, how well constructed! In the Anna Sergeevna plot of *The Tuner,* thus, we encounter an aesthetic modification of the other-directed deceit characteristic of "Ophelia." Here, Muratova explores the ways in which musical talent – and the act of musical performance – can represent a form of deception and engages in a deep exploration of the motives of her protagonist by portraying a man who, although styled as a *moshennik* from the start, gives determinacy to a faint intention to deceive progressively throughout tuntil, prompted by Lina, he capitalizes on his amassed power over Anna Sergeevna to produce a trick cinematic in scope.

The secondary plot of the *Tuner,* that of Liuba, more obviously recovers of the Ophelic paradigm of *Three Stories.* In the scene that opens the film, she – dressed in a flamboyant headdress reminiscent of Mikhail Vrubel's "Swan Princess" **(Figure 24)**[85] – waits behind a poster board for her date to arrive.

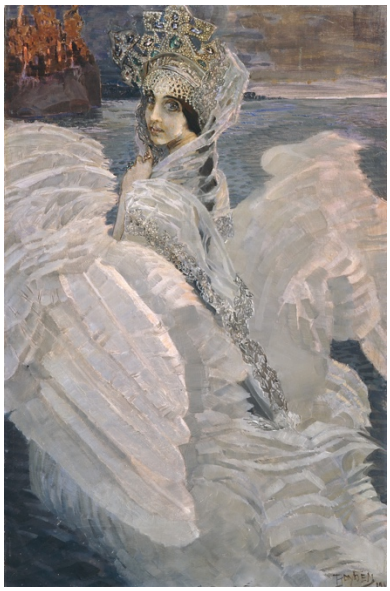

Figure 24, "Swan Princess" **(Mikhail Vrubel, 1900)**

[85] Mikhail Vrubel'. "Tsarevna-Lebed'," Oil on canvas, 1900. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Wishing to fall in love and get married, Liuba has placed ads on the newspaper matchmaking section, and after exchanging letters with a possible prospect, has agreed to meet him in person for the first time. Unbeknownst to us, however, she – in her nervous excitement – has arrived thirty minutes before the date is scheduled to begin. As she looks through the poster board at the man who is sitting on a bench nearby, she walks from side to side in anticipation, and even spins around with anxious energy as the camera follows after her **(Figure 25)**.

Figure 25, Still from The Tuner **(Muratova, 2004)**

By the time she approaches the man, she is not only utterly convinced that he is, in fact, the same individual with whom she exchanged letters, but is already in the process of developing an idealized image of him. This is visible in the "first-personal" way Muratova's presents the stranger **(Figure 26)**. The dialogue begins as follows:

> LIUBA: Are you not waiting for me?
> STRANGER: Perhaps.
> LIUBA: I am Liuba.
> STRANGER: Nice to meet you. Have a seat. What wonderful weather today.
> LIUBA: Strange…
> STRANGER: What's strange?
> LIUBA: You are acting very oddly.
> STRANGER: What is odd?
> LIUBA: You yourself put up the ad and then you force the woman to…begin the conversation…
> STRANGER: Sorry, I'm usually very forgetful. When I think about something or read, I can forget about everything in the world. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

LIUBA: You are very beautiful. You know that? You have an authentic Russian masculine beauty. It's good.
STRANGER: I'm Georgian.
LIUBA: Beauty.
STRANGER: I'm convinced.
LIUBA: How do you like me? I understand that you have seen my photos, but in real life, what do you think?
STRANGER: You are very pretty.
LIUBA: Really?
STRANGER: Very.
LIUBA: Are you saying this sincerely?[86]

Each successive line of text, here, is written to be deliberately ambiguous. When she approaches him and asks, "are you not waiting for me?" the man on the bench, who has never seen Liuba, interprets this as flirtation and not as an attempt to confirm an appointment scheduled in advance.

Figure 26, Still from The Tuner **(Muratova, 2004)**

Next, when Liuba claims the man is behaving strangely, it is she herself who appears to be carrying herself peculiarly. At one point, she even waves her hand in front of the man as if checking for a working connection between them, a gesture that would make no sense in a first conversation among strangers. It is only with the line "You yourself put up the ad and

[86] Kira Muratova, *Nastroishchik* (*The Tuner*). Original text: ЛЮБА: Вы не меня ждете?/НЕЗНАКОМЕЦ: Может быть./ЛЮБА: Я Люба, очень приятно./НЕЗНАКОМЕЦ: Присаживайтесь. Замечательная погода сегодня./ЛЮБА: Странно./НЕЗНАКОМЕЦ: Что странно?/ЛЮБА: Да вы ведете себя очень странно./НЕЗНАКОМЕЦ: Что странно?/ЛЮБА: Вы сами даете объявление, а потом заставляете женщину первый заговаривать с вами./НЕЗНАКОМЕЦ: Извините, я вообще очень забывчив. Как задумаюсь о чем-нибудь или зачитаюсь, обо всем на свете могу забыть. Извините. Извините./ЛЮБА: Вы очень красивы. Вы это знаете? У вас такая настоящая русская мужская красота, это хорошо./НЕЗНАКОМЕЦ: Я грузин./ЛЮБА: Красота./ НЕЗНАКОМЕЦ: Убедили. /ЛЮБА: А я вам как? Я понимаю, что вы видели мои фотографии, а вот в жизни как? /НЕЗНАКОМЕЦ: Вы очень хороши./ЛЮБА: Правда?/НЕЗНАКОМЕЦ: Очень./ЛЮБА: Вы искренно это говорите?

then you force the woman to…begin the conversation…" that the stranger comes to understand that Liuba believes him to be her date for the day. Here, as in "Ophelia," the man, rather than correct the misunderstanding right away, allows it to continue, waiting to see how the conversation will transpire. From this moment on, the exchange is deceptive for the stranger knows something quite essential about the interaction that is withheld from Liuba.

With "You know, you are very beautiful," Liuba appears to be completely taken by the throes of romanticism. She is shown in close-up smiling, looking admiringly at the man **(Figure 27)**. The fact that viewers have no access to the man's behavior at this point emphasizes her self-absorption: her emotional state is, so to speak, "excessively inner" and, as such, leads her (and us, the viewer) to ignore crucial evidence: the man's reaction to her words.

Figure 27, Still from The Tuner **(Muratova, 2004)**

The clearest sign of Liuba's mounting self-deceit occurs when she fishes for a compliment. "What do you think of me?" she asks. When he answers in obligatory fashion "You are very pretty" she goes on: "Are you saying this sincerely?" Here, Liuba fails to realize that praise and recognition can only be given freely and have no meaning if deliberately provoked. She

desires the feeling of being seen and admired, and yet is impatient to let the compliment come of its own accord. By forcing it to happen right away, she guarantees her dissatisfaction with the result. Yet even her questioning of the sincerity of the stranger's words is self-deceptively pushed aside when she, without prelude, moves to kiss him.

Throughout the opening of *The Tuner,* thus, Liuba's deceit evinces the fundamental other-directed quality characteristic of "Ophelia." She allows herself to be tricked by being overly trusting. On his part, the stranger, presumably, had no intention to deceive anyone when he left his house that morning, but provided with adequate opportunity, becomes a swindler by taking financial advantage of Liuba's infatuation with him. Liuba's own account of this interaction later in the film – her discovery that the man in the letters was not in fact the man on the bench – is equally marred by a form of self-deceit that is cruelly mocked by Anna Sergeevna. Liuba claims to have "seduced" the stranger on the bench, choosing to present herself as romantic predator rather than accept the very real way in which her own imaginative faculties led to her victimization.[87]

As Marina Rojavina[88] has argued in a recent conference presentation on the role of deceit in *The Tuner,* Liuba's romantic self-absorption is visually marked by her headdress. Throughout the film, the act of wearing something on her head reflects not only Liuba's desire to appear beautiful and charming before the eyes of a male beholder – the need to be seen and recognized as a woman worthy of love – but alternately functions as a kind of helmet that shuts off her critical faculties and, in a way, impairs proper evaluation of her love prospects. In the two episodes that constitute Liuba's flash relationship with her second

[87] Ibid. Original text: ЛЮБА: Я пришла раньше, на полчаса раньше и соблазнила ни в чем не повинного человека.

[88] Marina Rojavina, "Estetika obmana v fil'me Kiry Muratovoi 'Nastroishchik' (2004)". Paper delivered at the International Kira Muratova Symposium, May 8th, 2021.

lover – a man whose ultimate ploy involves marrying her – she wears two different hats. If in the first episode, in the living room of Anna Sergeevna's house, she dons the same Swan Princess adornment as in the opening scene of the film, projecting the same kind of blindness to her partner's interest in her money, in the second episode, the wedding scene in front of ZAGS, the registry building, she wears an even more elaborate headdress that, along with her clothes, is reminiscent of a feathered bird **(Figure 28)**. One detail in the preceding dialogue, at Anna Sergeevna's, can be thought to reveal the avian reference that informs Liuba's attire. When inquired as to what kind of business her future husband might be interested in undertaking, Liuba tells Andrei that he intends to be a monopolist in a new market. As an example of lucrative venture, she recounts the story of a friend of her husbands' (a story she heard from the man himself, presumably) who made a fortune rearing ostriches. This short interchange, again, does much to reinforce Liuba's naiveté, but it also serves, perhaps, as inspiration for Liuba's attire in the wedding scene: black, white, and feathered.

Figure 28, Still from The Tuner **(Muratova, 2004)**

In the episode that brings Liuba's flash marriage to its conclusion, the newlyweds are on a train, headed for their honeymoon. Excited and nervous, Liuba exhibits every kind of maternal care towards her new spouse, such as bringing him food and slippers. As a wedding

gift, too – a clear nod to the MacGuffin in Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train*[89] – Liuba gives her spouse a cigarette lighter that looks like a mobile phone **(Figure 29)**. With the excuse that he would like to smoke and purchase a stuffed hippo at the following train stop, Liuba's partner – yet another cheat – leaves with her purse and never returns. The scene that follows depicts Liuba's traumatic return to Anna Sergeevna after being deprived both of her dreams of marriage and her money.

Figure 29, Still from The Tuner **(Muratova, 2004)**

As previously suggested, despite being dangerously deceived at two different points in *The Tuner,* Liuba plays a fundamental role in ensuring the success of Andrei's ultimate scam. It is she that convinces Anna Sergeevna to acquiesce to giving Andrei the $7,000 necessary to pay for the expenses of his trip as an advance. Andrei's plan, thus, is masterful even from a character-reading perspective. Deception in the *Tuner,* thus, can perhaps be précised as follows: if the Anna Sergeevna plot invites us to ask philosophical questions about the relationship of art and deceit, directly challenges the erroneous equation of artistry and moral rectitude, and forces us to come to term with our own difficulties in ascertaining intent from physical movement, the Liuba subplot recovers the Ophelic, interlocutor-centered deceit of

[89] Alfred Hitchcock, *Strangers on a Train.* (Warner Bros, 1951).

Three Stories, depicting a situation in which an individual, without active encouragement, fails to understand something about another that, uncorrected, is used for personal gain.

IV. *Change of Fate* (1987)

Muratova's sixth independent film, *Change of Fate* (1987),[90] however, is perhaps the work that lends itself most naturally to philosophical discussion of the social or communal constituents of deceit. The plot, based on the short story "The Letter" by British playwright W. Somerset Maugham,[91] presents those interested in the logic of deception with an in-depth account not only of individual moments of pretense, but of the impact of collective factors, such as gender and racial biases, in allowing it to take root.

Change of Fate, even more than *The Tuner,* deals with the Hitchcockean question of the relationship between cinematic ontology and epistemology of self-knowledge. The film not only recounts a particular society's attempt to articulate, for itself, the meaning of a murder case – here, as in many detective stories, the key questions for both audience and lead characters are epistemological in nature, e.g. how do we know what in fact took place? – but also, most unusually for Muratova, the work includes what philosopher James Conant has called, in regards to Hitchcock, a metaphorical "false bottom."[92] As in such films like *Rear*

---

[90] *Peremena uchasti* (*Change of Fate*), dir. Kira Muratova (1987; USSR: Odessa Film Studios, 1987).

[91] W. Somerset Maugham, "The Letter" in *South Sea Stories of W. Somerset Maugham.* (New York: Permabooks, 1956).

[92] James Conant, "Psycho for Castasegna." Unpublished lecture, 9. The full quotation reads: "It comes more naturally to the European than the American intellectual to want to draw a sharp distinction between high art and low art – or as the Germans would put it, between "hohe Kunst" and "Unterhaltungskunst". The distinction that I have in mind here is one that is supposed to exclude the possibility of a work of art being both. A great Hollywood movie is, by its very nature, a kind of work of art that not only challenges such a distinction, but subverts it by pretending first to respect its terms. That is to say, a great Hollywood movie has a false bottom. On a first viewing, you can believe that you are consuming a mere piece of Unterhaltungskunst. But in order to understand that same movie on a more careful viewing, we come to see that the movie has exploited our willingness to underestimate it to its own ends. Hitchcock's movies are classic examples of structures of art that contain such a false bottom. On a second viewing, we begin to become unable to miss much that we found it easy to miss on a first viewing – we discover countless double meanings in the dialogue, uncover manifold ways in which we only attached significance to what we thought we were supposed to notice,

Window, Vertigo and *Psycho*,[93] one's understanding of events and characters in *Change of Fate* alters dramatically from an initial viewing to a second.[94] Set in an undefined Central Asian location where each of the secondary characters, excluding the three lead protagonists, come from a mix of ethnicities that purposely disorient the viewer, *Change of Fate* explores semantic multiplicity at the level of image, action, and sound. Muratova's film, I claim, is shot in such a way so as to feature a succession of mixed signals in acting, voiceover and imagery that create a rift between how scenes are read before and after one knows what in fact happened in murder scene itself. In this way, the film establishes an identity between the viewer and one of the film's lead characters, the lawyer (Yuri Shlykov). Although it is his duty to defend Maria from the death penalty – according to her version of events, she shot and killed Alexander, an acquaintance, in self-defense, after he attempted to attack her in the middle of the night – throughout the film, he is slowly exposed to evidence that does not quite fit into this picture. The key point of contention, in the initial part of the film, concerns the number of shots fired by Maria on her attacker. If one or two bullets might have been enough to immobilize or take down her assailant, Maria – forensic evidence has ascertained – shoots Alexander six different times. How does one make sense of that? Shlykov, thus, embodies, in

---

we come to appreciate the almost endless degree to which our generic expectations shaped our initial experience of the world of the movie. That is to say, one has only really seen a Hitchcock movie if one has watched it at least twice." See also James Conant "Die Unsichtbarkeit einer perfekten Regie: Über Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, USA 1960" in Angela Keppler, Judith-Frederike Popp and Martin Seel (Hrsg.) *Gesetz und Gewalt im Kimo.* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2015, 258-280).

[93] *Rear Window,* dir. Alfred Hitchcock. (1954; USA: Paramount Pictures, 1954). *Vertigo,* dir. Alfred Hitchcock (1958; USA; Paramount Pictures, 1958). *Psycho,* dir. Alfred Hitchcock (1960; USA; Paramount Pictures, 1960).

[94] In Hitchcock, for instance, one curious features of the second viewing of a film is the literalization of dialogue: language that registers in a first pass as "erased metaphors," to use Viktor Shklovsky's term, is found to possess literal and often quite physical significance in viewing 2. Norman Bates' response to Marion Crane, in *Psycho*, is typical: on viewing one, "Mother is not herself today" is, of course, a figure of speech meant to convey a mother excessively agitated, not in her usual state. On viewing two, the expression is perfectly denotative. Mother is not herself, of course, because Norman *is* the mother. For more on this reading, see again Conant's "Psycho for Castasegna."

part, our own epistemological quest: we, too, struggle to make sense of what we see and hear.

Another non-Hollywood precursor to *Change of Fate* that may have served as inspiration for the film is *Rashomon,* Akira Kurosawa's 1950 perspectival murder mystery.[95] Kurosawa's film, which was awarded the Golden Lion at the 1951 Venice Film Festival, is renowned for its unorthodox plot structure in which different characters (bandit, wife, medium, and woodcutter) provide alternative, self-serving, and often conflicting versions of the same incident: the rape of a woman and the killing of her samurai husband. Echoes of a *Rashomon*-like perspectivism can be heard in *Change of Fate* in its presentation of six different renditions of the same crime: 1) the opening scene, in which Maria's voiceover indicates (7 different times) that Alexander was summoned by Maria to her home to give her advice on what rifle to buy for her husband as a birthday gift; 2) Maria's telling of the crime before Philipp, her husband, as he visits her in jail; 3) Maria's first testimony to the lawyer, which features threats of physical violence from Alexander; 4) a revised and increasingly tentative second testimony before the lawyer after he confronts her with a note, supposedly in her own handwriting, that summons Alexander to her home in Philipp's absence; 5) a real time flashback in which Maria recalls the scene of the crime from her own point of view; and 6) Maria's final monologue, in which she admits having had an affair with Alexander. Whereas in Kurosawa, perspectival narration comes to a halt with the sound of a crying baby under Rashomon gate, the various iterations of the crime in *Change of Fate* ultimately coalesce into a sensible interpretation, allowing us to assess, in a second viewing, the reliability of all preceding scenes. Another important difference between *Rashomon* and *Change of Fate,* of course, is the latter's reliance on a single subjective experience: that of Maria herself.

---

[95] *Rashomon,* dir. Akira Kurosawa (1950; Japan: Daiei Film, 1950).

Although the crime is witnessed by another individual, Maria's ward, she is mute, and cannot be interrogated. Proper understanding of Maria's character and behavior, thus, is the node on which all interpretation of the film turns.

In order to characterize deception in *Change of Fate,* it is perhaps necessary to begin – unusually – with the end of the film, with the moment in which, after being acquitted by the court, Maria at last tells the lawyer the truth about her relationship to Alexander. Standing in the stairway of her large mansion, she says:

> MARIA: He knows that Alexander and I… That we loved one another, many years. It happened almost immediately after he returned from the war. We understood that we needed to be careful, so I pretended I didn't like him. When Philipp was home, he came to me rarely […]and we saw each other all these years. Not a single soul suspected it, but in recent times, he became a different man. […] I couldn't let him go. I loved him, I gave him everything, in him was all of my life. And suddenly I heard a rumor that he lived with some local woman, and in the beginning, I didn't believe it. I didn't want to believe it, but I saw her, I saw her with my own eyes, she walked around the village with her bracelets. When I walked by, she watched me, and I understood that she knew. And so I sent him this letter – it was madness to do so I didn't know what I was doing. […] Cursed letter. He always destroyed my letters as soon as he read them. How could I think that he would keep this one? He arrived. I told him I knew everything. He didn't admit it, he said it was all gossip. I was beside myself. How I hated him in that moment, I was ready to tear him to little bits, and I said everything I could to hurt him. I offended him, nearly spat in his face, and in the end, he couldn't withstand it, he said that he did not wish to see me anymore. And he said that he was glad: [that] now when I know everything, I'll leave him alone. What happened afterwards I don't remember. I went mad, I lost control of myself. He fell and I stood over him and shot, shot, shot until the empty chambers snapped. And I understood that the ammunition had ended. [96]

[96] Kira Muratova, *Peremena uchasti* (*Change of Fate*). Original text: МАРИЯ: Он знает, что Александр и я…что мы любили друг друга. Много лет. Это произошло почти сразу, после того как он приехал с войны. Я понимала, что нужна осторожность, я притворилась, что он мне неприятен. При Филиппе он приезжал к нам редко […] встречались все эти годы. Ни одна душа не о чем не подозревала, но в последнее время он стал другим. […] Я не могла отпустить его, я любила его. Я дала ему все, в нем была вся моя жизнь. И вдруг до меня дошли слухи, что он живет с какой-то туземкой. Сначала я не поверила этому, я не хотела этому верить, но я увидела ее, увидела ее своими собственными глазами. Она шла по деревне с своими браслетами. Когда я проходила мимо, она смотрела на меня, и я поняла: она знает. Я послала за ним – сумасшествие писать такую записку, но я не соображала, что я делаю. […] Проклятая записка. Он всегда уничтожал мои письма, как только прочтет. Как я могла подумать, что эту записку он оставит? Он приехал. Я сказала, что все знаю. Он не сознавался, сказал, что это сплетни. Я вышла из себя. Как я ненавидела его в эту минуту, я готова была разорвать его на куски, я говорила все, чтобы причинить ему боль. Я оскорбляла его, я чуть не плевала ему в лицо. И наконец он не выдержил, он сказал, что не желает меня больше видеть. Он сказал, что доволен, теперь я знаю все. И наконец оставлю его в покое. Что было дальше, я не помню. Я взбесилась, я себя не помнила. Он упал. А я стояла над ним и стреляла, стреляла, стреляла, пока не защёлкал пустой барабан. Я поняла, что кончились патроны.

Maria's confession is interrupted by a call from above, from one of her friends, who tells her that a room has been prepared for her to rest. The entire scene is shot with an utter disregard for the lawyer. Although we are aware that he remains seated in the manor's steps, listening to Maria, Muratova films the monologue in two shots, one close-up and one medium range, that feature no one other than Maria **(Figure 30)**. As already noted with both Liuba and Ofa in this very chapter, this common Muratovian device is a mark of Maria's self-absorption in her narrative and, by extension, of the loss of control experienced in the murder scene. Maria's language, here, emphasizes demonic possession: the word she uses for "going mad" is *vzbsesit'sia* whose core is the word "*bes"* ("demon"), while the Russian text for "lost control of myself" is "*I sebia ne pomnila*" (lit: "I didn't remember myself"), where the emphasis is not on action, but on loss of control. This, then, is how Muratova communicates the truth of the crime, in *Change of Fate:* after being passed over for a local woman, Maria shoots Alexander and is acquitted by a court with overwhelming social approval.

Figure 30, Still from Change of Fate **(Muratova, 1987)**

With this confession in mind, it is now possible to read all prior accounts of Maria's fateful interaction with Alexander with it as point of comparison. In *Change of Fate,* I argue, Muratova masks the truth of the crime by appealing to three modes of deception available to

cinematic narration: 1) the verbal lie; 2) the visual half-truth; and 3) the fantasy image. If, as shown in the introduction to this chapter, the lie is the paradigmatic case of deceit in philosophical literature, the final two cases are more properly cinematic. In what I have termed the visual half-truth, Muratova presents us with images of the crime that, although presented objectively, feature components so out of touch with the diegetic reality of the film they lead us to, to a greater or lesser extent, question the reliability of what is shown. In the fantasy image, on the other hand, Muratova presents us with scenes that are entirely fabricated – or are perhaps a mixture of fantasy and idealized memory – that are used by Maria to help her *convince herself* of her own falsified version of the murder and, in so doing, become a more persuasive defendant before the judges. Here, thus, Muratova visually explores one of the fundamental paradigms of deceit outlined by Solomon in the introduction to this chapter: the lie from self-deceit, but it appears in a very particular form. What we are shown is a *willful, deliberate, and fabricated*[97] attempt to believe a lie so as to better tell it. We look at each example in turn.

The most important instances of verbal deceit, in *Change of Fate,* are two: Maria's testimonies before the lawyer. When pressed about the details of her conversation with Alexander and the existence of a note in which she summons the man to her house, Maria often equivocates, changes the subject, or expresses herself confusingly about what unfolded between them. In a first viewing, we take this to be evidence of the still lingering traumatic effects of the murder itself. Maria's text, in fact, supports this reading: "I understand, I understand, but you will agree that to kill someone is not very pleasant, you want to drive away the dream, drive away the thought, drive away the dream… […] I generally like

[97] In this way, it is a direct parallel to our earlier example of the Stanislavsky method actor who, in preparing to walk on stage as Hamlet, believes himself to be the Danish prince for the duration of the performance.

loneliness, but one still has to occupy one's self."[98] This final phrase represents an attempt, on Maria's part, to reclaim her knitting needles. Maria loves to knit, and throughout the film, the movement of needles against yarn acts as a double symbol: of deceit itself – think Penelope weaving the shroud of Laertes, pulling the wool over the suitor's eyes – and of fate itself. Maria is depicted as a one of the *moirai,* creating and controlling destiny through her knitting. As we shall see, Maria makes use of the epistemological blind spots of her society to, as the title of the film suggests, "change her fate," that is, avoid being punished for a crime she did in fact commit.

In the second testimony scene, Maria moves away from misrepresentation of herself to misrepresentation of the actual facts of the case. She asserts that she never wrote to Alexander and, when confronted by the lawyer about the note, claims to have forgotten about it. A few seconds later she changes her story again, saying she was simply afraid to speak of it. The narrative is altered, still, two more times before the conversation comes to end: first, she claims to have invited Alexander to the house to discuss the purchase of a gun she intended to give her husband as a gift, and finally, she again insists that she was not responsible for the note. In a first viewing, here as in her original testimony, Maria's slipperiness can still be charitably attributed to the psychological shock of the crime itself. She has just killed someone and, as such, she is likely not thinking properly. In a second pass through the film, however, we see such rhetorical moves for what they are: a series of evasions meant to avoid punishment. As the conversation comes to an end, the lawyer informs Maria that, with the appearance of the note, the circumstances of her case have dramatically changed, and that her crime may ultimately be deserving of the death penalty. In

[98] Kira Muratova, *Peremena uchasti* (*Change of Fate*). Original text: МАРИЯ: Я понимаю, я понимаю, но вы согласитесь, убить человека не так приятно, хочется отогнать от себя сон, вернее, отогнать от себя мысли, отогнать от себя сон… […] Я вообще люблю одиночество, но все же необходимо занятие.

response, Maria faints (or pretends to faint), allowing Muratova to cut immediately to the half-truth episode.

After presenting us with deliberate lies in the two testimonies above, Muratova introduces a scene that represents the most accurate rendition of night of the crime up to this point in the film. One particular detail, however, Alexander's voice, suggests that this is not an impartial "view from nowhere," but a first-personal recollection of the scene that is colored by Maria's psyche: in contrast with the rest of the film, Alexander's voice sounds gravely, hoarse, ogre-like. The scene opens as Maria reads out loud from her diary to Alexander. The mise-en-scène, which contrasts significantly with the matte color palette of the prison, is full of vibrant reds and greens, cueing viewers visually to the maddening, passionate interchange that is to follow **(Figure 31)**.

Figure 31, Still from Change of Fate **(Muratova, 1987)**

"For some happy time now, a spirit has visited me, or a demon, or an incubus. I don't know how to call him, perhaps an angel. I am happy as can be, and even happier, and even if it is my fate to have this happiness followed by unhappiness, I will still remember the level of infinity I achieved. My bliss, my tender and passionate angel. My angel who calls me angel.

My God who calls me God."[99] Annoyed, Alexander enters the bedroom. He pushes Maria over on the bed like an object and uncovers his jacket underneath her body. He pulls it out. "My arm is asleep"[100] he roars in an inhuman voice. She repeats the lines of the diary as they move around the room even as her mute ward jumps on Alexander's back in an effort to prevent him from going away. As he tries to gain physical distance on Maria, she seizes his jacket and, in a tug of war, they move towards the richly decorated living room of the house.

The three of them ultimately position themselves in the center couch of the room, Alexander in the middle, Maria to the right and the ward to the left, holding a pair of scissors that pretend to cut Alexander. This set-up, however, lasts only a few seconds as Alexander, entering an adjacent room, voices (again, hoarsely) his frustration with Maria in a rant in which he advocates the need to see the world without idealization, underscores the ephemerality of love, and defends extracting a dose of satisfaction from the world as it really is. Her response, naively, is to ask him whether he loves her. Angrily, he answers in the negative twice. The third time the line occurs, Maria tries to move towards him: the contrast between her shirt, patterned with black and blue flowers, and both her red lipstick and the red background conspire to communicate anger and passion **(Figure 32)**. After he turns her down once more, she asks him to kill her and produces her husband's revolver. She gives him the gun. They both return to the living room again but now sit in a different arrangement: on the right of the couch. Their conversation soon devolves into Maria's attempt to feed him what she would like him to say to her: "Tell me 'I am sick of you,'" she

[99] Ibid. Original text: МАРИЯ: С некоторого счастливого времени меня посещает дух или демон или инкуб, не ведаю как назвать его. Быть может, ангел. Я счастлива, как только возможно, еще счастливее. Даже если мне дано будет вслед за счастьем несчастье, все же я буду помнить всегда степень беспредельности, который я достигла. Мое блаженство, мой нежный и страстный ангел, который называет ангелом меня. Мой бог, который меня называет богом.
[100] Ibid. Original text: АЛЕКСАНДР: Рука затекла!

asks him. He complies. "Tell me 'Your presence is burdensome to me'" He complies. "Tell me, 'I love you.'" To which he, tellingly, responds: "Do you know where my tie is?"[101]

Figure 32, Still from Change of Fate **(Muratova, 1987)**

After more back and forth between them, Maria asks: "Did you forget everything that happened between us? I can't go on this way, you understand?!"[102] and as she does so, crumples up her clothing and tears it up in grief, as in an ancient ritual of mourning **(Figure 33)**.[103]

---

[101] Ibid. Original text: МАРИЯ: Скажи: «Ты мне опротивела». АЛЕКСАНДР: Ты мне опротивела. МАРИЯ: Скажи: «Мне с тобой тягостно». АЛЕКСАНДР: Мне с тобой тягостно. МАРИЯ: Скажи: «Я люблю тебя». АЛЕКСАНДР: Послушай, ты не знаешь, где мой галстук?

[102] Ibid. Original text: МАРИЯ: Ты все забыл, все, что между нами было? Я так не могу, ты понимаешь?

[103] The interaction between Maria and Alexander, here, is strikingly similar to an equally bizarre scene between Vienna (Joan Crawford) and Johnny Logan (Sterling Hayden) in Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* (1954). In the western, however, genders are reversed: JOHNNY: Don't go away. VIENNA: I haven't moved. JOHNNY: Tell me something nice. VIENNA: Sure. What do you want to hear? JOHNNY: Lie to me. Tell me all these years, you've waited. Tell me. VIENNA: All these years, I've waited. JOHNNY: Tell me you'd have died if I hadn't come back. VIENNA: I would have died if you hadn't come back. JOHNNY: Tell me you still love me like I love you. VIENNA: I still love you like you love me. JOHNNY: Thanks. Thanks a lot. Thematic and stylistic parallels between *Change of Fate* and *Johnny Guitar* make the case for deliberate influence: both films feature hangings (that of Turkey, prompted by Emma; and that of Maria's husband); both films underscore a connection beyond death between a horse and its owner (Turkey's horse reveals the location of the Dancin' Kid's hideout behind the waterfall; that of Maria's husband trots towards the distance after his death, as if in mourning); both films feature strong women (Vienna and Maria) who are blamed/acquitted for crimes insofar as their behavior conforms to or diverges from societal expectations of femininity (in Vienna's case, the parallel to the Salem witch trials is explicit in the burning the saloon, and in the character Emma, whose puritanical repression of her own sexuality animates much of the plot); and, in both, deliberately using dress to mark facets of womanhood is an explicit device. When Emma's posse finally comes to the saloon looking for the Dancin' Kid, Vienna is found seated at the piano in a long white dress with a black band across her waist. This is a far cry from the traditionally more masculine Vienna we see throughout much of the film: a saloon owner, her

Figure 33, Still from Change of Fate **(Muratova, 1987)**

Alexander, exhausted, falls asleep in his armchair. With her ward positioned over her shoulder, Maria's dejected look evokes images of the Madonna and child **(Figure 34)**. Finding his tie, she begins to adjust it on his neck as he wakes up and, surprised, he pushes her away with the line: "Don't touch me with your hands, your fingers."[104] This is when the first shot is sounded. Maria is portrayed holding her husband's revolver and shooting Alexander repeatedly until he falls to the ground. The barrel on the revolver continues to click even after the final shot is heard, suggesting that she continues to fire even after realizing Alexander is dead.

usual attire features cowboy boots, jeans, and weapons. Like Maria, thus, Vienna is aware that controlling how she appears directly influences the social perception of her position: in donning a more feminine guise, she wants to convince the men in Emma's posse that she is (as Emma herself put it) a "fine lady" and that they are all "fine gentlemen for not going after her." The color palette in both films is also similar: both prominently feature greens, reds, browns, oranges, and yellows. *Johnny Guitar,* dir. Nicholas Ray. (1954; USA: Republic Pictures,1954).

[104] Ibid. Original text: АЛЕКСАНДР: Не трогай меня своими пальцами, своими руками.

Figure 34, Still from Change of Fate **(Muratova, 1987)**

This scene, the closest visual representation of the crime offered by Muratova in the film is in this way a half-truth. We can rely on what we were shown as factually accurate as long as we discount the incomprehensible, animal-like quality of Alexander's behavior and voice, a likely interference by Maria's own enraged subjectivity on her recollection of the scene. The images we see, thus, are mostly true in depicting the facts of the incident – that Maria is the killer, that she systematically attempts to enrage Alexander, that she asked him to kill her, that this is a crime of passion – but utterly unreliable if one's goal is to produce a character portrait of Alexander. Maria's presentation of him in this scene is, for this purpose, useless.

This mostly trustworthy representation of the facts of the crime, however, is contrasted, by Muratova, with Maria's deliberate attempt to deceive the judicial system of the society into she is inserted. Maria is fully aware of the performative or theatrical elements of court procedure and chooses to rely on playacting to avoid punishment. In her case, success involves taking measures – in gesture, dress, and behavior – to present herself as falling squarely within the parameters of social behavior expected of a person of her gender, class, and race. What are these expectations and how are they communicated in film?

Change of Fate presents them primarily in the dialogue between Maria and the prison guard who watches over her. The fact that two different prison guards take care of Maria throughout the film and their speeches to her are absolutely identical (the substitute guard speaks, without intending to, exactly the same words as the first) elevates their point of view above the level of individual idiosyncrasy: they come to stand for a societal approach to questions of gender and race. The guard says:

> GUARD: We are all civilized people. White people. We should be friends, should be in solidarity with one another. I can't stand native women. Only a white woman is a woman. That is, they are also formally white, but are a tad yellowish. You are a holiday for us. A white woman in prison! I've been here for many years. I am unlucky, provincial, and I've been here for many years. I forget how long. Consciousness defensively forgets, pushes the subconscious aside so as not to be horrified. I am a very healthy organism. My deputy, he is strict and honest. You can't ask for anything. We all have to hold on here. We've got one killer here, an actual killer. But he's a white man – that's the main thing, isn't it? We must all help each other? Don't you agree?
> MARIA: Yes.
> GUARD: Don't get me wrong, misfortune brings people together. We are all unhappy here. But human beings, we must keep up our character (*oblik).* We must hold on. After all, I could never even dream of seeing a white woman so close, a noble, innocent, pure lady. Here one could lose one's character. Habits save us. [105]

Here, the prison guard articulates the following arguments:

1) White people = civilized people;
2) White people must support a kind of corporativism; ("we must be friends, we must be in solidarity");
3) Only white women are real women (this means that the opposite is also true: local women are not real women);

[105] Kira Muratova, *Peremena uchasti* (*Change of Fate*). Original text: Охранник: Мы все люди цивилизованные. Белые люди. Должны быть друзьями, солидарными должны быть. Я не переношу туземок. Только белая женщина – женщина. То есть они формально тоже белые, но какие-то желтоватые. Вы для нас – праздник. Белая женщина в тюрьме! Много лет я здесь. Невезучий я, захолустный, много лет. Я забываю, сколько. Сознание защитно забывает, отодвигает подсознание, чтобы не ужасаться. Я очень здоровый организм. Мой заместитель он строг, честная натура. Нельзя требовать. Мы все здесь должны держаться. У нас тут есть один убийца, настоящий убийца. Но ведь он белый человек – это главное, не правда ли? Мы должны все помогать друг другу. Вы согласны?/Мария: Да./ Охранник: Поймите меня правильно, несчастье объединяет. Мы все здесь несчастны. Но мы люди, мы должны сохранять облик. Держаться. Я ведь просто и мечтать не мог о том, что вижу белую женщину так близко, благородную, невинную, чистую даму. Здесь можно потерять облик. Привычки спасают нас.

4) "We have one killer here, a real killer" – a line that suggests that Maria is not a real killer because her crime consisted in self-defense. The man shows great surprise that a white woman could be killer;
5) "After all, I simply could not even dream of seeing a white woman so close, a noble, innocent, pure lady." Although currently imprisoned, Maria is taken to be innocent and pure by those around her simply because she is white, a woman, and purportedly killed in self-defense.

Muratova also communicates this society's general attitude towards Maria by showing moments in which she is granted a number of privileges: 1) she is allowed to knit in prison (she hides the yarn behind her back when the inspectors come – an initial sign of duplicity); 2) other prisoners are invited to perform stunts before her (of magic, feats of bravery); 3) she is allowed to bring an armchair with her as she moves to another, more comfortable prison cell; 4) she is allowed visits not only from her husband, but all of her high-society friends; and 5) when it is over, the judges acquit her, a decision that is met with applause by the general public.

What must Maria do to avoid being punished for murdering her lover? Maria realizes that if she behaves exactly as she should – that is, presents a picture of herself as feminine and pure – she will live. This, however, requires significant duplicity.

Communicating deception on screen poses several cinematic challenges for both Muratova and her actors. Actress Natalia Leblé must, in each conversation with the lawyer or her husband, be playing a passionate, active woman who tries to match the passivity and innocence expected of her by her environment. To deceive not only the neighboring characters but also the viewer themselves (in a first pass through the film), Muratova and Leblé present us with mixed signals in the acting, colors, and mise-en-scène.

In the initial prison scene, for example, Maria is first presented washing herself – an attempt, perhaps, at a kind of cleansing or baptism. She is polite and kind, wears glasses – a sign of education and status – is dressed in white, and sings angelically when asked to perform before the prisoners **(Figure 35)**. In her first testimony to the lawyer, however, she gets nervous, speaks quickly, and addresses him as though he were her therapist, treating some kind of neurosis. She interrupts the conversation twice to discuss non-murder related issues (such as knitting) and her behavior hints at something manic or obsessive-compulsive when she insists on adjusting an armchair standing in the corner of the room.

Figure 35, Still from Change of Fate **(Muratova, 1987)**

As already suggested, in a first viewing of the film this behavior might be attributed to trauma. She only attains some sort of control of her behavior, in the scene when she reads her testimony from a piece of paper. On a second viewing, however, a privilege the lawyer does not have, it is clear that all of her actions are falsified. Not only is her story a lie, as we've already discussed, but her gestures are artificial and her movements excessively abrupt. None of it seems to have any degree of authenticity. The key point, here – which exemplifies the skill of both Muratova and Leblé in representing deceit – is that nothing in the scene has changed other than the contextual framework the audience is privy to at that particular moment in time. Leblé's acting – her gestures, eyes movements – is a Hegelian lesson about

our difficulty in recognizing or understanding someone else's behavior. If in the first view, we, like the lawyer, perceive her behavior and words as an honest reflection of her inner life, in the second, we pay attention to the artificiality of her actions and are able to see glimpses of her true, hidden, and not at all passive personality **(Figure 36)**.

Figure 36, Still from Change of Fate **(Muratova, 1987)**

Like Carson and Ekman, thus, Muratova's film, here, emphasizes the fact that it is only due to the prejudices of this society – its epistemological blindness to very possibility that a privileged, high-class woman could be capable of violent crime – that her deceit is able to be successful. By acting according to societal expectations, confirming the bias, Maria thus deceives the judicial system very effectively. Her acting needn't even be all that good. The social pathologies characterized by Muratova here, thus, are forms of gender stereotyping and racism without which Maria's ploy would never have been possible.

Another character whose description changes dramatically in a second-viewing is that of Maria's husband, Philipp. The foundational epistemological question in regard to his person is, of course, the extent to which he knows about the romance between Alexander and his wife. In a first view, the answer seems to be nothing, or next to nothing. In a second, however, his conversation with Maria outside her prison cell – when he is allowed to visit

her – begins to point in a different direction. Before Maria is even allowed to speak to him individually, Philipp and his high-class friends are standing outside of the prison discussing the crime as they wait for Maria to walk out of the building into the courtyard. When one of the ladies remarks that Alexander was a very well-dressed man, Philipp says, with a tinge of jealousy, "What difference does it make how the villain was dressed?"[106] When Maria arrives and he is allowed to speak to her individually, the conversation becomes particularly disjointed. Barely listening to her, Philipp appears to be repeating her story back to her, sometimes even anticipating her words. If in a first viewing, this can be taken as a sign of excess excitement on his part to hear the truth from her, in a second, it contributes to a theatrical reading of her character: inadvertently or not, he appears to be feeding her lines, aiding her as she attempts to memorize a given scenario. In this more ominous reading, Philipp can be thought, at some level, to suspect his wife of being unfaithful to him but has, for the time being, pushed the question off his mind in an effort to help Maria escape punishment. Maria even explicitly hints at her own secretiveness at the end of the scene. She claims: "It is a pity, it is a pity, my dear, that, before, certain things happened between us about which I could not speak to you openly." [107]Again, in a first viewing, we might not make much of the utterance; in a second, she appears to be alluding to an affair.

The interaction concludes, however, with Maria's use of a powerful metaphor to describe her inner state: that of a sprouting flower. These lines, in fact, are delivered like a theatrical monologue and only at the end is their purpose revealed: "All of this I say so you can feel my soul. So that you are confident, and self-confident. So that you do not look at me with that frightened look. So that you understand that I do not love you accidentally, but

[106] Ibid. Original text: Филипп: Какая разница, как одет негодяй?
[107] Ibid. Original text: МАРИЯ: Мне очень жаль, мне очень жаль, милый, что раньше между нами произошли какие-то вещи, о которых я не могла говорить с тобой откровенно.

because you are wonderful." [108] This is open deception: Maria has detected an inkling of doubt (or perhaps more than just an inkling) in her husband's behavior and has decided to deliver the lines that would best help him believe her case. Is he convinced by her acting, here? If it were not her insistence on her honesty, one might be inclined to say yes, but ultimately, the scene ends in ambiguity. Philipp's need for certainty is, in fact, what leads him to participate in the search party sent to recover the fateful letter that proves his wife's guilt.

Muratova's most elaborate cinematic representation of deceit in her oeuvre – the fantasy image – unfolds, however, in the bewilderingly complex opening minutes of *Change of Fate*. What follows is a shot-by-shot break-down of what we are shown on screen:

> **Shot 1** – Black screen
> MARIA: (in voiceover): And here I am awakened by a daring kiss.
>
> **Shot 2 –** Close-up of Maria's face in a black mask. She is wearing a red jacket. Wolves howl in the audio-track.
>
> MARIA (in voiceover): And here I am awakened by a daring kiss.
> ALEXANDER (in voiceover): You wanted to consult me about a gift. (*Maria opens her eyes*).
> MARIA (in voiceover): Now I don't want to.
> ALEXANDER (in voiceover): You wanted to give your husband a gun.
>
> **Shot 3** – Greenhouse wall
>
> MARIA (in voiceover): Now I don't want to.
>
> *Alexander takes Maria's hand as they descend the greenhouse stairs.*
>
> ALEXANDER (in voiceover): You don't want to consult me?
> MARIA (in voiceover): I don't want to.
>
> Maria and Alexander reach the bottom of the greenhouse stairs. The camera moves to the left through the plants. Characters are hidden from view?
>
> ALEXANDER (in voiceover) [You don't want] To consult me or to give [a rifle]?
> MARIA (in voiceover) My husband left me a revolver.
>
> *Alexander grabs Maria. She tosses her hair (and head) back, tries to free herself.*
>
> MARIA (in voiceover) And if you touch me…

[108] Ibid. Original text: МАРИЯ: Все это я тебе говорю, для того, чтобы ты почувствовал мою душу, чтобы ты был уверен, и даже самоуверен, чтобы ты не смотрел на меня испуганным взглядом, чтобы ты понял, что я тебя люблю не случайно, а потому что ты прекрасен.

Alexander tries to kiss Maria. Her upper body moves away from him, while her lower body remains close.

Shot 4 – Close-up of Alexander's face as he tries to kiss Maria. She turns her head and he kisses her neck.

Shot 5 – The pair is shown from a higher position. They are located at the very center of the greenhouse. Alexander continues to kiss Maria on the neck and she seems to protest. We cannot, however, see the expression on her face.

MARIA (in voiceover): ... I can kill you if you don't leave.

Shot 6 - Alexander holds Maria and tries to kiss her. Eventually she gives in and he kisses face repeatedly. He even holds her right hand behind her back.

ALEXANDER (in voiceover) Well, why are you talking about a revolver?
MARIA (in voiceover): We need to talk about the rifle. I don't understand why you say "you" (informal you) to me?

Maria slaps him with her left hand and tries to push him away. She appears to be smiling.

Shot 7 – Camera tracks left. Maria jumps up, holding Alexander's hand. She appears delighted.

ALEXANDER (in voiceover) You understand, you understand everything.

Shot 8 - Maria and Alexander are now running. He chases her, she runs away from him and she is running away from him.

ALEXANDER (in the frame) It is love, you yourself know it, you yourself feel it ...

Shot 9 - Like shot 2, but the camera is a little farther away. Back to Maria sitting with eyes closed in the greenhouse.

ALEXANDER (in voiceover) You love to torture me. I don't want to take it anymore. It's unbearable.

Shot 10 – Greenhouse shown from above, characters in the center. Plants block clear vision of the interaction.

MARIA: (in the frame!) My husband left me a revolver, I can kill you.
ALEXANDER: (in the frame) Why are you talking about the revolver?
MARIA: We must talk about the rifle, I don't understand, I don't understand.

They begin to climb the stairs of the greenhouse. She appears to be in no hurry to leave.

MARIA: Why are you calling me "you" (informal)?
ALEXANDER: You understand, you understand everything. You love to pretend. You love to torture me. I don't want to take it anymore, it is unbearable.

They reach the top of the stairs and she smiles.

Shot 11 - They argue. The tree is blocking the view.

MARIA (in the frame, it appears) What unbearable even mean if one simply has to bear it? I tolerate all your rude, intolerable, ridiculous antics.

They start down the stairs again. He runs past her and runs down the stairs first.

ALEXANDER: Because you don't want to admit it to yourself. That's why, not because you have to endure the unbearable.

He reaches out to help her down the stairs.

Shot 12 – A version of shots 2 and 9 that is even further away. Wolves howl. Alexander surges from behind a screen on the left. He walks up to the sleeping Maria, removes her black mask. Holds her hand and wrists and her body twitches. He kisses the left side of her face.

ALEXANDER (in the frame) You wanted to consult with me about the gift.
MARIA: Now I don't want to.
ALEXANDER: You wanted to give your husband a rifle.
MARIA: Now I don't want to.
ALEXANDER: You wanted to consult me?
MARIA: I don't want to.
ALEXANDER: To consult me or to give?

She pushes him away from her and walks towards the camera.

Shot 13 – Children play outside. They laugh.

Shot 14 – Maria enters the basement with a lamp.

ALEXANDER (in voiceover): You wanted to consult with me about a gift.
MARIA (in voiceover): Now I don't want to.
ALEXANDER (in voiceover): You wanted to give your husband a rifle.

Shot 15 – Maria carries a lamp to the basement. The camera tracks left and Maria hangs the lamp on a wooden pillar.

MARIA (in voiceover): Now I don't want to.
ALEXANDER (in voiceover): You wanted to consult me?
MARIA (in voiceover): Now I don't want to.
ALEXANDER (in voiceover): To consult me or to give?
MARIA (in voiceover): My husband left me a revolver and if you touch me…

Adjusting the lamp back in its place, she watches the entrance to the basement.

Shot 16 – A barely lit Alexander is standing at the entrance to the basement.

MARIA (in voiceover): I can kill you if you don't leave.
ALEXANDER (in voiceover): Why are you taking about a revolver?
MARIA: We have to talk about the rifle.

Alexander approaches the camera. The camera tracks left, following his movement.

MARIA (in voiceover): I don't understand why you are saying "you" to me.
ALEXANDER (in voiceover): No, you understand, you understand everything. You love to pretend.

Here, Alexander removes the lamp from the pillar and holds it in his hand

ALEXANDER (offscreen): You love to torture me. I don't want to take it anymore. It's unbearable.

Shot 17 – The basement is clearer now. Both Alexander and Maria are visible. Alexander holds the lamp.

ALEXANDER (very quickly, in the frame): You wanted to consult with me concerning a gift, concerning a rifle, I know a man, from whom it is possible to buy […] One can say it is a lucky occasion because this [rifle] is at the same time a rarity, a museum antique, and a gun in perfectly working order, as if the gun had been made yesterday. Your husband will be happy, it is a real gift and not just some trivial trinket.
MARIA (angry): I don't want to. I do not want.
ALEXANDER: What don't you want? To give your husband a gun or consult me?
MARIA (shouting): I don't want to!
ALEXANDER: To give or to consult?

Cut to the prison. After the servant washes her, she sits on the bed and the scene continues a little longer.

Shot 18 – Maria and Alexander stand side by side in the basement.

MARIA (in voiceover): I hate you, let me go.
ALEXANDER (in voiceover:) You are my beloved.

The servant comes out of the prison cell with a towel, knocks on the door with his foot to be left out.

Shot 19 – Cut to Maria sitting on the bed in her prison cell.

MARIA (in voiceover) I hate you, let me out.
ALEXANDER (off-screen) You are my beloved.
MARIA (in voiceover): Where is the light, here, turn on the light.
ALEXANDER (in voiceover): The switch was at the top, on the top, there is no need to pretend.
MARIA: There should also be a light switch here.

Shot 20 – Extreme close-up of their kiss in the greenhouse.

ALEXANDER (in the frame): You wanted to consult with me about a gift.
MARIA: Now I don't want to.
ALEXANDER: You wanted to give your husband a gun.
MARIA: Now I don't want to.
ALEXANDER: You want to consult me?
MARIA: I don't want to?
ALEXANDER: To consult me or to give [the gift]?[109]

---

[109] Ibid. Original text: МАРИЯ: (*за кадром)* И вот разбужена дерзким поцелуем./МАРИЯ: (*за кадром)* И вот разбужена дерзким поцелуем./АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром)*: Ты хотела посоветоваться со мной про подарок?/ МАРИЯ (*за кадром)*: Теперь не хочу./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром)*: Ты хотела подарить мужу ружье./ МАРИЯ (*за кадром)*: Теперь не хочу/ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром)*: Советоваться не хочешь?/МАРИЯ (*за кадром)*: Не хочу./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром)*: Советоваться или дарить?/ МАРИЯ (*за кадром)*: Мой муж оставил мне револьвер./ МАРИЯ (*за кадром)*: И если вы будете меня трогать/ МАРИЯ (*за кадром):* …я могу вас убить, если вы не уйдете./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром)*: Ну зачем ты говоришь про револьвер?/ МАРИЯ (*за кадром):* Про ружье надо говорить. Я не понимаю, почему вы говорите мне «ты»?/ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром)*: Ты понимаешь, ты всё понимаешь/ АЛЕКСАНДР (*в*

The perplexing multiplicity of cuts and repetitions that pervade this scene inevitably invite us to ask: what is it we are being shown? How does this interaction fit into the crime plot? And furthermore, how should we understand Maria's behavior throughout the scene? We know for a fact, for instance, that, as a representation of the day of the crime, what we are looking at is a lie. Maria's wish to ask Alexander for advice about a gun is, of course, not the reason for his visit. The contrast between Maria's narration (in voiceover) and her behavior on screen, too, is remarkable. If the voiceover is dry, monotone, and in control, Leblé's interaction with Alexander is filmed so as to accentuate assault and aggression **(Figure**

кадре): Эта любовь, ты сама знаешь, сама чувствуешь…/ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром)*: Ты любишь меня мучить. Я не хочу больше терпеть. Это невыносимо./ МАРИЯ (*в кадре, кажется)*: Муж оставил мне револьвер, я могу вас убить./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*тоже в кадре*): Зачем ты говоришь про револьвер?/ МАРИЯ: Про ружье надо говорить, я не понимаю, не понимаю,/ МАРИЯ: почему вы говорите мне «ты»./ АЛЕКСАНДР: Ты понимаешь, ты всё понимаешь. Ты любишь притворяться. Ты любишь меня мучить. Я не хочу больше терпеть, это невыносимо./МАРИЯ (*в кадре, кажется*): Что значит невыносимо, если приходится выносить? Я же терплю все ваши грубые, нестерпимые, смехотворные выходки./ АЛЕКСАНДР: Потому что ты сама себе не хочешь признаться. Поэтому, а не потому, что приходится выносить невыносимое./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*в кадре*): Ты хотела посоветоваться со мной про подарок./ МАРИЯ (*в кадре*): Теперь не хочу./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*в кадре*): Ты хотела подарить мужу ружье./ МАРИЯ (*в кадре*): Теперь не хочу./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*в кадре*): Советоваться не хочешь?/ МАРИЯ: Не хочу./ АЛЕКСАНДР: Советоваться или дарить?/ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром*): Ты хотела посоветоваться со мной про подарок./ МАРИЯ (*за кадром*): Теперь не хочу./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром*): Ты хотела подарить мужу ружье./ МАРИЯ (*за кадром*): Теперь не хочу./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром*): Советоваться не хочешь?/ МАРИЯ (*за кадром*): Теперь не хочу./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром*): Советоваться или дарить?/ МАРИЯ (*за кадром*): Мой муж оставил мне револьвер, и если вы будете меня трогать…/ МАРИЯ (*за кадром*): …я могу вас убить, если вы не уйдете./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром*): Зачем ты говоришь про револьвер?/ МАРИЯ: Про ружье надо говорить./ МАРИЯ *(за кадром*): Я не понимаю, почему вы говорите мне «ты»./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром*): Нет, ты понимаешь, ты всё понимаешь. Ты любишь притворяться./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром*): Ты любишь меня мучить. Я не хочу больше терпеть. Это невыносимо./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*очень быстро, в кадре*): Ты хотела посоветоваться со мной насчет подарка по поводу ружья, и я знаю человека, у которого можно купить […] Можно сказать, повезло, потому что это одновременно раритет,и антикварной музейной красоты вещь, в полной исправности ружье, действующее так, как будто его сделали вчера. Твой муж будет счастлив, настоящий подарок, это не какая-нибудь банальность./ МАРИЯ (*сердита*): Не хочу. Не хочу./ АЛЕКСАНДР: Чего ты не хочешь? Дарить мужу ружье или со мной советоваться?/ МАРИЯ (*кричa*): Не хочу!/ АЛЕКСАНДР: Дарить или советоваться?/ МАРИЯ (*за кадром*): Я вас ненавижу,выпустите меня./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром*): Ты моя любимая./ МАРИЯ (*за кадром*): Я вас ненавижу, пустите меня./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром*): Ты моя любимая./ МАРИЯ (*за кадром*): Здесь где этот выключатель, зажгите свет./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*за кадром*): Выключатель наверху, надо было наверху, незачем притворяться./ МАРИЯ: Здесь тоже должен быть включатель./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*в кадре*): Ты хотела посоветоваться со мной по подарок./ МАРИЯ (*в кадре*): Теперь не хочу./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*в кадре*): Ты хотела подарить мужу ружье./ МАРИЯ (*в кадре)*: Теперь не хочу./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*в кадре*): Советоваться не хочешь?/ МАРИЯ *(в кадре*): Не хочу./ АЛЕКСАНДР (*в кадре*): Советоваться или дарить?

37/38). What could we be looking at, ontologically speaking? Could this be a memory of a real interaction with Alexander set in a greenhouse? This reading would appear likely if it were not for the fact that the greenhouse environment is abruptly and incomprehensibly replaced by an underground cellar without significant change in dialogue.

Figure 37, Still from Change of Fate **(Muratova, 1987)**

Figure 38, Still from Change of Fate **(Muratova, 1987)**

It is highly unlikely that two nearly identical interactions took place in two different places. We are led to conclude, thus, that the opening of *Change of Fate* is a creative fabulation derived from strands of real memory: a fantasy image. Based on a substratum of existing interactions with Alexander, Maria – we are led to believe – is manipulating her memory, first through mental voiceover and later by rewriting the diegetic dialogue itself, to match her version of the murder scene: namely, to reinforce the claim that she invited Alexander to her

house to get advice about a gun. The obsessive use of repetition, here – which, as Zvonkine has argued, is comparable to the serialistic compositional practices of such composers as Schoenberg or Berg[110] – is not gratuitous, but is used in the service of psychological dimensionality. Maria juxtaposes visual memory with ceaselessly recurring false textual material in a practice of imaginative affirmations. So as to better consolidate her case before the judges, sitting in the prison, Maria is, by sheer reiteration, willingly altering her recollections of Alexander so as to better support her case in court. Her behavior in the scene, therefore, supports the truth of Nietzsche's insight in the *Human, All Too Human* passage quoted in the introduction to the chapter, that the easiest way to convincingly deceive is to believe in the deceit yourself, but also exposes, before the camera, what such deliberate and normally internal attempts to self-deceive *look like*.

The opening eight minutes of *Change of Fate,* thus, are a multi-media representation of the imaginative and psychological gymnastics undertaken by an actor as they prepare for a role. Maria makes use of her past memories and experiences, changes them, and alters the text and dialogue so as to better instantiate the character she must play before the judges: a meek woman attacked in the middle of the night. Through Maria, thus, Leblé renders on screen a representation of the very expedients she herself is employing to subconsciously move *as* Maria before the camera. The opening of *Change of Fate* is*,* thus, to quote Stanislavsky, "the work of an actor on themselves."[111] Actress Maria played by actress

[110] An extraordinary moment in Zvonkine's *Un cinéma de la dissonance*. I quote in full: "Dans le schéma suivant nous considérons toute reprise de la phrase comme un retour de l'élément. Tout changement de l'élément premier est désigné comme une variation appelée A' pour une variation sur l'élément A, comme « Réveillée » au lieu de « Réveillée par un baiser impertinent ». Toute séparation d'une unité en deux est désignée comme une subdivision : A1 et A2 pour une subdivisons de l'l'élément A. Le schéma du dialogue de cette séquence est alors le suivant : A, A', B, C, D, C, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, N', O, P, Q, R/L, M, N1, N 1, N2, O, P', R, S, T, T', Q', T/B, C, D, E, F, G, H/B', C, D, E, F, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, R', S, T/B", C', H', G, H"." Zvonkine, *Un cinéma de la dissonance,* 307-308.

[111] Konstantin Stanislavskii, *Rabota aktora nad soboi.* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo AST, 2017).

Natalia Leblé is readying herself for a performance of innocence in the great theater of the courtroom and is shown engaging in repetitive drills (*repetitsia* in Russian means "rehearsal") meant to condition her to act in character until she is cleared of all charges. As suggested earlier, however, Maria's acting does not need to be extraordinary if it is to succeed. Her job is greatly assisted, as Muratova's film suggests, by the epistemological failures in the *Sittlichkeit* of the unnamed Central Asian community in which the story is set: its propensity to equate whiteness and femininity with innocence.

V. Conclusion

The ubiquity of deceit and self-deceit in Muratova's films, however, should not be attributed exclusively to individual idiosyncrasy, that is, to a reading of "human nature" on the part of the direct-auteur in which dissembling is simply a feature of all intersubjective communication. The recent work of Lida Oukaderova on the aesthetics of collage in Muratova's *Second Class Citizens* – one that equates character and collected objects – in fact, includes as one of its byproducts an overturning of "the misanthropic Muratova," proposing, as alternative, a commitment to a notion of community and togetherness more akin to that of Jean-Luc Nancy's "Mitsein."[112] Whichever way one leans on the question of Muratova's individual predilections, it is perhaps undeniable that the presence of deceit and self-deceit in her films do not occur in a vacuum; rather, they mirror and reflect the particular historical features of the Soviet and post-Soviet subject widely theorized by philosophers and anthropologists from the former Eastern Bloc.

[112] Lida Oukaderova's "Kira Muratova's *Second Class Citizens* and the Aesthetics of Collecting" (Kira Muratova International Symposium, May 14th, 2021).

One tendency, represented by such authors as Slavoj Žižek[113] and Václav Havel – in particular in the latter's well-known essay "The Power of the Powerless"[114] from 1978 – presents the individual under Eastern European communist rule as caught between the public and private in a way that normalizes lying as mode of being. In this view, individuals were thought to behave and act, in public, as though they conformed to official ideology, but in the privacy of their homes – around the kitchen table – openly admitted to the falsity of such claims, creating a daily engagement with questions of epistemology of self-knowledge. Examples of such questions might be: "How do I know if I can trust him/her? Is there a disparity between what she says and what she does? Does she mean what she is saying? How do I assess her level of commitment to official ideology? Is she telling the truth or am I being deceived? How much does she know about me? How do I know when to hide and when to reveal an aspect of myself?" For thinkers like Žižek and Havel, to penetrate the barriers of ideology and see the truth of the other was a rare occurrence, one that demanded great trust, and was often only possible in moments of unusual intimacy or emotional release. The ever-presence of deceit in Muratova's films – its obsession with binary categories of appearance vs. reality, official and unofficial – as well as her fundamental commitment to "disclosing" what lies "beneath" or "behind," therefore, can be thought to be, in part, a product of and reflection upon the double consciousness of the communist and immediate post-communist subject: in a world where people do not say what they mean, detecting deceit in ourselves and others is of utmost importance.

Against the binary view of late Soviet subjectivity is the position of anthropologist Alexei Yurchak in his book *Everything was Forever Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet*

---

[113] Slavoj Žižek, *the Sublime Object of Ideology.* (London: Verso, 1989).

[114] Václav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless" in *Twenty-Two Essays Published on the Occasion of the Award of the Erasmus Prize to Václav Havel.* Ed. Jan Vladislav. (London: Faber and Faber, 1987, 36-122).

Generation.[115] Relying on categories from J. L. Austin's theory of speech acts, Yurchak claims that binary views, such as those presented by Havel and Žižek, take the constative meaning of social rituals too seriously or (as he puts it, too "literally"), rendering one's use of government slogans in an official capacity to be too readily interpreted as either a manifestation of real support or as evidence of fakery and dissembling. Yurchak's own anthropological research suggests that the paradigmatic response to such situations by most late Soviet individuals was primarily performative, one in which the reproduction of the *form* of the act acquired meaning in and of itself. Yurchak writes:

> During Soviet late socialism, the performative dimension of authoritative speech acts and rituals became particularly important in most contexts and during most events. One person who participated in large Komsomol meetings in the 1970s and 1980s described how he often spent the meetings reading a book. However, "when a vote had to be taken, everyone roused – a certain censor clicked in your head: 'Who is in favor?' – and you raised your hand automatically. […] Here the emphasis on the performative dimension of authoritative discourse was unique both in scale and substance. Most ritualized acts of authoritative discourse during this time underwent such a transformation. Participating in these acts reproduced oneself as a "normal" Soviet person within the system of relations, collectivities, and subject positions, with all the constraints and possibilities that position entailed, even including the possibility, after the meetings, to engage in interests, pursuits, and meanings that ran against those that were stated in the resolutions one had voted for. It would obviously be wrong to see these acts of voting simply as constative statements about supporting the resolution that are either true (real support) or false (dissimulation of support). These acts are not about stating facts and describing opinions but about doing things and opening up new possibilities.[116]

The late-Soviet subject, for Yurchak, thus, engages in rituals automatically, but it is this very automatism (the complete erasure of the constative meaning of speech acts, such as in the example of the Komsomol vote) that enables the subject to turn the tables on the system, permitting, as Yurchak writes, "the emergence of diverse, multiple, and unpredictable meanings in everyday life, including those that did not correspond to the constative meanings of authoritative discourse."[117]

---

[115] Alexei Yurchak. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
[116] Ibid, 24-25.
[117] Ibid, 25.

Both Kira Muratova, the individual, and her cinematic work can be thought to agree with Yurchak's diagnosis of a performative shift in late-Soviet culture, but not with its effect. If the fixation of strict structures of discourse at every level – texts, visual art, celebrations, meetings, school systems – is a fact of Muratova's films, which revel in repetitive dialogue and ritualistic speech of all kinds, from the most overtly political and ideological to the most banal social nicety, they are not celebrated, as they are in Yurchak, for their performative possibilities, but are ruthlessly admonished as insincere. Muratova films, thus, agree with Yurchak when he says that, in the late Soviet period, "the replication of fixed and normalized forms of discourse became an end in itself, and the constative meanings of these discursive forms became increasingly unimportant,"[118] but in her view – illustrated, in her films, through a radical skepticism towards language, and in her personal life, in a general distaste for interviews and for any kind of pre-set social role – is that the erasure of the constative meaning of the social ritual is an enormous tragedy, one that normalizes a mode of collective insincerity that must be combated and ridiculed at every turn.[119]

For Muratova, thus, the fall of the Soviet Union does not bring the end of her critique of performative ritual as deceit. Although the social and political context of her work changed dramatically with perestroika, glasnost', the privatization campaigns, the financial crises of the 1990s, the rise of the oligarchs, and the widespread criminal activity that became a feature of the political and economic landscape in both the nascent Russian Federation and Ukraine, Muratova never gives up her distaste for social deceit. In one of the final recorded interviews with her, from December 2017, a few months before her passing, she is asked by

---

[118] Ibid, 26.

[119] In Yurchak's reading of the performative possibilities of Soviet ritual, it is nearly impossible to divorce deceit from its close cousin: self-deceit. How can one distinguish between a ritual participant that is truly "just performing" and one who thinks they are only performing, but, unbeknownst to one's self, is not? Muratova's blanket rejection of all collective insincerity is extreme for this reason: unable to draw lines between performance and authentic belief, she takes aim at automatism itself.

a reporter to respond to the question: "What did you dream about when you were a child, and what are you dreaming about now, before the new year?" Her answer is, quite typically, to reject the framing of question:

> What I am dreaming about now? I won't tell you because they are very dark dreams. What I dreamt about when I was small? I don't remember. For this reason, I can't tell you anything that typical. I cannot wish your TV viewers a happy new year. I guess I could, but it would be only a formality, you understand. In general, I relate to holidays as a formality.[120]

Everything about this response reflects a kind of allergy to socially induced insincerity that, although begun as a Soviet phenomenon, is, as we shall see in the subsequent chapter, equally present in her critique of capitalism, money, holiday spirit, conspicuous consumption, and individual obsession.

After presenting a taxonomical account of approaches to deceit in disciplinary philosophy, this chapter has explored Muratova's filmic contributions to understanding the logic of deception in three of her works: "Ophelia," the second part of *Three Stories, The Tuner,* and *Change of Fate*. If in "Ophelia" and the Liuba subplot of *The Tuner,* Muratova challenges the primacy of deceiver-oriented theories of deceit, proposing instead what I have termed an interlocutor-centered paradigm in which the baseline case is misunderstanding followed by lack of correction, in the *Tuner,* Muratova explores the relationship between deceit and art by presenting the dangers of truth-warranting artistic performance and the difficulties in determining intent from physical action alone. There, I defended what I have termed a bildung-like view of Andrei's intent to deceive, highlighting the deceptive nature of Muratova's genre-signaling in the opening of the text by bringing into relief the ambiguities

[120] Kira Muratova, Interview recorded by GLAS (Odessa) on the opening of the exhibit "Vsyakaya vsyachina" by artist Evgeny Golubenko on December 2017. Original text: О чем мечтаю я сейчас? Я вам не скажу, потому что это очень мрачные мечты. О чем мечтала, когда была маленькая, я не помню. Поэтому я ничего не могу вам сказать такого традиционного. Не могу поздравить телезрителей с Новым годом, то есть могу, но это чисто формально, понимаете. Вообще я к праздникам отношусь довольно формально.

at the heart of Andrei's behavior before the return of Liuba's stolen money. Finally, in *Change of Fate,* I argued that Muratova not only transforms her work into a text with a "false bottom," whose interpretation changes dramatically from an initial viewing to a second, but explores the connection between cinematic ontology and epistemology of self-knowledge in two especially puzzling scenes: Maria's visual recollection of the crime scene itself, defined as a "visual half-truth" and the extraordinary opening of the film, an elaborate exercise in method acting on the part of the protagonist. The chapter concludes with a contextualization of Muratova in light of the Soviet and post-Soviet subject as it appears in the works of Žižek, Havel, and Yurchak. In the following chapter, we turn to an examination of self-opacity and self-deceit as anxieties of unknowingness in Muratova's work, considering both in their individual and social dimensions.

CHAPTER II

Long Farewells (1971), *Passions* (1994), and *Melody for a Street Organ* (2009): Self-Opacity and Self-Deceit as Individual and Social Pathologies

For G. W. F. Hegel, "objective Geist" as presented in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* refers to a form of collective mindedness i.e. a set of attitudes and dispositions, that is self-consciously acknowledged as shared by a given community. Often translated as "objective spirit," the term is properly understood both as the most foundational set of commitments in a given group and its highest and most encompassing collective form, one which need not be present in every arrangement or institution, but that demands a degree of consistency with it from all of its lesser iterations. In Hegel's view, this form of consciousness is not a substitute for a majority position or even a summation of individual attitudes; on the contrary it is a form of mutual subjectivity that operates much as it does in individuals: it can reflect on itself, reveal itself to itself, be ascribed responsibility or agency, and even evince greater or lesser degrees of self-consciousness. While the existence of such a subject in the state, for instance, is perhaps easier to acknowledge – for the state, in taking action in the name of a collective, can be thought , if properly functioning, to stand for that collective's wishes[1] – Geist, for Hegel, can be enformed in other instances of the determination of Right

[1] Hegel writes, in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right:* "The state is the actuality of the substantial *will,* an actuality which possesses in the particular *self-consciousness* when this has been raised to its universality; as such, it is the *rational* in and for itself. This substantial unity is an absolute and unmoved end in itself, and in it, freedom enters into its highest right, just as this ultimate end possesses the highest right in relation to individuals, whose *highest duty* is to be members of the state. […] But the relationship of the state to the individual is of quite a different kind. Since the state is objective spirit, it is only through being a member of the state that the individual himself has objectivity, truth, and ethical life. *Union* as such is itself the true content and end, and the destiny of individuals is to lead a universal life; their further particular satisfaction, activity, and mode of conduct have this substantial and universally valid basis as their point of departure and result. – Considered in the abstract, rationality consists in general in the unity and interpenetration of universality and individuality." G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right.* Translated by H. N. Nisbet. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 275-276).

both within Ethical Life (such as the Family and Civil Society) and outside of it, in Abstract Right and Morality.

Although the parallel with individual psychology is limited in certain ways – objective Geist cannot, of course, experience emotions or have "memories" – its powers as subject are extensive. For Hegel, the group agency of Geist has primarily two traits: 1) it constitutes and is constituted by the commitments and intentions of individuals without erasing them; 2) it is rational, meaning it is committed to a degree of internal coherence that allows it to be, in a sense, aware of its own contradictions and inconsistencies. It is from these premises that Hegel produces his well-known reading of Sophocles' *Antigone*: for Hegel, it is possible for a society to think of itself as rational (for objective Geist to think of itself as properly cohering), only to discover that two of its ethical commitments cannot exist side-by-side. In Sophocles, of course, the contradictory poles are a reverence for divine law and the family, represented by Antigone, and a respect for human law and the state, embodied by Creon.[2]

Hegel, of course, does not deny that human beings can, to the extent that they play different roles in society, have contradictory or seemingly incompatible commitments. David's assurances as PhD candidate may in fact be incompatible with his role as member of a given family. Objective Geist, however, is a collectivity of a higher order, a coherer of all other forms of human groupings. What this higher subject enables one to do – understood, as Hegel does, by analogy with the individual – is to attribute modes of self-deceit and self-

[2] In the *Lectures on Aesthetics,* Hegel summarizes in one paragraph his much lengthier analysis of *Antigone* in the *Phenomenology* : "Of this kind, for example, are the interests and aims which fight in the *Antigone* of Sophocles. Creon, the King, had issued, as head of the state, the strict command that the son of Oedipus, who had risen against Thebes as an enemy of his country, was to be refused the honour of his burial. This command contains an essential justification, provision for the welfare of the entire city. But Antigone is animated by an equally ethical power, her holy love for her brother, whom she cannot leave unburied, a prey of the birds. Not to fulfill the duty of burial would be against family piety, and therefore she transgresses Creon's command." Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art.* Translated by T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, 220-221).

opacity to social groupings that extend beyond weakness of the will. Much like an individual, a society, or a state, Geist can be thought both to fail to understand itself and to fail to cohere in its avowed intentions and deeds, that is, it can, in allowing tensions to remain unresolved, find itself in a state of irrationality.

Given the two-way dependency between the individual and the collective in Geist – the individual only fully exists as a part of the collective, and the collective cannot arise without the individual desires and wishes that constitute it – there is, as Pippin reminds us in "Hegel on Social Pathology: The Actuality of Unreason" something more involved in the notions of collective self-opacity and collective self-deceit than that many or some of its individuals succumb to either or both pathologies.[3] In the specific case of self-deceit it requires:

> In effect a silent conspiracy of unacknowledgment, reinforced by mutual assurances, common strategies for avoiding the truth, support of collective practices that make this easier rather than harder, and it depends on the simple, comforting weight of common confidence that, despite failure to act on the commitment, we are at least 'trying.'[4]

It is this form of self-deceit – manifest at the level of objective Geist – that Muratova exposes in her 2009 film *Melody for a Street Organ.* Alongside such powerful episodes of individual self-opacity such as the memorable trumpet-playing passage in *Asthenic Syndrome*[5] – in which Irina Pavlovna, mother of Ivnikov, is initially shown playing Sinatra's "Strangers in the Night" **(Figure 39)** with an off-key accompaniment and, after an abrupt cut, plays beautifully, signaling a shift between the present self and the dream self, between what she is doing and what she thinks she is doing – Muratova devotes three of her films to engaging

[3] Robert B. Pippin, "Hegel on Social Pathology: The Actuality of Unreason." *Crisis and Critique,* 4.1, 346.
[4] Ibid.
[5] *Astenicheskii sindrom* (*Asthenic Syndrome*), dir. Kira Muratova (1989; USSR: Odessa Film Studio, 1989).

what might be termed, in Hegelese, social pathologies of objective Geist: *Asthenic Syndrome* (1989), *Passions* (1994)[6] and *Melody* itself.[7]

***Figure 39, Still from Aesthenic Syndrome* (Muratova, 1989)**

In what follows, I analyze the ways in which Muratova expresses the contradictions and irrationalities of collective mindedness in the latter two works. If in *Passions,* Muratova presents viewers with collective self-opacity – despite speaking to one another incessantly, characters, unbeknownst to themselves, are shown to use language only in the service of their own hobbyhorses – in *Melody for a Street Organ,* Muratova violates the genre expectations of the Christmas film in order to underscore the self-deceived quality of holiday spirit itself, which opposes a commitment in deed (to conspicuous consumption) to a commitment in word (to Christian values and scripture).

In each, what elevates self-opacity and self-deceit above the level of individual psychology is a process of accretion: Muratova makes sure to show us not one, not two, but a large group of characters in the film (both major and major) engaged in behaviors

[6] *Uvlechen'ia* (*Passions*), dir. Kira Muratova (1994; Russian Federation-Ukraine: Nikola Film, 1994).
[7] *Melodiia dlia sharmanki* (*Melody for a Street Organ*), dir. Kira Muratova (2008; Ukraine: Sota Cinema Group, 2008).

consonant with her critique. Her diagnosis of social pathologies in both films, thus, is not wholly circumscribed to the film itself; in both *Passions* and *Melody for a Street Organ,* Muratova presents exaggerated or caricatured versions of collective self-opacity and self-deceit to bring into relief aspects of our reality outside the film that may remain unseen or unnoticed. Thus, our own delusions are unmasked in the act of comparing an assumed ever-changing world beyond the screen (the world of the viewer) to the eccentric behavior portrayed before the camera. Through the productive juxtaposition of both, Muratova puts her cinema to the task of unveiling the irrationality of her society's implicit or explicit commitments, that is, to show us – as she puts it in the intertitles **(Figure 40)** of *Asthenic Syndrome* – what "we don't like to see."[8]

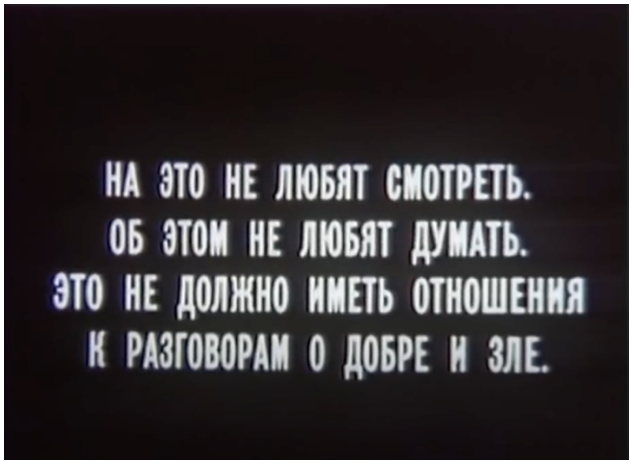

***Figure 40, Still from Aesthenic Syndrome* (Muratova, 1989)**

Before turning to such examples, it is worth spending some time on a systematic reading of individual self-opacity in Muratova's work, one present in what is perhaps the most overtly psychological (if not self-confessedly Freudian) of her films: *Long Farewells* (1971)[9]. Considered by many viewers her most powerful work, *Long Farewells* is the film most

[8] Muratova, *Astenicheskii sindrom* (*Asthenic Syndrome*).
[9] *Dolgie provody* (*Long Farewells*), dir. Kira Muratova (1973; USSR: Odessa Film Studio).

immediately responsible for her fall from grace with Goskino authorities, and explores the relationship between a mother and her adolescent child in a tale of grief, abandonment, and coming of age. Sasha and his mother, Evgenia Vasilievna are multifaceted characters that find themselves unaware of their true motivations and intentions, and it is only when their aims come to a head that they slowly begin to appreciate the psychological mechanisms undergirding their behavior in the film.

We turn, therefore, to an analysis of individual self-opacity in *Long Farewells,* followed by two critiques of social pathology in Muratova's work: that of collective self-opacity, in *Passions,* and that of collective self-deceit, in *Melody for a Street Organ.*

II. *Long Farewells* (1971)

According to Eugénie Zvonkine's *Kira Mouratova: un cinéma de la dissonance,*[10] the most authoritative source on the production history and reception of Muratova's work to date, in 1970, Muratova took interest in a screenplay titled *Being a Man* by Natalia Riazantseva, one of her friends from the State Film Institute (VGIK). Riazantseva, who had already achieved great success as screenwriter as author of *Wings,* Larissa Shepitko's great 1966 feature, wrote a similarly-structured plot: the story of a strong female protagonist's complicated relationship with her child. The plot of the film that becomes *Long Farewells* is as follows: Sasha, an adolescent boy, lives with his mother Evgenia Vasilievna, a middle-aged woman who, abandoned by his father, aims to conciliate her professional career as English translator with her role as single mother. Mother and son have a difficult relationship and after spending a

[10] Eugénie Zvonkine, *Kira Mouratova: un cinéma de la dissonance,* Histoire et esthétique du cinéma. (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 2012), 72-73.

season with his father at a prehistoric dig, Sasha, to his mother's chagrin, wishes to join him for good.

With the exception of perhaps of her 1983 *Among Grey Stones,* a film so butchered by censorship Muratova renounced authorship of it altogether (attributing the film to one "Ivan Sidorov"), the production of *Long Farewells* represents Muratova's most turbulent tussle with Soviet film authorities. As Zvonkine recounts – with reference to the Goskino archives available at RGALI – several opinions were written on the film in an effort to shape the ultimate product even at the level of literary script, many of them penned by prominent critics such as Mikhail Yurevich Bleiman and Rostislav Yurenev.[11] Shortly after the film was given a green light to begin pre-production on May 1970, it was suspended on July 15 by order of Goskino Ukraine. Shooting resumed on outside locations on November and December of the same year only after a cholera epidemic undermined other projects and forced the studio to support Muratova's film in an attempt to meet its production quota. In March of 1971, a telegram summons Muratova to Moscow to exhibit sections of the film, and the meeting that follows, Zvonkine recounts, yields a highly critical report demanding various aspects of the work to be reconsidered.[12]

More delays, such as an illness by lead actress Zinaida Sharko, postponed the final deadline for the completed film from March 29, 1971, to June 30. When the film's release in theaters was already scheduled, the work was banned under charges of *melkotem'e* (mediocrity of themes, themes having little to with the grand historical narratives of social equality and revolution), lack of didacticism, and the presentation of Evgenia Vasilievna as a less than perfect figure, an image which did not correspond to socialist realist portrayals of elders as

[11] Ibid**,** 73-74.
[12] Ibid, 74.

paragons of morality. Sasha, too, was thought to be too isolated and little participative in collective activities for a Soviet boy his age.[13] The film, therefore, was shelved and only came to light in the 1980s, as perestroika and glasnost allowed for its rehabilitation. Muratova herself was prohibited to make films until her 1978 *Getting to Know the Big Wide World*[14] (*Poznavaya belyi svet).* This film was produced not in distant Odessa, but in Leningrad (by Lenfilm), under the careful surveillance of state authorities.

The problem of self-opacity in *Long Farewells*[15] is advanced by Muratova and Riazantseva on two fronts, each relevant to one of the protagonists of the work. For Sasha, it surfaces in his inability to understand the motives underlying his desire to abandon his mother and move in with his archeologist father. Throughout the film, Sasha clearly attributes his desire to escape to his mother's overbearing behavior, a kind of overprotectiveness that fails to take into account his new status as a budding adult, an individual "personality" (*lichnost'*) with his own independent wants, needs, and desires. As the film unfolds, however, the viewer – and to a certain extent, Sasha himself – comes to realize that his own desire to break free has more to do with his experience of shame around women his age than any actions specifically attributable to Evgenia Vasilievna. Sasha, then, fails to understand the stimuli driving his behavior: he thinks that what he is doing is spiting his mother – escaping from her tyrannical authority – when in fact, all he wants is to be taken seriously by the likes of Masha and Tanya.

Evgenia Vasilievna, on the other hand, deceives herself insofar as she attributes her suffering in the film to her son's erratic behavior. Concern for the son, she believes, is responsible for her own sabotaging of her budding romance with Nikolai Sergeevich,

---

[13] See also ibid, 75-80 for the contemporary reception of the film.
[14] *Poznavaia belyi svet* (*Getting to Know the Big Wide World*), dir. Kira Muratova (1978; USSR: Lenfil'm, 1978).
[15] Muratova, *Dolgie provody* (*Long Farewells*).

whereas, in fact, underlying her own successive overreactions to Sasha's desire to leave (stalking him after school, intercepting his written communication) is the not yet processed trauma of having been abandoned by his father so many years ago. The absent presence of Sasha's father, thus, is the cog around which Evgenia Vasilievna's behavior turns, something she comes to understand only late in the film. We turn, first, to Sasha.

That adolescent desire is one of the prime catalysts of Sasha's decision-making can be noted as early as the opening scene of *Long Farewells*. In the start of the film, Sasha and his mother visit a florist intending to buy a flower arrangement to place over the grave of Evgenia Vasilievna's father, a World War II veteran. If Evgenia is mostly absorbed by the flower arrangement itself, Sasha's gaze is fixed on the two young florists who are describing the biological functioning of hydroponic plants to a nearby customer. Florist 1 says, "Over there we supply water from the pool, and then from the pool we supply the solution to the desired sector."[16] Meanwhile, the camera pans right to show us our first image of Sasha as he is utterly absorbed by the women's visage. **(Figure 41)** The hydroponic plants themselves, it is worth mentioning, are the first overt symbol in the film, the significance of which is signaled by Evgenia Vasilievna as she pulls one of them from the water by the root. Not only is the image of being "rootless" in the absence of the father an aspect of both Sasha's and Evgenia Vasilievna's character in the film, but the image of exposing one's roots, captured by Evgenia Vasilievna's gesture, is a grand metaphor for the film: the need to, in uncovering past trauma and present humiliation, uncover the turbulent waters beneath the apparent stasis in the mother-and-son relationship. **(Figure 42)** *Long Farewells* is, at heart, a

[16] Ibid. Original text: ФЛОРИСТКА: Там мы подаем воду из бассейна, а потом уже из бассейна, мы подаем раствор в нужный сектор.

film of disclosing: that which lies underneath is only waiting to be given expression as tensions between mother and son move towards their climax.

Figure 41, Still from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

Figure 42, Still from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

If in the florist scene, Sasha's adolescent desire is communicated primarily in the act of looking at the young women from a distance, with the appearance of Masha, his longing is also translated as fantasy. Sasha has (reluctantly) agreed to have lunch in the countryside with a few his mothers' friends and as he and Evgenia Vasilievna approach the house, Sasha sees Masha, an old acquaintance of his, from a distance. A few years older than himself, Masha has only just been accepted at the architecture institute and, as he watches her adjust

her hair, he is immediately taken with erotic yearning. As in *Brief Encounters*[17] before it (more on this point on chapter 3), the foundational metaphor for desire in *Long Farewells* is that of water. **(Figure 43)**

Figure 43, Stills from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

This association is suggested not only by the many overflowing glasses and hoses that recur throughout the film, but is made explicit in the film's first introduction to Masha: a shot in which Muratova overlays extreme close-ups of Masha's flowing hair as it is blown dry with the roaring of the sea **(Figure 44)**. In what is perhaps one of the most lyrical shots in all of Muratova, the director establishes, here, a visual and auditory connection between Sasha's longing for Masha, and the oceanic tremulations of her hair.[18]

[17] *Korotkie vstrechi* (*Brief Encounters*), dir. Kira Muratova (1967; USSR: Odessa Film Studio, 1967).
[18] Muratova, *Dolgie provody* (*Long Farewells*).

Figure 44, Still from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

Masha's hair, in fact, is the chief vehicle of desire in Sasha's imaginative world. A repeated fantasy in which Sasha imagines himself assisting Masha as she ties her hair underscores this point. In the daydream, Sasha holds onto the edges of Masha's hair, her ponytail, and lifts it up while she, smiling, slowly ties it up with a ribbon **(Figure 45)**. Muratova's use of editing, which enables a direct jump from erotic make-believe to Sasha's first actual interaction with Masha, could not be more illustrative of the chasm separating reality from the imagining mind. If in the dream, Sasha appears confident, staid, and Masha smiles coquettishly, in their actual meeting, he approaches hesitantly, with the line: "Hi. I didn't recognize you."[19] Masha, meanwhile, is concerned primarily with the business of turning on a hose on the ground and flutters horizontally from one side of the screen to the other, paying little attention to her interlocutor. Masha's reply is to inform Sasha she has been admitted to university. As she struggles with the hose, Sasha attempts to help her, to which she responds, with mocking formality: "Thank you."[20] Already feeling his sense of self-worth under attack, Sasha makes as though to leave. Masha's replies threaten Sasha

[19] Ibid. Original text: САША: Здравствуйте. Я вас не узнал.
[20] Ibid. Original text: МАША: Благодарю вас.

because they undermine his wish to appear as a grown man before her, as a possible love interest, and by laughing at his gentlemanliness and stressing her university status, Masha accentuates the inequality between them.

Figure 45, Still from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

Ironically, however, by touting her admission, Masha does something not very adult-like: she lords her newly acquired trappings of maturity over her friend, making him feel childish in comparison.

It is only in the second interaction between Sasha and Masha that the complex interlacing of desire and recognition is fully developed. Throughout the exchange – which occurs as the two adolescents sit in outdoor chairs in front of the house, not exactly facing one another – Masha has already realized that Sasha is attracted to her from the awkwardness of their earlier meeting, and, in a hypnotic voice that begs him to speak even as it rings with disdain, says:

> MASHA: Sasha. Saaasha. Say something, you are always quiet. Well, say something. He will not say anything. He's so sad. He sits there with such a sorrowful look that I involuntarily begin to pity him. Sasha. Sasha, look at the dog, Sasha. Do you hear me? Do you hear me?[21]

[21] Ibid. Original text: МАША: Саша. Сааааша. Расскажите что-нибудь. Вы все время молчите. Ну пусть он хоть что-нибудь скажет. Нет. Он ничего не скажет. Он такой грустный, он сидит с таким печальным видом, что мне невольно становиться его жаль. Саша. Саша. Посмотрите на собаку. Саша. Вы меня слышите? Вы слышите меня?

The sexual tension brought about by Masha's tantalizing mockery is underscored by the mise-en-scène. A white dog stands between Masha and Sasha and, as the characters converse, Muratova shows us the movements of their hands as they glide over the dog's fur, nearing but never quite touching one another **(Figure 46)**. Visually, thus, Muratova builds anticipation for the meeting of the hands just as, emotionally, we await as Sasha decides whether to act upon his desire. Sasha, for his own part, desperately wishes to speak, to act, but he also intuitively understands that Masha's egging is a faux encouragement, aimed only at provoking a sincere effusion of romantic feeling she will weaponize to humiliate him further. Masha, here, relishes in testing the boundaries of her newly acquired power over the opposite sex.

Figure 46, Still from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

Immediately after Masha utters the preceding lines, Muratova alters the viewpoint of the camera, positioning it between and behind the teens, facing the field. This allows us to see, in the distance, Nikolai Sergeevich running through the turf. This detail stunningly intertwines the fears that move Sasha in the work: on one side, his desire to be taken for an adult and be looked at with romantic interest by women his age, and on the other, his contradictory attitudes towards his mother, which surface as he watches her express

romantic interest towards an unknown man **(Figure 47)**. Muratova, here, begins to suggest that although Sasha's desire to leave the mother is expressed as a need to get away from her feminine authority and assert his masculine independence, it is also sparked by a directly contradictory motive, namely, a fear of losing the mother as he watches her fall in love with someone new. The escape itself, then, is equally, and unbeknownst to him, also a plea for attention, an effort to reassert himself as the center of his mother's world.

Figure 47, Still from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

The *coup de grâce* for Sasha, however, occurs when he, at last, rides his bicycle into town to visit a friend and encounters another acquaintance: Tanya. Dressed in a fashionable leather jacket, Tanya embodies an entirely different archetype of adult femininity than Masha: a paragon of independence, rebelliousness and rule-breaking, all of which are quite attractive to Sasha. The first we see of Tanya is as she "breaks in" to a friend's apartment as loud rock music plays from the inside. In the subsequent scene, in a nearby square, Tanya and Sasha converse and there, she too challenges his sense of adulthood.

> TANYA: I changed my mind. I work in a fruit and vegetable warehouse. Temporarily. Why am I telling you this? You are still little. You don't understand anything. You haven't worked yet. Let me go, that hurts!
> SASHA: I've worked.
> TANYA: With your father?
> SASHA: With my father.

TANYA: Is that really work?
SASHA: Yes, it's work.
TANYA: Well I thought it was for laughs, a scientific experiment. What, are you upset with me? Don't be upset with me, tell me something instead. Maybe I'll go there too… Stone Age, uh?
SASHA: Tools of the Stone Age. We pulled them out ourselves. Then we hollowed out a boat.
TANYA: Did you ride around in it?
Sasha: Yes, we rode around.
TANYA: What are the guys like there, Sasha?
SASHA: The experiment is over.
TANYA: What's the matter with you? Teething are we? [22]

Tanya, here, not only questions the difficulty of both the physical labor and academic work Sasha's was involved in when helping his father at the dig, but concludes by desiring to learn more about the other boys that were there with him, signaling a clear lack of romantic interest in Sasha himself. At this point, Sasha is quite hurt, so when a stranger from the community commission approaches Tanya to confront her about her relinquishing of yet another job (it is Tanya's fourth – it is perhaps worth remembering that being unemployed was a crime in the Soviet Union), Sasha decides to assert himself as Tanya's protector before the man. In an insolent tone, Sasha says:

SASHA: What, you don't see? Maybe you are interrupting. Maybe there is a complicated relationship or love, for example.
STRANGER: Love?
SASHA: Ok, you don't know what it is, yeah? What, wait! You don't know what it is; why then you come up to us, tactlessly barge in, simply acting rude? How is that?
STRANGER: You, my friend, need to use fewer words.
SASHA: Why so casual all of a sudden? Is that right? Maybe I'm just talkative, maybe it's just my personality. Everyone needs an individual approach, right? Right. There is personality, individuality, yes? And you are the public, right?
STRANGER: Why are you playing games with me? Individuality?
SASHA: Yes, I'm an individual, and you are the public, but what is the public? Yes, what is the public?
STRANGER: Give me your palm.
SASHA: What?
TANYA: Let's go, Sasha.
STRANGER: Give me your hand.
TANYA: Sasha, don't give him your hand.
SASHA: What is this?
TANYA: Sasha, please.

[22] Ibid. Original text: ТАНЯ: Раздумала. Я на складе овощей и фруктов много. Временно. Но для чего я тебе говорю…Ты же еще маленький, ты ничего не понимаешь, ты же не работал. Отпусти, больно! САША: Я работал. ТАНЯ: С отцом? САША: С отцом. ТАНЯ: Разве это работа? САША: Работа. ТАНЯ: А я думала, это, так, для смеха, научный эксперимент. Ты что, обиделся? Ты не обижайся, ты лучше расскажи. Может, и я туда подамся... Каменный век, да? САША: Орудия каменного века. Сами вытащили. Потом лодку выдолбили. ТАНЯ: Покатались? САША: Покатались. ТАНЯ: А ребята там хорошие остались? САША: Эксперимент окончен. ТАНЯ: Ты что такой? Зубки режутся?

> STRANGER: See, you are afraid.
> TANYA: No, Sasha, let's go.
> SASHA: No, please.
> STRANGER: So…Here is the line of life. Here is the line of death. But this doesn't matter. Look here, the line of the public. The line of the individual. Here they intersect, and here at this intersection we are standing right now, and what is this? There seems to be a female figure here. Kartseva, Tatyana. Hm, no I was mistaken, you don't have Kartseva on your palm. You don't have her on her palm because you, for example, don't care what she is going to eat tomorrow. She quit her fourth job. I, for example, do care. Feel free to think that I care because I get paid for it. Well, forgive me if I am wrong. Excuse me. I'm in a hurry. Goodbye, Kartseva. [23]

The underlying psychological motivation, here, could not be clearer: Sasha is taken by an extreme desire to posture, to position himself as assertive, confident, maybe even violent, before an adult man after he has been put down repeatedly by the young women around him. His attempt, however, is entirely diffused by the man who refuses to lose his cool and ultimately lectures him about the reasons underlying Tanya Kartseva's lack of interest in him. The dynamic of male confrontation, here, is best encapsulated by a small detail in the text: the line "give me your palm."[24] Sasha only agrees to do so after his interlocutor baits him into it: he is called a coward.

The next time Tanya Kartseva appears in the film, interestingly enough, is when she comes to Evgenia Vasilievna's office in search of a job. Although this interaction is never shown in the film, one can only suppose that Sasha took the unknown man's advice to heart

---

[23] Ibid. Original text: САША: Вы что не видите, может, Вы мешаете? Может, сложные отношения или любовь, например? МУЖЧИНА: Любовь? САША: Ну хорошо. Вы это не знаете, да? Подождите! Вы этого не знаете, чего же подходите, бестактно вторгаетесь, просто по-хамски поступаете? Это как это? МУЖЧИНА: Ты б, парень, слов поменьше. САША: Уже «на ты» переходите, да? Это разве правильно? А я, может, разговорчивый. А может у меня такой характер. К каждому нужен индивидуальный подход, правильно? Правильно. Есть личность, индивидуальность, да? А вы общественность, да? МУЖЧИНА: Что ты мне голову морочишь. Личность? САША: Да, правильно. Я личность. А вы общественность. А что такое общественность? Да, ну что такое общественность? МУЖЧИНА: Ну-ка дай ладонь. САША: Чего? ТАНЯ: Пошли, Саша. МУЖЧИНА: Руку дай. ТАНЯ: Саша, не давай ему руку. САША: А чего это? МУЖЧИНА: Вот видишь, ты боишься. САША: Нет, пожалуйста. МУЖЧИНА: Так, линия жизни. Линия смерти. Но это не важно. А вот, смотри, линия общественности. Линия личности. Вот здесь они пересекаются. Вот на этом перекресточке мы с тобой и стоим. А вот это что? Это как бы женская фигурка, что ли, виднеется? Карцева, Татьяна. Впрочем, нет, ошибся. Нет у тебя Карцевой на ладони. А нету у тебя ее, братец, потому что тебе, например, наплевать, что она есть завтра будет. Она четвертую работу бросила. А мне, например, не наплевать. Но, можешь считать, что это потому, что я за это зарплату получаю. Ну, извини, если что не так. Ты извини. Спешу. До свидания, Карцева.

[24] Ibid. Original text: МУЖЧИНА: Ну-ка дай ладонь.

and asked his mother to help Tanya find a job. Evgenia Vasilievna's tension throughout the interaction is palpable. If she is concerned with Tanya's relationship to her son – and is having great trouble hiding it – Tanya cares very little. Were Evgenia Vasilievna a bit more attentive, she might have noticed that her fears about a serious romantic connection between Tanya and Sasha were unfounded.

That Sasha's desire to escape is, ultimately, not at all a choice *for* his absent father is perhaps clearest when, after school, Sasha convinces his friend Pavlik to call Masha in order to tell her that he has left town. In one of the funniest scenes in all of Muratova's work – one that, to this day, is capable of producing shudders in educated Russian-speakers every time Pavlik and Sasha unproperly stress the word *zvonit* – Pavlik does indeed pick up the phone to call Masha and her reaction is nothing like what Sasha had anticipated.

> SASHA: Answer quickly, quickly Pavlik.
> PAVLIK: Yes…Pavlik, well yes…Ustinov left and sends you his best. No problem, I don't need thanks, I'd rather remain anonymous. Yes.
> SASHA: Well? What? Well?
> PAVLIK: She's laughing…
> SASHA: well? Well?
> PAVLIK: What?
> SASHA: Well what? What did she say? What?
> PAVLIK: Well she says well, who's calling?
> SASHA: And?
> PAVLIK: Well I tell her, well, I'm calling.
> SASHA: Who's I?
> PAVLIK: Pavlik, Pavlik.
> SASHA: What did she say, well what did she say?
> Pavlik: She said who's calling, and I said Pavlik is calling. [25]

In Sasha's mind, his departure was supposed to produce some kind of emotional stir in Masha, some kind of adolescent melodrama of surprise, fright, or sadness. Instead, the call

[25] Ibid. Original text: САША: Отвечай, отвечай ,быстро, Павлик. ПАВЛИК: Да, Павлик…Ну да…Низкий поклон Вам от уехавшего Устинова. Нет…Не стоит благодарности. Ну, я предпочитаю остаться неизвестным. Да. САША: Что? Что? Ну что? ПАВЛИК: Смеется. САША: Ну что, что? ПАВЛИК: Что? Ну как…САША: Ну что она сказала? ПАВЛИК: Ну она говорит, что, мол, кто звонит? Ну а я ей говорю, что, значит, я звоню. САША: Кто я? ПАВЛИК: Павлик! Павлик! САША: Что она сказала, что она сказала… ПАВЛИК: Она меня спрашивает…Она сказала: «кто звонит»? Я говорю «Павлик звонит».

from the less than competent Pavlik just makes her laugh: she sees through the ploy immediately. That Sasha is ultimately more concerned with Masha's opinion of him than the implications of his own departure is visible in the concluding interaction between the two schoolfriends.

> PAVLIK: Well, she says…basically, well she started laughing.
> SASHA: Yeah, I heard that.
> PAVLIK: I laughed, I mean I hung up the phone.
> SASHA: I saw that.
> PAVLIK: That is, she actually hung up the phone. Then I hung up my phone.
> SASHA: Yes, I saw you hang up the phone, idiotic scene, absolutely moronic.
> PAVLIK: You are humiliating me.
> SASHA: You are putting me in a stupid position.
> PAVLIK: With who? Her? You're leaving anyways.[26]

Sasha's surprised reaction to that final statement, which only flashes momentarily on the screen says it all: Sasha does not really want to leave. What he wants is adulthood. Despite having associated an inability to be independent to his overbearing mother, what he truly wants is female attention, an attention that – may be under threat, too – by his mother's budding relationship with Nikolai Sergeevich.

The very first encounter between Nikolai Sergeevich and Sasha is quite cold. Soon after Evgenia Vasilievna and Nikolai Sergeevich first make each other's acquaintance and discuss their interest in dogs, the following interchange unfolds:

> EVGENIA: Go ahead, you can go to the city, if you want, please. Go on. Well what, what, what? Please meet my son.
> SASHA: Hi.
> NIKOLAI: Hi.
> EVGENIA: Didn't I teach you to pronounce your name clearly and say, "Nice to meet you"?[27]

---

[26] Ibid. Original text: ПАВЛИК: Ну она…Ну она значит говорит, что…Потом она смеяться начала. САША: Слышал я. ПАВЛИК: Я смеялся. То есть, я трубку повесил. САША: Видел я. ПАВЛИК: В смысле, она трубку повесила. Потом я трубку повесил. САША: Да, видел я, как ты трубку повесил, дурацкое зрелище, кретинское просто. ПАВЛИК: Ты меня унижаешь. САША: Ты меня в дурацкое положение ставишь. ПАВЛИК: Перед кем? Перед ней, что ли? Так ты же все равно уезжаешь.

[27] Ibid. Original text: ЕВГЕНИЯ: Ну пожалуйста, можешь ехать в город, если хочешь. Пожалуйста. Пожалуйста. Ну что, что что. Познакомьтесь, пожалуйста. Это мой сын. САША: Здравствуйте. ЕВГЕНИЯ: Я же учила тебе внятно произносить имя и говорить «очень приятно».

Disdaining his mother's instructions, Sasha simply stands defiantly, looking at his mother and her new friend. The tension perhaps already suggests that he has sensed his mother's growing interest in the man. Sasha's watchful gaze, as I have noted earlier, permeates all of Nikolai Sergeevich's and Evgenia Vasilievna's interactions in the dacha. Most notable is Sasha's watchful eyes as the two talk underneath a gazebo about translation, walking barefoot, and mushroom collecting. About half-way through the scene Muratova cuts to Sasha watching them from a distance with a smile on his face, as he wanders from side to side **(Figure 48)**.

Figure 48, Still from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

The moment, however, when Muratova at last reveals the extent to which Sasha is threatened by the new presence of Nikolai Sergeevich in his family life occurs when Evgenia Vasilievna goes on her theater date with her suitor. Left alone at home by himself, Sasha is first shown engaging in a truly elaborate mode of passing the time: creating absurdist phonic poetry, most of which is based on great classics of Russia's verse tradition. Among the recognizable references are Khlebnikov, Kornei Chukovsky, and Pushkin.[28] This expression

[28] Among the texts mimicked and referenced by Sasha are the classic opener of many Russian folktales, "Once upon a time there lived an old man and an old woman," the futurist poem "Incantation by Laughter," by

of creative energy is a complex diversion of Sasha's attention, a way to keep him from passing the time without considering how he truly feels about his mother's new role as a dater. In this way, it is a kind of sublimation of jealousy that remains under the surface and is only rendered explicit in the subsequent scene, after Muratova shows us the fate of Evgenia Vasilievna's *rendez-vous*.

This scene begins with a close-up on Sasha's face as he rocks on a chair. As he engages in this repetitive movement, Muratova intersects it with images of Evgenia Vasilievna making herself up, putting on earrings, puffing up her hair, and trying on her theater spectacles **(Figure 49)**.

Khebnikov and the children's poem "Telephone" by Kornei Chukovskii, which features a chocolate-desiring talking elephant: "My phone rang/ Who's speaking?/ The elephant./Where from?/From the camel./What do you want?/Chocolate./For whom?/For my son." In the film, the direct citation is: «Кто говорит?/ Слон».

Figure 49, Stills from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

In context, these images reflect Sasha's own reminiscences or imaginings of his mother's new role as love interest. Given his despondent expression, the images can be thought to reflect Sasha's powerful attachment to the motherly figure. That in all of the images, the mother is dressing herself for the date in which she is currently engaged in is perhaps what bothers Sasha in particular about them; they embody, for him, the loss of the mother. She, Evgenia Vasilievna, has beautified herself to spend time and be affectionate with another man that is not him, her son, and this bothers him (Freudianly and commonly). The nature of such images confirms what is only alluded to in the earlier interactions between the boy and Nikolai Sergeevich, namely, that he perceives the other as a threat. Here, Sasha is forced to come to terms with his unwillingness to leave his mother, even his own sense of territoriality over her, all of which remains hidden from view in his adolescent coolness towards her during much of the film. This then is the nature of Sasha's self-opacity as presented by Muratova and Riazantseva in the film. Sasha, we come to see, was never truly ready to leave his mother; rather, what he was after is feminine attention, which he begins to receive from Tanya and from his mother the very moment he threatens to leave. As the mother begins to lead a life in which he might play a secondary or parallel role – a life in

which he might have to share his mother's attention with Nikolai Sergeevich – Sasha is forced to come to terms with his own claim on his mother, that is, with his own fear of losing her love to another man.

Individual self-opacity is also the mark of Evgenia Vasilievna's behavior throughout *Long Farewells*. This is rendered explicit in her opening conversations with Nikolai Sergeevich about the white dog that roams the dacha in which they are staying.

> EVGENIA: You know, I really love mutts, I think they're the best dogs.
> NIKOLAI: But this is a Great Dane!
> EVGENIA: No, it's a mutt. Definitely a mutt. I know better. You see, dogs get attached to people from the first glance all the way to the grave. Dogs really love me. Look, well, go get it! [29]

Even though Nikolai Sergeevich very confidently asserts that the dog in question is a great Dane, she refuses to accept it (out of the fear of making a fool of herself before someone she is obviously attracted to) and further, throws one of her shoes for the dog to return, only to watch as the dog sprints in the opposite direction. Muratova and Riazantseva, thus, signal to us that Evgenia Vasilievna's self-ascriptions are false with a compelling piece of physical evidence. Her claim that "dogs really like me" is challenged almost instantly by the rogue behavior of the Great Dane. The line "dogs get attached to people from first glance all the way to the grave" also alludes to the trauma of abandonment that lies at the heart of Evgenia Vasilievna's character. Read indirectly as a statement about herself, that is, that she herself remains attached to past love, the line may subconsciously explain her hesitation to begin a relationship with Nikolai Sergeevich.

This same motif recurs in the aforementioned gazebo scene with Nikolai Sergeevich. After she has just commented to Nikolai Sergeevich about her dedication to her job: "I have

[29] Muratova, *Dolgie provody* (*Long Farewells*). Original text: ЕВГЕНИЯ: Вы знаете, я очень люблю дворняжек. По-моему, самые лучшие собаки на свете. НИКОЛАЙ: Это дог. ЕВГЕНИЯ: Нет, это дворняжка, это дворняжка. Я же знаю лучше. Ну вы понимаете, собаки, когда привязываются к человеку с первого взгляда, это до гробовой тоски. И меня вот собаки очень любят. Вот смотрите, ну, ну.

been sitting for 15 years in the same spot, the same table even. I've been sitting there from the moment I first sat down," she remarks: "You probably think that I'm some kind of flighty woman, right?"[30] Nothing could be further from Nikolai Sergeevich's mind. She has, in fact, just proven herself very constant and loyal to her career. Beyond showing herself somewhat incapable of predicting how she is coming across (an element of her personality which certainly annoys her adolescent son), the line perhaps begins to point at the hidden motivations driving Evgenia Vasilievna to resist Nikolai Sergeevich's advances. Despite being interested in him, when he motions to cross the physical barrier between them – a wooden column – she rapidly moves to the other side, maintaining the defensive protection around her emotions and body **(Figure 50)**. Why is she so resistant?

Figure 50, Still from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

This behavior is taken to a veritable extreme of self-sabotage during their fateful theater date. Muratova cues us to what Evgenia Vasilievna feels by means of montage right at the start of the scene. There, she cuts from a hesitant Evgenia Vasilievna, hiding behind

[30] Ibid. Original text: ЕВГЕНИЯ: Понимаете, я 15 лет сижу на одном месте, даже за одним и тем же столом. Все так сижу… А вы наверно подумали обо мне, что я такая, ветреная женщина, да?
Original text: ЕВГЕНИЯ: Понимаете, я 15 лет сижу на одном месте, даже за одним и тем же столом. Все так сижу… А вы наверно подумали обо мне что я, такая, ветреная женщина, да?

the entryway door, to the image of a young naked boy who watches everything from an adjacent window **(Figure 51)**.

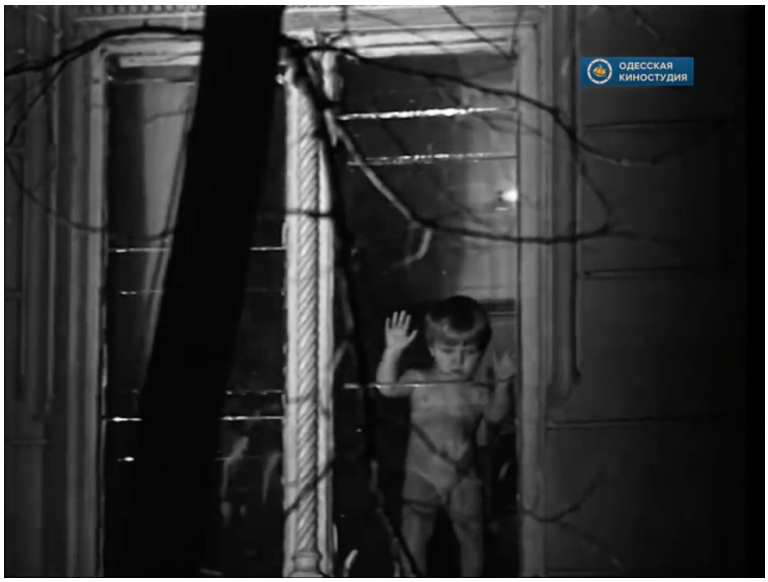

Figure 51, Still from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

This alternating movement happens a few times, establishing a connection between Evgenia Vasilievna and children, that is, putting children as the origin of her hesitation. Her focus, of course, is on one child in particular: her own son, whom she has left alone in the apartment. The date, thus, is a failed enterprise even before she enters the car.

As soon as she sits beside Nikolai Sergeevich, she begins to behave so outrageously that she could be thought to be deliberately boycotting their evening together. She claims to have already seen the play they are headed to, claims to want to leave early, claims to hate smoking (to never have smoked in her life), and finally, gets offended when Nikolai Sergeevich offers to pay for the cab. When Nikolai Sergeevich rightly asks her if what is bothering her has something to do with Sasha, she enters into a mode of self-defense as though Nikolai Sergeevich had offended her son. Consciously or not, at this point, Evgenia Vasilievna is looking for an excuse to call off the date and end the interaction. This is in fact exactly what happens.

Throughout the car scene, the profound psychological tension experienced by Evgenia Vasilievna is emphasized with cuts to the dark street and the flashing lights outside, which seem disconcerting when accompanied by the music of Karavaichuk, which takes on an ominous ¾ bass line that muddies its lyricism **(Figure 52)**.

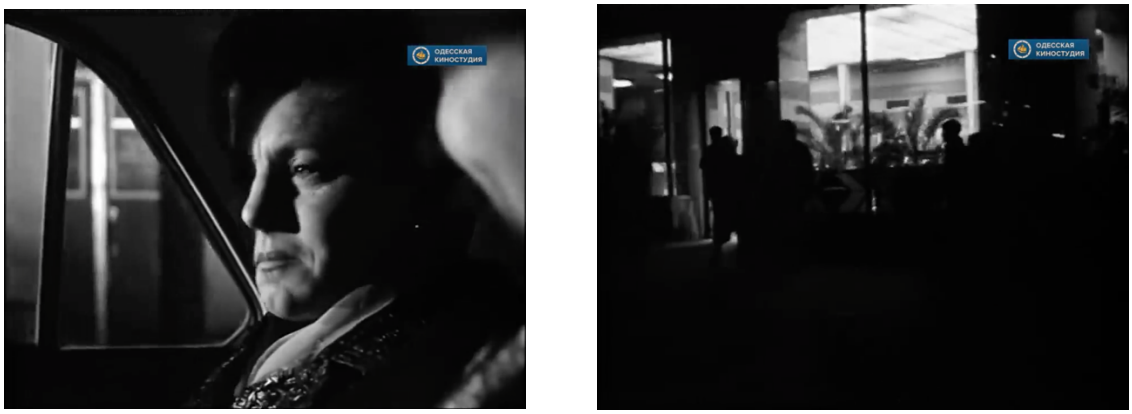

Figure 52, Stills from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

EVGENIA: Don't be offended, Nikolai Sergeevich.
NIKOLAI: It's impossible to take offense at you, Evgenia Vasilievna.
EVGENIA: Why? Though overall, you are right, of course, impossible. I gave you such an impression?
NIKOLAI: Well, no…
EVGENIA: Sometimes I let myself…
NIKOLAI: No impression…
EVGENIA: No impression? Well that's great.
NIKOLAI: I do have an impression of you, but not what you are…
EVGENIA: Where are we going?
NIKOLAI: To the theater.
EVGENIA: I think I've seen the piece.
NIKOLAI: "Night of the Nightingale?"
EVGENIA: Yes.
NIKOLAI: You saw it, I didn't know.
EVGENIA: You know what, I'll watch it for a bit and then I'll go. It will be better this way.
NIKOLAI: We can immediately change direction and go to say..
EVGENIA: No, no, why.
NIKOLAI: Is something wrong with your son again?
EVGENIA: He is a very good boy.
NIKOLAI: I didn't say anything bad.
EVGENIA: You thought it.
NIKOLAI: Please.
EVGENIA: I don't smoke.
NIKOLAI: But you smoked…
EVGENIA: Never in my life.

NIKOLAI: How I wish I could take you somewhere, to the village, to my aunt, to the -the middle of nowhere, to Saratov.[31]
EVGENIA: What village?
NIKOLAI: To recover and regain a sense of humor and other feelings that help one live in the world.
EVGENIA: Nikolai Sergeevich, what are you saying?
NIKOLAI: E. V, I speak in the subjunctive mood, I don't have an aunt in Saratov.
EVGENIA: And I don't have a sense of humor, no and never did. And I don't understand this sense of humor of yours, when something is funny, I laugh, but a sense of humor, I don't know. And we are late… Of course, it's all because of me, because of me… (*Tries to pay the taxi driver*)
NIKOLAI: Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Evgenia Vasilievna?
EVGENIA: How are you not ashamed? I have change, I always pay. To pay for a woman is to humiliate a woman. That's it, I don't need anything, all right, all right, please. That's it. Goodbye. [32]

Unbeknownst to Evgenia Vasilievna, however, the primary moving force psychologically speaking, of both her fear of being abandoned by her son and her sabotage of the date with Nikolai Sergeevich is not Sasha, but the not yet overcome trauma of his father's departure. This is shown in three late episodes in the film, which begin to unravel the importance of past trauma in Evgenia Vasilievna's experience of the present. The first

[31] «В деревню, к тетке, в глушь, в Саратов!» ("To the village, to the middle of nowhere, to Saratov!") is, of course, a famous line from the play *Woe from Wit* («Горе от ума») by Alexander Griboedov (1795-1829). The line is said by Famusov to his daughter Sophie in Act 4, scene 14: "Не быть тебе в Москве, не жить тебе с людьми;/Подалее от этих хватов./В деревню, к тетке, в глушь, в Саратов,/Там будешь горе горевать./За пяльцами сидеть, за святцами зевать». In the newest verse translation of the play, by Betsky Hulick, the passage reads: "Wait a day or two, then say goodbye/to pleasures of polite society/and gentlemen who use us with contempt,/and eat your heart out at a far remove/from Moscow, at your aunt's house in Saratov,/instructed by an edifying book/and playing your embroidery hook." Alexander Griboedov, *Woe from Wit*. Translated by Betsy Hulick. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).
[32] Ibid. Original text: НИКОЛАЙ: Чуть вперед. ЕВГЕНИЯ: Не обижайтесь, Николай Сергеевич. НИКОЛАЙ: На Вас невозможно обижаться, Евгения Васильевна. ЕВГЕНИЯ: Почему? Да, в общем, конечно, правильно. Правильно, невозможно. У Вас обо мне сложилось такое впечатление? НИКОЛАЙ: Да нет, почему… ЕВГЕНИЯ: Я иногда позволяю себе… НИКОЛАЙ: Не сложилось… ЕВГЕНИЯ: Вообще никакого? Тоже хорошо. НИКОЛАЙ: Сложилось, но не то, о чем Вы… ЕВГЕНИЯ: Куда мы едем? НИКОЛАЙ: В театр. ЕВГЕНИЯ: По-моему, я видела эту вещь. Я забыла... НИКОЛАЙ: «Соловьиная ночь». ЕВГЕНИЯ: «Соловьиная ночь»? НИКОЛАЙ: Видели? Не знал. ЕВГЕНИЯ: Вы знаете, я немножко посмотрю, а потом я пойду. Так будет лучше. НИКОЛАЙ: Мы можем сразу изменить направление и поехать, скажем… ЕВГЕНИЯ: Нет, нет. Ну зачем? НИКОЛАЙ: Опять с сыном что-нибудь не то? ЕВГЕНИЯ: Он очень хороший мальчик. НИКОЛАЙ: Я ничего плохого не сказал. ЕВГЕНИЯ: Вы подумали. НИКОЛАЙ: Прошу. ЕВГЕНИЯ: Я не курю. НИКОЛАЙ: Но Вы же курили. ЕВГЕНИЯ: Никогда в жизни. НИКОЛАЙ: Ах, увез бы я Вас куда-нибудь, в деревню, к тетке, в глушь, в Саратов. ЕВГЕНИЯ: Что, в какую деревню? НИКОЛАЙ: Чтоб прийти в себя и вновь обрести чувство юмора и другие чувства, помогающие жить на свете. ЕВГЕНИЯ: Николай Сергеевич, ну что такое Вы говорите, ну что? НИКОЛАЙ: Я, Евгения Васильевна, говорю в сослагательном наклонении, у меня нет тетки в Саратове. ЕВГЕНИЯ: А у меня нет чувства юмора. Нет, нет и не было никогда. Я вообще не понимаю этого вашего чувства юмора. Понимаете, когда смешно, то я смеюсь. Когда смешно. А чувство юмора… Я не знаю. Но вот опоздали… Конечно, все из-за меня, все из-за меня… НИКОЛАЙ: Ну как не стыдно, Евгения Васильевна? ЕВГЕНИЯ: Что такое? Как Вам не стыдно? У меня есть мелочь. Я всегда плачу. Ну что такое, понимаете, платить за женщину это унижать женщину. Ну все, все ничего не надо, все. Ничего я не хочу. Все, до свидания.

scene occurs when Evgenia Vasilievna has intercepted a postal exchange between her ex-husband and her son in which she realizes that Sasha does indeed wish to leave her. Feeling distraught, Evgenia's initial reaction is to write a response telegram to the father. She engages in three attempts, phrasing her telegram in ways that suggest that she is assigning responsibility for her son's departure to *the ex-husband* rather than to Sasha. Her impulsive writing, however, is abruptly interrupted when a song by Mikhai Vasilevich Dolgan[33] is played in the background by a group of adolescent boys. As I have argued in "Video Authenticity and Epistolary Self-Expression in Kira Muratova's *Letter to America,*" [34] the piece appears to invite positive, loving recollections of the ex-husband in Evgenia Vasilievna, sparking within her a realization that the husband is not directly to blame for her son's departure but, rather, that she is the one projecting evil intent onto him as a result of his breaking her heart. Dolgan's piece, thus, impedes Evgenia Vasilievna from wrongly attributing blame where it does not belong even as it highlights the crucial role played by abandonment in her behavior in the film.

The second of our trio of revelatory episodes is, perhaps, a visual synecdoche of the philosophical claim on which this entire dissertation turns: that in Muratova films, the cinematic image is, for those who dare to look*,* a sensible-affective path to self-understanding. Earlier in the film, Sasha exhibits a certain fascination for a set of pictures slides that, with the help of a small contraption, he projects on the wall of their darkened apartment. These include images of animals, plants, drawings, and other objects. Evgenia Vasilievna tolerates her son's behavior but does not understand it. At that point in the film,

---

[33] Mikhai Vasilievich Dolgan "In a White Dress With a Belt" ("*V belom plat'e s poiaskom"*) in Muratova, *Long Farewells* (*Dolgie provody*).

[34] See forthcoming Molina, David G. "Video Authenticity and Epistolary Self-Expression in Kira Muratova's *Letter to America"* (1999), in *Epistolary Forms in Film, Media, and Visual Culture,* ed. Catherine Fowler and Teri Higgings (forthcoming 2022).

she asks him (in a line that resonates with the Hitchcockean question in *Change of Fate* and *The Tuner*): "I don't understand, why such love (*strast')* for pictures?"[35] The metacinematic dimension of the question, here, is given not only by the mise-en-scène – Sasha is, after all, projecting photographs on a wall, in the dark – but by the word *kartiny* (in the diminutive, here, "*kartinki"*) "pictures," which invites viewers to investigate their own passion for cinema. Is it ordinate? Inordinate? Repugnant? With this query, Evgenia Vasilievna, early in the film, is marked as an uncinematic person, as someone either uninterested or incapable of appreciating what cinema, as a sensible-aesthetic mode of intelligibility of Geist's self-knowledge, can offer her. Late in the film, however, Muratova and Riazantseva convert Evgenia Vasilievna from a film critic who fails to see, to one who does. Distraught after her failed date and in an agitated state of mind, Evgenia Vasilievna, in very abrupt movements, manipulates her slide projector and inserts, inside it, a new set of slides sent by Sasha's father to him in the intercepted package. After the image has settled in place, Muratova shows us a medium range shot of Evgenia Vasilievna smoking as she looks, absorbed, at the slides **(Figure 53)**. Behind Evgenia Vasileivna are all sorts of visual art: of animals, flowers, and even a woman in the lower rightmost corner of the frame. At least three sets of eyes can be detected in the background, not only signaling that this is a moment or *the* moment of sight in the film, but also cueing viewers to look intensely at what is being shown.

[35] Muratova, *Dolgie provody* (*Long Farewells*). Original text: ЕВГЕНИЯ: Не понимаю, что это за страсть к картинкам.

Figure 53, Still from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

Zinaida Sharko then, stands up from her position, exhales the smoke from her cigarette, and walks towards the door of the apartment, where an image of Sasha and her ex-husband, side-by-side, are shown. Crucially, she does not walk up to her son, Sasha, who has been threatening to run away from her during most of the film, but towards the image of the husband. In fact, as she approaches him, she slides her hand over his chest, projected over the rightmost door **(Figure 54)**. She then moves away from the image, and positions herself so that her shadow is perfectly visible between the figures on the door **(Figure 55)**.

Figure 54, Still from Long Farewells (Muratova, 1971)

Figure 55, Still from Long Farewells (Muratova, 1971)

If the husband is the ever-present absence in Evgenia's life, it is her own self that is missing from the photograph. Her shadow takes its proper place in an act of desirous projecting. We then hear as Evgenia Vasilievna returns to the slide projector and a new set of images appears on screen. First, we see an extreme close-up of Evgenia Vasilievna's cigarette, whose fumes pervade the room as she looks at the slide; then, Muratova cuts to an extreme close-

up of a photograph of Sasha holding what looks like a Greek artifact in his hand. As the camera zooms out from the face, the image is replaced with photographs of the ex-husband with his female graduate students, an image depicting a set of Greek columns accompanied by a smiling Sasha (on the rightmost corner) and an unidentifiable man at the center of the image; and, after a few more group shots, the most important image in the film: a close-up shot of the father with Sasha's face to the left of it **(Figure 56)**. Their faces appear to blend into one another. Evgenia Vasilievna flips through one more photograph until she returns to the starting position – the image of Sasha and his father standing side-by-side – and at that very moment, Sasha himself – flesh-and-bone – walks through the door, or rather, walks into the apartment through his own projected image.

Figure 56, Still from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

This is the fundamental turning point in *Long Farewells:* Evgenia Vasilievna's engagement with a set of picture slides – a stand-in for cinema itself – is what catalyzes Evgenia Vasilievna's confrontation with her self-opacity. By looking at images of her son

and husband – in particular, the shots in which they stand side by side, or even more powerfully, the shot in which their faces appear to blend into one another – Evgenia Vasilievna's sees the motivating fallacy of her behavior. It is not the son's inexplicable conduct – his teenage rebelliousness – that is causing her so much trouble; on the contrary, it is the relationship with the father that moves her, a sense that the son's departure is a repetition of original heartbreak. This realization is prompted not only by looking at the cinematic slideshow, but by touching the image. Evgenia Vasilievna's fear of abandonment is made even more explicit when one recalls that what she is in fact touching is a *door*: the image of father and son appear as they are metaphorically threatening to leave. The haptic quality of the photograph itself – its indexing capacity to direct attention to the missing presence – is what enables her to understand her behavior. Muratova, here, encapsulates, through Evgenia Vasiliievna, the project of her own cinematic oeuvre: to show us ourselves. Evgenia Vasilievna uses a stand-in for cinema to discover who she is, that is, to see the truth underneath her self-opacity.

The ever-presence of the father comes to its fullest realization in the scene in which mother and child switch roles. Sasha, having realized that his mother opened his package and intruded upon his privacy remains aloof from his mother. Because he holds the moral high ground, he appears distant and cold while Evgenia Vasilievna is in a state of childish tension, behaving like someone afraid of being punished by a parent. When Evgenia Vasilievna ultimately asks Sasha about whether he has decided to leave and he says yes, she has another moment of quiet despair as she fumbles while lighting her cigarette **(Figure 57)**. Wholly pushing into the adult role, Sasha, who at this point is sitting in an armchair, lights his mother's cigarette and sits next to her. At this point, Evgenia Vasilievna begins to recount a tale about her encounter with a red bird:

EVGENIA: Thank you. Once, we were riding in a jeep. A cloudy, cloudy gray day, when there are clouds, but no rain, quiet, quiet, gray day, everything is gray, gray. The poplars are gray, the road and the sky, and we… stopped near the teahouse. A little house by the road, and then we came out and suddenly we see, sitting on a tree, is a red, red, bright red bird. The poplar is all gray, but the bird is red, red, impossibly red! I yell: look, how it is! Look, how it will fly away! How red it is! Such red doesn't even exist. It was a parrot. He lived in the teahouse, nothing unusual. Someone just forgot to close the door of its cage, so it flew out. It wasn't going to fly away. I'm curious, curious, I wonder if your father remembers this or not. You ask him, it was a long time ago, he probably forgot it. You ask him and write to me. I know you don't like writing letters, but you ask and write to me in detail. I'm curious.
SASHA: I'll write. I'll write. [36]

Figure 57, Still from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

Evgenia Vasilievna's insistence on wanting to hear from her ex-husband through Sasha and the recounting of this memory acts as a kind of therapeutic talking cure for Evgenia Vasilievna. In processing this love affair – whose sad end still plagues her – she is attempting to free herself, for the first time in the film, from the poisoned clutches of the trauma that has directed her behavior towards her son throughout. The insistence on the bird's red color

[36] Ibid. Original text: ЕВГЕНИЯ: Один раз мы ехали на газике. Такой пасмурный, пасмурный серый день. Когда тучи, а дождя не будет. Тихий, тихий серый день. Все кругом серое, серое. Тополя серые, дорога, небо. И мы… Остановились возле чайной. Такой маленький домик у дороги, мы вошли и вдруг видим, на тополе сидит такая красная-красная, ярко-красная птица. И тополь сам весь серый, а она красная, красная до невозможности просто красная. А я кричу: смотрите, смотрите, какая она красная, смотрите, как она улетит. Такая красная - так не бывает. А это был попугай. Он жил в чайной. Ничего странного. Просто кто-то забыл закрыть дверцу клетки. Вот он и вылетел, он не собирался никуда улетать. Интересно. Интересно, тец помнит это или нет? Ты спроси у него. Это было давно, он, наверно, забыл. Но ты спроси у него, и напиши мне. Я знаю, ты писем не любишь писать, но ты спроси и напиши мне подробно. Мне интересно. САША: Я напишу. Я напишу.

– the color of beauty in the Russian tradition (e.g. "Red Square," in Moscow) – is itself a revelation of a moment of aesthetic wonderment in the natural world that also reflects nostalgia for the lost relationship. The primary salutary significance of the monologue, however, has to do with the fact that, contrary to expectation, the bird in the story is *not* about to fly away. (Flying away, of course, is a common metaphor for grown children abandoning their parents: "the empty nest.") Evgenia Vasilievna speaks as though she accepts Sasha's departure, but the story reveals that she is not quite ready yet. We have, here, yet another instance of self-opacity, this time founded on memory.

The concluding scene of the film, which recounts Evgenia Vasilievna and Sasha's night on the eve of his departure takes place in a department celebration, where foreigners have been invited to a night of awards and swing dancing. After a few images of dancing and the characteristic Muratovian use of stuttering montage during the awards ceremony, Muratova shows us Sasha and Tanya Kartseva together on the dance floor.

Evgenia Vasilievna, however, wants to spend time with her son and goes to find him; meanwhile, he hides behind a tree where a mime, behaving as his double, embodies the duplicity in his motives: a simultaneous desire to hide and be seen **(Figure 58)**.

Figure 58, Still from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

Ultimately, Sasha is found and his mother introduces him to all of her colleagues. In one telling moment, his mother introduces him to a male friend as "her Sasha," meaning, her son Sasha, but he immediately corrects her, introducing himself to the man as "Ustinov, Alexander,"[37] an attempt to assert his independent identity. The man, again, reacts at this move for what it is: a pretense. In response, the man says "Just call me Vasya" showing that adulthood does not require a cover of formality and distance; in protesting his childhood too much, Vasya shows, Sasha only succeeds in asserting it.

The film concludes in one of the most formally interesting scenes in Muratova's oeuvre: Evgenia Vasilievna and Sasha, late for the performance that is to conclude the departmental event, try to reclaim their reserved seats as the performance is already going on. Evgenia Vasilievna and Sasha walk up to their seats and ask that they be vacated. When they are not, Evgenia stands there, blocking the view of those behind her and becoming increasingly tearful at the "disorder" and "lack of principles" unfolding all around. Sasha pulls her away from the seat a few different times, but she always returns to the same spot, standing in the way. Meanwhile, Muratova alternately cuts between the mime performance on stage and Evgenia Vasilievna, suggesting a theatrical parallel between the audience and stage **(Figure 59)**.

[37] Ibid. Original text: ЕВГЕНИЯ: Это мой Саша. САША: Устинов, Александр. Очень приятно. Устинов, Александр. МУЖЧИНА: Ну, меня зови Вася, просто.

Figure 59, Still from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

Where is the performance taking place, Muratova seems to ask? And further, if Evgenia Vasilievna is a mime, what is she miming? In a sense, she is acting out a desire for order in a world that appears to be falling apart by means of this metonymical gesture, the refusal to give up her seat. Almost imperceptibly, however, the mimic number comes to a close and is replaced by one in which a woman, accompanied by a guitar, performs a musical rendition of Lermontov's 1832 poem "The Sail" (*'Parus'*).[38] The poems' text accompanies the film to its close, and plays a particularly important role in the scenes in which Sasha, having succeeded in extracting his mother from the performance space, tells her, in a burst of passionate feeling, that he will not leave her. Evgenia Vasilievna, hearing her son's effusion, sheds tears of joy, presented by Muratova in a series of close-ups that carry the film to its end. The theme of deception, too, is visually underscored once more by Evgenia Vasilievna's removal of her wig **(Figure 60)**: she is literally wearing different hair throughout the preceding scene.

[38] Mikhail Iur'evich Lermontov, "Parus" in *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh,* Tom 1. (Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatel'stvo Pushkinskogo doma, 2014, 254).

Figure 60, Still from Long Farewells **(Muratova, 1971)**

If Sasha's desire to remain ends Evgenia Vasilievna's pain in the film, it leaves open the fundamental question of the ultimate health of this mother-son relationship. Is this conclusion not simply a concession to the tyrannical mother, a subsuming of the child's desire for independence to his mother's need for attachment? Yes and no. It is Lermontov's text that best captures Sasha's state of mind:

> Белеет парус одинокой
> В тумане моря голубом!..
> Что ищет он в стране далекой?
> Что кинул он в краю родном?..
>
> Играют волны — ветер свищет,
> И мачта гнется и скрыпит…
> Увы! он счастия не ищет
> И не от счастия бежит!
>
> Под ним струя светлей лазури,
> Над ним луч солнца золотой…
> А он, мятежный, просит бури,
> Как будто в бурях есть покой![39]

[39] Ibid. Translation: "A lonely sail is flashing white/Amdist the blue mist of the sea!.../What does it seek in foreign lands?/What did it leave behind at home?../Waves heave, wind whistles,/The mast, it bends and creaks.../Alas, it seeks not happiness/Nor happiness does it escape!/Below, a current azure bright,/Above, a golden ray of sun.../Rebellious, it seeks out a storm/As if in storms it could find peace!" Mikhail Lermontov, "The Sail". Translated by Tatiana Tulchinsky, Andrew Wachtel, Gwenan Wilbur. Available online at: http://max.mmlc.northwestern.edu/mdenner/Demo/texts/sail.html

The poem, which describes a sailor's departure from the homeland by metonymically coding his movement as a "lonely white sail" (*'beleet parus odinokoi')* depicts a desire to embrace the high seas (which mimics Sasha's own wish to escape to the father) as neither a desire for happiness nor a desire to run away from happiness. Rather, it is a need for restless change in which the rebellious sail (*miatezhnyi*) asks for the storm without realizing that it does not bring calm. At the end of *Long Farewells,* Sasha's departure is ultimately presented by the film as a storm in calm waters. Different from Lermontov's lonely sail, however, which is already "in the blue fog of the sea (*v tumane moria golubom*)"[40] Sasha sees the delusion of the escape for what it is before departure: a plea for attention, a desire to assert independence, and decides to go about fulfilling these desires in other ways. In *Long Farewells,*[41] thus, self-opacity and its possible overcoming are at the heart of the plot, and are resolved and reflected, in particular, by aesthetic objects. If in Evgenia Vasilievna's case, the contact with the slides – a stand-in for cinema – leads her to question her motivations and see through her behavior towards her son and ex-husband, in Sasha's case, Lermontov, if not causally responsible for his choice to remain, acts as a mirror for his realization that the desire to escape the mother was, among other things, a wish to bring feminine attention upon himself, be it from Masha, Tanya, or Evgenia Vasilievna herself. Sasha's decision to stay, thus, is presented by the film as a true act of adulthood; leaving, he knows now, would be an act of "immaturity" or "adolescence" on par with Lermontov's somewhat naïve romanticism. *Long Farewells* culminates, therefore, with an act of mutual understanding between mother and son: Sasha becomes an adult the very moment he realizes that his mother is not an oppressor, but a human being in pain.

Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Muratova, *Dolgie provody* (*Long Farewells*).

III. *Passions* (1994)

As Zvonkine sketches in *Un cinéma de la dissonance,* the original script of *Passions* (1994), Muratova's second post-Soviet film, authored by Muratova herself at the request of Galina Lazareva was inspired by two stories about horse-racing written by Boris Dedukhin: "Krek" and "Priz Elity." If the original screenplay focused exclusively on the character of Violetta, a young circus girl who dreams of putting on an act with horses, the final cinematic version was heavily modified with the goal of granting Renata Litvinova, whom Muratova had met at the Arsenal Festival in Riga during the filming of *Sentimental Policeman,*[42] a larger role. Litvinova had originally been cast as Violetta herself, but had been found unsuitable for the role, leading to the introduction of the nurse Lilya, whose monologues, written by the actress herself, brought her international acclaim. The final script, thus, can be thought to be a three-part composition by Litvinova, Muratova, and her partner Evgeny Golubenko.[43]

The project was originally set to be filmed by the Odessa Film Studio, but with the onslaught of new financial difficulties, it was taken up by Primodessa Film International. It was Litvinova who was ultimately responsible for bringing Igor Kalyonov to the project, producer and creator of the St. Petersburg based Nikola Film Company, in what became the first of his several collaborations with Muratova in the subsequent years. The film premiere took place at the Moscow Kinotsentr on March 4, 1994.[44]

After the title of the film, *Passions*[45] appears twice in the opening credits (the first time immediately after Muratova's own name and again before the film begins in earnest), the work commences with an opening shot in which the jockey Kasyanov, dressed in a suit,

---

[42] *Chuvstvitel'nyi militsioner* (*Sentimental Policeman*), dir. Kira Muratova (1992; Ukraine/France: Primodessa-Film, Parimedia).
[43] Zvonkine, *Un cinéma de la dissonance,* 123-124.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Muratova, *Uvlechen'ia* (*Passions).*

searches for his injured friend and fellow horseback rider Sasha Milashevsky in the grounds of a hospital, where he is assisted by the nurses on call. Milashevsky is shown seated in the distance, surrounded by his friends, and is greeted with enthusiasm. The camera then cuts to a close-up of the hand of Violetta, circus performer and protagonist of the film as Kasyanov promptly kisses it, before cutting once again to a scene in which two somewhat disheveled men by the seaside are shown in a playful attempt to ride one another like horses. As they repeatedly fall and trip over one another but continue to stand and repeat the gesture, the soundtrack of the film features a rousing rendition of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* **(Figure 61)**. At the end of the scene, Muratova at last gives us enough information to make sense of what we see: in a stunning close-up of Violetta with a garland of flowers in her hair, we are made to understand that, although, to us, this type of play seems incomprehensible or absurd, in Violetta's mind, it represents an exaggerated externalization of her own dreams and aspirations **(Figure 62)**.

Figure 61, Still from Passions **(Muratova, 1994)**

As we come to discover throughout the film, Violetta, more than anything in the world, desires to feature in a circus number involving horses, and as she sees the men at play in the shore, she projects this desire onto them in the form of Beethoven's music. The culmination of Violetta's own search for joy, Muratova suggests in this opening scene, involves

horseback riding, a fact that transforms the grotesque play of the men on the shore into a locus of aesthetic wonderment.

Figure 62, Still from Passions **(Muratova, 1994)**

After a brief interlude in which Kasyanov and an unnamed friend (played by Umirzak Shmanov) push Milashevsky around in his wheelchair – an effort, perhaps, to give him the thrill of speed that moves him to ride horses competitively – Violetta returns to the group and, sitting on Sasha's lap, offers up the following conversation starter: Who is faster, tamed or untamed horses? And further, how do racing horses compare with circus horses? Kasyanov, the racer, adamantly defends racehorses while Milashevsky, in an effort to ingratiate himself with Violetta – whose preference is, naturally enough, for the circus – plays devil's advocate to his friend.

A key feature of Kasyanov's rhetorical strategy throughout the conversation is to compare horses with people, a move that runs through much of Muratova's film and that serves, both, to elevate horses (Oleg Nikolayev, at one point even claims that "horses tune us to a philosophical key. They are higher animals"[46]) and diminish the primacy of human beings. In order to defend his position – that one cannot compare wild and tamed horses –

[46] Ibid. Original text: ОЛЕГ: Лошади настраивают на философский лад. Лошадь - возвышенное животное.

he establishes a parallel with human physical strength, saying it would be equally unwise to compare the fitness of a bodybuilder like Arnold Schwarzenegger (the cultivation model) to Ilya Muromets, a *bogatyr,* a knight of epic tales and heroic adventures famous for fearlessly defeating his foes (the natural model). The same strategy is transferred to the circus/racehorse debate. Kasyanov remarks that the famous Soviet comic Yuri Nikulin first attempted to become a theater artist and it was only after being rejected from theater school that he turned to the circus, where he achieved his renown. Kasyanov, thus, imports and defends a strict hierarchy of genres – like that of traditional art history – into the universe of horseback riding, and fails to consider the role that horses might play in cinema: after all, Nikulin's countrywide success came equally from both the circus and the movies, as the star of Leonid Gaidai's comedies *The Diamond Arm*[47] and *Kidnapping, Caucasian Style.*[48]

As the debate between Kasyanov and Violetta continues to rage, Sasha's priority is to continue to get to know Violetta. Here, the dialogue takes its first deliberately surreal turn. While Sasha continues to ask Violetta about her interest in poetry and visual art – her preferred poets (Fet, Tyutchev, Maikov, Lermontov) and her thoughts on Aivazovsky, the great 19th century ocean painter – Violetta's mind is visibly elsewhere, daydreaming, perhaps, of the circus. These lines are interposed with the arrival of Lilya, the nurse, played by Litvinova, who has come to give Sasha a manicure. As she cuts Sasha's toenails, Lilya begins to discuss her favorite topic: death. She begins her speech by describing a dissection she witnessed in the morgue that morning:

> LILYA: When they cut him, he had such a wrinkled face as though he couldn't bear it. When they stitched him up, his face turned smooth as though he were relieved. Actually the pathologist woman

[47] *Brilliantovaia ruka* (*Diamond Arm),* dir. Leonid Gaidai (1969; USSR: Mosfilm).
[48] *Kavkazskaia plennitsa* (*Kidnapping, Caucasian Style!),* dir. Leonid Gaidai (1967; USSR: Mosfilm).

> was very good. She does her job masterfully. She's stronger than any man. And she does it so adroitly, oddly enough, she is such a beauty doing that job. Everyone admires her beauty.[49]

Although at first, it seems as though Violetta is listening to the story, when the camera cuts away from the close-up on Lilya, she is looking straight ahead and so is Sasha as the monologue continues. The mise-en-scène implies, here, that no one is *really* listening to Lilya speak. This is confirmed when, after a few beats, Sasha turns to Kasyanov and insists that he is wrong about horses. Every character in the scene is intent on standing their ground and speaks only about themselves and their interests, a fact that renders true conversation, in this film – a repartee in which one listens and speaks in turn – virtually impossible.

Along with the double iteration of the title of the film, in the opening credits, this is one of the earliest encapsulations of the fundamental social pathology presented by the film: *Passions* presents a universe in which characters speak to each other incessantly, are desperate for communication, but are in fact so enthralled by their own "hobbyhorses" (no word could be more appropriate for this equestrian film), that they systematically fail to see and hear one another. Within the Hegelian framework presented in the opening of this chapter, thus, the nature of social self-opacity in *Passions* consists in the illusion of communication; human beings, in fact, are islands of self-absorption, hermetic and impenetrable to the input of others. As in *Asthenic Syndrome* before it and *Melody for a Street Organ,* after it, Muratova ensures that that we understand the widespread dimension of her diagnosis by showing examples of it not only in the film's primary characters: Violetta, Lilya, and the racers Kasyanov, Sasha Milashevsky and Oleg Nikolayev, but also in its secondary roles, such as the trainers Amirov and Onkin, the photographer Volodya, and even Violetta's mother and

---

[49] Muratova, *Uvlechen'ia* (*Passions).* Original text: Когда, вот, его резали, у него было такое сморщенное лицо, как будто (?) он еле терпит. А когда его зашили, оно так разгладилось, словно от облегчения. Правда, там была очень хорошая женщина-патологоанатом. Она все так виртуозно делает. Сильная такая, сильнее любого мужчины. Она так ловко все делает, и странно, на таком посту, такая красавица. Ей все любуются.

grandmother. In what follows, I explore examples of social alienation from each of *Passions'* primary characters in an effort to show that, through a kind of cumulative effect, Muratova articulates a worldview in which an entire society finds itself unaware of the ineffectuality of language for mutual understanding.

Easiest to articulate, perhaps is the case of Lilya. If one had to put her hobbyhorse (or "passion," as the film's title would have it) succinctly, it would be, as I have already suggested, an obsession with death and dying. Only a few seconds after her first monologue, on the morgue, Lilya initiates her second foray on the theme, one of the most remarkable, where she describes her relationship to her friend Rita Gautier. She says:

> LILYA: Rita Gautier…We adored her, but she vanished from our life. And my colleague and I got jobs here at the seaside. Rita reappeared in our life when she got into my hospital ward. Her health kept deteriorating and she'd been seeing dreadful dreams, as though her relatives urged her to lie down in a coffin. I visited her during my shift, I would take her hand and listen to her complaining: "My fever won't subside… My fever won't subside." I anticipated something bad, but I did not foresee that it would be so soon. Once, at a briefing, I heard it said: "Last night, Margarita Gautier, Lilya's friend, died." […]Indeed, Rita had a beautiful surname, Gautier. I dashed out and ran into my work mate. […] She said to me: "Don't go! Don't go! I wouldn't go if I were you." But I went anyway. They had already begun the dissection. I stood by the wall, at a distance but still now and then I could see her head, with the hair thrown back. […] I think he was aware [of my dislike of him, the operating man], because at the end of the dissection, he lit up a cigarette and, after inhaling two or three times dropped the smoldering butt right into Rita Gautier's belly and his assistants were quick to sow the body up, and for a few moments he relished in his deed. [50]

Other than confirm Lilya's own interest in death as a phenomenon, Lilya's account, which at this point has not yet come to an end but is interrupted by a stranger who, after

---

[50] Ibid. Original text: ЛИЛИЯ: Риту Готье… Мы очень любили, но она исчезла из нашей жизни. А мы стали работать с сослуживицей здесь, на побережьи. И вот в жизни Рита появилась снова, когда попала ко мне в отделение. Ей становилось все хуже и хуже, ей снились ужасные сны. Как будто ее мама и все родственники уговаривали ее лечь в гроб. И она плакала. Когда дежурила, я приходила кней и брала ее за руку, и она жаловалась: «У меня не падает температура, у меня не падает температура». Я предчувствовала, что будет плохо, но я не предчувствовала, что так быстро. Однажды, когда я пришла на пятиминутку, сказали: «Сегодня ночью скончалась Лилина подруга, Маргарита Готье…» […]Да, действительно, у Риты была такая красивая фамилия. Я выбежала и встретила сослуживицу. […] Она мне говорит, « Не ходи, не ходи. Я бы, говорит, на твоем месте не пошла бы». Но я все равно пошла. Вскрытие уже началось, я встала у стены, я не стала подходить близко, но все равно было видно иногда ее голову, с брошенными назад волосами. […] И я думаю, что он знал, потому что он, в конце вскрытия закурил, сделал разве что для видадве три затяжкибросил горящий окурок прямо в живот Рите Готье, и его ассистенты все так быстро зашили, и несколько мгновений он был доволен такой своей выходкой…

sitting for a number of minutes, interrupts to ask her to speak more loudly, establishes Rita Gautier as a kind of haunting presence in Lilya's life. That fact that, before passing, Rita is troubled by dreams in which she is asked to lie in a coffin prefigures one of the most puzzling scenes in the film, where Lilya is discovered "asleep" in the middle of the racetrack. Initially, all passersby take her for a corpse, but after she is shaken into waking – to everyone's general relief – the viewer, who has heard Lilya's remarks about Gautier, understands that Lilya was attempting to play dead, namely, to imagine what it might be like on the other side **(Figure 63)**. That Gautier's name is a borrowing from Alexandre Dumas *fils's La Dame aux Camélias* (Marguerite Gautier) is itself suggestive of her character and the alluring role she might be thought to play in Lilya's subconscious. Equally remarkable is Lilya's decision to attend the dissection at the morgue (an act that would dehumanize Gautier in her mind) and her equally understated reaction to her colleague's treatment of her friend as an ashtray, a deed clearly aimed at incensing her. Here we begin to see something of the extremity of Lilya's compulsive curiosity for death. In this sense, Lilya's predicament is somewhat reminiscent of Plato's treatment of Leontius, son of Aglaeon in Republic 439e-440a:

> "As against that,' I said, 'there's a story I once heard which I think can guide us here. Leontius, the son of Aglaeon, was on his way up to town from the Piraeus. As he was walking below the north wall, on the outside, he saw the public executioner with some dead bodies lying beside him. He wanted to look at the bodies, but at the same time he felt disgust and held himself back. For a time he struggled, and covered his eyes. Then desire got the better of him. He rushed over to where the bodies were, and forced his eyes wide open, saying, "There you are, curse you. Have a really good look. Isn't it a lovely sight?"[51]

If in Plato, the passage establishes a direct tension between the appetitive and rational sides of the soul, the former seeming to take over and overwhelm Leontius' better instincts not to look, Lilya, a nurse, inverts that dynamic by presenting an identical situation

[51] Plato, *Republic.* Translated by Tom Griffith. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000: 439e-440a).

in which there seems to be no internal tension whatsoever, no pull towards what Plato might describe as the "rational" in her tripartite soul. Rather, if there is something disproportionate or excessive about Lilya's interest in death and dead bodies, then she is completely unaware of it, instituting the dynamic of self-opacity that is the focal point of analysis in this section.

Figure 63, Stills from Passions **(Muratova, 1994)**

Immediately after Gautier's story comes to an end, the tension in the argument between Violetta, Kasyanov, and Sasha returns as if nothing had been said, but not long after, the cacophony is replaced by a third monologue on Lilya's part, this time directed exclusively at the camera. The monologue begins with Litvinova's face in close-up, her lips utterly still; we hear her in voiceover. It is only as she turns around and approaches the camera, which is sitting at some distance that she properly speaks **(Figure 64)**.

Figure 64, Still from Passions **(Muratova, 1994)**

Three other scenes in the film confirm Lilya's obsession with her own demise. The first occurs after the initial race. She, approaching Kasyanov, asks him, with no preparation whatsoever, if he would agree to be a coffin-bearer in her funeral.

> LILYA: I came here because one's got to have friends. I keep thinking about coffin-bearers. Who will carry my coffin?
> KASYANOV: Whose coffin?
> LILYA: Mine. I don't mean to do it intentionally, but I don't have anyone capable of bearing such a load. Should this happen, will you do it?
> KASYANOV: Whose coffin?[52]

Later in the film, she also compares Violetta (Svetlana Kolenda) with "the deceased Audrey Hepburn," a line whose dark humor, in the Russian, is primarily derived from moving the appositive phrase "the deceased" to a position after Hepburn's name. She also is responsible for a concluding monologue in which beauty is described as being ephemeral, as only existing against a background of finality, death, and extinction. Lilya says:

> LILYA: I'm interested in the theme of beauty and the end. Every person, even if not good-looking, reaches the peak of beauty once in a lifetime. Man is beautiful even for a few moments. But usually it happens when a person is very young. I saw it. Sasha Milashevsky, for instance, reached his peak of beauty in the hospital. I took him to the beach and left his wheelchair by the shrubs. The sun lit his face up. He was in pain, but his face was beautiful. This lasted until the sunset. […]The peak is over, I thought. The peak is over. The peak is over. His face was commonplace and quite ordinary. The peak is over I thought. […] Beauty always strives for self-destruction. I'm concerned with this theme, too.

[52] Muratova, *Uvlechen'ia* (*Passions)*. Original text: ЛИЛИЯ: Я с вами оттого, что нужно иметь друзей. Ну, я часто думаю о том, кто же понесет мой гроб. КАСЬЯНОВ: Какой гроб? ЛИЛИЯ: Мой собственный.

> How this can be explained I don't know. I do not dread death, I rather dread immortality. […] Or take this song… That song. "Diamonds are the girl's best friends." Diamonds. [53]

The whole passage is built from a contrast between fleeting aesthetic pleasure and its ultimate self-effacement, an image underscored by the reference to Marilyn Monroe's rendition of "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friends" from the 1953 Howard Hawks musical *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.*[54] Marilyn is not only the obvious inspiration for Litvinova's characteristic bright-red lipstick **(Figure 65)** and fashionable evening gown, but her views on beauty and eternity resonate with those of Lorelei Lee **(Figure 66)**:

> Men grow cold as girls grow old
> And we all lose our charms in the end
> But square-cut or pear-shaped
> These rocks don't lose their shape
> Diamonds are a girl's best friend
>
> […]
>
> Time rolls on and youth is gone
> And you can't straighten up when you bend
> But stiff back or stiff knees
> You stand straight at
> Tiffany's[55]

The eternal shine of diamonds is a constant when human beauty fades in the face of death.

---

[53] Ibid. Original text: ЛИЛИЯ: Меня заботит тема красоты и тема стремления к финалу. Каждый родивший человек, даже некрасивый, всегда переживает в своей жизни пик красоты. Хоть полчаса, хоть несколько мгновений, но он бывает прекрасным. Но обычно это бывает в ранней юности. Я видела. А вот, хотя бы Саша Милашевский достиг в больнице пика красоты. Он тогда был на берегу моря, на прогулке. Сидел на каталке, и я оставилаего у кустов. Да, солнце подало ему в лицо. Его мучила боль, но в это мгновение его лицо сделалось таким прекрасным и это, наверное, длилось до самого заката. А не следующий день, все прошло, все ушло. […] Значит, пик миновал, подумала я, ну значит, пик миновал. Значит, пик миновал. На него легла какая-то тень обыденности; оно стало таким, совершенно обычным. […] Но красота всегда стремится к финалу, к самоуничтожению, и эта тема тоже меня заботит. Как объяснить, как объяснить, я не знаю. Нет, я не боюсь смерти; нет, скорее, скорее бессмертия. […] А эта песня… Эта песня. « Лучшие друзья девушки это бриллианты». Бриллианты.

[54] *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes,* dir. Howard Hawks (1953; USA: 20th Century Fox).

[55] "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" sung by Marilyn Monroe in Ibid.

Figure 65, Still from Passions **(Muratova, 1994)**

The concluding episode of the lengthy opening scene at the hospital, however, serves to better comprehend the motivations of Violetta and Kasyanov.

Figure 66, Still from Gentlemen Prefer Blondes **(Hawks, 1953)**

If Violetta continues to expound on her love for the circus and its attractions involving horses, ultimately rebuking Kasyanov via an allusion to *Anna Karenina,* she soon feels so moved to practice a circus number that she moves away from the group and, in one of the most openly plotless moments in the film, performs a cane-twirling routine. Four women wearing robes, however, patients in the mental ward of the hospital, presumably, respond to her act by means of dance, each creating her own move **(Figure 67)**.

Figure 67, Still from Passions **(Muratova, 1994)**

The crucial tenor of the passage is the radical isolation that is exhibited by this dance performance. Although Violetta performs her number for both us and the women, she has moved away from her entourage. Similarly, the women, although standing in a quartet, can in no way be said to be dancing "together." They are not responding to each other's movements in any way that might communicate a sense of unity; on the contrary, they each begin to move in their own time, and engage in stylistically very distinct gestures, creating four clear islands of kinetic activity on the screen. Self-absorption, thus, predominates over communication despite the fact that the interaction begins as a response to Violetta's cane-twirling.

Sasha's character is also further elaborated in this final scene. When he shows himself uncertain about his future post-wheelchair, Violetta and Lilya, in keeping with the self-obsessive personalities of the characters in the film, attempt to give him advice. Naturally enough, each suggestion, on their part, fails to take into account anything about Sasha himself and, instead, reflect their own hobbyhorses and self-interest. If Violetta encourages Sasha to join the circus, presumably also to help her with her own horseback number, Lilya, extraordinarily, tells him to take a job at the hospital, listing as some of its perks, the possibility of carrying human organs in a bottle. In both cases, both characters fail to see the

other in their advice; they mean well, but are unable to get past their own selves to imagine what might be best for him. Sasha's response is quite revelatory of his own hobbyhorse in the film. Although he appears upset at having injured himself and seemingly continues to look forward to riding horses, he is also, unbeknownst to him, grown quite fond of his new status as fallen hero or victim. When he is asked to tell the story of his accident, he relishes in the details: "It is great that I still knew how to fall. I fell down and forgot it all: whether it was day, night, spring, fall."[56] He is also very descriptive about all his ailments: he is said to have suffered "multiple injuries, internal hemorrhages, broken ribs…"[57] Despite assurances of the contrary, he is in fact quite satisfied with his new position as a "broken man" which is in part why (a fact that is suggested a few times throughout the story) he does not seem to be making great strides towards health **(Figure 68)**. Violetta is aware of this and already at the end of the scene, is no longer willing to wait for him to get better to learn how to ride horses. By the end of the interaction Violetta turns to Kasyanov for lessons and begins to see Sasha with a cold eye.

This motif, of Violetta's willingness to "use men" to advance her self-interest as a circus performer recurs in two crucial scenes in the film. The first is the moment when, midway through a conversation with Kasyanov about his race, she immediately agrees to take lessons from Oleg Nikolayev, Kasyanov's rival.

[56] Muratova, *Uvlechen'ia* (*Passions)*. Original text: САША: Это хорошо, что я еще падать умею. А потом, как провалился, я все позабыл: день, ночь, весна, осень.
[57] Ibid. Original text: САША: Множественные травмы, внутреннее кровотечение, ребра.

Figure 68, Still from Passions **(Muratova, 1994)**

In her joy, she kisses not Nikolayev but Kasyanov himself **(Figure 69)**, implying that she feels no real romantic attachment to any of the jockeys interested in her: Nikolayev, Kasyanov or Milashevsky. They are interchangeable insofar as their role is to assist her with her circus dream; the joy brought about by one can become a kiss on the other. Any other considerations: romance, love, are irrelevant. She herself confirms the intentionality of this behavior during her lesson with Nikolayev:

> VIOLETTA: I'm clever as well as beautiful.
> OLEG: The horse and the woman aren't compatible in the same space and time. […] I'll never marry!
> VIOLETTA: What do I have to do with this? Do you think I'm going to get married? I've devoted myself to the circus, and I use all of you as a mean to my ends.
> OLEG: A woman should be in the stands. [58]

"I use you all as means to my ends" is a correct description of her behavior in the film, even if Violetta is a sympathetic character in every other respect. If Lilya is obsessed with death, Violetta cannot think of anything other than horseback riding in the circus, and her self-absorption is often embodied – as in *The Tuner* – by her use of various headdresses and hats: the flower garland, the hat, and especially, the Mongol helmet she dons in advance of her lesson with Nikolayev **(Figure 70)**.

[58] Ibid. Original text: ВИОЛЕТТА: Я не просто красивая, я умная. ОЛЕГ: Я считаю, что нельзя совмещать в одном пространстве и времени лошадь и женщину. Нельзя. […] Нет, никогда не женюсь. ВИОЛЕТТА: А причем здесь я? Думаешь, что я замуж выйду? Я посвятила себя цирку и всех вас использую как средства для достижения собственных целей, ладно? ОЛЕГ: Женщина должна сидеть на трибуне.

Figure 69, Still from Passions **(Muratova, 1994)**

Figure 70, Still from Passions **(Muratova, 1994)**

The most pathetic scene of Violetta's isolation occurs in the circus, when she tries to express her enthusiasm for horses to her cat and dog-loving mother. The scene is cacophonous from beginning to end: if Violetta fails to appreciate any of her mother's circus tricks, a "profanation" of the family heritage, according to the mother, the mother cannot understand her daughter's obsession with horses, and the two simply talk over each other throughout the scene until they are interrupted by the exhausted grandmother who uses rude language to bring the argument to an end. Like many other episodes in the film, the circus' circularity – a symbol of obsession – is everywhere emphasized, in the cat tricks **(Figure 71)** that follow the contour of the room (one cat literally jumping over the other, like the speech of the characters in the film) and even in the movement of Svetlana Kolenda herself, who at one point, begins to turn around in place as she recites a paean on the horse **(Figure 72)**.

Figure 71, Still from Passions **(Muratova, 1994)**

Figure 72, Still from Passions **(Muratova, 1994)**

Violetta's inability to communicate with her mother, despite so much speech, despite so many "vain words" (as Muratova might put it in "Ophelia") is the tragedy of social self-opacity in the text. Talk, in the film, is ubiquitous, yet there is no resolution to any of the conflicts presented on screen.

In the crucial first scene at the horse stables, some of the remaining protagonists of the film are at last introduced. The first character we meet is the photographer Volodya. The first image we get of Volodya is as he measures something with the palm of his hand while holding a camera. His own hobbyhorse, naturally enough, is photography itself, most especially photographing horses and centaurs **(Figure 73)**.

Figure 73, Still from Passions **(Muratova, 1994)**

His opening dialogue features the following lines, all very resonant of his particular contribution to the social pathology central to the film. "I can tell an old camera from a new one by the smell," "Photography is a form of possession" and, last but not least, "I'm afraid"[59]: a response to why he never mounts a horse. Volodya's character is such that he sublimates his desire to ride horses, to tame them, by photographing them. Volodya's absorption in his art is such that he only occasionally spares a thought to the beauty of the women with whom he is conversing. Violetta and Lilya are both dressed extravagantly: if the latter is wearing a black evening gown, bright red lipstick, excess face powder and high heels, Violetta, under her black robe, is wearing a white tutu. Both women, in this sense, are dressed not for reality, that is to say, for a specific situation and context, but for fantasy **(Figure 74)**: as the horse circus performer she dreams of being (Violetta) or the corpse she is imagining becoming someday (Lilya).

[59] Ibid. Original text: ВОЛОДЯ: Я могу отличить старую фотокамеру от новой по запаху. Фотография есть форма обладания. […] Я боюсь.

Figure 74, Still from Passions **(Muratova, 1994)**

Muratova then shows us, in the tradition of Tolstoy's *Kholstomer*[60] – a story that is narrated by a horse who shares his estranged view on reality by presenting human readers what is incomprehensible about ourselves – the first of two lengthy scenes that explore horses' visages and bodies. As alluded to previously in the text, in Muratova's hierarchy of being, animals are perhaps at the top of the list. If she, at times, appears to demonstrate little pity for us, animals, in both her work and her charity, were a constant preoccupation, and she is well-remembered for work with animal welfare foundations in Odessa to this day. In the aftermath of *Asthenic Syndrome,*[61] which features a scene in a dog pound that presents the miserable condition of hurt, maimed and bedraggled street dogs, in *Passions,* Muratova gives horses the pride of place, and attempts to engage in an exploration, even if brief, of the phenomenology of "horsehood" on screen. The question of the role of the animal in Muratova in this film and elsewhere – inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "becoming animal"[62] – has been the focus of readings of this film by such scholars as

[60] Lev Tolstoi, "Kholstomer" in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, tom 26*. (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo 'Khudozhestvennaia literatura', 1936, 3-37.
[61] Muratova, *Astenicheskii sindrom* (*Asthenic Syndrome*).
[62] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Trans. By Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

Raymond de Luca[63] and Dragan Batančev.[64] Alongside an interest in the nature of the animal as a challenge to cinema's anthropocentrism – as De Luca and Batančev claim – the horse passages, in my view, are also testament to Muratova's love of the cinematic image itself. The animal body, eroticized and fetishized in close-ups of its various parts – hooves, eyes, limbs – is a stand-in for Muratova's love of cinema itself. In a film in which characters fall victim and succumb to their own fantasies in ways that present communicative challenges for those around them, the horse scenes lay claim to a form of visual beauty that blocks the ever-operating interpretative apparatus of the viewer, forcing one to marvel at the image alone, at the Muybridge-like succession of discrete images made continuous characteristic of cinematic movement. Muratova, in these scenes, like the characters of the film, can be thought to be succumbing to a fantasy of her own, one of "pure plotless cinema."

If Muratova is, as I have claimed throughout this text, an epistemologist in her approach to cinema – constantly seeking to, in depictions of individual and social relations, unravel how we fail to understand one another – here, she *gives in* to a powerful contrary force in her artistic personality, one that is perhaps the propelling energy of the second part of her late film *Second Class Citizens*:[65] what one might call an aesthetics of *liubovanie,* "visual marvelment" (a term derived from the word love, "liubov"' but that refers specifically to the beauty of what is seen, "to feast one's eyes"). Muratova is, of course, fascinated by the cinematic image itself, with objects and things, and while this impulse, I claim, plays second fiddle to her philosophical concerns with epistemological critique, it is an undercurrent that,

[63] Raymond De Luca, "Becoming Animal with Kira Muratova: Deleuze, Identity, and Animality in Muratova's films" (extract of a dissertation chapter delivered as paper at the Kira Muratova International Symposium, May 7th, 2021).
[64] Dragan Batančev, "Posthuman *Passions*. On Muratova's Concept of Horsehood" (paper delivered at the Kira Muratova International Symposium, May 7th, 2021).
[65] *Vtorostepennye liudi* (*Second Class Citizens),* dir. Kira Muratova (2001; Ukraine: Odessa Film Studio/Film-TV Studio Odissei).

here, is allowed to rise and commandeer the film. From *Getting to Know the Big Wide World*[66] onwards, Muratova exhibits a tendency towards a view of cinema as a collection of sights without meaning, but at no point before *Passions* does she allows herself to give in to this temptation so fully: the erotically coded bodies of horses circling obsessively through the screen are an authorial indulgence that democratizes her position with respect to the social critique leveled by film. Muratova, the "famed auteur" is not simply passing judgment on our passions from without; on the contrary, she enlists herself as guilty of the same obsessions as her characters, including, in her film, a moment of "beauty with plotless abandon" that is so obviously excessive it would, in ordinary circumstances, be a mistake. **(Figure 75)**.

***Figure 75, Still from Passions* (Muratova, 1994)**

The arrival of the famous jockey Oleg Nikolayev into the stables sparks another moment of self-absorptive cacophony. As the general voice level rises, each character – as he or she moves through the corridor of the stables – vocalizes their own priorities. One man, for instance, is trying to encourage Nikolyaev to buy what appears to be racing clothing. Even after Nikolayev enters the stable to greet his horse Pomegranate, we can hear the man repeating over and over, incessantly, "buy a camisole, buy a camisole, buy a camisole."[67]

[66] Muratova, *Poznavaia belyi svet,* (*Getting to Know the Big Wide World*).
[67] Muratova, *Uvlechen'ia* (*Passions)*. Original text: Купи камзол, купи камзол, купи камзол.

Violetta, in turn, is interested in asking Nikolayev about the concept of "pace." Touching him on the shoulder in a tracking shot across the corridor, we see as Violetta repeats the question, eliciting a very half-hearted response from her interlocutor. [68] Lilya's preoccupation, however, is with the utter messiness of the stables themselves. In one extraordinary episode, she threatens to leave the stable multiple times, expecting to, in doing so, draw attention to herself (she is, after all, dressed in a sequined evening gown), but when she realizes that this elicits no response from the group – the horses are the center of everyone's attention – she is taken aback. She says, somewhat powerlessly: "It is strange. I am trying to say goodbye, but they don't say goodbye."[69]

The last two characters in Muratova's panorama of social self-opacity – of talk without communication, dialogue without interaction – are the trainers Amirov and Ivan Ivanovich Onkin. If Onkin's obsession is to defeat Amirov in competition, who he believes has an unfair advantage over others for playing dirty in recruiting – he goes so far as to attempt a conspiracy with other trainers to defeat Amirov's horses in a big race – Amirov himself is singularly-focused on victory. Amirov, thus, is shown conspiring to recruit other trainers' riders and is portrayed constantly in an altered state as he encourages his staff and jockeys to achieve excellence in training **(Figure 76)**. Amirov, we are told, was once a rider himself who became a trainer only after an injury incapacitated him, and an aspect of vicarious living is at the heart of his psychology. He wants to put his jockeys where he was never able to be, to live through them as they strive to the top of the podium. Amirov and Onkin's obsession with racing and defeating one another is coded as pathological, but, at least in Amirov's case, is also presented with some degree of admiration.

---

[68] Ibid. Original text: ВИОЛЕТТА: Что такое «расе»? Что такое «расе»?

[69] Ibid. Original text: ЛИЛИЯ: Ну давай прощаться. Ну я уйду. Что они не прощаются… Какие-то странные.

***Figure 76, Still from Passions* (Muratova, 1994)**

Although proximity to Amirov is obviously harmful to those immediately around him, even Nars Narsikov, his main jockey, the bearer of the brunt of his rage, has unwavering respect for him ("Amirov is a god to me")[70]. *Passions* in fact, ends by depicting an Amirov training session accompanied by Beethoven, coding his devotion to racing in aesthetic terms comparable to Muratova's or the composer's own. It is Amirov, in fact (earlier in the film), who is responsible for the clearest statement of individual pathology turned collective in *Passions.* After he has yelled to his heart's content, Amirov tells Nars:

> AMIROV: Are you satisfied or not? If an eagle always eats its fill, it will cease to have fun and life will lose its meaning for it.
> NARS: What meaning?
> AMIROV: Craving. To crave and never have your fill. Be it fame, love or honor. And to revel in your grief. [71]

This is the tragedy that plagues every character in the film. Striving or craving is the mode of being of Amirov, Nars, Onkin, Lilya, Violetta, Milashevsky, Kasyanov, and Volodya. They all want what they do not have, and in the incessant dialogical interchanges between them throughout the work, no true advancement is made in any of their goals. What appears to be dialogue, in this film, unbeknownst its characters, is merely a mark of radical isolation, a sign

[70] Ibid. Original text: НАРС: Амиров для меня бог.

[71] Ibid. Original text: АМИРОВ: Утешился ты или нет, в конце концов? Ну, если кормить орла досыта, как думаешь, померкнет для нее радость жизни? Не пропадёт ли сам смысл ее? НАРС: В чем смысл? АМИРОВ: Жажда, жажда всегда и никогда не обжираться. Не славой, не любовью, не почет. И упиваться своим горем.

that people can never truly get away from seeing others as a means to an end. All that is left is to want, a form of pathology embodied by Amirov, but how one responds to it makes all the difference. The failure of language to connect human beings, too, is, in *Passions,* also connected to the film's overwhelming focus on (supposedly languageless) animals. Considering the long-standing tradition of justifying human dominance over animals by pointing precisely to the faculty of speech, the fact that language, in this film, is practically synonymous with mutual misunderstanding is a sign of a Muratovian inversion of established hierarchies of being.

III. *Melody for a Street Organ* (2008)

Muratova's second to last film, *Melody for a Street Organ* (2008)[72] is based on a screenplay written by Vladimir Zuev, Kiev playwright, that was then edited by Muratova and her long-time partner Evgeny Golubenko. The film was produced in Ukraine with funds from government agencies and the Sota Cinema Group totaling a sum of 11.3 million grivna. It was shot in Odessa from November 2007 to February 2008. Following the line of *Three Stories,* in which Muratova was very explicit about hiring what she called "stars" to play lead roles (leading names in Russian and Ukrainian cinema), two of the primary adult roles in the film were given to Renata Litvinova and Oleg Tabakov who along with the music of popular singer and songwriter Zemfira were used by producer Oleg Kohan to advertise the film for a wider audience.[73]

As Eugénie Zvonkine recounts, Zemfira's presence in the film led to delays in the release due to issues of copyright. The choice of the two child actors was also arduous, as

[72] *Melodiia dlia sharmanki* (*Melody for a Street Organ*) dir. Kira Muratova (2008; Ukraine: Sota Cinema Group, 2008).
[73] Zvonkine, *Un cinéma de la dissonance,* 138.

were the growing tensions between Muratova and Zuev as she sought to gain greater authority and control over the direction of the narrative than he might have wished.[74] Particularly controversial was Muratova's decision to transform what, in the script, is primarily a straightforward psychological story about individual children into a much wider social critique: the exact rhetorical move from individuality to Geist that renders the film unavoidable in our account of social pathologies in her cinema. The multiplicity of crowd scenes – which perhaps has analogues in modernist literary works like Joyce's *Ulysses*– was a particularly contentious issue between director and scriptwriter.

Melody for a Street Organ[75] opens with what appears to be the frigid glass window of a moving train. As a palm approaches and touches the window, producing a drippling effect of condensation, the camera approaches the hands in jolts as if moving side-to-side in time with the rhythmic beatings of the train **(Figure 77)**. The same effect is repeated once more, this time with a different hand (with a ringed finger), leading to a third cut that enables us to, at last, see through the glass.

Figure 77, Still from Melody for a Street Organ **(Muratova, 2008)**

[74] Zvonkine, *Un cinéma de la dissonance,* 139.
[75] Muratova, *Melodiia dlia sharmanki* (*Melody for a Street Organ*).

This initial visual image is reminiscent of other Muratova films that begin with acts of seeing and unseeing – such as *Among Grey Stones* **(Figure 78)** [76] – and here, it serves not only to establish the setting of the narrative (the winter cold, a train), but to introduce what is perhaps the crucial metaphorical impetus of Muratova's social cinema: the act of "seeing through." Only the first of what is a seemingly never-ending sequence of glass panes, windows, and storefronts that characterize this film, Muratova's first shot establishes a distinction not only between an inner world of warmth and comfort and an outer world of winter harshness, but also between appearance and reality, the fundamental logical category underlying all self-deceit.

Figure 78, **Still from *Among Grey Stones* (Muratova, 1983)**

Muratova's opener is, in this sense, a lesson in how to watch her films: the need to look beyond the pane of genre expectations to see social truths that remain hidden from view in ordinary interactions. Following this initial moment, Muratova introduces us to the passengers in the train, divided in groups of two. Here, as elsewhere, Muratova shows us

[76] *Sredi serykh kamnei* (*Among Grey Stones*), dir. Kira Muratova (1983; USSR: Odessa Film Studio, 1983).

characters in similarly matched clothing and dress – a characteristic Muratovian visual motif – accompanied by a Christmas song played on the radio: "Lullaby" (Kolybel'naya) by M. Blanter and M. Isakovskii.[77] Not long after, Alyona and Nikita, the film's main characters, appear on screen for the first time as they sleep, leaning over one another **(Figure 79)**. Half-siblings, they have taken a train to the big city on their own after the death of their mother. They hope to find their respective fathers, Aleksei Bogdanov, the cabinet maker, and Sergei, the violinist. The opening scene in the train is almost entirely devoted to firmly establishing *Melody of a Street Organ* within a genre, that of the Christmas film. The combination of unfortunate children, Christmas music, winter cold, and caroling in the train car cues the viewer into certain expectations, each of which will be radically overturned as the film progresses.

***Figure 79, Still from Melody for a Street Organ* (Muratova, 2008)**

Muratova does not take too long to challenge our assumptions about her film. The first fundamental rule of Christmas films that she attacks is the charm of the children themselves. While it is not uncommon for misfortune befall children in Christmas stories, the fact that the children themselves are sympathetic and likable characters is, usually, never

[77] M. Blanter and M. Isakovskii, "Kolybel'naya" in Muratova, *Melodiia dlia sharmanki* (*Melody for a Street Organ*).

really called into question. Viewers, after all, have to identify with the children if they are to properly sympathize with the injustice that befalls them. This is not the case in *Melody for a Street Organ.*[78] Not only are the children not obviously "cute" by cinematic standards – in fact, they seem to have been chosen exactly for their somewhat unusual looks – but they often behave in harsh and cruel ways toward one another, undermining genre expectations. The first thing Nikita does in the film is to rudely complain to his sister Alyona that she has awakened him, and elbows her away. Alyona, in turn – forced to mother her younger brother prematurely – has adopted all of the mannerisms of the overprotective babushka, from her old-fashioned clothing (which includes an outrageous fluffy *mufta* for hand-warming) to her mode of speech, which often rises to a pedantic level of motherly didacticism. Two examples of this are particularly remarkable: when Alyona begins to dictate a letter to her dead mother for her brother to hear, pronouncing the words as they are written rather than as they are spoken, so that he might learn to spell properly, and when she, in a nagging tone, repeatedly chastises her brother for refusing to wear his winter boots and fluffy socks. Nikita, in turn, is even more unfair to his sister. While the viewer understands that Alyona's excessive zeal is a sign of care and, perhaps, part of the process of her adjustment to becoming, in essence, a parent to her younger brother, Nikita sees in Alyona a figure of authority, and often treats her with disdain. The cruelest example of this attitude in the film occurs when, after Nikita's jacket is robbed by a group of street urchins, Nikita claims that the jacket was only stolen because she, Alyona, was envious of it. Their mother, supposedly, had taken a carpet off the wall and sown the jacket for Nikita. Since Alyona did not receive one of her own, so Nikita claims, she desired that the jacket be taken away. He also presents another argument attributing responsibility for the robbery to

[78] Muratova, *Melodiia dlia sharmanki* (*Melody for a Street Organ*).

Alyona: Alyona had chosen not to pay the ticket at the station. Had they not been kicked out of the train for not having a ticket, they would not have been robbed. Alyona, naturally enough, is appalled at her brother's cruelty and the viewer follows suit. While we come to feel very greatly for the children through the film (they suffer misery after misery with no reprieve) Muratova makes it clear that the children are complex characters and not at all the straightforwardly innocent angels of the standard Christmas tale.

Another major target of Muratova's attack on the genre comes from religion. Muratova reinforces her commitment to unveiling false religiosity as early as the opening train scene. After the carolers have come and gone, a well-spoken man enters the cart offering three products for sale: an artificial Christmas tree; Christmas tree scent (to use with the tree); and a set of Christmas postcards. If the fake Christmas tree and smell key us, once again, to the fundamental motif of appearance/reality that underlies the work (the film will also feature artificial caviar being used in a display at the train station when the children are feeling the hungriest) **(Figure 80)**, the selection of Christmas cards includes one fundamental outlier that signals Muratova's overall attitude to religion in the film.

Figure 80, Still from Melody for a Street Organ **(Muratova, 2008)**

Along with the "Magi and the Shepherds," "The Holy Family," "The Flight to Egypt," "The Virgin Mary with the Infant on a Donkey" and "St. Joseph and the Angels," the man also

sells a card featuring "The Slaughter of the Innocents by the Soldiers of King Herod" **(Figure 81).** Now, while the massacre is indeed a crucial component of the Biblical narrative of the birth and childhood of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew (2:16-18),[79] one could scarcely find a less attractive Biblical motif from the Gospels to send as a Christmas card. Yet, it is precisely this detail that Muratova attends to in the film. Of all the Christmas cards that are distributed around the room, this is the one that falls to the ground allowing the children to examine it. The image sets up two aspects of Muratova's critique of religion: the identification between the children and the innocents, and the rejection of a narrow-minded, selective religiosity. While Nikita and Alyona are not deliberately sacrificed by any one person, societal neglect ultimately leads to the eventual death of Nikita and the imprisonment of Alyona, victims of a form of consumerist capitalism that refuses to look at people like them with care, even at Christmas time. The religious critique itself, which begins here and runs throughout the film, however, attacks a form of religious "picking and choosing" where people choose the angels, the dinner, and celebratory parts of Christianity without being true to its more difficult propositions: charity, attention to the poor, abandonment of earthly riches. "The Massacre of the Innocents by Herod," therefore, is an early stand-in for the part of Christianity no one wants to look at even, or perhaps especially, in the very day it should be at the top of every Christian's mind: Christmas day itself.

[79] The passage in King James reads: "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men." (Matthew 2: 16). The Bible: Authorized King James Version. Edited with an introduction and notes by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett. (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1997).

Figure 81, Still from Melody for a Street Organ **(Muratova, 2008)**

It is, in fact, the very poorest and most unfortunate beggar characters in the film that express this criticism most fully. In the early part of the film, Muratova shows us an unknown man (Georgii Deliev) outside in the snow looking into the station where the children are hiding. He recites, first, the "misuse of riches passage" from James 5:3 "Your gold and silver are cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you and shall eat your flesh as it were fire"[80] and, immediately following, a section from the parable of the Sheep and the Goats from Matthew 25: 31-46:

> And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. […] Then he shall say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink. […] Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.[81]

Here, two of Muratova's primary themes in the text begin to fuse. A critique of religious sentiment is immediately tied to her attack on money, one of her greatest targets after the fall of the Soviet Union. If James 5:3 openly attacks money's predominance over all other things, the second divides the world into those who minister to the poor, and those who refuse to do so, saving the former and condemning the latter. If *Melody for a Street Organ* is about one

[80] Ibid. James 5:3.
[81] Ibid. Matthew 25: 31-46.

theme it is a society's inability to display enough charity to two poor children on Christmas day to keep them from falling into harm. At the level of Geist, Muratova, here, points to the self-deceived Christian values at the heart of this society. Although it claims to be Christian – the film includes ever-present reminders of the Christmas celebration, from presents to Christmas trees, decorations, and caroling – what everyone is truly committed to, *Melody for a Street Organ* seems to convey, is money.

The same point is made with even greater clarity when the children, already in the train station, encounter a beggar woman (Nina Ruslanova) who begins to sing. Not long after she initiates her chant, a policeman approaches her and tells her that people are bothered by her. She believes, naturally enough, that this is a result of her singing, but the man, surprisingly, replies that people are offended by her smell. Muratova, however, renders the source of the stench quite ambiguous. Although a well-dressed man does indeed sit beside Nina Ruslanova, smells her and stands up, a scene only a few seconds later suggests that Nikita's jacket also smells very badly, so there is a possibility that the beggar woman is not even guilty of imposing upon the passengers' noses **(Figure 82)**. Nina Ruslanova's character, however, is taken to stink, and, as she is escorted outside the station, she adopts a form of religious discourse that explicitly attacks the impiety of the moment: "Lord God, am I one too many in this earth? The last to get food, the first to get a beating… Help me good woman, I say, but she runs away. A little bread, a little salt, I walk barefoot and wear no gold. I can't even go see the Nativity play – they chase me away."[82] Ruslanova's character, much like the madman played by Deliev in the previous scene are two of the people that most need help – two of the people that should be most subject to Christian charity – and yet, they are, for that very reason, ignored and abandoned.

[82] Muratova, *Melodiia dlia sharmanki* (*Melody for a Street Organ*). Original text in Ukrainian.

Figure 82, Still from Melody for a Street Organ **(Muratova, 2008)**

Muratova continues her critique of the hypocrisy of capitalist commitment to religious charity by contrasting images of joyous family life in Christmas celebrations – dancing, holiday attire, costumes, goose, lavish desserts – to the hungry destitute children in the outside cold. Furthermore, Muratova emphasizes the dishonesty of the celebration by having one of the gathered women pretend to be pregnant by carrying a pillow on her belly only to "reveal" the truth to the gathered party as a joke. Here, as in many places in the film, glass barriers (in this case, a window) separate the warm comfort of the inside, and its selective commitment to family, and religious values, from the reality of the harsh winter **(Figure 83)**. That this unwillingness to assist the destitute children or even acknowledge their existence is not so much an individual matter but a widely shared societal trait – perhaps even an inherent feature of Christmas day itself, a day in which people's indulgence in joy and food appears to make them not more but less willing to look at the suffering of others – is everywhere confirmed as the children attempt to enter an apartment entryway to shelter themselves from the snow. After being frightened away from such a building by the voice in the intercom, Nikita and Alyona ultimately succeed in getting past a particularly oblivious caretaker and sit next to each other on the stairs.

Figure 83, Still from Melody for a Street Organ **(Muratova, 2008)**

Their plan to protect themselves is cut short, however, by a singing couple who is on its way to a Christmas celebration. While the man appears not to mind the presence of the children inside the building, the woman, his wife, stops mid conversation and, concerned for the material integrity of their apartment, chooses to invite the children back to the streets. A form of intriguing psychological overcompensation is suggested by Muratova, here. We learn from the conversation between husband and wife that the woman is feeling particularly hurt that her own children have failed to reach out to her on Christmas day. While the husband claims that this is normal, that they themselves behaved in reckless fashion in their youth, the woman's choice to expel the children from the entryway, as so often in Muratova, better reflects the woman's own concerns – a taking out of her anger on others – than it does anything about the children themselves. Alyona and Nikita are merely stand-ins for her adult children.

Another violation of the Christmas film genre in Muratova's film is the utter failure of the expected "miracle happening" or "miracle reunion" that motivates so many Christmas films. If the last we see of Alyona in the film is that she remains stuck in the security division of a supermarket after being caught stealing some bread, Nikita never reaches Uspensky Pereulok, where his violinist father makes a living playing on the streets. He is interrupted by

a group of singing passersby when he is only meters away and, for this reason, never meets his father. In place of the joyous reconciliation of father and son, we get a distorted version of the "magical Christmas ending" in which another young boy, after stopping to listen to the playing of Nikita's father, talks to him **(Figure 84)**.

Figure 84, Still from Melody for a Street Organ **(Muratova, 2008)**

The father, we see, speaks of his own son with affection and transfers his love for his own missing child to the unknown boy before him in a powerfully lyrical moment. The scene hurts, thus, for its warmth and sense of missed opportunity: future happiness is denied to Nikita in virtue of a wrong turn.

In the haunting final scene of the work, Nikita searches for a place to settle for the night and discovers a semi-sheltered construction site. Weak, tired and hungry, he nestles in what looks like a bed and covers himself with a sheet of plastic wrap eerily reminiscent of that which envelops the murdered woman in "Boiler Plate n. 6" (the opening narrative of *Three Stories*).[83] That death is in store for the child is confirmed the following day, when a group of construction workers find the boy dead from hypothermia, his plastic wrap now turned into a shroud. Muratova, at this point, appeals to a tableau vivant to render her

[83] Kira Muratova, *Tri istorii* (*Three Stories*) (NTV-Profit, 1997).

inversion of the Biblical manger scene explicit: in a film about Christmas eve, the characters – upon finding the unmoving Nikita – freeze in place as though in the Adoration of the Magi scene sold by the postcard salesman at the start of the work **(Figure 85)**.

Figure 85, Still from Melody for a Street Organ **(Muratova, 2008)**

The freezing technique, too, has its own very Russian origins in the conclusion of Gogol's *Inspector General,*[84] which famously includes a silent reaction scene in which each character, in a pose appropriate to their own personalities, remains unmoving as each reacts to the discovery that the man they thought was an the inspector, was not one at all. The Gogolian tragicomic, here, is characteristic of Muratova: rather than the birth of the messiah, this Christmas brings about the death of an innocent child, irredeemable and devoid of world-historical significance. The film then cuts to its credit sequence in which, in a final attempt to take aim at cinematic Christmas narratives, the director introduces a version of the song "Shchedryk," a Ukrainian holiday classic known in the English-speaking world as "Carol of the Bells."[85] This attempt to "speak to the genre," here, only serves, dialectically, to

[84] Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol, *Revizor* in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem: v dvadtsati trekh tomakh: tom 4.* (Moskva: Nauka, 2003).
[85] "Shchedryk" in Muratova, *Melodiia dlia sharmanki* (*Melody for a Street Organ*).

emphasize the extent to which the preceding film defies the conventions of the Christmas narrative. If we do get a Christmas song in the title sequence, it is about the only thing that remains from the cheery version of the idiom.

Muratova's critique of social pathologies – beyond identifying religious self-deceit – also takes aim at the role of technology in alienating human interactions. When the children find themselves in the train station for the first time, unable to acquire any useful information that may lead them to Alyona's father, they discover the train station internet café. From the other side of a glass window – again the ever-present transparent barrier – the children observe, like curious onlookers in a natural history museum **(Figure 86)**, the odd behaviors of the inhabitants of the room. As the camera pans to the right in utter silence, an effect that estranges ours (and the children's) visual experience of the computer users, we see, first, a man in a white jacket looking at PC screen with incomprehensible text and flashing photos. Standing above him is a man in a leather jacket, which looks straight at the kids with a frown.

Figure 86, Still from Melody for a Street Organ **(Muratova, 2008)**

Next we see a man in a suit, looking through the glass "without seeing," absorbed in his work. Finally, Muratova tracks the camera to follow each of the users sitting at the computer: a man with a camel jacket, who seems to be looking neither at the computer, nor

through the glass at the outside world; a younger man in a red jacket who is rocking on his seat as he is observing something in the machine; a third man with large earphones, moving to what appears to be music as he presses keys on his computer; and finally two more computer users, the first of which reflects the glaze of the images he is looking at on his glasses.

The effect of this aquarium scene – and the silence that accompanies it – emphasizes two aspects of the experience of technology as seen by the children: it is at one and the same time utterly absorbing, encouraging of a human tendency to remove one's self psychologically from the world, and on the other hand, enables a kind of communal experience that is in fact radically individual. Although each person is in fact using the same technology – similar computer screens, the same web – their experience is not in any way shared or common. Each is doing something else on the machine, something that at once affirms their individual interests, but also radicalizes them to such extent that they fail to realize how odd their physical behavior in the room might look to an outside observer like Nikita and Alyona. The machines in fact separate human beings into invisible cubicles even though they are sharing and inhabiting one and the same space.

The most important technology scene in *Melody for a Street Organ* is the moment in which, after finding a 500-euro bank note in the bathroom, Nikita and Alyona try to convince one of the adults in the station to help them exchange the money. Since they are underage, they cannot do it themselves and they, of course, desperately need the cash to purchase food. What Alyona and Nikita do, thus, is approach a group of adults, all speaking on their respective mobile phones, and ask each one to assist them. In each case, Alyona waves a 500-euro bill in front of their faces and asks the individual for help exchanging the money. In each case, the individual is so absorbed in their own conversation, in their phone,

that they take Alyona to be asking *for* money (that is, begging), rather than asking for assistance. Muratova, again, shows the interlocutor's text as voice-over, presenting us exclusively with a medium-range shot of each individual as they speak on the phone. **(Figure 87)**

***Figure 87, Still from Melody for a Street Organ* (Muratova, 2008)**

The critique of technology itself – of the alienating phones and computers – quickly devolves, however, into a critique of human obsessions not unlike that of *Passions*. Each individual is so carried away by their own affairs, that they evince no interest in what is taking place here and now. The first man is a filmmaker who is attempting to discuss the contract and budget of a feature; the second, speaking in a mixture of German and Russian, appears to be attempting to illegally sell and seize the money for an apartment that, we infer, belongs to Alyona and Nikita themselves; the third, a woman, is torn between the desire to leave her controlling lover and the inability to live without his money; the fourth is working on organizing a research conference on animal cognition, focusing on dogs; and the fifth, a child, is reciting a poem over the phone to his parents. The text, called "Legend" (*Legenda),* with words by Aleksei Pleshchev (made famous by a Tchaikovsky song from his *Songs for Children*) reads:

> Был у Христа младенца сад
> И много роз взрастил он в нем;

Он трижды в день их поливал,
чтоб сплесть венок себе потом.

Когда же розы расцвели,
детей еврейских созвал он;
Они сорвали по цветку,
И сад был весь опустошен.

"Как ты сплетешь теперь венок?
В твоем саду нет больше роз!"
"Вы позабыли, что шипы
остались мне," сказал Христос.

И из шипов они сплели
венок колючий для него,
и капли крови вместо роз
чело украсили его. [86]

An almost exact translation of the poem "Roses and Thorns" by American poet Richard Henry Stoddard,[87] Pleshchev's version – like Stoddard's – has nothing childish about it. The text portrays how the young Jesus Christ rears a garden to make himself a garland and is deprived of his roses by "Jewish children" and has to make do with thorns instead. Upon wearing the crown of thorns, the desired effect is produced not by the beauty of the roses, but by the drops of blood that spot his forehead. Why does Muratova include this reading here, and why does it take place over the phone?

At least part of the critique concerns the fact that the poem – recited by a very young boy – is being reproduced by a kind of rote memory, entirely without understanding. The boy, it seems, fails to appreciate the horror of what is being described. Religious fervor, like the poem itself, has become something that is repeated without being heard, something in need of defamiliarization in order to regain social effect. The recitation, further, emphasizes

[86] Aleksei Pleschchev, "*Legenda*" in Muratova, *Melodiia dlia sharmanki* (*Melody for a Street Organ*).

[87] Richard Henry Stoddard, "Roses and Thorns" in *The Poems of Richard Henry Stoddard: Complete Edition.* (New York: Charles Scribner's sons, 1880, 71-72). "The young child Jesus had a garden,/Full of roses, rare and red:/And thrice a day he watered them,/To make a garland for his head./When they were full-blown in the garden,/He called the Jewish children there,/And each did pluck himself a rose,/Until they stripped the garden bare./ "And now how will you make your garland?/For not a rose your path adorns."/ "But you forget," he answered them,/ "That you have left me still the thorns."/They took the thorns, and made a garland,/And placed it on his shining head;/And where the roses should have shone/Were little drops of blood instead!"

the profoundly "unchristian" behavior of the train station users towards Alyona and Nikita and associates them with the suffering child Jesus, robbed of his roses wherever he looks. Here, as in the other examples, the presence of the mobile phone, too, removes the boy physically from the station, allowing him to withdraw into the conversation, to unsee the inequality and suffering around him.

In each case, modern technology is presented by Muratova in paradoxical terms. Although it does enable connection with those far away – like those using the internet to answer email – it, like in the case of the man dancing with his earphones in the computer aquarium, also serves to remove people from where they are, leading to an exacerbation of pre-existing tendencies towards individualism and obsession that are at the heart of collective self-opacity in *Passions*.[88] Technology, thus, serves as a vehicle for people to become more extreme in their love of dogs and money and leads to misreadings so extreme that a child waving a 500-euro banknote is taken to be begging. Muratova, too, hints at something else in the 500-euro bill sequence: namely, that the value of money is itself an illusion, a fabrication. That the children have the bill but cannot use it reduces it to nothing other than a bright piece of paper.

The third and most incisive prong of Muratova's social criticism – the unveiling of social pathologies – in *Melody for a Street Organ*[89] is a critique of capitalism. Here, one of the crucial distinctions established by the director is one between stealing for subsistence, and stealing gratuitously, for enjoyment. If the first is thoroughly censored and vigilantly watched – Nikita attempts to take some leftovers from a table in the train station but constantly fails

[88] Muratova, *Uvlechen'ia* (*Passions*).
[89] Muratova, *Melodiia dlia sharmanki* (*Melody for a Street Organ*).

while Alyona gets caught in the surveillance tapes and is punished after stealing bread from a supermarket – kleptomania, in Muratova's world, is endorsed as entertainment.

In one of the most memorable scenes of the second part of the film, an unnamed man (played by comic actor Jean-Daniel) gathers a group of friends outside a supermarket and, playing his toy trumpet, announces the beginning of a game. They, he says, will have 15 minutes to steal as much from the supermarket as they can. This is the very same supermarket, of course, in which Nikita and Alyona find themselves. As the motley group enters the building, Alyona is, at that very moment, mustering the strength to take some bread from the shelf for herself **(Figure 88)**.

Figure 88, Still from Melody for a Street Organ (Muratova, 2008)

While Alyona hesitates, we see as the game-playing kleptomaniacs stuff everything they see into their pockets and underwear: scissors, fruit, bottles of wine, among others **(Figure 89)**. At the cashier, Alyona drops a pickle container on the ground and, with no money to pay for it, is taken to the backroom of the supermarket for a conversation with the administration.

Figure 89, Still from Melody for a Street Organ **(Muratova, 2008)**

There she is also found guilty of stealing when the staff discovers a surveillance tape of her eating the bread. Meanwhile, the kleptomaniacs check-out, paying, of course, for only a small portion of what they took, and discuss their gains outside the building. The double-standard in what is seen and what is ignored, of course, is patent: the unfairness of Alyona's being caught while ten other people were amassing as much stuff as they could evinces a degree of discrimination that is hard to understate. Muratova, however, goes one step further in her exposure of social self-deceit. After the kleptomaniacs leave with their goods, the character played by Jean-Daniel, their ringleader, enters the supermarket to talk to the staff and pays them for the items that were taken, asking them to erase all the security cameras. Kleptomania, thus, is shown to be not a rupture with the institution – a form of rule-breaking in which the supermarket fails to receive what it is due – but something that is encompassed by, or perhaps even encouraged by the more powerful actors in the capitalist system. Jean-Daniel's character, thus, acts as a kind of release valve, making a profit by allowing people to express their kleptomania (to think that they are stealing without really doing so) in a way that does no harm to the supermarket structure. There is pure thrill and no disturbance. The kleptomaniacs themselves, thus, are themselves deceived by their leader.

Alyona, thus, gets punished for not being part of the game while everyone else who does steal from the market at exactly the same time – for fun, without necessity – leaves with impunity.

Another powerful scene of the subsuming of ethics to capitalist concerns is the moment in which Nikita finds himself in the deluxe lounge of the train station and observes as a World War II veteran attempts to use it without charge. "It [the lounge] should be free of charge for me. I've shed blood"[90] the veteran tells the woman. "Sir, this is a deluxe lounge, you have to pay." "I have war veteran benefits. We were soldiers."[91] Ultimately, the woman fails to let the man inside and closes the door of the lounge in his face, an act that, metaphorically, represents the closing away or abandoning of national values before consumerist concerns. In Ukraine, as everywhere in the former Soviet Union, the historical narrative surrounding the Second World War is not simply that of a fight against Nazism and fascism as controlling regimes that attempted a total subjection of Europe to their own designs, but a war of self-preservation. In Russian, the war is commonly referred to as the Great Patriotic War, one in which the very existence of the country and its population was threatened, a feeling justified by Hitler's expressed desired to create Lebensraum for the German race by eradicating Slavic peoples. The death toll of the war itself, whose Eastern front was orders of magnitude more costly than its Western counterpart, completes the picture. That a man who, in the culture, is hailed a hero is denied access to a lounge on monetary grounds is in a sense an explicit violation of patriotic values. Muratova, here, directly calls into question the weight of historical memory and capitalist consumerism in contemporary Ukraine. Which commitment is greater, Muratova invites us to ask, to

[90] Ibid. Original text: ВЕТЕРАН: Пропустите, я должен бесплатно войти. Я кровь проливал. /ЖЕНЩИНА: Мужчина, это зал повышенной комфортности, платный.
[91] Ibid. Original text: ВЕТЕРАН: У меня льготы. Когда-то мы были солдаты.

capitalist consumption or to a reverence for historical memory? That the door of the lounge is shut to a man whose actions are interpreted as the condition of possibility of the very existence of everyone else around him is Muratova's reply **(Figure 90)**.

Figure 90, Still from Melody for a Street Organ **(Muratova, 2008)**

Muratova follows this scene with a shot of a woman playing slots inside the lounge. Beside her is small child, who, whimpering, attempts to stop the mother from her continued gambling. Signs of addiction can be seen not only in the expression of the woman herself as she plays, but also in the fact that the child is prematurely forced into a role of responsibility, insisting that if she does not stop, they will be late for their train. When, surfacing into consciousness, she realizes that their luggage has disappeared – presumably stolen – she vehemently blames not her own gambling, but the child whose responsibility it was to watch over it. In the adjacent machine, a man wins the slots game. Nikita, standing by, watches excitedly as the man collects his gains and the coins flow out of the contraption in a torrent. One coin, however, falls to the floor and rolls away. Nikita follows it, for claiming the coin could mean, for him and Alyona, access to food for the day. The coin, however, comes to a halt close enough to one of the armchairs in which the wealthy loungers are resting and is picked up by one of them. Nikita, thus, is denied the coin, while the affluent man, for whom the coin's marginal utility is next to zero, is allowed to pocket an extra unit. Before us, then,

is an ironic inversion of Jesus' commentary on the parable of the sower in Matthew 13.12: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."

One final interaction concludes Muratova's criticism of money and consumerism in the train station, increasingly a microcosm not only for contemporary Ukraine, but for consumer capitalism worldwide. The subsequent scene begins with a close-up of a woman and her child. As she is wiping her child's face, Alyona introduces herself and they ask her to exchange the foreign money found by Nikita in the bathroom stall. At this point, we get yet another version of the Muratovian solipsism shot: focusing exclusively on the woman, the response comes only after a beat of complete silence upon which the woman initiates a monologue of her own **(Figure 91)**. This overt break in the shot/counter-shot structure of the interaction emphasizes the unusualness of the exchange of and of the woman herself: the focus, again, returns to the woman's face as she responds to every question by Alyona in order, agreeing to help her and Nikita. The unusual formal presentation of the interaction, in fact, is aimed to differentiate the woman from the many passersby Alyona and Nikita have requested assistance from. The woman *does* listen to them, and everywhere communicates trustworthiness and kindness.

Figure 91, Still from Melody for a Street Organ **(Muratova, 2008)**

Claiming she has a friend who works in the exchange box, she approaches the line and waits. When Alyona and Nikita give her the bill and she sees the 500 euros, we are allowed to hear her thoughts. She has never held that much money in her whole life, she says. She is tempted **(Figure 92)**.

Figure 92, Still from Melody for a Street Organ **(Muratova, 2008)**

If she initially thought about leaving her child behind with Nikita and Alyona as she went to exchange the money, when the child complains about feeling pain, she takes the child into the office with her, removing her only safeguard from "falling into sin." (Leaving her progeny with Alyona and Nikita as "collateral" would force her to have to return to them). This is when viewers know she will take the money for herself. The kids, however, do not immediately understand what is going on. This enables Muratova to use the dramatic irony for pathetic effect as the kids await her return. While they wait for the exchange to happen, Nikita dreams out loud about all the things he wants to buy. Mostly, he wants to eat large quantities of Russian and Ukrainian staples such as borsch, sausage, and cabbage, while Alyona – always the responsible, motherly figure – tries to convince him to spend the money wisely, to be frugal. The most poignant line, however, occurs when, sighing to herself, Alyona thinks: "Yes, there are some nice people in the world after all" referring to the

woman's commitment to help them. "How should we thank her?"[92] Alyona asks Nikita. After another few seconds of waiting, however, it dawns on them that the woman has taken their money. As they walk into the office to ask where the woman is, she is nowhere to be found. In this scene, Muratova presents us – in real time – with the corrosive effect of money on the ethical standing of the average person. The woman, we are led to believe, was an honorable person that simply had not had the opportunity for treachery, that is, she simply had not had the moral bad luck of being forced to choose between life-changing wealth and her ethical standing. The moment the children, vulnerable as they are, put that choice before her, she could not resist. Contact with the money itself, then, the interaction suggests, is destructive, and led this woman, whose intention was to help, to become a thief.

In the second half of the film, Muratova's attack on money continues on three fronts: in her use of the music of pop artist and cult figure Zemfira; in the fateful casino scene, where two limousine-driving men Pyotr and Mark – archetypes of contemporary *bratki,* low-level gang members with temporary access to luxury goods – forget themselves in gambling; and in Alyona's attempt to beg on the streets, an act that is met with trenchant resistance by a group of urchins.

If, on the one hand, Muratova's use of Zemfira's music in the second part of the film is a concession to big money – the use of her music was, among other things, an attempt to bring Zemfira's enthusiastic audience to the film, that is, to make the film, commercially, reach a new group of people – on the other hand, the four songs by Zemfira employed in the film, all from her fifth album *Thank You* (*Spasibo,* 2007)[93] are carefully chosen to

[92] Ibid. Original text: АЛЁНА: Бывают все-такие хорошие люди. Как нам ее отблагодарить?
[93] Zemfira Ramazanova, *Spasibo* (*Thank You*). Recorded in 2007 in London. ID "Kommersant," released 3 October 2007. Compact disk.

contribute to the aesthetic of the work. If in "Gentlemen" ("Gospoda"),[94] the lyrics underscore many of the thematic strands of the casino scene itself through references to gambling ("*karty razlozheny," "poluchaem komu chto polozheno"*), masks (*maski sbrosheny*), hiding (*perestan'te skryvat' napriazhenie/Eta partiia do porazheniia*), and the repetitive idiom "*Vse my v zerkale slavnye*" ("We are all saints I the mirror"), in "1000 years,"[95] which accompanies the scenes of Alyona and Nikita's wanderings through the city, the text rhymes with the expulsion of the World War II veteran from the luxury lounge. Its refrain reads: "*Beri Chanel, poshli domoi," ("*Take Chanel and let's go home"), a direct allusion to bard Bulat Okudzhava's famous piece "*Beri shinel', poshli domoi"* ("Take your overcoat and let's go home").[96] If Okudzhava's song recounts the story of foot soldiers returning home in the aftermath of World War II – some of its most famous lines read, "we've closed our account with the war" (*S voinoi my pokonchili schety),* "four years a mother was left without her son" (*Chetyre goda mat' bez syna),* and the eponymous "Take your coat and let's go home" – in Zemfira, a single letter changes the "overcoat" (*shinel',* the same word in the title of Gogol's famous Petersburg tale) into the brand Chanel, a replacing of the world-historical with the consumptive. In Okudzhava, the overcoat is the promise of homecoming; in Zemfira, Chanel is the placating of existential angst through purchase. This coldness and hollowness is everywhere underscored by the images that accompany hearings of "1000 years" in *Melody of a Street Organ,*[97] which often emphasize the harsh December/January weather to which the children are subjected **(Figure 93)**.

[94] Zemfira Ramazanova, "Gospoda," track 6 in *Spasibo.* ID "Kommersant," 2007.
[95] Zemfira Ramazanova, "1000 let," track 10 in *Spasibo.* ID "Kommersant," 2007.
[96] Bulat Okudzhava, "Beri shinel', poshli domoi" written for *Ot zari do zari* (*From Dawn Till Sunset*), dir. Gavriil Egiazarov, (1975; USSR: Mosfil'm, 1975).
[97] Muratova, *Melodiia dlia sharmanki* (*Melody for a Street Organ*).

Figure 93, Still from Melody for a Street Organ **(Muratova, 2008)**

Two others Zemfira pieces can be heard in the film. "*Ia poliubila vas'*"[98] accompanies the casino scene and signals a commodification of the artwork in the contemporary Russian-speaking world, one in which high art and popular idioms coexist within the capitalist mode of production. The piece is an intertextual tango – a musical choice not without great irony and humor – that creates a lineage of poetesses that runs from Anna Akhmatova through Marina Tsvetaeva to Zemfira herself. Dedicated to Tsvetaeva, the piece recounts a mini-narrative in which the poetic speaker, on the verge of death (presumably by suicide at gunpoint), chooses to live in part because of a fortuitous encounter with Tsvetaeva's poetry. That poetry, in Zemfira's work, is a matter of life and death, is contrasted with the form of the piece (it is joke-like and even includes shouts of "Marina!" after the text is sung through) and the opulence in the casino environment. The implication is that Tsvetaeva is now a part of *this* world, the world of capitalist gambling, and it is not without some glee that Muratova has Nikita run inside the casino and be pursued by a group of guards, knocking things over, disrupting games, upsetting the order of the whole space.

[98] Zemfira Ramazanova, "Ia poliubila vas," track 7 in *Spasibo.* ID "Kommersant," 2007.

Zemfira's piece, however, gains its artistic power by metrically and imagetically imitating Tsvetaeva's own dedicatory poem "To Anna Akhmatova"[99] from 1915. Compare, for instance, the meter of Tsvetaeva's opening stanza to Zemfira's own:

> Узкий, нерусский стан —
> Над фолиантами.
> Шаль из турецких стран
> Пала, как мантия.[100]
> *Marina Tsvetaeva on Anna Akhmatova*

> Медленно верно газ
> Плыл по уставшей комнате,
> Не задевая глаз
> Тех, что вы вряд ли вспомните.[101]
> *Zemfira on Marina Tsvetaeva*

Two other moments render the allusion unmistakable: the reference to weaponry, which, in Zemfira, is read into the Russian roulette motif that is characteristic of many of the songs in *Spasibo,* and the conclusion of both works, where Zemfira's indebtedness to Tsvetaeva is direct. Tsvetaeva writes of Akhmatova "*I bezoruzhnyi stikh/v serdtse nam tselitsia"*[102] while in Zemfira, we get:

> Бился неровно пульс,
> Мысли казались голыми,
> Из пистолета грусть
> Целилась прямо в голову.[103]

And here is the concluding stanza of both works:

> В утренний сонный час,
> — Кажется, четверть пятого, —
> Я полюбила Вас,
> Анна Ахматова.[104]
> (*Marina Tsvetaeva,* "To Anna Akhmatova," 1913)

---

[99] Marina Tsvetaeva, "Anne Akhmatovoi" in *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh, tom 1.* (Moskva: Ellis Lak, 1994, 234-235).

[100] Marina Tsvetaeva, "Anne Akhmatovoi" in *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh, tom 1.* (Moskva: Ellis Lak, 1994, 234-235).

[101] Zemfira Ramazanova, "Ia poliubila vas," track 7 in *Spasibo.* ID "Kommersant," 2007.

[102] Marina Tsvetaeva, "Anne Akhmatovoi" in *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh, tom 1.* (Moskva: Ellis Lak, 1994, 234-235).

[103] Zemfira Ramazanova, "Ia poliubila vas," track 7 in *Spasibo.* ID "Kommersant," 2007.

[104] Marina Tsvetaeva, "Anne Akhmatovoi" in *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh, tom 1.* (Moskva: Ellis Lak, 1994, 234-235).

В утренний сонный час,
Час, когда все растаяло,
Я полюбила вас,
Марина Цветаева…[105]
(Zemfira, "I fell in love with you," 2007)

In the context of *Melody for a Street Organ,* the embedding of such complex forms of intertextuality in both a scene (the casino) and a form (the over-the-top tango) can perhaps be thought a reference to an earlier scene in the film, namely, the bathroom stall episode which culminates in Nikita's acquisition of the 500-euro bill. Here, a man recites poetry in the bathroom, suggesting in no uncertain terms, that this is the space left for this kind of self-expression **(Figure 94)**. Zemfira's ironic tango both complements and confounds the straightforwardness of such a reading. If, on the one hand, the form-content split does much to undermine or mask the poetic ambition of the piece, on the other hand, Zemfira's legions of loyal fans indicate that this kind of aesthetic ambition has simply shifted its place, from the underground (in the Soviet Union) into accepting a spot within the culture industry itself. Criticism, in both Zemfira and Muratova, must play the system within the system (in cinema, see for instance, any film by Robert Altman).[106]

***Figure 94, Still from Melody for a Street Organ* (Muratova, 2008)**

[105] Zemfira Ramazanova, "Ia poliubila vas," track 7 in *Spasibo.* ID "Kommersant," 2007.
[106] Robert Altman, *The Player.* (Avenue Pictures/Spelling Entertainment/David Brown Productions/Addis-Wechsler, 1992).

Finally, Zemfira is Muratova's final word in *Melody for a Street Organ.* Her piece "In me"[107] (*Vo mne),* the second song played in the credit sequence, is borrowed by Muratova to give to voice not only to *Melody for a Street Organ,* but to cinema itself:

> Сон,
> Странный сон.
> Я вижу отражение себя.
> Столько лет
> Во мне все слова,
> Во мне тишина.
> Снова дождь,
> Стучит свои признания луне.
> Этот дождь,
> Наверное, не знает обо мне.
> Во мне корабли,
> Во мне города,
> Во мне вся любовь,
> Во мне все, что есть.[108]

In context, Zemfira's piece speaks to the connection of cinema and dream, of cinema's role as catalyst for the self-reflective ("*I vizhu otrazhenie sebia"*) Whitmanian all-inclusiveness characteristic of Muratova's work: with words, ships, cities, love, silence, everything there is. Appropriated by film itself, Zemfira's piece is a perfect epigraph not only to Muratova's cinema, but to this dissertation, so focused, as it is, on the ways in which Muratova's filmic oeuvre unveils a commitment, enunciated by the works themselves, to a view of cinema as vehicle to self-knowledge: "in me [the film!]" says Muratova via Zemfira, "there is everything."

As already suggested, Pyotr and Mark – the gamblers, who also introduce Zemfira in the film – are characterized equally by a relationship to money and forgetfulness. If they, on a whim, agree to take the children to the address they need to go on their limousine after a chance encounter on the street, they realize on the way that Mark has forgotten a crucial briefcase at the casino and are forced to return to pick it up. If Mark is guilty of neglecting

---

[107] Zemfira Ramazanova, "Vo mne," track 11. in *Spasibo.* ID "Kommersant," 2007.
[108] Ibid.

the briefcase, Pyotr – the well-dressed foil to the slot-playing woman in the train station – forgets himself as soon as he walks into the building. Having already lost a large sum of money earlier in the day, after recuperating the briefcase, Pyotr, overjoyed, instantly approaches the chip-exchange cashier, trades in more of his money and reinitiates the play. Muratova, then, shows a number of shots of consumption and absorption in the richness of the game in the casino, allowing viewers to, in a sense, "forget" the promise made by Mark and Pyotr to take the children in their car to Nikita's father **(Figure 95)**.

***Figure 95, Still from Melody for a Street Organ* (Muratova, 2008)**

In small scale, Muratova aspires to achieve the same effect characteristic of Zvyaginstsev's *Loveless (Neliubov'),*[109] where the director involves the viewer so deeply into the romantic adventures of the film's adults, that we – like the lead couple itself – become implicated in forgetting their child, whose disappearance ultimately brings the parents back to their senses. In Muratova, however, there is no such moment of reckoning. Nikita and Alyona sit in the entrance of the casino waiting for Pyotr and Mark to play until they are chased out by the guards who, at last, realize that children should not be in the vicinity of gambling.

[109] *Loveless* (Neliubov'), dir. Andrei Zvyaginstsev (2017; Russian/Germany/France/Belgium: Sony Pictures Releasing, 2017).

Before the children are removed from the premises, however, they sit on a couch on either side of a woman who appears to be asleep. Most fascinating is the fact that despite the woman's obvious presence in the scene, she is completely ignored and becomes simply another object in the mise-en-scène: touched, handled. If Mark, when looking for the briefcase, lifts her up to check whether the briefcase is hidden or obscured by her figure, Alyona, sitting next to her, not only puts on her red carnival mask, but touches her clothing, skin, and hair in wonderment **(Figure 96)**.

Figure 96, Still from Melody for a Street Organ **(Muratova, 2008)**

The woman is forgotten just as they, the children, are because of the environment's obsession with money. The casino environment is a universe unto itself, absorbing and controlling in a way that makes one forget about life on the outside.

Completing Muratova's invective against money and consumerism is the depiction of the children's final attempt to acquire some money: they beg. The moment Alyona begins to beg around the vicinity of a supermarket, a group of street urchins attacks her, claiming the children have no right to beg in that particular turf. One has, they are informed, to pay for that right. Even begging, thus, is not free in *Melody for a Street Organ.*[110] The cruelty of the scene is further intensified when Muratova shows us an interaction between one of the

[110] Muratova, *Melodiia dlia sharmanki* (*Melody for a Street Organ*).

begging urchins and a man leaving his car. In effect, the story told by the urchin to convince the man to part with some of his money is – to an extraordinarily level of detail – identical to that of Alyona and Nikita. While the narrative, when uttered by the urchin, is a lie – it is exceedingly unlikely that he too has experienced everything Nikita and Alyona have, from the death of his mother to the prospect of being separated from his sister – his use of the story serves to take away from Nikita and Alyona their only remaining asset: their story. Even if they wished to tell their experiences in exchange for money and bread, their own narrative has been used so often by the urchins that it is not likely to ring true. The repeated lie on the part of the beggars thus, is instantly subject to scrutiny and rendered powerless by the "Boy Who Cried Wolf Principle." Muratova, thus, closes all doors for escape with the exception, of course, of the "magical happening" characteristic of Christmas films. Only a kind of divine intervention from a charitable soul would be capable of delivering the children from their despair.

V. Conclusion

Muratova sets up the possibility of the happening – a confirmation of genre expectations – with the appearance of the characters played by Oleg Tabakov and Renata Litvinova. As the Tabakov character is leaving the supermarket in which Alyona has been detained, he sees Nikita waiting for his sister with a stray cat in his hand. As they strike up a conversation, Tabakov becomes taken with him, and promises that a woman will come looking for him. Tabakov then calls Litvinova and says, very unusually:

> TABAKOV CHARACTER: I found you a boy, a boy. Have you forgotten? Not a baby, not a teenager […] A pretty, fabulous boy, like you wanted. Come and pick him up. I'm almost late for the

> airport. […] I mean that he looks like, in a word, a boy as such, a classic. I don't know, from a Christmas story by Anderson or Dickens. [111]

Litvinova responds, equally implausibly, that she will come pick him up in a costume, dressed as a fairy. After a few more questions aimed at ascertaining the boy's orphan status, and whether or not he is called Ivanushka – which Tabakov denies, adding "we can rename him if we want" – Litvinova departs for the supermarket in an extravagant fairy godmother attire **(Figure 97)**.

Tabakov and Litvinova, here, although not guilty of the social forms of self-deceit that are Muratova's primary concern in this film – excess consumerism, selective Christian values, a critique of technology – code their desire to assist the boy as the fulfillment of a self-serving fantasy: Litvinova's desire to be an orphan's salvation, to be someone's fairy godmother. Although ultimately, the fulfillment of their fantasy is a life and death matter for the boy – its failure to unfold leads to the boy's death by freezing – the act is not *about* Nikita and Alyona.

Figure 97, Still from Melody for a Street Organ **(Muratova, 2008)**

[111] Muratova, *Melodiia dlia sharmanki* (*Melody for a Street Organ*). Original text: Я нашел тебе мальчика. Ну, забыла? Мальчика! Не младенца, не подростка […] Миловидный, сказочный мальчик, как ты хотела. Приезжай и забери его. Я почти опаздываю в аэропорт. […] Я имею в ввиду, что у него такой вид, одним словом, мальчик как таковой, классика. Как из святочного рассказа, я не знаю, Андерсона, Диккенса…

In fact, all of the information exchanged about the boy in the telephone conversations between Litvinova and Tabakov suggest that Litvinova's prime interest in Nikita lies in the extent to which he conforms to a certain archetype of the fairytale boy in stories by Anderson, Dickens, or the Brothers Grimm. Particularly relevant, here, is the story "Brother and Sister" (*Brüderchen und Schwesterchen),* collected by Alexander Afanasyev with the title "Sister Alyonushka, Brother Ivanushk."[112] (This is the source text that informs Litvinova's desire to "rename" the boy "Ivanushka.") The phenomenon of literary projection as conducive to failures in epistemology of self-knowledge, which I have termed, in a borrowing from Flaubert studies, the problem of bovarism in self and other knowledge, is the subject of the succeeding chapter of this dissertation, and it too represents a crucial strand in Muratova's attempt to characterize failures in intersubjectivity in her films. Thus, although Tabakov and Litvinova do not share the social pathology characteristic of *Melody of a Street Organ* – its self-deceived commitment to holiday spirit and Christian values that is ultimately undermined by capitalist consumption – they exhibit, in the very expression of their noble intention to help the boy, a failure of epistemology of self-knowledge that will become the center of our discussion in the following pages.

[112] Aleksandr Nikolaevich Afanas'ev: "Sestritsa Alenushka, Bratets Ivanushka," in *Narodnye russkie skazki.* Tom 2. (Moskva: Nauka, 1985, 250-255).

CHAPTER III

Muratova's "Kinobovarism": *Brief Encounters* (1967), *Letter to America* (1999) and *Two in One* (2007)

I. Introduction

One of the fundamental philosophical questions posed by Gustave Flaubert in his 1856 novel *Madame Bovary* concerns the proper role of fantasy and imagination in romantic interactions between historically-inflected subjects. Although Emma Bovary has become – along with her well-known Russian and German colleagues Anna Karenina and Effi Briest – a short-hand for the "fallen" woman or adulteress, in Flaubert, more important than the fact of marital infidelity is the articulation of the psychological processes that lead to its consummation.

In the case of Emma, Flaubert makes no mystery as to what lies at the heart of her inability or unwillingness to accept the world and her marriage as it is. Her "disease," so to speak, is a product of *reading itself*. Having spent a great portion of her adolescence in a convent, Emma's imagination and self-understanding, Flaubert tells us, is shaped not only by the texts taught in that space – biographies of saints, Sunday prayers, lectures on faith – but also on an underground exchange of fictional works: novels concerned with "martyred maidens swooning in secluded lodges, […] aching hearts, promising, sobbing, kisses and tears."[1] The novels of Walter Scott and biographies of strong and ill-fated women, we are told, also played an important role in the tuning of her imaginative apparatus.

[1] Gustave Flaubert. *Madame Bovary,* trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 34-25. The full quotation reads, in the French: "Ce n'étaient qu'amours, amants, amantes, dames persécutées s'évanouissant des pavillons solitaires, postillons qu'on tue à tous les relais, chevaux qu'on crève à toutes les pages forêts sombres troubles du cœur serments, sanglots, larmes et baisers, nacelles au clair de lune, rossignols dans les bosquets, *messieurs* braves comme des lions, doux comme des agneaux, vertueux comme on ne l'est pas, toujours bien mis, et qui pleurent comme des urnes." Gustave Flaubert. *Madame Bovary.* (Munich: Doppeltext, n.d.), iBooks e-book, under "Chapitre VI."

For Flaubert, Madame Bovary is first and foremost a *reader:* as early as the novel's well-known sixth chapter, she is portrayed as someone whose interactions with both human beings and material objects is *excessively* mediated by archetypes from religious, romantic, and biographical texts. Part of Emma's tragedy, thus, is that in projecting fictional scripts onto herself and others, she creates an unsurmountable chasm between her imagined ideal of what life *should* be like – exciting, passionate, full of adventure – and what it often is: routine. Emma's misery is such that it surfaces the very moment literary imagination and reality fail to accord.

Emma is not the only character in *Madame Bovary* with this particular psychological makeup. Her second lover, Leon, approaches romantic love in a similar way, and it is in his description of Emma that Flaubert provides the clearest account of the philosophical problem of "bovarism" in self and other knowledge:

> By the variousness of her moods, successively mystical and joyful, talkative and taciturn, passionate and nonchalant, she roused a thousand desires in him, kindling instincts or memories. She was the lover in every novel, the heroine in every play, the vague *she* in every volume of poetry. On her shoulders he found the amber colours of *Odalisque au bain;* she had the long body of some feudal chatelaine; and she looked like the *pale woman of Barcelona,* but supremely she was the Angel. [2]

The passage – a string of antithetical adjectives and images (*babillarde/taciturne, emportée/nonchalante)* – is constructed to demonstrate that although Leon *purports* to be describing a real person, he, in fact, is merely projecting his "vague" idea of a literary lover onto Emma. None of Emma's peculiarities – marks of her subjectivity – appear in the passage; her outer form is simply a shell to be filled by Leon's literary imagination, a cloud that is toxic insofar as it occludes the live woman from view.

---

[2] Flaubert, *Madame Bovary,* 247. In the French: "Par la diversité de son humeur, tour à tour mystique ou joyeuse, babillarde, taciturne, emportée, nonchalante, elle allait rappelant en lui mille désirs, évoquant des instincts ou des réminiscences. Elle était l'amoureuse de tous les romans, l'héroïne de tous les drames, le vague *elle* de tous les volumes de vers. Il retrouvait sur ses épaules la couleur ambrée de *l'odalisque au bain;* elle avait le corsage long des châtelaines féodales; elle ressemblait aussi à la *femme pâle de Barcelone,* mais elle était par-dessus tout Ange!" Flaubert, *Madame Bovary,* "Chapitre V. "

In this passage and others, Flaubert's insight is alarming for those of us committed to teaching and writing about literature or cinema: reading (or perhaps even more generally, "art"), if improperly handled, can be dangerous. Narrative is capable of so thoroughly shaping our imagination – Flaubert, it is worth noting, would scarcely have called Emma's reading "literature," consisting, as it did, in sentimental romantic stories by second-rate authors[3] – that it can, in blinding us from ourselves and those around us, bring about physical or psychological harm. This then is what is meant by "bovarism" as a problem of self and other knowledge: it is a pathology of overidentification with narrative scripts that leads to injury (in a broad sense) to one's self and others.

As defined, "bovarism" is another name for what is often called the "problem of life and literature," a disease of imagination (first examined, in Europe literature, in *Don Quixote*) in which an individual's life and relationships are problematically motivated by fictional scripts. The "injury" proviso is fundamental, here. It importantly rules out all forms of script projection that are either inoffensive or salutary for the subject and those around them. The basketball player who takes on a superhero alter ego to boost performance is only a bovarist if inhabiting that fictional identity in society leads, among other, to physical or psychological damage to one's self and others; to the objectification of one's self and others; to excessive demands – say, in adulation or attention – detrimental to one's relationships; and to greater vulnerability to deceit and treachery. Each of these forms of harm surfaces in both *Don Quixote* and *Madam Bovary* and, as we shall see, are also quite typical of the phenomenon as it

[3] Flaubert scholars have often argued that what is dangerous, in Flaubert's view, is not literature itself, but sentimental trashy novels posing as literature. I disagree with this reading slightly. On the one hand, I claim that it is not the quality of the books themselves, but a kind of excessive imaginative disposition that leads the bovarist astray; on the other, I insist that the narrative quality of the script is fundamental in increasing our propensity to fall victim to bovaristic self-opacity. It is this very feature, narrative, that distinguishes bovarism from other, less compelling forms of script projection (e.g. advertisement).

appears in cinema. Emma Bovary is correctly diagnosed with this malady, thus, not because of her wish for a better and more fulfilling marriage, but because we are told that her tragic unhappiness is motivated wholly or in part by her textually-inflected imagination.

In French, *le bovarysme* has been a mainstay of Flaubert studies for over a hundred and thirty years. In his doctoral dissertation, *Bovarysme beyond Bovary: From the psyche to the text,* Albert Samuel Whisman traces the origin of the term to a text by French philosopher Jules de Gaultier: *Le Bovarysme: la psychologie dans l'oeuvre de Flaubert* (1892).[4] For Gaultier, *le bovarysme* is defined as "a man's power to conceive himself as other than he is,"[5] a condition that is alternately portrayed as both pathological and common to all individuals. Too general to be of any use in literary or psychological analysis, Gaultier's understanding of *le bovarysme* has since suffered numerous transformations. If the term *bovaryste* came to describe those who defend *le bovarysme* as element of common humanity, the term *bovaryque* came to characterize a clinically diagnosable psychopathology of imagination. In contemporary Flaubert studies, *le bovarysme* can be thought to be a synthesis of both: it is, as Yvan Leclerc humorously put it, an MTT ("une maladie textuellement transmissible")[6] or "a perversion of reading: instead of considering books for what they are, i.e. as the expression of a particular point of view on the world, the reader believes in the truth of what is reported, even of novels, or at the very least imagines that what the books tell is valid, or 'exportable', to his own existence" (Michel Brix).[7] My own definition of "bovarism" here is a philosophical appropriation of the

---

[4] Albert Samuel Whisman. "Bovarysme Beyond Bovary: From the Psyche to the Text." (PhD thesis, U of Oklahoma, 2013), 1-13.

[5] Jules de Gaultier. *Le Bovarysme, suivie d'une Étude de Per Buvik: "Le Principe Bovaryque."* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2006), 10. The original text reads: "le pouvoir départi à l'homme de se concevoir autre qu'il n'est."

[6] Yvan Leclerc. "*Bovarysme, histoire d'une notion." Madame Bovary: Le bovarysme de la littérature de langue anglaise.* (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2004), 11.

[7] Michel Brix. "Mal du Siècle et Bovarysme." *La Vie Romantiue: Hommage à Loïc Chotard.* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003), 97. Translation mine. The original text reads: "Une perversion de la lecture: au lieu de considérer les livres pour ce qu'ils sont, c'est-à-dire comme l'expression d'un point de vue

Flaubertian concept: contra Brix, the bovaristic subject errs not by attempting to export "truth" from works of literature, but by incorrectly and injuriously making sense of the behavior of one's self and others through an overreliance on literary imagination.

Defined in this way, therefore, bovarism is not a Flaubert-specific phenomenon; many romantic, realist and modernist literary works include sophisticated articulations of both the problem and its ramifications in human relationships.[8] In the realm of Russian 20th century modernist prose, Andrei Bely's *Petersburg* evinces a fascinating semi-parodic rendition of the issue in the character of Sofia Petrovna Likhutina. Sofia Petrovna's predicament is as follows: she sees herself as Liza from Tchaikovsky's (not Pushkin's) *Queen of Spades* and spends much of the novel wishing that Nikolai Apollonovich, her love interest, would take on the role and behavior of the operatic Hermann. A bumbling young philosopher with no propensity towards romantic heroism, Nikolai Apollonovich, to Sofia Petrovna's dismay, consistently disappoints her literary expectations, provoking a sense of frustration that is

---

particulier sur le monde, le lecteur croit à la vérité de ce qui est rapporté, même dans les romans, ou à tout le moins imagine que ce racontent les livres est valable, ou 'exportable', dans sa propre existence."

[8] The attempt to extend "bovarism" beyond *Madame Bovary* and Flaubert is a feature of literary scholarship in many languages. Outside of French, where *le bovarysme* is ubiquitous – a recent example being the 2018 republishing of the 2006 volume *Le bovarysme et la littérature de langue anglaise,* edited by Nicole Terrien and Yvan Leclerc – the term is particularly prominent in Polish literary studies, which features "bovaristic" analyses of Eça de Queiroz and Machado de Assis (Anna Kalewska, 2018), Hanne Ørstavik (Maria Sibińska, 2018) and George R. R. Martin (Żaneta Szlachcikowska, 2016). The word also appears in literary scholarship in Italy, Portugal and Brazil. Considering the power of Russia's literary and cinematic mythology – and the crucial position played by literary figures in Russia's cultural self-presentation – it is perhaps surprising that "bovarism" is not already a staple of Russian literary studies. Beyond scholarship on Flaubert himself – a prominent mention occurring in Mikhail Bakhtin's fragment "*O Flobere*" - *bovarizm* is virtually nowhere. The term's potential, however, as noted by Russianist Aurelia Kotkiewicz, is extraordinary: "Charakterystyczne jest ono [bowaryzm] dla wielu krajów i kręgów kulturowych, występuje również w twórczości wielu najznakomitszych przedstawicieli literatury rosyjskiej XIX stulecia, by wymienić Iwana Turgieniewa, najsilniej związanego z kulturą francuską XIX wieku, Iwana Gonczarowa, Lwa Tolstoja, Fiodora Dostojewskiego, czy Antoniego Czechowa" ["It (bovarism) is characteristic of many countries and cultural circles, and it is also found in the works of many of the best representatives of Russian literature of the 19th century, such as Ivan Turgenev, most closely associated with French culture of the 19th century, as well as Ivan Goncharov, Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Anton Chekhov" – my translation]. Aurelia Kotkiewicz, "Bowaryzm – nuda – melancholia. Uwagi o bohaterach XIX-wiecznej literatury rosyskiej", *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Literaria Polonica* v. 49, n. 3 (2018), 169-170.

manifest in bursts of anger. The clearest enunciation of the problem occurs in a subchapter titled "The Rabid Dog Howled," at the end of chapter three:

> Sofia Petrovna Likhutina did not regard the Canal as a prosaic place, where you could allow yourself the kind of behavior he had just allowed himself; it was not for nothing that she had sighed so often at the sounds of *The Queen of Spades:* there was something similar to Liza in this situation of hers (where the similarity lay she could not have said precisely); and it went without saying that she dreamt of seeing Nikolai Apollonovich here in the role of Hermann. But Hermann? … Hermann had behaved like a pickpocket: in the first place, he had stuck out his mask at her from the side of the palace with laughable cowardice; secondly, after waving his domino in front of her with laughable haste, he had measured his length on the bridge; and then from the folds of his velvet the trouser straps had prosaically appeared (at that moment these straps had finally driven her out of her wits); and to complete the outrages so uncharacteristic of Hermann, this Hermann had run away from a mere Petersburg policeman; he hadn't stood his ground and torn the mask from his face in a heroic, tragic gesture; he hadn't said, in a dull, faint voice, in the presence of all, the audacious words: "I love you"; and after that Hermann had not shot himself. No, the shameful behavior of Hermann had extinguished in her forever the dawning light of all these tragic days![9]

Here, the projection of literary (or in this case, operatic) archetypes onto Nikolai Apollonovich leads to a kind of willful blindness on the part of Sofia Petrovna, a tension Bely chooses to portray in a humorous rather than melodramatic light.[10]

To speak of an overreliance of literary imagination *within* literary works could, however, sound like the snake biting its own tail. It is easy to imagine the destructive potential of fictional-artistic script projection in the lives of real, flesh-and-blood individuals, but can one really do so when talking about literary characters? As the Cervantes, Bely, and

---

[9] Andrei Bely, *Petersburg,* trans. David McDuff (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 169-170. Original Russian text: Софья Петровна Лихутина считала Канавку не каким-нибудь прозаическим местом, где бы можно было себе позволить то, что позволил себе он сейчас; ведь недаром она многократно вздыхала над звуками "Пиковой Дамы": было что-то сходное с Лизой в этом ее положении (что было сходного, -- этого точно она не могла бы сказать); и само собой разумеется, Николая Аполлоновича она мечтала видеть здесь Германом. А Герман?.. Повел себя Герман, как карманный воришка: он, во-первых, со смехотворной трусливостью выставил на нее свою маску из-за дворцового бока; во-вторых, со смехотворной поспешностью помахав перед ней своим домино, растянулся на мостике; и тогда из-под складок атласа прозаически показались панталонные штрипки (эти штрипки-то окончательно вывели ее тогда из себя); в завершение всех безобразий, не свойственных Герману, этот Герман сбежал от какой-то там петербургской полиции; не остался Герман на месте и маски с себя не сорвал, героическим, трагическим жестом; глухим, замирающим голосом не сказал дерзновенно при всех: "Я люблю вас"; и в себя Герман после не выстрелил. Нет, позорное поведение Германа навсегда угасило зарю в ней всех этих трагических дней! Andrei Belyi, *Peterburg: roman v vos'mi glavakh s prologom i epilogom.* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1981), 129-130.

[10] Bely, of course, had multiple ambitions with the Likhutina character. Among other things, she is parody of Liubov' Blok who, famously, did not follow Emma Bovary in leaving her husband, the poet Alexander Blok, for Bely himself.

Flaubert examples suggest, however, identifying bovarism in literary works is possible under two conditions: when the authors themselves 1) explicitly establish a relationship between the character and the scripting text (that is, we must "see" the character read, watch a movie, look at art, discuss opera etc.) and 2) show us scenes/passages that strongly indicate that it is the imaginative assimilation of that text (or similar) that harmfully interferes in the character's understanding of themselves and others. Literary characters, of course, will always "speak literature"; to be bovarists, they must be shown to read it, be taken by it, and to damage themselves and others according to its directives.

If "bovarism" is primarily a literary phenomenon, "kinobovarism" – its cinematic rendition – can be thought to be both a simple transposition of bovarism from text to screen and as an extension of the imagination-forming source medium to include film itself. Kinobovarism is at play, thus, every time a cinematic character is shown to project onto themselves and others scripts from literature, visual art, theater, opera and cinema (among others) in a way that obstructs how they see themselves and others within the diegetic universe of the film. Bovarism and kinobovarism, thus, are distinct from other forms of "external interference" in identity creation – such as those provided by the media or advertising – insofar as they are 1) restricted to the universe of narrative art; and 2) are in operation only when the intrusion of art in self-understanding is an obvious *problem* for the subject in question. "Bovarism" is characterized, therefore, by excess. This second claim is particularly important, for not all interference, as I have suggested earlier, need create difficulties for mutual understanding. Artworks can, and very often do, produce the opposite effect – the intensification of a kind of collective self-consciousness.

A second worthy clarification concerns the role of self-consciousness in the "bovaristic" subject. It is, of course, not necessary for an individual to be *aware* of the fact

that their romantic fantasies are shaped by a particular literary character for their situation to be deemed bovaristic. Although Sofia Petrovna knows exactly where her projected model for Nikolai Apollonovich comes from – Tchaikovsky – Emma Bovary is not fully conscious of the extent to which her childhood readings shape her interactions with Leon, Rodolphe, the chateau, and the material world around her. When identifying this phenomenon in works of art (say of literature or cinema), the paradigm case is frequently riddled with dramatic irony: although we, the reader (or viewer), can often identify the text that lies at the heart of a particular character's model of love, they themselves cannot.

Bovarism or kinobovarism, I claim – like deceit, self-opacity, and self-deceit – is a crucial thematic strand in Kira Muratova's film philosophy. One of the extraordinary features of her work is that it provides a sophisticated account of the way in which literary and cinematic scripts can impinge upon our attempts to know ourselves and others. As early as her first independent film *Brief Encounters,*[11] from 1967, Muratova's films constantly portray situations in which gazing at the world through literary or cinematic archetypes can lead to damaging forms of idealization, ignorance, blindness, and manipulation. In what follows, I show that one of the philosophical ambitions of Muratova's cinematic work is to articulate the problem of "bovarism" on screen: to *show* what it could mean for someone to be manipulated on the basis of their literary imagination or *show* what it is like, when someone thinks they are in love, but are in fact so taken by a literary ideal, they fail to see the beloved's subjectivity.

In what follows, I analyze Muratova's treatment of "bovarism" and "kinobovarism" in three of her works: *Brief Encounters,* her 1999 short film *Letter to America,* and the second half of her 2007 feature *Two in One.*

---

[11] *Korotkie vstrechi* (*Brief Encounters*), dir. Kira Muratova (1967; USSR: Odessa Film Studio, 1967).

II. *Brief Encounters* (1967)

Not long after the conclusion of *Our Honest Bread* (1964),[12] Kira Muratova and her husband Alexander went their separate ways professionally and personally. Having received a commission to work on a new film at Dovzhenko studios, in Kiev, Alexander moves to the capital of the republic, while Kira initiates work on her first authorial film under the provisional title *Fulfillment of Desires.* As Eugénie Zvonkine reminds us in *Un cinéma de la dissonance,* the film that would become *Brief Encounters* arises as a combination of two unexpected sources of inspiration: the shortage of water experienced by the Odessites in the mid-1960s – a fact that surprised the director after her first move to the city – and "House on the Steppe," a story by Leonid Zhukhovitsky.[13]

Along with Muratova, Zhukhovitsky is the author of the literary script to *Brief Encounters,* which recounts the story of Valentina Ivanovna Sviridova, a government official responsible for Odessa's water supply distribution. Valentina Ivanovna is in love with Maksim, a geologist she meets a few years earlier, but to her dismay, his excavations often preclude him from spending time in the city, a circumstance that – despite Valentina's strength of character and professional responsibilities – leaves her in a state of great suffering. In one geological expedition, Maksim meets a young country girl named Nadia at a roadside café. Having only recently left her village in search of professional opportunities, Nadia quickly falls in love with Maksim, and they live a brief affair. Before leaving, however, Maksim promises to find Nadia a job in the city. Taking up his offer, Nadia searches Odessa for Maksim's address only to find Valentina Ivanovna, about whom she was unaware. The

---

[12] *Nash chestnyi chleb* (*Our Honest Bread),* dir. Alexander Muratov and Kira Muratova (1964; USSR: Odessa Film Studio, 1964).
[13] Eugénie Zvonkine, *Kira Mouratova: un cinéma de la dissonance.* (Lausanne: Editions L'age d'Homme, 2012), 64-65.

film begins, thus, with the unexpected encounter between Maksim's two lovers: taken for a house servant, Nadia moves in with Valentina Ivanovna in the hopes of making sense of the latter's relationship with the elusive geologist. The structure of the film is nonlinear: the *siuzhet* is narrated in a series of intercalated flashbacks which have each of the two female protagonists at their center. The work comes to an end when, hearing of Maksim's possible arrival, Nadia chooses to leave Valentina's home.

Brief Encounters' literary scenario was accepted by Odessa Film Studio on March 1st, 1966, but was not finalized until May of 1967. Casting for the project, as both Jane Taubman and Zvonkine recount, was difficult. Muratova had chosen actor Stanislav Liubshin to play the role of Maksim, but he, due to prior commitments, was unable to accept. The role was therefore offered to actor and songwriter Vladimir Vysotsky, with whom Muratova had only just been acquainted. For the role of Valentina Ivanovna, Muratova had chosen muscovite actress Antonina Dmitrieva, but as early as the first day of shooting, Muratova and her staff reconsidered.[14] Gennadii Kariuk, film operator, recounted the episode in a recent talk given at the New Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow:

> You know, I just watched the film and although so many years have passed, I just sat there and thought: I am really great! [laughter] Do you know why? Because I convinced Kira Muratova to be *in* the film. Really. We had a different actress. I won't mention her last name but she is fine, and I walked up to Kira and said: "Kira, you already feel this character, you know all of this already, play the role because no one will be able to play it like you will." And she hesitated. Suddenly my crew came by, and they all said: "Yes, Kira Georgievna, only you can do it. Only you."[15]

Kira ultimately complied, and the film was accepted by Odessa Film Studio on March 31st, 1967 with her in the lead role, but its progress came to sudden halt in Moscow. As Zvonkine shows, Goskino USSR's main fiction division demanded – in a four-page

[14] Jane Taubman. *Kira Muratova.* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 13 and Zvonkine, *Un cinéma de la dissonance,* 66.
[15] Gennadii Kariuk. "Interlude: Remarks on *Brief Encounters."* Q&A session following the screening of Kira Muratova's *Korotkie vstrechi,* New State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Tuesday, Nov. 9, 2019. Transcribed and translated by David G. Molina.

report – the re-arrangement of the film's episodes in light of criticisms that had been pointed out (and promptly ignored) from the very beginning of the project. These included, among others, the fact that Nadia commits a supposedly immoral act by living with Valentina Ivanovna after her sexual encounter with Maksim. Censors also pushed to eliminate the Maksim-Nadia affair entirely. The film writers eventually drafted a rebuttal, arguing that to eliminate the Nadia-Maksim plot would be to eradicate most of the dramatic tension of the film, and the work was ultimately accepted with only slight modifications. It was accorded the third and lowest category of Soviet film distribution.[16]

Although the film begins with an instance of wordplay inspired by Shakespeare's *Hamlet* ("To wash or not to wash, that is the question") – whose effect, in the Russian, is aurally exacerbated by the rhyming verbs *byt'* ("to be") and *myt'* ("to wash") – the problem of bovarism in self and other knowledge, in the film, is not often communicated by explicit allusion to literary works. Rather, in this first of two "provincial melodramas" – Muratova's own ironic genre description of her débuting works – the interaction between literary imagination, unhappiness, and intersubjective misunderstanding is presented primarily in a veiled way, discernable in the actions of three characters: Valentina Ivanovna, Maksim, and Zina, a friend of the protagonist's, whose difficulty in finding a suitable romantic partner is in part a result of her newly-found passion for reading.

In the case of both Valentina Ivanovna and Maksim, echoes of literature are crucial in informing their understandings of themselves and one another. Valentina not only has an enormous library in her relatively large apartment – the bookshelf dominates the *mise-en-scène* in one of the rooms **(Figure 98)** – but her interactions with Maksim are occasionally peppered with subtle references to literature and literary archetypes. In the first of these

[16] Zvonkine, *Un cinéma de la dissonance,* 66-68.

scenes, Valentina Ivanovna initiates a quarrel by comparing the behavior of geologists to that of "gypsies" (in the Russian *tsygany)*: in her opinion, both live in the same tents (*shatry)* and sing the same songs. The primary objective of her speech act, here, is to criticize Maksim for abandoning the home on his expeditions. Irritated by the perceived unfairness of Valentina's juxtaposition, Maksim responds by calling attention to the artificial character of her self-presentation. Their interchange reads as follows:

> MAKSIM: Don't display that you are…an ironic kind of woman.
> VALENTINA: What am I pretending? I am not pretending anything.
> MAKSIM: No, you have the need to expose me. To prove something.
> VALENTINA: Prove what?
> MAKSIM: I don't know, I don't know. Maybe, that I am a slacker. Only you live the right way; everyone else does not. You need people to turn like winding machines until they are sick. Don't you? Long live the feeling of duty! Only then will people deserve your respect. You'll sympathize with them, but you'll also respect them.
> VALENTINA: I don't turn out of a feeling of duty. I turn because I like it.[17]

The language of the interaction, here, suggests that Maksim's aim is to push back against Valentina's (in his eyes) inability to separate her role as romantic partner from her position as government official. His use of the word *razoblachat'* (to "expose") – a term that evokes the show trials of the 1930s – as well as *dokazat'* ("to prove") insinuates that Maksim sees himself as subject to a kind of scrutiny that is not the usual demand for justification that arises in ethical interactions among private citizens, but one that has, behind it, the condemning power of the state. Other details in the passage corroborate this view, such as Maksim's appeal to "a feeling of duty" (*chuvstvo dolga*) – which resonates, in Vysotsky's voice, with the ironic pathos of an official Soviet virtue – automatism, and the use of word

[17] Kira Muratova, *Korotkie vstrechi,* 1967. МАКСИМ: А ты не показывай, что ты такая…ироническая женщина./ВАЛЕНТИНА: Что я показываю, ничего я не показываю./МАКСИМ: Нет, ну почему, тебе надо меня разоблачать. Тебе надо доказать./ВАЛЕНТИНА: А что доказать?/МАКСИМ: Не знаю, не знаю. Наверно, что я бездельник, что ли. Одна ты живешь так, а остальные всё не так. Тебе надо, чтобы человек вертелся, как автомат заведенный**,** что ему было тошно. Но да здравствует чувство долга! Вот тогда ты его будешь уважать. Сочувствовать, но уважать./ВАЛЕНТИНА: Я вовсе не кручусь из чувства долга. Мне это нравится.

bezdel'nik ("idler" or "slacker"), eerily comparable to *tuneyadstvo* ("parasitism"), offense punishable by Soviet law.

Complementary to official discourse, however, is the language of Alexander Pushkin's long poem *Gypsies*[18] (*Tsygany,* 1824), the most well-known instantiation of a cultural meme – that of "gypsy life" (to use the terminology of Muratova's film, still overwhelmingly current in contemporary Russian) – that thrives both within and outside of literature well into the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.[19] Pushkin's narrative unfolds as follows: after an introduction in which the poet describes the movable setting of the poem, a Romani community, employing, along the way, all three linguistic markers identified by Valentina in geologists (*tsygany, shatry, pesni*), the leading characters of the drama are announced: an old man (*starik*), his daughter Zemfira, and her lover Aleko, who abandons the city – in an irony characteristic of the text – to permanently embrace nomadic life. Zemfira, however, is a free spirit and, as time passes, chooses to act upon her love for another man, a deed that, as Pushkin makes sure to emphasize, does not consist in a violation of the ethical standards of the community. In fact, part of the very function of the *starik* – unnamed throughout – is to communicate, through his stories, the group's historical and social understanding of right and wrong, the necessary background against which one can judge the ethical standing of Zemfira and Aleko. Despite living for two years among the Romani, Aleko, a city man,

---

18 Aleksandr Pushkin. "*Tsygany*" (1824), *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii.* Tom 4. *Poemy. Skazki.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1957), 203-236.

19 An instance of the former is Lev Tolstoy's play *Living Corpse* (1900), which describes a man's escape from his lawful wife to a Roma settlement without effecting a formal divorce. There, the text's primary concerns are marital infidelity, gender double standards, and religious observance: if a man abandons his marriage, can his wife, Tolstoy asks – ethically, religiously, and lawfully – marry someone else? Besides the motif of escape, a series of exoticized cultural stereotypes are crucial to Tolstoy's rendition of the Roma, such as singing, drinking, and free love. Outside of literature, the romantic myth of the Soviet geologist – who embraces the wilderness in pursuit of science and thrives outside of state surveillance – as I discuss below, is a crucial refashioning of this motif, one that is essential for comprehending the interactions of Maksim and Valentina. Lev Tolstoy. *Zhivoi trup: drama v 6 deistviiakh i 12 kartinakh.* (New York: Knigoizdatel'stvo 'Molot', 1919).

interprets Zemfira's dalliances through the lens of his previous ethical principles – founded on monogamy and love as a form of possession – and seeks to violently punish Zemfira and her lover. The story comes to an end, like Bizet's *Carmen* and its source text, the eponymous novella by Russian translator and Pushkin connoisseur Prosper Mérimée, with murder.

Pushkin's poem presents a particularly paradigmatic – and for this reason useful – knotting of the thematic strands that compose a cohesive understanding of "gypsy life" in the Russian cultural imaginary: it foregrounds 1) the natural over the urban; 2) freedom over state oppression; 3) a romantic abandonment of the past; 4) an alternative to rigid societal conventions and mores (e.g. a lifting of restrictions on adultery and polyamory); 5) singing and carousing; and 6) nomadism. Although Pushkin or his *Gypsies* are not mentioned explicitly in *Brief Encounters,* the presence of nearly all of the aforementioned narrative building blocks – as well as Valentina and Nadia's explicit comparison of geology to *tsygany* – allows one to point to Pushkin and his successors as the self-obfuscating literary sources that, in *Brief Encounters,* interfere in Valentina and Maksim's attempts to understand one another. The logic of bovarism, here, is of an unusual form: it does not arise from an excess in literary imagination in one of the parties, or even from a mismatch of the literary sources that inform respective understandings of intimacy, but from a lack of consensus with respect to *one and the same text.* Literature interferes in Valentina and Maksim's attempts at mutual understanding because, like two bickering Pushkinists, they cannot agree on what the text says.

In comparing geologists to "gypsies," Valentina projects Zemfira onto Maksim and aligns herself implicitly with Aleko, a "reading" of Pushkin – borne by words and deeds – that emphasizes unwavering commitment and assumes a view of romantic intimacy that unfolds according to societally-sanctioned paradigms. At the heart of the debate is

Valentina's very reasonable belief – in the Soviet 1960s – that romantic partners should live under one roof. Maksim, however, openly rejects this model, and when confronted by Valentina, construes her behavior, unfairly, perhaps, as overly controlling, indistinguishable from state oppression and surveillance. Maksim's response – his insistence that geology is a profession and not a pastime – is a misleading retreat into fact: it consists in an attempt to cover up his misbehavior (we know him to have been unfaithful to Valentina) by granting it an ideologically acceptable and incontrovertibly factual guise. It is true that he is a geologist, but it is also true that Valentina is right to connect his professional escapades to a refusal in accepting a stable monogamous relationship with her.

For Valentina, however, the enactment of the Pushkin script evinces a degree of bovaristic self-opacity insofar as, in attributing her suffering exclusively to Maksim's inability to conform to social norms, she fails to account for her own responsibility in her sorrow. Valentina's love is freely given and so can be freely withdrawn; there is no evidence, in the film, of external coercive forces binding her to a man whose moral compass does not align with her own. It is even unclear whether Valentina and Maksim are legally married. Although Valentina does refer to Maksim as her husband in a conversation with Nadia at the start of the film, Muratova's delivery of the line conveys a hint of wishful thinking. Although the Pushkin narrative successively illuminates the fundamental incompatibility between Valentina and Maksim, thus, one in which she, unlike Aleko, holds the moral high ground by conforming, unlike Maksim, to shared social expectations of behavior, it also bovaristically blinds her from seeing how her own refusal to end things – her hope that Maksim will somehow come to accept the status quo (e.g. nonnomadic monogamy) – implicates her in her misery.

Figure 98, Still from Brief Encounters **(Muratova, 1967)**

Muratova's interest in epistemology of self-knowledge is furthered by the second half of the dialogue:

> MAKSIM: This is because you are a boss.
> VALENTINA: Is that so?
> MAKSIM: Yes.
> VALENTINA: And in exactly the same way, you sometimes think: do I need all this, and then you run away… to the forest. Isn't that so?
> MAKSIM: That's about right, yes.
> VALENTINA: See, now this is something I had long wanted to hear from your own lips. You are always bringing out the ideological side of things: "I'm a geologist, a geologist," you see…
> MAKSIM: No, with you it's simply impossible. Simply impossible. You think this and I say that. Understand this, I don't want you to examine me under a microscope. I'm not a worm. And even if I were a worm, I still wouldn't want that.
> VALENTINA: I am not examining you. I'm simply looking at you, it is interesting to look at you. What, would you like me to keep my eyes closed?
> MAKSIM: Closed; orhalf-closed… I live with eyes half-closed and I'm fine. I'm great. Yes, yes. You don't have to raise me, educate me. I'm already a grown man, everything in me is ingrained, all of this is useless. If you love me, you must look at me with loving eyes, blind ones. [20]

After Valentina Ivanovna articulates the belief that Maksim's geological retreats consist in a way of avoiding her, (see **Fig. 99**), he – increasingly exposed by her line of inquiry – begins

[20] Kira Muratova, *Korotkie vstrechi,* 1967. Transcription of original text: МАКСИМ: Это все потому, что ты у меня тоже начальничек. /ВАЛЕНТИНА: Да?/МАКСИМ: Да./ВАЛЕНТИНА: И ты точно также время от времени думаешь: да, а на кой мне это все сдалось, и уходишь… в лес. Так?/МАКСИМ: Примерно так, да./ВАЛЕНТИНА: Вот, вот это я давно хотела услышать из ваших уст. А то ты все ведь идейную сторону выпячиваешь: «я геолог, геолог я», понимаете./МАКСИМ: Нет, с тобой невозможно. С тобой просто невозможно. Все время думать так, я говорю не так. Ты пойми, я не хочу, чтобы меня разглядывали под микроскопом. Я не червяк. А даже если червяк, я все равно не желаю./ВАЛЕНТИНА: Я вовсе не разглядываю. Я просто на тебя смотрю, интересно на тебя смотреть. Ты что хочешь, чтобы я с закрытыми глазами, что ли?/МАКСИМ: О, закрытыми здесь, полузакрытыми. Вот я живу с полузакрытыми глазами и мне хорошо. Мне отлично. Да, да. И не надо меня воспитывать, учить. Я уже совершеннолетний, я, так сказать, закоренелый, и все это бесполезно. А если ты меня любишь, ты должна на меня смотреть влюбленными глазами, слепыми.

to object to it, deeming it an unjustified meddling in his personal affairs. From the lens of epistemology of self-knowledge, particularly interesting, here, is the comparison made between trying to make sense of the other as subject and looking at a worm through a microscope. Part of the extraordinary difficulty in the struggle for recognition and understanding among human beings comes from the fact that the process is by definition reciprocal: the worm we are looking at is not a worm at all but a human subject, equally interested in seeing, making sense of and reacting to us. In claiming that Valentina studies him like a worm, Maksim accuses her, both, of approaching him as object rather than subject, and of unduly gazing into his private world, a form of looking that, to his mind, is analogous to state surveillance. Valentina, of course, is doing neither; she is merely demanding, of her partner, reasons for his unavailability. In employing the microscope image, thus, Maksim frames what is in effect a level-headed attempt at rationally understanding his character as an overstepping of boundaries, a reach for control. Valentina's "I just want to look at you," thus, consists in a proper defense to the accusation leveled at her: she *does* want to just see him, clearly, without judgement or imposition.

The concluding lines of the passage – on whether to act with eyes open, closed or half-closed – foregrounds the role of fantasy in romantic love.

Figure 99, Still from Brief Encounters **(Muratova, 1967)**

If, up to this point, the text seemed to suggest that the misunderstanding unfolding between the parties consisted in the fact that Valentina and Maksim appear unaware of the harm brought about by their fundamental disagreements on how the Pushkin romantic "gypsy narrative" should be instantiated in their relationship, his assertion – that one can live well with eyes half-closed – poses a perplexing question about the limits of truth in romantic love: it suggests that sustaining a relationship in some sense *requires* refraining from the kind of epistemological investigation characteristic of both Valentina's approach to Maksim and this dissertation.

Maksim's assault on self-knowledge, however, is undermined by reference to its underlying motivation: personal gain. His argument for half-sight is properly read as a mode of self-defense: it is aimed at diverting Valentina from an investigation that, if continued, might lead Maksim to admit the inadmissible, namely, that, in the Soviet 1960s, geology was not just a profession, but one that enabled a retreat from both the full-sight of state control and the oversight of domestic partners into a world of singing, nature, freedom, and bonfires. Maksim's collapsing of reason-giving and control is therefore an attempt to prevent Valentina from fully confronting him about his own eminently geological enactment of Pushkin's literary "gypsy" paradigm.

Maksim appears to be bovaristically enamored to five of the six characteristic elements of Pushkin's *Gypsies* outlined above (all but number 3) and unites traits of both Zemfira and Aleko. From the latter he borrows a desire to be away from state surveillance and to escape from city life; from the former a lack of stable attachment and a love of freedom and the natural world. Like Aleko, however, Maksim's own "abandonment of the past" is partial: if Aleko, we discover, ultimately continues to operate under the customs of his native milieu rather than his newly found community, Maksim wants to wander but also to occasionally return to the comforts of both city and relationship. That Muratova ultimately chose Vysotsky for the role of Maksim and insisted that he play the guitar, only gives further credence to the Pushkin comparison. When asked to come to terms with the fact that 1) 1960s Soviet geology represents, in part, an instantiation of a 19th century literary script; and 2) that his romantic over-attachment to this ideal inflicts unnecessary pain on his significant other, Maksim cuts the conversation short.

Near the end of the film, Valentina and Maksim have another stormy conversation about the status of their relationship. There, Maksim openly accuses Valentina of bovaristic script projection. After she tells him, "I don't want you to love me like that…I want you to give everything up for me" (*Ia khochu, chtoby ty menia liubil ne tak… No ia khochu chtoby, ty vse iz–za menia brosil"),* he replies "you are a book woman [*knizhnaia zhenshchina*], Valya. I cannot sit at home and wait for you." The tension, here, consists in the fact that Valentina wants Maksim to abandon his career as a geologist to live a stable life with her, that is, to give up his personal liberty on her behalf. When earlier in the scene, he asks whether she would be willing to do the same for him (that is, whether she would be willing to leave her job and accompany him in his exploits), she replies incredulously, "You know, I'm being serious" (*Ty znaesh', ia ser'iozno s toboi razgovarivaiu):*

MAKSIM: I'm also being serious. Gather your things and let's go.
VALENTINA: What will I do there? Make oatmeal?
MAKSIM: If you don't want to, you won't have to. Gather your things, let's go.
VALENTINA: You think that I, *I* will suddenly give everything up, all of my work, and go somewhere with you?
MAKSIM: That is where everything begins: I, I, I. What about me?
VALENTINA: You …you are simply selfish. [21]

Bovaristic egoism, here, goes both ways. If Valentina's desire that Maksim give everything up for her gives some credence to his accusation that she is a "book woman" – a yearning that can be thought to echo, for instance, Aleko's romantic abandonment of his past life for Zemfira – Maksim, on the other hand, fails to notice how the charge can be turned on him. Might not his unwillingness to give up a literary-tinted ideal of geology make *him* the "book man"? The imaginary scenarios (he leaves his job for her; she leaves her job for him) put forth by Maksim, furthermore, places them in eminently unequal positions. He might, despite hating it, be able to find a decent job in the city; for Valentina, however, joining the geologists would likely mean a significant step down in her career and status. He knows all too well she cannot accept it. The scene ultimately moves to its denouement with their relationship at a standstill: both do not wish to renounce their occupations to be together in one place.

Further elaborations of bovaristic thinking in *Brief Encounters,* however, differ in aesthetic medium for Valentina and Maksim. If, for her, it is cinema that, along with literature, acts as cocreator of her imaginative world, for Maksim, that mode is popular song. We discuss each in turn.

[21] Kira Muratova, *Korotkie vstrechi,* 1967. Transcription of original text: МАКСИМ: И я серьёзно. Собирай вещи, поехали./ВАЛЕНТИНА: И что я там буду делать? Кашу вам варить или что? /МАКСИМ: Ну не хочешь, не будешь варить. Собирай вещи, поедем./ВАЛЕНТИНА: Ты соображаешь, вот я, *я* вдруг всё так брошу, все дела, и поеду куда-то?/МАКСИМ: Вот с этого ты начинала, вот я, я, я. А я?/ВАЛЕНТИНА: Ты просто…ты эгоист просто.

In *Brief Encounters,* Valentina examines film on two occasions. The first occurs during her first date with Maksim, recounted in flashback. After he invites her to go with him to the movie theater and watch an American film with horse chases and cowboys, she, in a half-joke, tells him that she hates cowboys almost as much as she does geologists. Flirtation aside, if we take her response as a truthful representation of her cinematic interests, we might have grounds to suppose that Valentina's cinematic taste leans away from Westerns. A few minutes later, however, she expounds a more positive view of cinema (and literature), one that identifies it with ideal life: "You watch a movie, right? Or read a book. Everyone there is so beautiful, beautiful, the feelings and actions are so meaningful, complete. Even when people suffer, everything is logical and correct, there is cause and effect, there is a beginning, a middle, and an end. Here, everything is so vague, disform…All right, enough with all this lyricism."[22] For our purposes in this chapter, this is the most important single line of Valentina's in the film: it not only confirms that literature and cinema play an important role in her imaginative universe, but identifies those mediums as presenting a view of life that, when juxtaposed with reality, produces an insuperable gap in beauty, logic, and meaning. Put differently, Valentina makes clear, here, that part of her suffering consists in the fact that the world around her is not structured ideally, that is, is not like books and movies. Like Emma Bovary, thus, Valentina struggles in the void between life on screen (or as portrayed by Pushkin's verse) and the amorphous gnawing reality of the everyday.

That the film's original title was *Fulfillment of Desires,* too, is worth recalling, here, along with Valentina's behavior in the film's other major plotline: her fight to supply the

[22] Kira Muratova, *Korotkie vstrechi,* 1967. Transcription of original text: ВАЛЕНТИНА: Посмотришь кинофильм, да. Или книжку прочитаешь. Все там такие красавцы, красавцы, чувства и действия такие осмысленные, законченные. Вот даже когда страдают, все логично и правильно, и причина есть, и следствия, есть начало, середина, конец. А то все неопределенное, несформированное…Ну ладно, все это лирика.

inhabitants of an Odessa apartment complex with running water. Despite the fact that the building's inhabitants repeatedly tell her that they are homeless and would rather have a roof over their heads than wait for water to be installed in their homes, Valentina refuses to allow them to move in, to compromise on what she understands to be ideal living conditions.[23] Although the water plot is quite independent from literature or cinema, Valentina's approach to it in many ways reproduces the bovaristic structure of ideal-projection she associates with art: in painfully insisting on what *should be* whether than *what is,* she brings about suffering not only to herself but to those that depend on her work. That running water acts in the film as a kind of symbol, an equivalent of her desire for fulfillment in love with Maksim, is clear when, early in the film, Valentina is moved to tears as she opens the faucet in one of the apartments and the water pours furiously from it, a form of visual catharsis of her personal and professional pains. (Remember, too, of the role of water in *Long Farewells*). Waiting for apartments to conform to her ideal thus, mirrors her desire that Maksim accept societal standards for committed relationships. Neither of which seems likely to happen.

That Valentina interprets her relationship to Maksim *cinematically* is not communicated in words, but through the insistent repetition of a musical motif by composer Oleg Karavaichuk. The fact that narration in *Brief Encounters* is filtered by the subjectivities of Nadia and Valentina Ivanovna immediately unseals an ontological can of worms: if much of what we see are memories of the two protagonists, it might be difficult, at first, to determine the extent to which we should take anything on screen as a faithful rendition of a narrative past. At least initially, we do not know whether the memories are idealized or fragmented,

[23] There is also, it is worth mentioning, a practical reason for her insistence, her: as a Soviet official, Valentina realizes that once people move in, the government would likely do nothing to supply them with water. The problem needs to be solved before paperwork is signed. While I am surely not alone in thinking that having running water in a communal apartment is far from an "ideal living condition," the motivic-symbolic universe of the film, I would argue, frames it in this way. Running water stands for the gap between a state of lack and a state of fulfillment in desire: "what is" vs. "what should be."

full of the blanks and imperfections that arise in attempts to remember. This instability, as we have already observed in *Change of Fate,* is characteristic of Muratova's approach to cinema as a whole.

On the basis of the film's visual and dialogic material, I claim that the memories in *Brief Encounters* are, for the most part, reliable. Crucial to this reading is the fact that the character of Maksim as depicted by Valentina and Nadia does not significantly diverge. The movements of Valentina's fertile imagination, however (and its relationship to cinematic sources) are conveyed by the music that accompanies conversations with her partner. Throughout most of the film, all of Valentina Ivanovna's happiest memories are complemented by a piano soundtrack redolent of silent cinema. In superimposing a musical track to Valentina's most important memories (and avoiding it, when conversations become more tense), Muratova subtly points to the fact that although the cinematic *image* is objective, the unreliability of Valentina's cinema-suffused bovaristic imagination is accounted for through *sound.* The projection of film music on otherwise objective recollections signals the operation of kinobovarism, that is, of Valentina's cinematic reading on her own life.

Karavaichuk's "silent movie theme" first appears in *Brief Encounters* in Valentina's initial romantic recollection of Maksim. Maksim is lying on Valentina's knees while they converse on a couch. The music plays as she says: "When you are not here, I somehow remember us sitting on this couch. But we never sit on this couch. Ever." [24] Here, as in Muratova's *Change of Fate,* the text releases a Pandora's box of ontological questions. We can now no longer be sure whether what we are shown is memory – whether there really was a conversation between the protagonists on a couch – or a wholly fictitious fantasy of the kind

[24] Kira Muratova, *Korotkie vstrechi,* 1967. Transcription of original text: ВАЛЕНТИНА: Когда тебя нет, я почему-то всегда вспоминаю, будто мы сидим на этом диване. Но мы никогда не сидим на этом диване. Вообще.

Valentina has just described. The dialogue continues: "You know, to me you are an alien creature" (*chuzhoi),* to which Maksim answers: "Chain me up."

The image of being bound by a chain serves a double role in the text: it points to Valentina's desire to tie Maksim down in one place – convince him to give up his wandering way of life – but also to an epistemological need: Valentina wants to make sense of Maksim, to read him. This second interpretation is supported by the subsequent lines (now without musical accompaniment): "See, you are lying there. I see you. I see your eyes, your cheeks, your lips." And he continues the sentence for her: "Ears, hair and nose." "Yes, yes, yes. Ears hair and nose – all of this I know," she says, "but *you,* you I don't know at all."[25] Muratova underscores this theme through her own acting: Maksim's face is not only shown in close up, giving the viewer the opportunity to read it, but as Valentina lists Maksim's facial features, she runs her fingers through them, as if reading in Braille **(Figure 100)**. Her gesture implies a tactile desire to understand the other like a novel, or alternatively, to make sense of the other through an act of grasping. The dialogue unfolds by leading to what philosophers call the "other minds" problem, the struggle to make sense of the mindedness of another:

> VALENTINA: You are lying here, thinking about something, about something. What are you thinking about? Are you asleep?
> MAKSIM: I don't think about anything. Does that surprise you? You probably are always thinking about something. Right?
> VALETINA: Always, probably. Like all people.
> MAKSIM: So don't think! That is also possible.
> VALENTINA: I bore you.
> MAKSIM: Not at all.
> VALENTINA: You know, when you are not here, I often speak to you. [I speak] For you and for myself. We even argue.
> MAKSIM: When I'm not around, I probably say some significantly smarter things.
> VALENTINA: That is not the point.
> MAKSIM: What is the point, then?
> VALENTINA: Simply, you are different. You simply different (*drugoi).*
> MAKSIM: Better or worse?
> VALENTINA: Not better and not worse. Different, that is all. You leave so quickly that I don't have time to know you. I imagine and imagine and imagine you.

[25] Kira Muratova, *Korotkie vstrechi,* 1967. Transcription of original text: ВАЛЕНТИНА: Вот ты лежишь. Я тебя вижу. Вижу твои глаза, твои щеки, твои губы/МАКСИМ: Уши, волосы и нос./ВАЛЕНТИНА: Да, да, да. Уши, волосы и нос – это я все знаю, но вот тебя, тебя я не знаю совсем.

MAKSIM: Don't complicate me. I'm simple. I move my legs and arms. My legs, and my arms.
VALENTINA: You are not simple. No, no, no…You live like…a plant.
MAKSIM: I'm a palm tree, a cactus!
VALENTINA: To me, you are like a plant from a different planet.[26]

In what is perhaps the strongest exchange in the film, Valentina tells him that she imagines (*pridumyvaet)* her beloved when he is not there but claims not to know him when he is before her. The conversation confirms an exaggerated capacity for imagination in Valentina: in speaking to Maksim in his absence, Valentina struggles to properly hear him in his presence. Maksim's line "When I am not here, I probably say some significantly smarter things" is the clearest utterance of the bovaristic gap between reality and imagination at the heart of Valentina's approach to the world: when he is before her, Maksim disappoints for not carrying himself as he does in her mind. The struggle for mutual understanding also comes through in the line: "To me, you are like a plant from a different planet." If eyes, in the Russian tradition, are the window to the soul, and plants have no sense-perception, then Valentina cannot find an entrance to Maksim's inner world; she has no access to it. His body, his face, his behavior: all of this appears hermetically sealed from her. The music returns at the end of the episode when Maksim says: "The prawns are ready. The prawns are probably ready, and I love you" (*Raki navernoe svarilis'. Raki navernoe svarilis', i ia liubliu tebia*). In

[26] Kira Muratova, *Korotkie vstrechi,* 1967. Transcription of original text: ВАЛЕНТИНА: Вот ты лежишь, о чем-то там думаешь, о чем-то, да? О чем ты думаешь? Ты просто спишь, да? Ты спишь?/ МАКСИМ: Ни о чем я не думаю. Тебя это удивляет? Ты наверно всегда о чем-нибудь думаешь. Да? /ВАЛЕНТИНА: Всегда, наверно. Как все люди./ МАКСИМ: А ты не думай! Так тоже можно./ ВАЛЕНТИНА: Я тебе надоедаю./ МАКСИМ: Ну что ты./ ВАЛЕНТИНА: Ты знаешь, когда тебя нет, я с тобой разговариваю часто. И за тебя, и за себя. Мы даже ссоримся./ МАКСИМ: Когда меня нет, я наверно говорю значительно более умные вещи. ВАЛЕНТИНА: Не в этом дело./ МАКСИМ: а в чем?/ ВАЛЕНТИНА; Просто ты другой. Просто ты другой./ МАКСИМ: Хуже или лучше?/ ВАЛЕНТИНА: Не хуже и не лучше. Другой, и все. Ты каждый раз так быстро уезжаешь, что я не успеваю тебя узнать толком. Потом я тебя все придумываю, придумываю, придумываю./ МАКСИМ: Ты меня не усложняй. Я простой. Машу ногами, руками. Ногами хожу. Машу руками./ ВАЛЕНТИНА: Ты не простой. Нет, нет, нет. Ты живешь как…растение./ МАКСИМ: Я пальма, я кактус./ ВАЛЕНТИНА: Ты для меня - как растение с другой планеты.

this initial episode, thus, Karavaichuk's music is intertwined with a discussion of imagination, idealization, and Valentina's struggle to make sense of Maksim.

Figure 100, Still from Brief Encounters **(Muratova, 1967)**

The following appearance of the theme occurs during Maksim and Valentina's first date. This rendition of the piece is particularly effusive. Here, Muratova shows us how Valentina and Maksim walk through the street, approaching the camera. He lights a cigarette. When they approach a wall, they speak among themselves. At the end, Maksim turns Valentina around and kisses her. As he does this, the music goes quiet and returns only as they begin to leave the area together. Maksim raises Valentina off the floor, carrying her on his shoulders as the lights dim. The music continues to play as the film returns to present time, where Valentina Ivanovna opens the blinds in her apartment. No one speaks. Portrayed in this manner, the first date between Valentina and Maksim looks and sounds like an excerpt from silent cinema. Considering both what we know about Valentina – her interest in cinema and fruitful imagination – and that this is the originary moment of their relationship, this scene should be read as evidence of the interreference of cinematic imagination on memory. Valentina's image of ideal love, signaled by music, looks and most especially *sounds* like film.

The silent film music returns yet again in a third joyous scene between Valentina Ivanovna and Maksim, the scene in which they boil prawns. There, Muratova shows Maksim and Valentina from the bottom of the boiling pan. The prawns themselves are at the center of the shot, and influence how we see the faces of the protagonists in the background. Yuri Lotman and Yuri Tsivian analyze this scene in their well-known *Dialogue with the Screen* (1994).[27] There, the shot's unusual point of view is read as a summary of the film's main concern: Valentina's inability to ascribe emotional and psychological complexity to her reticent house servant Nadia, whom the tongue-tied bystanding prawns are thought to stand for. In Lotman/Tsivian, the languageless human subject in Muratova can be read as analogous to Heidegger's view of animals, namely, that they are "poor in world," a step away from having no world at all. While this reading accurately describes both Valentina's character and the symbolic importance of the shot in the film, for our purposes here, it is the fact of interference that is the tenor of the image: the prawns, like Valentina and Maksim's imaginations, are literally and metaphorically *in the way of sight* (**Fig. 101).** The memory is happy – Valentina smiles as the prawns sizzle – and the music stops when the film returns to the present. The rupture, again, signals a move from positively accented memory to present reality.

[27] Yuri Lotman and Yuri Tsivian. *Dialog s ekranom* (Tallinn: Aleksandra, 1994, 64).

***Figure 101, Still from Brief Encounters* (Muratova, 1967)**

The final appearance of Karavaichuk's film music occurs in the powerful concluding shot of the film, where Nadia readies herself to leave Valentina's home before Maksim's expected return. There, the music signals the uneasiness and expectation of Valentina as she waits for her beloved: it communicates ideal cinematic love *in potentia.* The circular camera work, here, is particularly remarkable. The camera touches every corner of the room, as if expressing the view that each centimeter of space has been altered by the expectation of Maksim's return. Nadia, however, bursts this imaginative bubble by taking, before leaving, one of the symmetrical, perfectly positioned oranges in the center table. This aggressive disruption of the exactness of the *mise-en-scène* presents itself as a kind of Barthian *punctum,* a break in the structure of the image that undermines any possible "happy ending."[28] Although late Muratova was fundamentally averse to symbolic representation in cinema, in this early work, the gap left by the orange should be read metaphorically: if Maksim's return was, for Valentina's fruitful imagination, a sign of completeness, a "full bowl of fruit," Nadia's intervention reminds us: in a relationship marked by brief encounters, a "cinematic" love affair can only exist in dreams. Reality is always at least one orange short **(Fig. 102)**.

[28] See Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980).

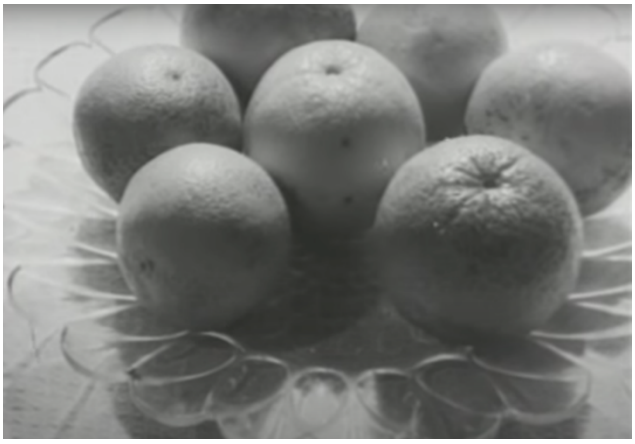

***Figure 102, Still from Brief Encounters* (Muratova, 1967)**

In Maksim, however, bovaristic self-opacity is unveiled primarily by his tendency to retreat from communication and self-examination into song. Valentina's view that Maksim "does not like to talk"[29] is quite accurate: in *Brief Encounters,* he often expresses himself by singing and playing his seven-stringed guitar, a practice that problematizes one of the most fundamental ontological distinctions in fiction cinema: namely, that between character and actor. When Maksim, played by Vysotsky, sings Vysotsky's songs on screen, he at one and the same time breaks the fourth wall of the film, forcing viewers to come to terms with an intrusion of documentality in its universe – we see, for a second, not the character Maksim but the singer Vysotsky playing his own music – and recontextualizes the textual significance of the pieces sung, allowing the lyrics to take on new meanings as they graft onto Maksim's interactions with Nadia and Valentina Ivanovna. The fact that Vysotsky's songs are overwhelmingly a mode of musical storytelling – they include, in condensed form, whole narratives, with characters and relationships that can be more or less verisimilar – establishes a fundamentally bovaristic dynamic for their use. Rather than speaking as himself, Maksim frequently chooses to offer commentary on the surrounding world through the literary

[29] Kira Muratova, *Korotkie vstrechi,* 1967. Transcription of original text: ВАЛЕНТИНА: Ты не любишь разговаривать.

universe of Vysotsky's characters, a form of identification that, idealistic, is frequently complementary to and aggravating of Maksim's view of himself as a kind of Pushkinian Roma geologist.

In one of the early encounters with Nadia at the roadside café, Maksim tells her – in a clear refashioning of the nomadic strain of the Pushkin motif – that "geologists are an unreliable people, today I am here, tomorrow I can be in Kamchatka."[30] Aimed at dissuading Nadia from becoming enamored of him, the statement is not only evocative of the kind of lack of attachment in love we identified as characteristic of *Gypsies*, but also of another famous moment in Pushkin's work: Onegin's refusal of Tatyana. As he begins to walk away, however, Nadia asks him to take a guitar with him in his travels, and he plays, as he walks away, an excerpt from Vysotsky's "Song of New Time" *("Pesnia o novom vremeni").* If the original piece is a song of war that encapsulates the efforts of men and women in battle, their desire for future happiness, and the expected trauma that might ensure from their present struggle – the third stanza powerfully reads "For a long time, we will take lights for fires,/Long will the creaking of boots appear ominous/Children's games, with old names, will be played about war/And we will long divide people into enemies and our own"[31] – Maksim's singing of a short excerpt of the first stanza, recontextualizes it into song of nomadic wandering, consistent with his Pushkin-inflected self-presentation. The stanza in question reads: "Like an alarm call, the heavy steps sounded at night –/It means that soon we too will have to depart and say our farewells without words./Through untrodden paths

[30] Kira Muratova, *Korotkie vstrechi,* 1967. Transcription of original text: МАКСИМ: Геологи – народ ненадежный. Сегодня я здесь, а завтра я могу быть на Камчатке.
[31] Vladimir Vysotsky, *"Pesnia o novom vremeni."* Original text: «И еще будем долго огни принимать за пожары мы, /Будет долго зловещим казаться нам скрип сапогов, /О войне будут детские игры с названьями старыми, /И людей будем долго делить на своих и врагов».

trod horses, horses,/It is unknown to what ends [of the earth] they carry their riders."[32] In omitting the first two lines, thus, Maksim eliminates the war entirely. The passage, instead, comes to focus on horses and riders, and on a form of aimless peripety through the wilderness. In appropriating Vysotsky, Maksim (played by Vysotsky) renders explicit his own bovaristic self-delusion by choosing to interact only with the parts of the song that confirm his literary self-presentation, namely, the parts that emphasize the "gypsy narrative."

Another iteration of this phenomenon – a full-body bovaristic takeover of Maksim's voice by the characters of the songs he sings – takes place in his successive renditions of "The Clouds Have Risen Over the City" (*"Tuchi nad gorodom vstali"),* with text by Pavel Armand and famously sung in Sergei Yutkevich's 1938 *The Man with a Gun,* and Vysotsky's rendition of "At Least You Speak to Me" (*"Pogovori khot' ty s mnoi*"), a slightly altered rendition of the popular *romans* "Podruga semistrunnaia" by 19th century poet Apollon Grigoriev. From the first piece, Maksim sings only the initial lines "Clouds have risen over the city,/The air smells of thunderstorms./Beyond the distant Narva Outpost…"[33] following them up immediately with Vysotsky's "At least you speak to me, guitar/Seven-stringed guitar, all [of my] soul/All of my soul is filled with you, and the night/The night is so moonlit."[34] If in the first piece, the fundamental themes include hot passion ("*zharkoiu strast'iu pylaiu*"), the path or road ("*daleka ty, put'-doroga*…") – a crucial romantic image of nomadism in the Soviet 1960s – kissing ("*potselui menia v usta"),* and parting ("*My prostimsia s toboi u poroga,/ty mne schast'ia pozhelai"),* in the second, one encounters guitars, nature, kissing –

---

[32] Vladimir Vysotsky, *Pesnia o novom vremeni"* in Kira Muratova, *Korotkie vstrechi,* 1967. «Как призывный набат, прозвучали в ночи тяжело шаги-,/Значит скоро и нам уходить и прощаться без слов./По нехоженым тропам протопали лошади, лошади,/Неизвестно к какому концу унося седоков».
[33] Pavel Armand, "*Tuchi nad gorodom vstali*" in Kira Muratova, *Korotkie vstrechi,* 1967. Original text: «Тучи над городом встали,/В воздухе пахнет грозой./За далекою Нарвской заставой…».
[34] Vladimir Vysotsky, *"Pogovori khot' ty so mnoi"* in Kira Muratova, *Korotkie vstrechi,* 1967. Original text: «Поговори хоть ты со мной, гитара,/Гитара семиструнная, вся душа,/Вся душа полна тобой, а ночь,/А ночь такая лунная».

alluded to in "*Ekh raz, raz, da eshche raz…"* and, most importantly, the "gypsy" motif. Maksim sings: "On the mountain stands an alder, and below it a cherry blossom/I fell in love with a Gypsy-girl and she got married."[35] The culmination of Maksim's performance in the scene, final last stanza is sung by Vysotsky with "drive," a purposefully dirtied voice in which the higher notes are accompanied by a strong guttural roar. The crucial word in the extract, *tsyganka* ("gypsy-girl") is intentionally emphasized by both a raising of pitch and temporal extension. The point is clear: in context, the performance of both pieces not only communicate Maksim's attachment to the Pushkin "gypsy motif" in both form and content, but, having chosen pieces about love, it acts as a kind of (intentional? unintentional?) courting of Nadia, who had only just joined the geologist table. Maksim, thus, allows himself to be taken over by Armand's impassioned *molodoi paren'* and Vysotsky's "gypsy-lover" so as to project a romantic literary ideal of freedom and nature that leads to Nadia's affection at the expense of Valentina's suffering. The need to constantly "play the geologist" – here and elsewhere – renders him bovaristically blind to Valentina's pain.

A third character, Zina, completes Muratova's treatment of the dangers of literature in *Brief Encounters*. When we first meet her, she tells us that she came to Valentina's house for salt and, having seen her bookshelf, began to borrow a few tomes. Soon, we realize that this practice is recurrent: as soon as she walks in, she goes straight for the books. Zina, Valentina Ivanovna, Nadia and a third friend, Lydia Sergeevna, are in the room. This last woman is an aspiring fortuneteller who asks permission from her friends to read their fate. The question that most interests the women is that of love and marriage. When Zina says she does not

[35] Ibid. Original text: «На горе стоит ольха, а под горою вишня./Полюбил цыганку я, а она, она замуж вышла».

want her fate read and Valentina supports her, the former articulates her struggles with literary love.

Zina says: "No, Valentina Ivanovna. It is necessary to get married. I haven't because of you. It is because of you, because when I met you, I left my own circle of friends but haven't been able to join yours. As soon as I started to visit you and began to read books that were not about spies, everything became so much more interesting. It is very interesting to speak to you. I am interested in your company, but you, see, are not interested in mine."[36] Here, the problem of books is directly tied not only to the quality of the friendship between Zina and Valentina, but also to the former's romantic life. Zina correctly diagnoses an imbalance between Valentina's affection and her own: Valentina forces a change of subject almost as soon as the topic is raised.

Having not finished articulating her thought, however, Zina insists on her confession: "This is what I wanted to say. This is why I didn't marry because of you. This is the type of guy I used to like: I used to like the kind of guy who causes everyone to shy away from him when he walks. I also liked when they were pleasant to look at. Now I only like the smart ones. I like them, but I am not smart, so they are not interested in me. Does everything really depend on upbringing?"[37] Although Zina's is not an instance of bovarism, it conveys another way in which literature can be thought to bring pain to individual readers. Prior to contact with Valentina, Zina's approach to both romance and friendship was not

[36] Kira Muratova, *Korotkie vstrechi,* 1967. Transcription of original text: ЗИНА: Нет, Валентина Ивановна. Замуж выходить нужно. Я, может, из-за вас и не вышла. Ну, конечно, из-за вас потому что, когда я с вами познакомилась, так от своего круга отбилась а к вашему не прибилась. Как только я стала к вам ходить, книжки читать не про шпионов, и мне все так интересно показалось. Очень с вами интересно поговорить. Мне вот с вами интересно, а вам ведь с мной не интересно.

[37] Kira Muratova, *Korotkie vstrechi,* 1967. Transcription of original text: ЗИНА: Вот что я хотела сказать. Почему я из-за вас замуж не вышла. Мне вот раньше, какие ребята нравились. Мне нравились вот такие, что вот он идет, и все от него шарахается. Ну потом мне еще нравилось, чтобы на личико красивенький был. А теперь мне все умные нравятся. Они мне нравится, а я-то им нет, я-то ведь не умная, им с мной неинтересно. От воспитания это, что ли, зависит?

based on literary archetype, intelligence, or education. After Valentina's books, however, her interactions with real people changes dramatically. Not only have her tastes been modified, but her own ability to successfully charm her love interests has decreased. If, for Valentina and Maksim, literature, cinema, and popular music bovaristically lead to a kind of blindness to themselves and the pain of their romantic partners, Zina, who sees herself clearly, is brought to despair from an exposure to books.

III. *Letter to America* (1999)

After the relative success of her highly controversial *Three Stories* – whose third and final episode portrays an eight-year old's poisoning of an old man, a scene that still provoked violent debate among audience members when exhibited in Moscow twenty-three years later – in 1997, Muratova spoke about developing a third project with actress and writer Renata Litvinova, who would become a frequent collaborator until the director's passing in 2018. Temporarily titled *Two More Stories* ("*Esche dve istorii*"), the film was thought up as a coagulation of two scripts by Litvinova ("To Wait for a Woman" and "About a Man") in which contrasting characters, both killers – one kind (Klavdia) and one evil (Faina) – would be played by a single actress, Litvinova herself.[38] According to Muratova, Litvinova was put in charge of finding a producer and approached Alexander Antipov with an offer. During the search process, however, Litvinova fell in love with Antipov and got married, and when Muratova began to add her own twists to Litvinova's literary screenplay, the newlywed Antipov raised objections. In an interview with Jane Taubman, Muratova compares Antipov's "Hollywoodian" criticisms to the censorship practices of Boris Vladimirovich Pavlenok (1923-2012), the conservative deputy chair of Soviet Goskino from 1970-1985.

[38] Zvonkine, *Un cinéma de la dissonance,* 128-129.

Unwilling to compromise, Muratova ultimately told Antipov to film the project himself and the screenplay never got off the ground with Muratova at the helm.[39]

With the failure of *Two More Stories* and the onset of the Russian financial crisis of 1998, Muratova – increasingly isolated as a Romanian-born Russian-speaking citizen of independent Ukraine – struggled to find funding for her subsequent work. Then, most of Muratova's audience and attention was still concentrated in the nascent Russian Federation; Muratova's recognition as a figure of Ukrainian cinema only effectively began in 2001, when Ukrainian sources provided her with the modest means to produce two feature-length films in quick succession: *Second-Class Citizens* (2001) and *Chekhovian Motifs* (2002). With little to no resources available, in 1999 Muratova decides to produce a 20-minute short film. Based on a script by Sergei Chetvertkov, Ukrainian poet who had worked with Muratova in *Asthenic Syndrome* (1989), *Letter to America* is shot in two days in Muratova's own Odessa apartment and a nearby park, with four non-professional actors working without pay: Chetvertkov himself, Odessite art critique Uta Kilter, Ukrainian director Nikola Sednev and his assistant Pavel Makarov. [40]

According to Jane Taubman, Muratova finished *Letter to America* on the eve of the 21st Moscow International Film Festival in June 1999. The film was also screened at the Venice Mostra International Festival, at the Kiev Film Actors' Festival "Stozhary" and at the Kiev International Film Festival "Molodist," where it was voted Best Ukrainian Film of 1999. With the help of Hans Joachim Schlegel – German film scholar and translator of Eisenstein and Tarkovsky – it was included in the 2000 Berlinale where Muratova was awarded the $50,000 Andrzej Wajda Freedom Prize.[41]

---

[39] Taubman, *Kira Muratova,* 88.
[40] Ibid, 89-90.
[41] Ibid, 92.

Letter to America[42] is composed of two parallel stories centered around a single protagonist, a fledgling poet by the name of Igor. If in the first storyline, Igor and a friend attempt to shoot a video letter to Igor's long-time lover who emigrated to the United States, in the second, Igor endeavors to receive rent money from Lena, his tenant. The primary aesthetic and philosophical questions in the first story are those of cinematic authenticity and epistolary self-representation in digital media. Muratova explores the video-letter as viable cinematic form and invites us to think about what can happen to epistolary sincerity when translated on screen.[43] The second story, however, presents a particularly dangerous facet of bovarism in intersubjective relations. As a way of manipulating Igor, Lena turns to literary imagination – in particular to archetypes from the works of Dostoevsky – to persuade the poet to part with his rent. Lena's manipulation only succeeds because, she, the audience and Igor are so familiar with the Dostoevskian archetype of the "self-sacrificing prostitute" – Sonya Marmeladova – that, when Lena actively begins to play that role, it becomes difficult to call her out on the lie. Muratova shows us, thus, an instance when knowledge of the other's literary imagination is used for personal gain. We analyze the episode more closely.

As soon as Igor enters his apartment – which he rents to Lena – the conversation between lessor and tenant turns to money. After Igor demands that Lena pay her monthly rent, she tells him she is unable to do so. Igor, in turn, tells her to begin packing her things and that he will no longer listen to her excuses. Sensing a certain hesitation on Igor's part to play the role of the uncaring landlord, Lena attempts various manipulation tactics with the aim of getting Igor to leave her alone. Her first move is to change the register of the

---

[42] Kira Muratova., dir., *Pis'mo v Ameriku* (1999; Ukraine: Odessa Film Studio, 1999).
[43] See forthcoming Molina, David G. "Video Authenticity and Epistolary Self-Expression in Kira Muratova's *Letter to America"* (1999), in *Epistolary Forms in Film, Media, and Visual Culture,* ed. Catherine Fowler and Teri Higgings (forthcoming 2022).

conversation from formal to informal. She does this, by calling him "Igoriok," an affectionate nickname that implies a great deal of familiarity. To address him in this way is about three-levels of informality away from what an interaction of this kind usually requires: name and patronymic. Dissatisfied with Lena's verbal behavior, he insists on being called Igor – already a slight win for Lena – and tells her, once again, that he will no longer listen to her. The irony, of course, is that Chetvertkov's repetitive hand movements convey the opposite: that he is on the verge of giving in **(Figure 103).** Aware of this, Lena ramps up the force of her theatrical act: she asks him if it would be possible to find another way to resolve the issue, a clear allusion to a kind of sexual exchange. With the hopes of disgusting him completely, she adds, for clarity: "You are a man, I am a woman."[44]

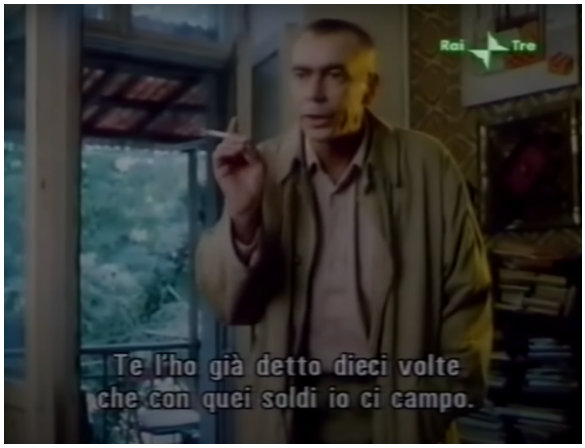

Figure 103, Still from Letter to America (1999)

Outraged, Igor rejects the offer but Lena's role-play continues to unravel; she presents her case with increasing passion and anger, repeating, as occurs so often in Muratova's films, the same lines over and over: "I have no money, I have nowhere to live, I have no money."[45] About to submit, Igor picks up a newspaper on the living room table and

[44] Kira Muratova, *Pis'mo v Ameriku.* Original text: ЛЕНА: Вы мужчина, я женщина.
[45] Kira Muratova, *Pis'mo v Ameriku.* Original text: ЛЕНА: У меня нет денег, мне негде жить, у меня нет денег.

pretends not to be interested in his tenant's plight. It is at this point that Lena reveals the source script of her deception: she kneels on the floor before Igor, and, looking at the icon in the corner of the room, pretends to pray **(Fig. 104).** Lena's is not a generic portrayal of prostitution as self-sacrifice but a very specific, literary one: that of Sonya in *Crime and Punishment.*[46] Knowing that Igor is a poet, and hence a reader, the manipulation works because it builds on associations with Dostoevsky's heroine, who, in turning to prostitution, sacrifices herself, like Christ, for her father and stepfamily. Insistent, Lena endures in that prostrated position for about a minute until Igor leaves. She is victorious.

Figure 104, Still from Letter to America (1999)

It is worth remembering that Dostoevsky's texts are themselves fundamentally concerned with issues of *bovarism* and self-representation, and that Dostoevsky Studies is, in fact, one of the few branches of Slavic Studies in which the French term (*le bovarysme)* has been used as a way of characterizing an author's poetics. In *Dostoevsky's The Idiot: A Critical Companion,* Liza Knapp emphasizes the role played by *Madame Bovary* in the *Idiot* – it is the last work read by Nastasya Filippovna before she is murdered by Rogozhin – and reminds us that, following a recommendation from Turgenev, Dostoevsky had only just finished reading

[46] Fyodor Dostoyevsky. *Prestuplenie i nakazanie.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1970).

Flaubert when writing the novel. Referencing I. I. Lapshin's *Estetika Dostoevskogo,* Knapp calls attention to the workings of *le bovarysme* in *The Idiot* by devoting much attention to the novel's various intertextual references (Holbein, Hugo, Rousseau, Tyutchev, Dumas and Gogol).[47] It is also worth emphasizing the role of Pushkin's "Lived a Poor Knight…" (*"Zhil na svete rytsar' bednyi"*) poem in the novel – a veiled literary projection of Myshkin himself – and Raskolnikov's alignment with Napoleon contra Schiller in *Crime and Punishment.* Dostoevsky's focus on literary fantasy as an instrument of projection, blindness of the other, and as vehicle of self-opacity was certainly not lost on Muratova, and explicitly informs her treatment of the problem in both *Letter to America* and elsewhere in her work. Back to the film.

Sitting on the outside step of his own apartment complex, Igor reflects on his interaction with Lena and decides, ultimately, to try to claim his money once more. As he reenters the apartment, however, he sees that Lena has a guest: Victor. Victor, we know, is Lena's lover, and had been hiding in the closet throughout the previous interaction, watching everything closely. Igor demands to speak to Lena privately and, in the kitchen, threatens her once more. In response, she switches to a calloused, businesslike tone: "All right, Igor, I understand. Can you wait for a few minutes?" "Why?" "Wait, please."[48] She leaves the room.

While he sits, Lena and Victor talk to each other in the living room. Among other activities, Lena picks up a thread and begins to weave **(Figure 105)**, one of the few clear symbols in Muratova's work: tangling thread as a metaphor for narrative deception (as we have seen, Maria in *Change of Fate* does the same).[49] As she waters the plants, a few seconds

---

[47] Liza Knapp. *Dostoevsky's 'The Idiot': A Critical Companion.* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998).
[48] Kira Muratova, *Pis'mo v Ameriku.* Original text: «Хорошо, Игорь я поняла. Ты можешь подождать несколько минут?» «Зачем?» «Подожди, пожалуйста».
[49] *Peremena uchasti* (*Change of Fate),* dir. Kira Muratova (1987; USSR: Odessa Film Studio, 1987).

later, she not only mentions Dostoevsky by name ("Fyodor Dostoevsky is hiccupping, rejoicing and turning [in his grave]"[50]) but looks for some money – appropriately enough – hidden in a book, a prop necessary for her last bit of Dostoevskian deceit **(Figure 106).** Victor, meanwhile, is also flipping through a book on the table. Before leaving the room, she asks Victor to unbutton her dress, takes Victor's towel, wraps it around herself so she looks naked and returns to Igor. Apologizing for the delay, she gives him the money and says that the amount should be enough until the next day. Completely distraught, Igor can barely listen to her: he, of course, believes that Lena – like Marmeladova – has sold her body to pay him rent. The pinnacle of manipulation in the scene occurs when Lena says: "Really, why should you suffer because of my problems?"[51] Igor leaves. Lena is victorious once more.

Figure 105, Still from Letter to America (1999)

Frustrated with his defeat, Igor returns to the video-letter and, in an onrush of anger, expresses all of his pent-up pain in the reading of a maddening poem before the camera. From the perspective of epistemology of self-knowledge, the fundamental section of the film ends in the previous scene. In *Letter to America,* Muratova shows us that the presence of a

[50] Kira Muratova, *Pis'mo v Ameriku.* Original text: «Федор Михайлович икает, ликует и переворачивается с боку набок».
[51] Kira Muratova, *Pis'mo v Ameriku.* Original text: «В самом деле, почему ты должен мучиться из-за моих проблем».

bovaristic imagination can put the diseased subject under serious threat: if one knows how to appeal to another's literary imagination, one can easily manipulate the other to one's ends. When someone's imaginative-literary universe is so specific that others have access to it in books – such the Sonya archetype in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* – reading those texts is a step towards control and can lead, as with Igor, to cruelty and extortion.

Figure 106, Still from Letter to America (1999)

IV. *Two in One* (2007)

Muratova's strongest cinematic articulation of the problem of bovarism, however, occurs in the second part of her 2007 film *Two in One*.[52] *Two in One* consists of two independent screenplays, connected – as Mikhail Iampol'skii put it with reference to Gérard Genette[53] – by a movement of parabasis. If in the first, "Stagehands" written by Evgeny Golubenko (Muratova's production designer from the time of *Asthenic Syndrome*), Muratova shows how the suicide of an actor is met with absolute indifference by the rest of his troupe, who choose to go about their everyday affairs exactly as they usually do – with all the petty thieving, bickering and annoyance that surges between people who professionally interact – the second story "The Woman of His Life" (adapted from a similarly titled novella by

[52] Kira Muratova., dir., *Dva v odnom* (2007; Ukraine; Sota Cinema Group, 2007).
[53] Mikhail Iampol'skii. *Muratova: opyt kinoantropologii.* (Saint Petersburg: Seans, 2008), 243.

Renata Litvinova) is the play staged by the troupe later that same evening. This second story is none other than the reworked script of "About a Man" that Muratova had aborted in the 1990s *Two More Stories* project and it re-animates the "life as theater" metaphor by presenting action as unfolding simultaneously on stage and a real-life set.

The production history of the film is turbulent. The project was set to be co-produced by Ukraine and the Russian Federation with investments, on the Russian side, from Igor Kalyonov, and on the Ukrainian side, from the Sota Cinema Group, led by young producer Oleg Kohan. Kohan, a graduate in international economics – Zvonkine reminds us – was, at this point, taking his first steps in business. An enthusiast of Muratova's work, he had, at that point, produced only a few short television films. International disputes, however brought the project to a speedy stop. Although the Russian minister of culture Mikhail Shvydkoi had explicitly promised to finance Muratova's next film – whatever it might be – when she submits the script to him in 2005, he claims the work must be reviewed by an anonymous commission before approval. The filing of the process, Zvonkine tell us, coincided with the height of the Russian-Ukrainian natural gas dispute in March of 2005. The offer was rescinded. Igor Kalyonov also withdrew, leaving the young and inexperienced Kohan as sole producer of the film. *Two in One* ultimately comes to be a Ukrainian-only production, with most funds provided by the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Sota Cinema Group. Its budget was also quite large: upwards of 1.5 million dollars.[54]

For the main role, Muratova invited Bohdan Stupka (1941-2012), one of Ukrainian cinema's greatest stars. In *Un cinéma de la dissonance,* Zvonkine compares his career to Muratova's, noting how opposite their trajectories were: "In 1971, when virulent articles against *Long Farewells* were being written in the press, the film was contrasted with Yuri

[54] Zvonkine, *Un cinéma de la dissonance,* 134-136.

Ilienko's "good" Ukrainian film *The White Bird Marked with Black,* in which Stupka played one of the three main roles."[55] Stupka was also nominated People's Actor of Soviet Ukraine in 1980, People's Actor of the USSR in 1991 and, in the post-Soviet period, was appointed minister of culture of independent Ukraine, remaining in the post from 1991 to 2001. Muratova, however, gives the former minister a shocking role: that of Andrei Andreevich, an aggressive man whose artistically-inflected dreams of true love lead to the destruction of the women around him. We turn to his story.

"The Woman of His Life" begins with the entrance of a man, a chorus or narrator, into a crowded theater. As he moves through the aisle towards the stage, he introduces the play as a New Year's tale, as a story about the "meeting with the woman of one's life, the longing for her," a "tale of decrepit power and beauty."[56] As early as the first line of Litvinova's text, thus, we have an indication that romantic fantasy of a particular kind – a man's search for romantic love – is at the heart of what we are about to see. After a short introduction in which two women, one blond and one brunette, discuss the passing away of the brunette's father by a Christmas tree – an episode that is, in fact, a kind of afterword to the tale that is to unfold – the film introduces the 65-year old Andrei Andreevich. It is his search for the "Woman of His Life" that constitutes the film's *siuzhet.*

Andrei Andreevich's tale begins, the narrator tells us, when a long-awaited nude is delivered to his flat: a copy of Boris Kustodiev's "The Beauty" (*Krasavitsa*, 1915).[57] The painting – enormous, held up by a powerful frame – is hoisted by two tiny men up a

---

[55] Ibid, 137. Original text: "En 1971, alors que les articles virulents contre *les Longs adieux* se multiplient dans la presse, le film est toujours mis en opposition avec le "bon" film ukrainien de l'époque *l'Oiseau blanc marqué de noir* (*Belaia ptitsa s tchiornoï otmetinoï)* de Iouri Ilienko dans lequel Stoupka interprète un des trois rôles principaux." My translation.

[56] Kira Muratova, *Dva v odnom.* Original text: «История о встрече с женщиной жизни… история о дряхлеющей мощи и красоте».

[57] Boris Kustodiev. "Krasavitsa," Oil on canvas, 1905. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

stairwell, and once it is at last positioned on the wall, a number of differences between it and the original strike the eye **(Figure 107)**. If Kustodiev's aim was to faithfully portray Moscow Art Theater actress Faina Shevchenko, Andrei Andreevich's version of the work seems to be lacking in key details. Particularly noticeable are the indistinct quality of the wallpaper, the covers, the pink lacework in the pillows, and the nebulous lines on the face and body of the girl herself. If Kustodiev's girl is a real person painted in a somewhat naturalistic

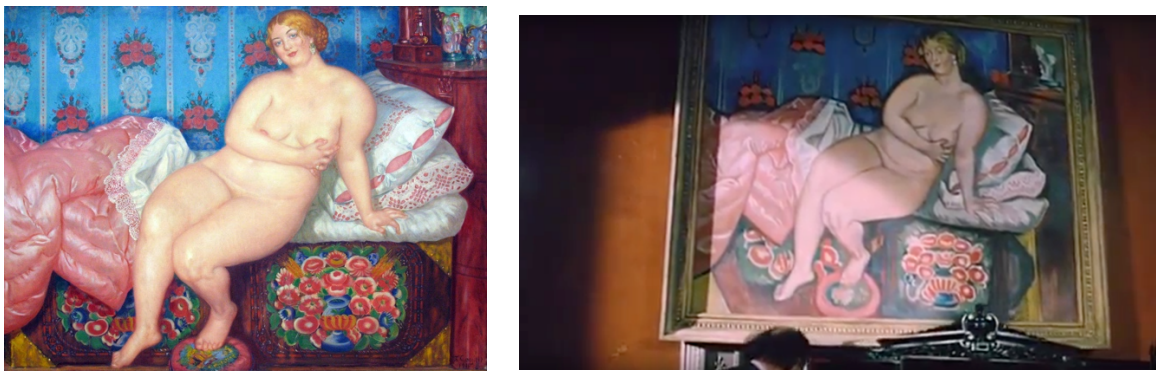

Figure 107, **Boris Kustodiev, *The Beauty* (1915, left); Still *from Two in One* (Muratova, 2007, right).**

fashion, Andrei Andreevich's imitation is more impressionistic, more sketch-like, a fact that turns out to be important as we learn more about his character.

As the painting moves up the stairwell, the narrator tells us that Andrei Andreevich had long chosen a place for it, a wall that enabled him to sit at his table, look through the window and turn his eye at the nude. An inkling of bovarism is already noticeable, here. Not only are we told that Andrei Andreevich fantasizes about the Woman of His Life, but can already see that part of his view of that ideal is filtered through works of visual art, namely, through the female nude. The Kustodiev copy is so large and its role in the *mise-en-scène* so blown out of proportion – it is at much larger than the real painting that hangs in the Tretyakov Gallery – that as early as the first few minutes of this second part of *Two in One,* we are given much reason to believe that Andrei's fantasies may be excessive, not quite under control. That the text emphasizes Andrei Andreevich's ability to quickly alternate

between staring at the nude and looking *outside the window* – presumably at real women – also hints at the fundamental logic of bovarism in intersubjective relations: projection. Andrei Andreevich takes what he sees on the wall and screens real women through it.

That Andrei Andreevich's visual-art inspired romantic ideal is excessive is further manifest by his apartment. The Kustodiev nude, it turns out, is not the only work of art in Andrei Andreevich's living room. In fact, the whole apartment is covered with artistic representations of naked women, a kind of outward externalization of his "love-sick" internal universe. Some of the artists whose work he owns include: Cranach, Dürer, Ingres, Hans Baldung Grien, Raffael, Botticelli, and Eugène Emmanuel Amaury Duval **(Figure 108)**. In his acting, Bohdan Stupka further emphasizes the delusive character of the film's protagonist by introducing him in an act of imaginative play: as he chooses which hat to wear, he raises his hand and clicks his tongue as if riding a horse. In both gesture and scenery thus, Muratova and her crew introduce key elements of the logic of bovarism in Andrei Andreevich's psyche: he, we know already, is an individual whose romantic ideal is exaggerated or distorted in part *because* of his immersion in visual art.

Figure 108, Still from Two in One **(Muratova, 2007)**

Once the painting is positioned in its proper place, Andrei Andreevich calls his only daughter, Masha, over the phone. (She lives in a different quarter of their enormous house.)

The dynamics of make-believe in Andrei Andreevich reach a whole new level in the dialogue that unfolds between them. He tells his daughter:

> ANDREI: I'm looking at her.
> MASHA: At whom?
> ANDREI: At her, they brought her in today. She's ready, hanging on the wall. And right now she's looking at me. And you can even talk to her. She is very beautiful. Don't you want to come have a look? Yes, it's my new painting. [58]

Until Andrei Andreevich explicitly informs Masha that the female subject of the previous sentences is a painting, she has little way of knowing for sure what or about whom he is talking about. That the painting supposedly talks to him – that he relates to it as if to a thinking subject – suggests the presence of a double-psychological delusion within: he not only projects his ideal from painting onto person, but also from person onto painting. Real life subjectivity and art are, for Andrei Andreevich, multidirectionally intertwined in his imaginative apparatus.

That this is indeed the case is confirmed by the film's use of editing. Muratova, here, cuts from the paintings to Andrei Andreevich's view of the street below, in which we see, amidst the snow that falls, the image of a pale-faced young woman with a lapdog **(Fig. 109)**. Through this series of shots, Muratova indicates that Andrei Andreevich's view of the "Woman of His Life" is not only shaped by visual art, but also by literature and reading. Why should he single out this woman, out of the many people passing down below? Presumably because he – much like Madame Bovary – recognizes the woman as a literary archetype: Anna Sergeevna from Chekhov's famous story *Lady with a Lapdog* ("*Dama s sobachkoi"*).[59] The implication is clear: Andrei Andreevich is reading himself through the

[58] Kira Muratova, *Dva v odnom.* Original text: АНДРЕЙ: Я смотрю на нее./ МАША: На кого?/ АНДРЕЙ: На нее. Мне ее сегодня принесли. Она готова, висит на стене…а вот, сейчас она смотрит на меня…А с ней даже можно разговаривать. Она очень красивая. Не хочешь ли прийти посмотреть, а? Да, это моя новая картина. Да, она красивая.
[59] Chekhov, Anton P. *Dama s sobachkoi i drugie rasskazy.* (Moscow: Russkii iazyk, 1975).

vulgar Gurov, who has a fateful affair with a beautiful married woman, Anna Sergeevna while on vacation in Yalta (Crimea). Interestingly enough, Litvinova's text never employs the phrase "*dama s sobachkoi*" to describe the woman and her lapdog. In fact, she purposefully uses a series of synonyms to try to enstrange the language even as it points to an archetype any Russian viewer would recognize. The woman with the lapdog below, thus, is not a real-life human being, but a kind of projection, an unfathomable ideal that Muratova intertwines with the female nude by cutting from images of one to the other. Literary and artistic imagination, thus, are – in Andrei Andreevich's fantasy – complementary.

Figure 109, Stills from Two in One **(Muratova, 2007)**

Not long after, Masha, the daughter, arrives to see the new painting. Her father says: "Look, there goes the girl again. The girl walking the dog. She lives somewhere not far from me. Tell me, Masha, do you know her?" When she responds that she does not, Andrei continues: "I've noticed her a long time ago. It is as if she walks past my windows especially slowly. Do you like her?"[60] Once again, Litvinova's text unveils key elements of the man's

[60] Kira Muratova, *Dva v odnom*. Original text: АНДРЕЙ: Ну Вот. Вот смотри опять идет. МАША: Кто идет? АНДРЕЙ: Девушка, выгуливающая собаку. Она здесь где-то недалеко живет. Ну скажи, Маша, ты

delusion: 1) that Andrei Andreevich's fantasy of "romantic love"[61] is governed by a Chekhovian understanding of a "fateful meeting" with the woman of his life and 2) that he is interested in little other than the woman's appearance. How could the daughter answer the question "do you like her?" by reference to anything else other than her exterior? As the conversation unfolds, however, Andrei Andreevich begins to systematically remove his daughter's clothes in an open act of sexual harassment. It is here that we realize how costly his literary and visual-artistic fantasies are to those around him. *All women*, for him, exist only as vehicles to possible sexual fulfillment, as sketches not unlike the undefined Kustodiev copy that hangs on the wall. In Andrei Andreevich, thus, we observe what was so dangerous in Flaubert's description of literary fantasy: "lover" has become such an abstract category that *any* person, regardless of family relations or previous commitments, is subject to fantasy projection if only they are beautiful enough.

While Andrei Andreevich caresses his daughter's naked legs and body, he offers a discursive description of his ideal woman that rings of the vagueness heard in Leon: "It would be good if she were an orphan, with a pretty face. With a waistline and firm breasts…and if she could clean the floor…and generally, well… be a normal woman. See, I haven't met the woman of my life yet, but I believe I will."[62] Notice the features that matter to him, here: waistline, firm breasts, passivity, floor-cleaning, and subservience. While having

---

знакома с ней? **…**АНДРЕЙ: А я ей давно приметил. Она как будто специально ходит медленно мимо моих окон. Она тебе нравится?

[61] My use of the term "romantic love" to refer to Stupka's character throughout the chapter represents, of course, an attempt to ventriloquize Andrei Andreevich's self-deceit. His interest in women, as should become clear in only a few pages, is exclusively sexual, his behavior vulgar, and exhibits no hint of the emotional attachment at the heart of "romantic love." This is precisely the point: the fundamental feature of bovaristic self-deceit in *Two in One* is that Andrei Andreevich talks in high language ("the woman of his life"), is surrounded by high art of all kinds, but is in fact nothing more than a sexual predator. That he might call sexual fulfillment "romantic love" is precisely a mark of his self-deceit.

[62] Kira Muratova, *Dva v odnom.* Original text: АНДРЕЙ: Хорошо бы, сирота, с хорошим лицом. И талия чтобы была, грудь стояла, мыла полы, и вообще…ну была бы…нормальной женщиной. Вот я еще не встретил женщину своей жизни, но верю, что встречу.

a waistline is a trait shared by most women, all of the other characteristics are merely repetitions of traditional gender roles or stereotypes most women spend their lives negotiating with and fighting against. For someone who claims to be searching for someone in *particular*, Andrei Andreevich's description is way too vague – and way too patriarchal – to fit anyone at all. By way of justifying the plausibility of his Chekhovian romantic fantasies about the girl with the lapdog, he tells Masha a story about his caretaker Kolya, who, he claims, found the woman of his life while putting out the trash. According to Andrei Andreevich, Kolya saw his future beloved on the street, fell in love at first sight, ran away with her, and never returned to his wife. Using Kolya as a foil, here, Litvinova and Muratova encourage us to think about Andrei Andreevich's neglect (or suppression) of his own experience as a married man. Although Andrei Andreevich, we are told earlier, was married to Masha's mother – a woman who was faithful to him to her final hour – all evidence points to him having forgotten all about her. Could *she* have been the woman of his life? That this thought is completely unavailable to Andrei Andreevich is communicated through his excited retelling of Kolya's abandonment of married life.

Now extraordinarily uncomfortable, Masha asks her father whether he truly desires such a fateful encounter with an unknown woman. With a momentary glimpse of self-understanding, Andrei Andreevich responds "What, does that not happen in real life?", a line that is succeeded by: "Do you want to live with me?"[63] Yet again, we are given confirmation of the wildness of Andrei's romantic delusions: he inquires unto his own daughter whether she would like to live with him as a romantic partner. When she objects – reminding him that she is his daughter – he replies with all kinds of justifications, including

[63] Kira Muratova, *Dva v odnom*. Original text: АНДРЕЙ: Что, разве этого не происходит в реальной жизни? […] Хочешь ли ты жить со мной?

the fact that Goethe apparently did the same. A different brand of bovarism pokes its ugly face at us, here: even Andrei Andreevich's justification of his bad behavior is couched in art, in this case, in the biography of famous poets. His proposal rejected, Andrei Andreevich, in what is one of the most frightening scenes in all of Muratova's work, threatens his daughter with a knife. When she screams and leaves the room, he, sitting in front of the Kustodiev nude, pretends to dance.

The scene immediately following is an elaboration of the literary/visual-artistic bovarism established in the previous episode. Andrei Andreevich once again calls his daughter over the phone, and as he speaks, Muratova quickly cuts to a series of women passing by his window: cheery, in a holiday mood **(Figure 110)**. Among them is the pale-face girl with the little lapdog, who is now walking very quickly. Through intercutting, here, Muratova solidifies the three-pronged relationship of illusion and desire unfolding in Andrei Andreevich's psyche: it moves from Chekhov and visual art, to romantic fantasy, to projection onto both the girls on the street and his own daughter. His dream, simply put, is that a woman might want to spend the night with him on the eve of the New Year.

Figure 110, Stills from Two in One **(Muratova, 2007)**

Andrei Andreevich, then, calls his daughter a fourth time, this time with a request: he wants Masha to introduce herself to the Chekhovian girl and bring her to the apartment. This conversation offers fascinating insight into Andrei Andreevich's position within

Pippin's spectrum of "unknowningess."[64] Here, Andrei Andreevich shows himself to be not entirely unaware that the age difference between himself and the girl might be an impediment in convincing her to sleep with him – it is exactly for this reason that he aims to send his own daughter as an envoy – but he demonstrates an extraordinary degree of self-opacity in believing that if the girl spends enough time in the house, she might fall in love. As predatory as his attitude is, Muratova and Litvinova, here, tell us exactly *where* Andrei Andreevich's lack of self-knowledge lies: he is not deluded enough to believe that the girl will fall in love with him at first sight, but still harbors the dream that, once she is in the vicinity, he might succeed.

When Masha refuses to go meet the girl, Andrei Andreevich tells her that if she does not find someone for him to sleep with on New Years', she will have to come herself. Putting down the phone, Masha – a seamstress and a dancer, judging by the belongings in her room – plays out a pantomime in which she pretends to be a doll. She at first dances freely, then begins to move increasingly robotically: first turning her head, then pretending to look at a mirror. She then feigns putting on lipstick, smoking, throwing off her cigarette after seeing what seems to be an approaching man, walks towards him, and puts her arms around his shoulders to dance **(Fig. 111)**. After dancing with her imaginary partner for a bit, Masha pretends, for a moment, to be hugged by the invisible man after which the dancing resumes. The pantomime comes to an end when she puts her hand over her heart and extends her arms forward as if giving it to the invisible stranger.

[64] See Robert B Pippin, *The Philosophical Hitchcock: 'Vertigo' and the Anxieties of Unknowingness.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

Figure 111, Still from Two in One **(Muratova, 2007)**

Through gesture alone, here, Natalia Buzko's acting succeeds in conveying what it feels like to be on the receiving end of the kind of epistemological blindness that befalls Andrei Andreevich. Here, she behaves exactly as Andrei Andreevich might have liked her to: as a faceless doll following a predetermined script – a ritual of falling in love – that reduces her from subject to body, from woman to faceless movement. The claim here is not just that Masha is her father's puppet, but that his dangerous, art-inspired image of the ideal woman renders all objects of his literary/artistic imagination into robot-like creatures. Masha's pantomime, thus, is a kind of outward exteriorization – a wordless exteriorization – of the reduction in subjectivity that befalls the object of the bovaristic gaze.

As the New Year approaches, Masha returns to the house with her friend Alisa (played by Litvinova). Alisa's arrival marks a new checkpoint in our reading of Andrei Andreevich. As soon as she enters the premises, he locks all doors twice, seizes his daughter's keys and puts his dog at the entrance of the house to guard the exit. He also tells her that "there will be no moms this evening," clearly suggesting that Alisa is forbidden to make an excuse to leave their party earlier than expected (such as, for instance, to see her mother).

Most of the rest of the film consists of the movement of Andrei Andreevich and the women around the house as they engage in a number of activities such as drinking

champagne, watching TV, and listening to music. Several key points call attention to problems of "bovarism" and unknowingness. The first is when, sitting at the table, Andrei Andreevich celebrates the fulfillment of his New Years' dream. He loudly announces: "What I have been striving for has been achieved. Two beautiful women are sitting in front of me."[65] The issue, however, is that at the moment in which he utters these words, there is only one "beauty" in front of him: Alisa. His own daughter, Masha, is at this point looking out the window, paying no attention to him. Here, Muratova begins to, aggressively, emphasize the extent of Andrei Andreevich's metaphorical blindness by rendering it physical. Suddenly noticing that Masha is not in front of him as desired, he orders her to sit down, and she does so, forcefully brings his imaginative script to fruition. His own daughter or Alisa – far from subjective entities with their own desires – are simply marionettes that serve him. This first case of blindness or delusion presents the final element of kinobovarism in the film: Andrei Andreevich's artistic fantasy is *gendered,* that is, it impedes him from interacting with women.

A second interesting exchange occurs when he asks whether the women would like to be photographed. When they agree, he picks up a Polaroid camera and places a Dracula fang in his mouth. When he enters the room, he photographs the girls with the camera while smiling at them with the fang. **(Figure 112)** Here, we have an unconscious (or perhaps semi-conscious) bovaristic moment, a scene in which Muratova and Litvinova show us that, despite the fact that Andrei Andreevich believes himself to be following a plot from a romantic novel, the storyline he is enacting is that of Dracula[66] or Blue Beard, men that imprison people in their castles to do with them whatever they wish. The attempt to capture

[65] Kira Muratova, *Dva v odnom.* Original text: АНДРЕЙ: То, к чему я так стремился, достигнуто. Две красавицы сидят передо мной.
[66] Bram Stoker. *"Dracula"* in *Five Novels: Complete and Unabridged.* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2006).

the image of the women with an instant photo also indicates a predatory impetus (think of Volodya line's "photography is a form of possession"): the camera seizes their image, encloses them in a frame, trapping them permanently.

Figure 112, Still from Two in One **(Muratova, 2007)**

Muratova and Litvinova, then, throw another interesting moment of literal blindness at us: Andrei Andreevich asks the girls what they think of his new white jacket. The jacket he is wearing, however, is black. This same interchange and image are repeated later in the film when Andrei Andreevich, at the end of the night, shows the girls his bed. The bed in which he intends to caress "The Woman of His Life" is completely white; he claims it is "black, black" (**Figure 113).** It is also eerily similar to a Draculean tomb, with its own pedestal and candelabra. Through bed and jacket, thus, Muratova and Litvinova literalize a crucial feature of Andrei's self-understanding: his blindness is so extreme it leads to epistemological difficulties in *sense-perception.* Andrei Andreevich's script tells him he is Gurov, but his behavior, throughout, is more like that of Count D.

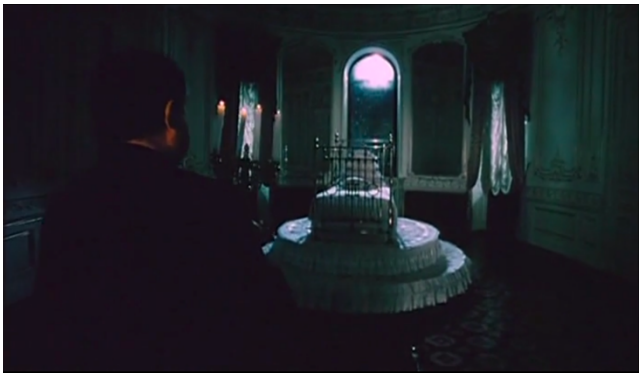

Figure 113, Still from Two in One (Muratova, 2007)

Throughout the film, Muratova continues to expand Andrei Andreevich's fantasy to include other types of art. No traditional art form remains untouched: Andrei Andreevich is a monster, and yet he is surrounded by opera – they listen to "E lucevan le Stelle" from Puccini's *Tosca* – photography, cinema, fine art, and literature. The fullest articulation of *kinobovarism* in the film, however, occurs when Andrei Andreevich cuts out the faces of two of the paintings in his living room – Cranach's *Venus* and Ingres' *The Source* – and forces Alisa and Masha to stand behind them, sticking their own faces through the holes. Having forced her characters to literally enter the painting, that is, to *become* the nude, Muratova – through gesture and *mise-en-scène* clearly literalizes the logic of kinobovarism in Andrei Andreevich's psychology: he strong-arms real, flesh-and-bone women into conforming to archetypes he has derived from *art.* (**Figure 114).**

As a work of philosophical film, the second part of *Two in One* turns out to be, therefore, more than a story about the epistemological difficulties one faces in attempts to understand others through visual art, literature, opera, and others arts: it acts as a kind of indirect polemic with eighteenth-century treatises about the development of moral sentiments in art. Despite his high tastes and artistic erudition, Andrei Andreevich does not have the sensibility and moral principles that theoretically should accompany extended exposure to Ingres, Puccini, Chekhov, and the like. On the contrary – to appropriate

language from Formalist Viktor Shklovsky – art, here, is deadening and deadly: it leads the other to be *recognized* and reduced, rather than *seen.*[67]

Figure 114, Still from Two in One (Muratova, 2007)

V. Conclusion

The origin of literary deceit in Muratova's work, however, is a phenomenon much larger than her own cinematic oeuvre. Bovarism as problem can be identified in Russian literature as early as 18th century sentimentalism, and reaches its first explicit articulation many years before the publishing of *Madame Bovary,* with Aleksandr Pushkin. The subsequent personal and institutional canonization of writers in Russian collective consciousness, which begins with Pushkin's death, passes through the rise of the thick journal and the growth in literacy rates in the 19th century, and takes root in the Soviet educational system transforms Russian culture into one uniquely committed to literature as form of national identity, locus of political resistance, and secular hagiography (at least by comparison to, for instance, the United States or Brazil). It is a common truism among Slavists that Russian culture appears to be *particularly* literary, a fact that, according to some, has served to protect Russian literary studies from the more poignant existential questions that have plagued the humanities in the last three decades. Russian literature should be taught in universities, so the argument goes,

[67] See Viktor Shklovsky. *"Iskusstvo kak priem"* ("Art as Device") in *"O teorii prozy"*. (Moscow: Krug, 1925, 7-20). There, of course, he defends the exact converse, namely, that art, or in his case literature, was capable of *enstranging* the world, enabling us to see it without automatism, as if for the first time.

because it is important for *Russians*. Although, since the fall of the Soviet Union, many Russian critics have mourned a loss of literature's pride of place in Russian culture, it is a fact that characters such as Akakii Akakievich, Khlestakov, Chichikov, Raskolnikov, Tatyana Larina, Myshkin, Onegin, Oblomov, Woland, Karenina, Vronsky, and Bazarov hold as much sway in the collective consciousness of Russian speakers today as Harry Potter or James Bond in the Anglophone world. The only scholarly attempt I am aware of to give meat to this anecdotal insight about Russian culture, however, can be found in Kathleen Parthé's still extraordinary *Russia's Dangerous Texts.*[68] There, she characterizes Russian culture's view of its literary tradition in ten fundamental myths that she supports with historical and literary examples. They are:

1) *Russians read more than any other people;*
2) *Literature is where the formation of politics, prophecy, and national identity took place in Russia;*
3) *One text would be one everyone's mind at a given time;*
4) *In Russia, poets get shot;*
5) *But manuscripts don't burn;*
6) *Although they can cause fires;*
7) *Writers must avoid all contact with* vlast' (power);
8) *The burden of a political function weakened art;*
9) *Censorship stimulated the imagination of Russian writers more than freedom;*
10) *Writers undermined the authoritarian state until it collapsed. In the end, the most dangerous Russian writer/text of them all was _____ [fill in the blank].*[69]

While it would be fruitless, here, to reproduce Parthé's analysis, which should be read in full, one of the surprising elements of her account is the connection between Russian literature and religion. Parthé not only connects the cult of personality of particular authors – Pushkin, Esenin, Mayakovsky – to Orthodox hagiography turned secular, but most fascinatingly, turns to Judaism as possible origin of Russian bookishness. If, in order to be Israel, Jews had to invest themselves in scriptures, Russians – she suggests – should be equally thought of as "people of the book," where Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Pushkin, and Gogol replace Torah,

[68] Kathleen Parthé. *Russia's Dangerous Texts: Politics Between the Lines.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).
[69] Ibid, 1-50.

Nevi'im and Ketuvim in expressing how one should live, what to believe, and how to fight against authoritarian rule.[70] Mandelstam's statement shortly before his death in the prison camp is a case in point: "nowhere is poetry valued so highly as in Russia: there people get shot for it."[71]

The overwhelming presence of literature in the Russian cultural tradition – and the institutions that promoted and developed it – paves the way, I claim, for literature's misuse or abuse in Muratova's films. Russian artists, from Dostoevsky on, begin to understand that, in Russia, literature can get out of hand, can lead to the kind of epistemological problems I describe in the chapter, rendering texts "dangerous" not only for writers and the state (as suggested by Parthé), but also for readers, who come to rely excessively on its guidance for how to understand one's self and others. As a partial outsider to Russian culture – Romanian-born and active in Ukraine – Kira Muratova, perhaps, was ideally suited to identify the hold of Parthé's ten myths on the culture around her, and therefore to explore the extent to which some of its excesses could be conducive to epistemological failures of intersubjective communication. "Bovarism" in Russian literature deserves its own lengthy investigation, one I wish to pursue as a subsequent project.

After introducing the concepts of "bovarism" and "kinobovarism" as ways of characterizing a kind of injurious epistemological blindness experienced when one fails to adequately relate to one's self and others due of an overreliance on archetypes from art – literature, cinema, painting – this chapter has explored three iterations of the phenomenon in the cinematic work of Kira Muratova. If in *Brief Encounters,* a reliance on literary, cinematic and musical scripts lead Valentina Ivanovna and Maksim to significantly complicate their

---

[70] Ibid, 10.

[71] Osip Mandelstam in Kathleen Parthé, *Russia's Dangerous Texts.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, 15). Original: Нигде стихи не ценятся так высоко, как в России – здесь за них расстреливают.

relationship to one another, in *Letter to America,* Igor becomes a victim of extortion because of his Dostoevskian imagination. The second half of *Two in One,* in turn, is the most extreme exploration of the problem in Muratova's oeuvre. There, Andrei Andreevich's obsession with discovering the woman of his life leads to self-opacity so extreme that it impairs his sense-perception and threatens the physical integrity of the women close to him.

Conclusion

In Andrei Bely's modernist novel *Petersburg,* a young revolutionary's attempt to assassinate his conservative father with a time-bomb reaches its narrative climax in a somewhat unexpected moment. If, in an ordinary plot, the high point of the text might have been the apocalyptic explosion itself – much anticipated and announced by the twenty-four-hour countdown that dictates the pace of the work following its fifth chapter – Bely pushes the crash to the very end of the text, right before the epilogue, rendering the violent outburst something of an afterthought, a natural follow-up to the moment of anagnorisis at the start of the penultimate chapter. Contrary to what the would-be revolutionary tells himself throughout the work, there, the terrorist attempt on the father is understood not as coerced by a party who fails to leave him be, but as an act of his own volition, a crime he chose to commit willingly. In a subchapter appropriately called "The Plan," Nikolai Apollonovich realizes that, throughout the novel, he has submitted to a failure of self-knowledge, a form of willful self-deceit, that has properly kept him from seeing what is obvious to any careful reader of the text: that he is guilty of the intent to kill his father *from the very start.*

The central argument of this dissertation attributes a similar centrality the epistemology of failed self-knowledge in the cinematic work of Kira Muratova. Among the various thematic and formal strands that can be detected in her work, our analysis took as its focus the way in which Muratova's cinematic articulation of failures of self-knowledge can be though to illuminate the logic of the epistemological malfunctions themselves, to, without ever wanting to be philosophy, converse with, complement, and even contradict disciplinary accounts of deceit, self-opacity, self-deceit, and narrative script projection.

In the introduction, I explored the fundamental methodological questions underlying projects of film-philosophy, presenting Pippin's Hegelianism for the 21st century – with its

view of art as aesthetic-sensible articulation of Geist's self-knowledge – as a way of avoiding a form of interdisciplinarity in which cinema is reduced either to an illustration of a given philosopher's approach to the world or to a series of discursive claims that fail to take cinema's medium specificity into account. Against views that emphasize Muratova's ornamentalism, lack of psychological complexity and refusal of deep-meaning, I defended a philosophical approach to her cinema grounded on the Hegelian notion of concrete universality, one that understands the very eccentricities of her way of presenting filmic reality – repetitive dialogue, mannerist acting – not as a retreat into dada or the absurd, but as a form of hyper-realism that enables one to better detect instances of social pathology and individual deceit.

Chapter one began by offering a panorama of the philosophical literature on deceit – relying on such authors as Carson, Black, Solomon, Bok, Nietzsche, and Ekman – with the hopes of providing a baseline against which to compare Muratova's cinematic paradigms. In "Ophelia," the second part of her triptych *Three Stories,* I presented a paradox not often contemplated in the philosophical literature on deception, namely, a situation in which the intent to deceive, on the part of the deceiver, is announced to the interlocutor in advance, and argued that Muratova's own view – somewhat analogous to Bernard Williams' notion of accuracy – is not one in which the individual intentionally withholds information from the other, but one in which the deceived individual works from inaccurate assumptions about the other that are allowed to persist to the advantage of the deceiver. This I termed "interlocutor-centered deceit," one in which the failure to correct the misguided assumptions of the deceived party on the part of the deceiver is, to a certain extent, the constitutive act of dishonesty. This same mode was identified as operative in the Liuba subplot of *The Tuner,* a film that explores the interconnections between artistry and dissembling and directly attacks

the fallacy of the moral artist still active in certain quarters today. There, too, Muratova explores the crucial question of the physical indistinguishability of intent – the ambiguity in reading bodies – an activity as central in our interpersonal relationships as it is in film criticism, and offers as illustration the character of Andrei, whose determinate intent (the intent to deceive Anna Sergeevna) crescendos slowly throughout the work, becoming directly linked to forms of personal gain only after the recovery of Liuba's purse. Finally, we explored the mutual ties between ethical life and individual deceit in *Change of Fate,* a film in which Maria's dissembling is only possible as a result of the systematic epistemological failures of the nondescript Central Asian society in which the story set, most notably, its penchant to readily equate whiteness and femininity with innocence. An awareness of the role of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* in shaping Muratova's filmic oeuvre was also at the heart of the considerations that conclude chapter one, on the bearing on Muratova of late-communist and early post-communist forms of subjectivity described by Václav Havel, Slavoj Žižek and Alexei Yurchak. Yurchak's diagnosis of a "performative shift" in late-Soviet social rituals – that is, the systematic emptying of constative meaning of repetitive actions – was thought to exist, in Muratova's world, not as a release from the true-false binary, but as the source of Muratova's virulent personal and cinematic hatred for all kinds of collective automatism, from the most political to the smallest social nicety.

In the second chapter, our analyses of self-opacity and self-deceit as social pathologies were prepared by an investigation of Hegel's presentation of a form of non-akrastic collective deceit in such works as the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* and *The Phenomenology of Spirit.* The claim, there, was that the social pathologies described by Muratova in such films as *Passions* and *Melody for a Street Organ* are of the kind described by Hegel, reflective either of a lack of self-knowledge on the part of Geist or of a confrontation

of opposing principles that fail to be rationally reconciled. Before turning to collective self-deceit, however, the chapter engaged in a close reading of Muratova's greatest psychological film, *Long Farewells,* concentrating on the development of self-knowledge in the characters of Evgenia Vasilievna and Sasha. Particularly fundamental to Evgenia's self-discovery was the interaction with a set of picture slides whose power to disclose self-knowledge was read as a stand-in for cinema's own.

The third and final chapter of the text turns to the concept of "bovarism," a philosophical borrowing from Flaubert studies, to characterize Muratova's preoccupation with the extent to which roles imported from narrative – be they visual, cinematic or literary – can be harmful to our attempts to make sense of ourselves and others. If in *Brief Encounters,* Maksim is governed by the "gypsy" archetype celebrated in Pushkin, Tolstoy, and geological songs, Valentina Ivanovna and Zina see literary and cinematic works as forms of order and sense-making and suffer in the chasm between their everyday experience and the logical structure of fictional narrative. In *Letter to America,* in turn, Dostoevsky becomes the condition of possibility of Lena's deceit of Igor, while in *Two in One,* Andrei Andreevich's search for the "Woman of His Life" – informed by artworks of all kinds, literary, operatic, photographic – is shown to motivate the objectification and oppression of the female figures around him. At the conclusion of the chapter, I also sketched a possible explanation for the widespread presence of literary deceit in Russian cinema with reference to Kathleen Pathé's *Russia's Dangerous Texts.* In that work, Parthé offers a detailed account of ten fundamental myths about literature's function in the Russian-speaking world – including its role as secular hagiography, its privileged role in constituting national identity, and its position as locus of resistance to authoritarian rule – that renders Russian literature dangerous in a new sense: for

its readers, who begin to rely too much on its parameters to understand how to navigate the world around them.

This dissertation, it is worth noting, does not explore the many other Muratova films that support the triad of themes that were our focus here. Among those that support our account, one could name the deeply philosophical *Eternal Return,* Muratova's final work – a casting event turned Sisyphean boulder-hauling – and *Getting to Know the Big Wide World,* whose treatment of the dynamics of recognition in romantic love are as touching as they are endlessly reflexive. In the realm of social pathology, too, we have not addressed (in part as a result of the already vast secondary literature on the film) Muratova's most aggressive critique of Soviet communism: *Asthenic Syndrome.* That film would, of course, not be out of place in the second chapter of this text. This dissertation too does not engage in any systematic exploration of the extent to which Muratova's interest in epistemology of self-knowledge is unique among Soviet filmmakers of her time. It is, however, committed to the position that Muratova's focus on the *logic* of miscommunication – not just showing *that* we fail to understand each other, but *how* we fail to understand each other – is characteristic to her approach, granting her films philosophical weight.

Along the way, this dissertation was also committed to unveiling the complex intertextual dimensions of Muratova's work, with its many allusions to popular song, Russian poetry, literature, works of visual art, opera, among others. Music, in particular, takes a life of own, with each chapter offering significant attention to Muratova's treatment of the aural universe of her work, from Vystosky's songs in *Brief Encounters* to Zemfira and Schedryk in *Melody for a Street Organ.* As is perhaps expected, Renata Litvinova – actress, director, screenwriter – is a co-star of this thesis, an artist in many ways responsible for the introduction of many of the considerations in epistemology of self-knowledge outlined here

as both their author and their public face, with her pivotal roles in "Ophelia," *Melody for a Street Organ, Passions* and *The Tuner*. Litvinova's central position in Muratova's oeuvre provides, in my view, the solution to yet another fundamental question in Muratova scholarship that was only occasionally addressed in this work: the question of her feminism. Although Muratova was avowedly not a feminist – she rejected the label off-hand as part of her systematic refusal of all fixed categories and social roles – some of her mature work can unproblematically be read as feminist insofar as Litvinova introduces such themes through her writing and acting. Muratova is thus, a feminist second-hand: in acquiescing to Renata Muratovna's plots, she allows feminist motifs to permeate her mature work. The second part of *Two in One* is a case in point.

Writing on Muratova was and has been an extraordinary privilege and challenge, and it is my hope that a text like this, written to appeal to multiple audiences – from film specialists to Slavists, comparatists to philosophers – can, along with increased access to her films in high quality with reliable subtitles (a project that, as I understand, is already underway at Criterion) play a role not only in introducing her work to a wider audience but also, most especially, in providing a framework with which to watch her films that might make them less inscrutable.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abdullaeva, Zara. Kira *Muratova: Iskusstvo kino.* Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2008.

Afanas'ev, Aleksandr Nikolaevich. "Sestritsa Alenushka, Bratets Ivanushka." In *Narodnye russkie skazki.* Tom 2, 250-255. Moskva: Nauka, 1985.

Altman, Robert, dir. *The Player.* Avenue Pictures/Spelling Entertainment/David Brown Productions/Addis-Wechsler, 1992. (USA)

Audé, Françoise. "L'oeuvre et le chaos: Le Syndrome asthénique." *Positif - Revue mensuelle de cinema,* Paris, May 1991.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. "O Flobere." In *Sobranie sochinenii v 7 tomakh,* tom 5. Moskva: Iazyki Slovianskich kul'tur, 2003-2010.

Banko, Anja. "Ruski film odjuge in ženski pogled: Larisa Šepitko in Kira Muratova," Druzboslovne Razprave 33, no. 84 (2017): 29–47.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography.* trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1980.

Batančev, Dragan. "Posthuman *Passions.* On Muratova's Concept of Horsehood." Paper delivered at the Kira Muratova International Symposium, May 7th, 2021.

Beardow, Frank. "Soviet Cinema: 'Women's Films'" Rusistika, no. 11 (1995): 35–42.

Bely, Andrei. *Petersburg,* trans. David McDuff. London: Penguin Books, 1995.

Belyi, Andrei. *Peterburg: roman v vos'mi glavakh s prologom i epilogom.* Leningrad: Nauka, 1981.

Berry, Ellen E. "Grief and Simulation in Kira Muratova's The Aesthenic Syndrome," Russian Review 57, no. 3 (1998): 446–454, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9434.00034.

Bodrov, Serguéi and Brenda Bollag, "Pathology of Contemporary-Life in Russia in Muratova, Kira 'Le Syndrome Asthenique,'" *Positif*, no. 351 (1990): 50–51

Bok, Sissela. *Lying.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1989.

Brix, Michel. "Mal du Siècle et Bovarysme." In *La Vie Romantique: Hommage à Loïc Chotard.* Ed. André Guyaux and Sophie Marchal, 93-106. Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003.

Callow, James."A 'post-Historical' Cinema of Suspense: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Limits of Redemption" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2010), http://search.proquest.com/docview/1033191794/?pq-origsite=primo.

Carson, Thomas L. "Deception and Withholding Information in Sales," Business Ethics Quarterly, 11(2): 275-306 (2001).

Carson, Thomas L. "Lying, Deception and Related Concepts." In The *Philosophy of Deception,* 153-187. Edited by Clancy Martin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Challis, Clare Elizabet. "'The Piano Is Not Tuned': Music in Two Films by Kira Muratova," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 9, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 40–60, https://doi.org/10.1080/17503132.2015.1011870.

Chekhov, Anton P. *Dama s sobachkoi i drugie rasskazy.* Moscow: Russkii iazyk, 1975.

Chernetsky, Vitaly. "The Pleasures and Problems of Leonid Osyka's Zakhar Berkut: Poetic Cinema and Its Limits," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 56, no. 1–2 (2014): 43–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2014.11092754.

Conant, James. "Die Unsichtbarkeit einer perfekten Regie: Über Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, USA 1960)" in *Gesetz und Gewalt im Kimo,* 258-280. Ed. Angela Keppler, Judith-Frederike Popp and Martin Seel. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2015.

Conant, James. "Psycho for Castasegna." Unpublished lecture.

Condee, Nancy. *The Imperial Trace: Recent Russian Cinema.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Cousins, Mark "Cinema of Anxiety," *Sight and Sound* 27, no. 3 (March 2017).

Dabert, Dabrochna. "Cinema on a Journey. The situation of Ukrainian Cinematography after 1991," *Studia filmoznawcze* 35 (2014): 21–45.

De Luca, Raymond. "Becoming Animal with Kira Muratova: Deleuze, Identity, and Animality in Muratova's films" (extract of a dissertation chapter delivered as paper at the Kira Muratova International Symposium, May 7th, 2021)

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

Deninschenko, Irina. "Muratova's Anti-Art and the Historical Avant-Garde." Paper delivered at the International Kira Muratova Symposium, May 6th, 2021.

Dostoevskii, Fedor. *Prestuplenie i nakazanie.* Moscow: Nauka, 1970.

Dostoevskii, Fedor. *Sobranie sochinenii v piatnadtsati tomakh, t. 6 Idiot.* Leningrad: Nauka, 1988-1996.

Dostoevskii, Fedor. *Dnevnik pisatelia.* Moskva: Institut Russkoi Tsivilizatsii, 2010.

Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *Diary of a Writer.* Translated by Boris Brasol. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919.

Eakin Moss, Anne. *Only Among Women: Philosophies of Community in the Russian and Soviet Imagination,* 1860-1940. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2020.

Egiazarov, Gavriil dir. *Ot zari do zari* (*From Dawn Till Sunset*). Mosfil'm, 1975. (USSR)

Ekman, Paul. "Lie Catching and Microexpressions" in *The Philosophy of Deception.* Edited by Clancy Martin, 118-135.Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Ferguson, Helen. "Silence and Shrieks: Language in Three Films by Kira Muratova," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 83, no. 1 (2005): 38–70.

Flaubert, Gustave. *Madame Bovary* (Bilingual French-English Edition), trans. Eleanor Marx-Aveling. Munich: Doppeltext, n.d, iBooks edition.

Flaubert, Gustave. *Madame Bovary,* trans. Geoffrey Wall. London: Penguin Books, 2002.

Frankfurt, Harry G. *On Bullshit.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Gaidai, Leonid, dir. *Brilliantovaia ruka* (*Diamond Arm*). Mosfilm, 1969. (USSR)

Gaidai, Leonid, dir. *Kavkazskaia plennitsa* (*Kidnapping, Caucasian Style!).* Mosfilm, 1967. (USSR)

Gaultier, Jules de. "*Le Bovarysme," suivie d'une Étude de Per Buvik: "Le Principe Bovaryque."* Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2006.

Gaultier, Jules de. *Le Génie de Flaubert.* Paris: Mercure de France, 1913.

Gogol', Nikolai Vasilievich. *Revizor.* In *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem: v dvadtsati trekh tomakh: tom 4*. Moskva: Nauka, 2003.

Graffy, Julian. "Difficult People: Kira Muratova's Cinematic Encounter with Chekhov," *Essays In Poetics* 31 (2006): 180–212.

Griboedov, Aleksandr. *Gore ot uma.* Moskva: Clever, 2014.

Griboedov, Alexander. *Woe from Wit.* Translated by Betsy Hulick. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

Guthrie, W. G. "The Astronomy of Shakespeare." The Irish Astronomical Journal, 6(6) (1964): 201-211.

Havel, Václav "The Power of the Powerless." In *Twenty-Two Essays Published on the Occasion of the Award of the Erasmus Prize to Václav Havel,* 36-122. Ed. Jan Vladislav. London: Faber and Faber, 1987.

Hawks, Howard, dir. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.* 20th Century Fox, 1953. (USA)

Hegel, G. W. F. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art.* Translated by T. M. Knox, 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

Hegel, G. W. F. *Elements of the Philosophy of Right.* Translated by H. N. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Hegel, G. W. F. *Hegel's Science of Logic.* Translated by A. V. Miller. London: Galen & Unwin, 1969.

Hitchcock, Alfred, dir. *Psycho.* Paramount Pictures, 1960. (USA)

Hitchcock, Alfred, dir. *Rear Window.* Paramount Pictures, 1954. (USA)

Hitchcock, Alfred, dir. *Strangers on a Train.* Warner Bros., 1951. (USA)

Hitchcock, Alfred, dir. *Vertigo.* Paramount Pictures, 1958. (USA)

Iampol'skii, Mikhail. "Kira Muratova: A World Without Reality" (keynote delivered at the Kira Muratova International Symposium, May 13th, 2021).

Iampol'skii, Mikhail. *Muratova: opyt kinoantropologii.* Saint Petersburg: Seans, 2008.

Kaganovsky, Lilya. "Mono, Dia: Polyphony: Muratova, Sound and Image" . Paper delivered at the Kira Muratova International Symposium, May 14th, 2021.

Kaganovsky, Lilya. "There Is No Acoustic Relation: Considerations on Sound and Image in Post-Soviet Film," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 19, no. 1 (2010): 65–87, https://doi.org/10.5250/quiparle.19.1.0065.

Kalewska, Anna. "Emma, Luiza i inne, czyli bovaryzm w Portugalii i Brazylii." Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Literraria Polonica T. 49, n.3 (2018), 61-83.

Kant, Immanuel. "On a Supposed Right to Lie because of Philanthropic Concerns." Translated by James. W. Wellington. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981, 63-69.

Kariuk, Gennadii I. "Interlude: Remarks on *Brief Encounters."* Q&A session following screening of Kira Muratova's *Korotkie vstrechi,* New State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Tuesday, Nov. 9, 2019.

Knapp, Liza. *Dostoevsky's 'The Idiot': A Critical Companion.* Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998.

Koshko, Arkadii Franstevich. *Korol' syska.* Moskva: Eksmo, 2001.

Kotkiewicz, Aurelia. "Bowaryzm – nuda – melancholia. Uwagi o bohaterach XIX-wiecznej literatury rosyjskiej." Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Literraria Polonica T. 49, n. 3 (2018), 169-178.

Kurosawa, Akira dir. *Rashomon.* Daiei Film, 1950. (Japan)

Kustodiev, Boris. "Krasavitsa*,"* Oil on canvas, 1905. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Lash, Dominic. *Robert Pippin and Film: Politics, Ethics, and Psychology after Modernism.* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022.

Lapushin, Radislav. "The Chekhovian Intertext: Dialogue with a Classic," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 51, no. 1 (2009): 161–162.

Leclerc, Yvan, Nicole Terrien. *Le bovarysme et la littérature de langue anglaise.* Mont-Saint-Aignan: Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2004.

Lermontov, Mikhail Iur'evich. *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh,* Tom 1. Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatel'stvo Pushkinskogo doma, 2014.

Lotman, Yuri and Yuri Tsivian. *Dialog s ekranom.* Talinn: Aleksandra, 1994.

Maugham, W. Somerset. "The Letter" in *South Sea Stories of W. Somerset Maugham.* New York: Permabooks, 1956.

Millais, John Everett. "Ophelia," Oil on canvas, 1851-52. Tate Britain, London.

Miller, William Ian. "Deceit in War and Trade." In *Philosophy of Deception.* Edited by Clancy Martin, 49-66. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Molina, David G. "Sisterly Conflict: Music and Text in Richard Strauss' Elektra (1909), Revista Música 20(2), 2020, p. 99-118.

Molina, David G. "Video Authenticity and Epistolary Self-Expression in Kira Muratova's *Letter to America"* (1999). In *Epistolary Forms in Film, Media, and Visual Culture,* ed. Catherine Fowler and Teri Higgings (forthcoming).

Montaigne, Michel de. "On Liars" in Essays. Translated by J. M. Cohen. London: Penguin Books, 1993.

Moreau, Nina Valiquette. "Musical Mimesis and Political Ethos in Plato's Republic," *Political Theory,* 45.2 (2017): 192-215.

Muratova, Kira and Aleksandr Muratov, dir. *Vesennii Dozhd'* (*Spring Rain).* VGIK, 1958. (USSR)

Muratova, Kira and Alexander Muratov, dir. *Nash chestnyi chleb* (*Our Honest Bread).* Odessa Film Studio, 1964. (USSR)

Muratova, Kira, dir. *Astenicheskii sindrom* (*Asthenic Syndrome*). Odessa Film Studio, 1989. (USSR)

Muratova, Kira, dir. *Chuvstvitel'nyi militsioner* (*Sentimental Policeman).* Primodessa-Film, Parimedia, 1992. (Ukraine/France)

Muratova, Kira, dir. *Dva v odnom* (*Two in One),* Sota Cinema Group, 2007. (Ukraine)

Muratova, Kira, dir. *Korotkie vstrechi* (*Brief Encounters)* Odessa Film Studio, 1967. (USSR)

Muratova, Kira, dir. *Melodiia dlia sharmanki* (*Melody for a Street Organ*). Sota Cinema Group, 2008. (Ukraine)

Muratova, Kira, dir. *Nastroishchik* (*The Tuner*). Pygmalion, 2004. (Russian Federation/Ukraine)

Muratova, Kira, dir. *Peremena uchasti (Change of Fate)*. Odessa Film Studio, 1987. (USSR)

Muratova, Kira, dir. *Pis'mo v Ameriku* (*Letter to America)*. Odessa Film Studio, 1999. (Ukraine)

Muratova, Kira, dir. *Poznavaia belyi svet* (*Getting to Know the Big Wide World*). Lenfil'm, 1980. (USSR)

Muratova, Kira, dir. *Sredi serykh kamnei* (*Among Grey Stones*). Odessa Film Studio, 1983. (USSR)

Muratova, Kira, dir. *Tri istorii* (*Three Stories)*. NTV-Profit, Odessa Film Studio, Sudzi Film, 1997. (Russian Federation/Ukraine)

Muratova, Kira, dir. *Uvlechen'ia* (*Passions*). Nikola Film, 1994. (Russian Federation/Ukraine)

Muratova, Kira, dir. *Vechnoe vozvrashchenie (Eternal Return)*. Sota Cinema Group, 2012. (Ukraine)

Muratova, Kira, dir. *Vtorostepennye liudi* (*Second Class Citizens)*. Odessa Film Studio/Film-TV Studio Odissei, 2001. (Ukraine).

Muratova, Kira. dir. *Dolgie provody* (*Longs Farewells*) Odessa Film Studio, 1973. (USSR)

Muratova, Kira. Interview recorded by GLAS (Odessa) on the opening of the exhibit "Vsyakaya vsyachina" by artist Evgeny Golubenko, December 2017.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Oukaderova, Lida. "Kira Muratova's 'Second Class Citizens' and the Aesthetics of Collecting."Paper delivered at the Kira Muratova International Symposium, May 14th, 2021.

Parthé, Kathleen. *Russia's Dangerous Texts: Politics Between the Lines*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.

Pears, David. *Motivated Irrationality*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.

Pippin, Robert B. "Hegel on Social Pathology: The Actuality of Unreason." *Crisis and Critique,* 4.1, 2017.

Pippin, Robert B. "Transdisciplinarity, Interdisciplinarity, Reductive Disciplinarity, and Deep Disciplinarity." Keynote lecture at the Interdisciplinary Futures Symposium, Emory University, Atlanta, GA, October 24, 2013.

Pippin, Robert B. *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial* Modernism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.

Pippin, Robert B. *Hegel's Realm of Shadows*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019.

Pippin, Robert B. *The Philosophical Hitchcock: "Vertigo"and the Anxieties of Unknowingness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Plato, *Republic*. Translated by Tom Griffith. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Pushkin, Aleksandr. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii.* Tom 4. *Poemy. Skazki.* Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1957.

Ramazanova, Zemfira. *Spasibo* (*Thank You*). Recorded in 2007 in London. ID "Kommersant," released 3 October 2007. Compact disk.

Ray, Nicholas, dir. *Johnny Guitar*. Republic Pictures, 1954 (USA)

Roberts, Graham. "Re-Viewing Homo Sovieticus: The Representation of the Male Body in the Films of Kira Muratova," *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 1, no. 2 (June 2002).

Rojavina, Marina. "Estetika obmana v fil'me Kiry Muratovoi 'Nastroishchik' (2004)". (Paper delivered at the International Kira Muratova Symposium on May 8th, 2021)

Roll, Serafima. "Fragmentation and Ideology in Kira Muratova's The Aesthenic Syndrome and Arto Paragamian's Because Why.," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* V, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 49–67.

Sandomirskaia, Irina. "A Glossolalic Glasnost and the Re-Tuning of the Soviet Subject: Sound Performance in Kira Muratova's Asthenic Syndrome," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 2, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 63–83, https://doi.org/10.1386/srsc.2.1.63_1.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness.* Transated by Sarah Richmond. New York: Washington Square Press/Atria, 2018.

Schulzki, Irina. "Kira Muratova: A Cinema of Gesture." (Forthcoming doctoral dissertation, LMU Munich).

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet.* Ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor. London: Arden, 2006.

Shakespeare, William. *King Lear.* Ed. R. A. Foakes London: Arden, 1997.

Shklovsky, Viktor B. *"Iskusstvo kak priem"* ("Art as Device") in *"O teorii prozy,"* 7-20. Moscow: Krug, 1925.

Sibińska, Maria. "Bowaryzm jako samotność. "Miłość" Hanne Ørstavik, czyli opowieść norweskiej pani Bovary końca XX wieku." Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Literraria Polonica T. 49 , n.3 (2018), 283-297.

Smorodinskaya, Tatiana. "Adapting Chekhovian Mood," *Post Script - Essays in Film and the Humanities* 23, no. 3 (2004): 74–86.

Solomon, Robert C. "Self, Deception, and Self-Deception in Philosophy," in *The Philosophy of Deception.* Edited by Clancy Martin, 15-36. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Stanislavskii, Konstantin. *Rabota aktora nad soboi.* Moskva: Izdatel'stvo AST, 2017.

Stoddard, Richard Henry. *The Poems of Richard Henry Stoddard: Complete Edition.* New York: Charles Scribner's sons, 1880.

Stoker, Bram. *"Dracula"* in *Five Novels: Complete and Unabridged.* New York: Barnes and Noble, 2006.

Strauss, Richard. *Elektra.* New York: Dover Publications, 1991, comp. 1906-8.

Szlachcikowska, Żaneta. "Elementy bowaryzmu w "Grze o tron" i "Starciu królów" George'a R.R. Martina na przykladzie Sansy Star." Conversatorio Linguistica, n. 10 (2016), 191-211.

Tarkovskii, Andrei Aresen'evich. *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema.* Translated by Kitty Hunger Blair. London: Faber and Faber, 1989.

Taubman, Jane A. "Asthenic Syndrome (Astenicheskii Sindrom). Slavic Review 51, no. 04 (1992): 802–803, https://doi.org/10.2307/2500141.

Taubman, Jane. *Kira Muratova.* New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005.

The Bible: Authorized King James Version. Edited with an introduction and notes by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett. Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1997.

Tolstoi, Lev. "Kholstomer" in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, tom 26,* 3-37. Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo 'Khudozhestvennaia literatura', 1936.

Tolstoi, Lev. *Anna Karenina: roman.* Moskva: Gos. Idz-vo khudozh. Lit-ry, 1955.

Tolstoy. *Zhivoi trup: drama v 6 deistviiakh i 12 kartinakh.* New York: Knigoizdatel'stvo 'Molot', 1919.

Toymentsev, Sergey. "Deleuze and Russian Film: Transcenendental Exercise of the Faculties on (Post-) Totalitarian Screen" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2014), http://search.proquest.com/docview/1655001200/?pq-origsite=primo.

Tsvetaeva, Marina. *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh, tom 1.* Moskva: Ellis Lak.

Vrubel', Mihail. "Tsarevna-Lebed"', Oil on canvas, 1900. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Whisman, Albert Samuel. "Bovarysme Beyond Bovary: From the Psyche to the Text." PhD thesis, U of Oklahoma, 2013.

Widdis, Emma. "Muratova's Clothes, Muratova's Textures, Muratova's Skin," *KinoKultura* 8 (2005).

Williams, Bernard. "Truth, Politics and Self-Deception." In *In the Beginning was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument,* 154-164. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Williams, Bernard. *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Willinger, Isa. *Kira Muratova: Kino und Subversion.* Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2013.

Yekelchyk, Serhy. "Thinking Through Ukrainian Cinema," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 56, no. 1–2 (March 2014): 3–5, https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2014.11092751.

Yurchak, Alexei. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Žižek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology.* London: Verso, 1989.

Zvonkine, Eugénie. *Kira Mouratova: un cinéma de la dissonance.* Lausanne: Editions L'age d'Homme, 2012

Zvyaginstsev, Andrei, dir. *Neliubov'* (*Loveless).* Sony Pictures Releasing, 2017. (Russian Federation/Germany/France/Belgium)