Man Enough: Multiple Masculinities in the Films of Pavel Lungin

Dissertation

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Abstract

Pavel Lungin has been a dynamic, award-winning figure on the Russian film scene for nearly forty years, approximately twenty-five of which he has spent in the director’s chair. Lungin’s success in courting a range of international and domestic financiers has permitted him to work not only through rough economic patches in crisis-ridden post-Soviet Russia, but has also afforded him relative liberty to craft films in accordance with his own designs, and not necessarily in response to public appetites. This artistic freedom has redounded to a diverse oeuvre, which incorporates comedies and tragedies, blockbusters and art-house films, original screenplays and literary adaptations, as well as genre and genre-bending films. Lungin’s storied career has most certainly warranted a monograph-length scholarly examination. My study provides the first analytical survey in any language of Lungin’s directorial corpus.

A common thread running through Lungin’s diverse films is their showcasing of a wide range of topical and historical male typologies that critique traditional notions of culturally viable heteromasculinity in the Russian context. Having developed such a cinematic modus operandi, Lungin appears to have distinguished his films from most post-Soviet mainstream fare. Seemingly in response to fervent pleas by cinema luminaries Daniil Dondurei and Nikita Mikhalkov, successful
Russian directors have by and large featured idealized, palliative masculine heroes as a discursive antidote to the Russian public’s pessimistic perception of men as perpetually inebriated, short-lived deadbeats. My dissertation argues that, contrary to this trend, Lungin’s films consistently foreground alternative, unconventional, and even marginalized models of Russian masculinity to reform or overthrow previously valorized types. Lungin champions such traits as the creative ingenuity, proactive passivity, and physical longsuffering of artists, holy fools, and religious leaders in contrast to the brute force, competitive drive, and blind compliance stereotypically attributed to the soldiers, businessmen, and romantic leads of recent record-breaking Russian blockbusters. In other words, while mainstream Russian filmmakers have been toiling to reinvigorate their industry on the backs of sympathetic, redemptive masculine heroes—and provide a boost to public morale—Lungin has been offering up critical take after critical take not only on traditionally ideal, socially sanctioned masculinity, but also on topically jeopardized, discursively ostracized masculine figures. I demonstrate that Lungin accomplishes this feat through a system of juxtaposition and triangulation of the various positive and negative, yet always culturally resonant male characters in his films.

Most significantly, my study directs specific attention to the reality of multiple masculinities in Russian film, utilizing Lungin’s work as possibly the most dependable purveyor of a rich array of manly and less-than-manly typologies, not only heroes such as Danila Bagrov in both Brother films. In adopting a concept of the cinematic gaze as dialogical and textually embedded, my dissertation examines the
possibility of manifold representations of masculinity, as well as multiple points of spectatorial identification. Thus, my study treads fresh ground by expanding the boundaries of what may be presented and viewed as socially and aesthetically productive masculinity in Russian film.
Dedication

Dedicated to Francesca and Richard
Acknowledgments

I gratefully acknowledge the continuous inspiration, productive suggestions, and marathon patience of my advisor, Helena.
Vita

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1. Masculinity and Russian Studies. My dissertation aims to contribute to the embryonic but developing body of scholarly work on the re/presentations of masculinities in Russian film—not the ideal physical masculinities on display in recent Russian blockbusters, but both the historically ideal and the alternative masculinities in the varied films of prolific director Pavel Lungin. Its widespread influence on various disciplines of the humanities notwithstanding, gender studies—and masculinity studies, in particular—has made fewer and later inroads into Russian studies.\(^1\) Of course, one might argue that, historically, Russian studies (literature, film, history, culture, etc.) has always overwhelmingly been *men’s* studies, as prominent women number few among the ranks of canonical figures. For example, in terms of history and politics—setting aside Catherine the Great and the so-called “Women’s Kingdom”\(^2\) of the 1700s—Russian and Soviet rulers, as well as

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\(^1\) In her 1999 book *Gender Awakening*, Arja Rosenholm notes that women’s studies in the Russian context has had a “short history” in contrast to its strong presence in the West beginning in the 1970s (35). Masculinity as a topic in Russian studies has arisen even later than that.

\(^2\) бабье царство. Following the death of Peter I in 1725, Russia was governed by a series of empresses, including Catherine I (1725-7), Anna (1730-40), Elizabeth (1741-62), and Catherine II (1762-96), and weak, short-reigning emperors, such as Peter II (1727-30) and Peter III (1762), leading the eighteenth century to be broadly known as the “Women’s Kingdom.” Michelle Marrese recuperates this designation in
prominent historical figures, have been nearly universally men. Additionally, unless Russian literature, film, or cultural studies instructors muster a concerted effort to structure material around the topic of gender, it is likely that most, if not all, of the canonical authors and directors covered in their courses will be men, as will the protagonists of the works. Naturally, the same could be said of any Western humanities until gender studies highlighted women’s cultural production in the 1970s, and there is, admittedly, a difference between studying the works of male artists as subjects and masculinity as a subject. Nevertheless, Russian studies has lagged behind in opening up fields of inquiry into the social constructions and artistic renderings of what characterizes Russian men as men in relationship to women and to each other at different moments in the Russian cultural tradition. The issue of masculinity as such, and in relationship to femininities, has only been a topic of assiduous analysis in Russian cultural studies since approximately the late 1990s and warrants further inquiry.

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3 Bryce Traister admits that analyses of the Anglo-American humanities canon—novels, films, history—have been centered on men (278). He notes, however, that looking at “men as men,” and not just “Man,” can yield productive results (282).

4 Early works analyzing masculinities as such in the Russian humanities are Sergei Ushakin’s 2002 collection of articles О муже(н)ственности and Russian Masculinities in History and Culture, a 2002 collection of articles edited by Barbara Evans Clements, Rebecca Friedman, and Dan Healey.
2. Masculinity in Theory. Scholars of Western humanities and social science have been debating the topic of masculinity longer. And although they have been bandying the question about for decades, there exists no academic consensus as to the precise definition of masculinity, or as to whether it even exists as such beyond its reference one way or another to men and their behaviors. Nevertheless, R.W. Connell, Jeff Hearn, and Michael Kimmel confess, “All human cultures have ways of accounting for the positions of women and men in society and have different ways of picturing the nature of men and the patterns of practice we call masculinities” (4-5). Each culture, though, has its own ways of regarding masculinity. Where scholars do concur is that masculinity is culturally conditioned, not biological. John Beynon states, “Men are not born with masculinity as part of their genetic make-up; rather it is something into which they are acculturated and which is composed of social codes of behavior which they learn to reproduce in culturally appropriate ways” (2): in other words, Judith Butler’s performance theory. On top of this, scholars assert that masculinity is understood not only in the behavior itself, but also in the ways said behavior resonates in a given social context. Finally, doubt persists that masculinity should even be validated as a concept. John MacInnes, who contentiously claims that there is no such thing as masculinity per se, concedes that “masculinity exists only

5 Traister traces publications of “masculinity studies” as far back as Leslie Fiedler’s book Love and Death in the American Novel. “With its narratives of male territorial eroticism and adolescent sexuality, Fiedler’s 1960 text reads in many respects as a literary case history of American normative masculinity and its discontents” (276-77). Traister goes on to note that Anglo-American masculinity studies exploded in the 1980s and 1990s (277).
as various ideologies or fantasies, about what men should be like, which men and women develop to make sense of their lives” (2).

I would venture, indeed, that to laymen, the concept of masculinity is not so consciously problematic—rather, it is taken for granted. In public and private, speakers invoke the term, and listeners do not balk, puzzling for hours over what exactly is meant by masculinity. To them, it refers to whatever is deemed to be manly in their experience. Even on gay “hookup sites,” where men seek sexual assignations with other men—an activity that seems antithetical to (hetero)masculinity—the majority of searchers aggressively advertise their desire for a “masculine,” or even “straight-acting” partner, much to the chagrin of men who are seen, and who see themselves, as “feminine” (Troughton, n. pag.). The concept of masculinity extends to inanimate objects, as well. Colognes are deemed to have masculine notes. Apparel has masculine lines. Home-renovation and redecoration television programs refer to particular interior décor as masculine, and the Internet abounds in blogs prescribing tips for orchestrating “masculine interior design.” In all these situations, neither speakers nor addressees lose sleep over what is meant

6 http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/nov/30/the-end-of-camp-straight-acting-gay
7 In Russia, heteronormativite mandates persist in shaping the behavior of self-identified gay men. Luc Beaudoin writes: “Surprisingly few gay men are willing to part with some of the traditions of compulsory heterosexuality, treating women as delicate creatures to be pampered and idolized—objectifying their status in society, as opposed to giving them equal status” (232).
8 A simple Google search will bring up scores of such websites. It appears that by “masculine interior design,” these sites do not mean a messy bachelor pad, but rather a room furnished with leather or dark-upholstered sofas, heavy wood paneling, austere iron fixtures, and maybe even a deer’s-head trophy.
by calling something masculine. It simply makes sense to them. Furthermore, masculinity is usually invoked as an asset, or a laudable quality, even though it can just as well be associated with negative traits, such as violence, aggression, and obstinacy. Masculine images make an impact in the Russian context, as well, and inform the apex of that society. As Helena Goscilo catalogues in her collection *Putin As Celebrity and Cultural Icon*, the president of the Russian Federations has artfully manipulated a media campaign to portray himself as iron-willed and virile (i.e., hypermasculine) in order to ingratiate himself with the electorate as a macho leader (180-207).

My dissertation recognizes as an assumption the social cachet conveyed by “positive” masculine traits (particularly in the Russian context), and also adopts Jeff Hearn’s position that masculinity persists as a lens that can be productively applied to analyze representations of men and discourses surrounding social roles and expectations of men (202). In so doing, it hews to a definition of masculinity that conceptualizes it as the set of physical traits, behaviors, images, and attitudes normatively ascribed to self-identified men in a given cultural context—in this case, the twenty-first-century Russian context. In support of this definition I quote the doyens of masculinity studies Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett, who muse, “The nearest that we can get to an ‘answer’ is to state that masculinities are those behaviors, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated by males and thus culturally defined as not feminine” (15-16).
Of course, even this conceptualization of masculinity is problematic, and Western scholars have theorized several key axioms as caveats to their analyses of what men are and do, as well as representations of what men are and do. First of all, masculinity is not constant, as Connell observes: “gender is not fixed in advance of social interaction, but is constructed in interaction” (Masculinities 35). Moreover, this construction never ceases to evolve. Kimmel indicates:

the various social and behavioral sciences have elaborated the differing meanings of masculinity over time (history), across cultures (anthropology), over the course of a man’s life (developmental psychology), and within any one culture among different social groups (sociology). Masculinity, in this view, is not a constant, universal essence, but rather an ever-changing fluid assemblage of meanings and behaviors that vary dramatically. (22)

In other words, different cultures at different times mandate/recognize certain standards of masculinity for different occasions, and individuals themselves can alter their enactment of masculinity based on given social situations. Societies brook mutable masculinity. Arthur Brittan observes, “Masculinity, from this point of view, is always local and subject to change. Obviously some masculinities are long-lived, whilst others are as ephemeral as fads in pop music” (52-53). Nevertheless, while the social manifestations of masculinity change all the time, the power masculinities maintain within societies obtains.
3. Multiple Masculinities. Second, masculinity cannot be justifiably conceived as a monolithic concept embedded in human beings who identify as male. Rather, it is diverse, again, based on context. As Douglas Schrock and Michael Schwalbe assert, “The qualities seen as constituting a masculine self can vary historically and culturally. The practices that are interpreted as signs of a masculine self can also vary depending on other features of the actor (age, race, ethnicity, class), the audience, and the situation” (280). Thus, not only does masculinity vary over time, but different masculinities coexist at the same time in the same context—and, perhaps, in the same individual. The concept of multiple masculinities gained traction through Connell’s work (most notably in the 1995/2005 tomes Masculinities) and it has since become axiomatic of any credible analysis. Schrock and Schwalbe qualify their above assertion, however, with a caution against lapsing into “categorical essentialism,” or the compartmentalization of masculinities into discrete iterations (280). I disagree with their stance with an asterisk, however, and argue that cultures themselves cling to certain masculine types to order meaning during bracketed periods of time. In her book The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America, Susan Faludi considers revered masculinities in the American cultural context, taking as an example the valorization of the emergency first-responder in the wake of the 9/11 tragedy, linking this type to the cowboy of frontier American lore who fought off marauding Native Americans to protect his women and children on the homestead (46-88). Indeed, unpacking the characteristics of this now mythologized profession reveals much about the state of
a still-paternalistic American society in an age of a government-sanctioned campaign against an “invading” racial and religious Other.

Thirdly, not only do multiple masculinities exist in multiple guises, but also those guises are hierarchical. At the top of a given hierarchy perches what Connell calls “hegemonic masculinity” (*Masculinities* 37). Connell expands this concept by arguing that hegemonic masculinity is “established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual” (“The Social Organization” 39). Connell enumerates the military, the boardroom, and the halls of government power as institutions that establish hegemonic ideals, which are “very little shaken by feminist women or dissenting men” (39). In other words, there is one type, or a limited number of types, of masculinity that a culture will venerate or mythologize, and persists in doing so. Beneath the hegemonic, however, there are masculinities defined by their “complicity” with hegemony (39). These are men who do not necessarily live up to hegemonic exemplars in terms of their behavior, but still, as Connell maintains, “gain from...hegemony, since they benefit from the patriarchal dividend, the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women” (40).

Below—or beside—the complicit masculinities are “marginalized” masculinities, distinguished by their “deviance” from the norm in terms of race, class, sexual orientation, etc. (41-42). It is tempting to conflate such a posited “masculine conspiracy” with the concept of patriarchy, or the oppressive social practices and attitudes that inform “the system of men’s rule as a whole” (Remy 44). Robert
Moore and Douglas Gillette resist conceptualizing patriarchy as a collusion of powerful men, regarding it rather as a paranoid response in defense of tenuous gender-based privileges against external forces (xvii). John Remy proposes a better term than patriarchy to denote the unorganized, yet potent domination of men in society: “Androcracy, or ‘rule by men’” (43).

Fourth, masculinity always positions itself in opposition to femininities. Roger Horrocks writes, “The heavy anxiety that surrounds masculinity in our culture, and probably other cultures, flows from this defensive quality. The male has to distance himself from femaleness and femininity, in order to prove that he is a male” (33). It remains, however, that masculinities are not the sole preserve of self-identified men. Brittan contends that masculinity is always in dialogue with femininity, “and these images are often contradictory and ambivalent” (52). In the essential tome Female Masculinity, Judith/Jack Halberstam analyzes the various masculinities enacted by women and queer individuals on film and on stage, and questions the heretofore unimpeachable virility of “masculine” film stars such as Marlon Brando and Robert DeNiro. Additionally, Marian Salzman, Ira Matathaia, and

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9 Moore and Gillette write, “In our view, patriarchy is not the expression of deep and rooted masculinity, for truly deep and rooted masculinity is not abusive. Patriarchy is the expression of the immature masculine. It is the expression of Boy psychology, and, in part, the shadow—or crazy—side of masculinity. It expresses the stunted masculine, fixated at immature levels. Patriarchy, in our view, is an attack on masculinity in its fullness as well as femininity in its fullness. Those caught up in the structures and dynamics of patriarchy seek to dominate not only women but men as well. Patriarchy is based on fear—the boy’s fear, the immature masculine’s fear—of women, to be sure, but also fear of men. Boys fear women. They also fear real men. The patriarchal male does not welcome the full masculine development of his sons or his male subordinates any more than he welcomes the full development of his daughters, or his female employees” (xvii).
Ann O’Reilly observe that women can embody not only discursively positive aspects of traditional masculinities, such as the drive to protect, provide for, and compete, but also the negative aspects, such as ritual humiliation and dehumanizing violence, as was evidenced by the prominent participation of women military personnel in the Abu Ghraib scandal of the American occupation of Iraq (33).  

4. Masculinity in Crisis. A final important topic addressed in masculinity studies is that the mass media, and even some scholars, periodically/constantly depict the concept as in the thrall of an existential crisis. In his book *Cultures of Masculinity*, Tim Edwards elucidates the nebulous nature of said crisis, indicating that it is variably equated to factors as diverse as the impact of second-wave feminism on men, competition with women at school or at work, the escalating levels of violent acts men are seen to commit, anxieties concerning how men should act within the home or within personal relationships, the representation of men in negative terms in the media, or the undermining of traditional male sex roles. (7)

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10 Reflecting on the horrifying photographs documenting physical and sexual abuse of prisoners of war at the hand of American military personnel, Salzman, Matathia, and O’Reilly comment, “These images went against everything we had come to believe in the modern era. Yes, women are equal to men, we said. Yes, they can be every bit as ambitious and hard driving and even aggressive. But deep down, we still stuck by the notion that women at their very base are more sensitive, more nurturing, more humane. That women, even in the high-testosterone environment of the military in time of war, could be capable of such wanton abuse stunned us, sickened us—and, perhaps most of all, frightened us by providing a glimpse of what women have the capacity to become” (33).
Edwards further bifurcates the perceived crisis into two realms: the pressures and expectations an ever-changing society places on men (“external crisis”), and individual men’s psychological grappling with the effects of these changes (“internal crisis”) (7-8). Writing in 1990—at the time of a budding men’s mythopoetic movement—from a Jungian perspective and informed by Arnold van Gennep’s work on rital initiation into adulthood, Moore and Gillette conceive of this crisis as the lack of bona fide ritual processes necessary to spirit men along from “Boy psychology” to “Man psychology” (xviii-xix, 3-8).11 Kaja Silverman, in her volume *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, also posits that social conditions feed into the notion of masculinity in crisis. Instead of equating crisis to a dearth of trials to test men’s mettle, she argues that intense “historical upheaval,” such as World War II and its immediate aftermath, precipitates personally unpleasant reconfigurations of masculine subjectivity (52-53).

In her 1999 book *Stiffed*, Faludi seemingly concurs with this assessment, as she documents working-class American men’s relationship to the disappearance of erstwhile guaranteed manufacturing jobs and fraternal organizations. Here, globalization is the traumatic social phenomenon that has compelled American society and (some) American men to suffer over the specter of change and then rethink their preconceived notions of masculinity. In terms of traumatic historical

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11 Moore and Gillette dedicate their book to Robert Bly, who penned the (now notorious) treatise *Iron John: A Book about Men* (1990), which drew upon mythology, folklore, and Jungian psychology to encourage men to reconnect with their “deep masculinity,” and which was instrumental in launching the men’s mythopoetic movement.
moments, one might apply Silverman’s and Moore and Gillette’s hypotheses to the Russian context in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and its attendant ideologies. The newly fashioned quasi-capitalist economy had not yet provided the necessary social architecture for a wide swath of men to attain respectable reputations as workers and fathers via social trials and competition. Indeed, Russian men’s mortality skyrocketed and opportunities for gainful employment abruptly vanished in the wake of the crash of the Soviet Union (Ashwin and Lytkina),\textsuperscript{12} precipitating a significant deterioration in men’s health statistics and a souring of the public perception of men in the domestic sphere (Utrata).\textsuperscript{13} Even the Russian military proved incapable of providing a reputable social rite of passage for men, given the debacle that was the Soviet foray into Afghanistan in the 1980s and the highly unpopular Chechen wars in the 1990s, in which the Russian Federation’s military was proven to be a shadow of its Soviet forebear.\textsuperscript{14} This constellation of

\textsuperscript{12} In 2004, Sarah Ashwin and Tatyana Lytkina conducted a study to gauge Russian men’s marginalization from the domestic sphere and concluded, “Loss of the status of chief breadwinner not only threatens the identity of unemployed and poor men but can also lead to a double marginalization from both work and household” (203).

\textsuperscript{13} In 2008, Jennifer Utrata published the results of an eye-opening study, in which she interviewed lower-wage-earning Russian men. She observed, “The dominant gender discourse on Russian men has many aspects, but most women emphasized that men behave irresponsibly and immaturely, lack an interest in and commitment to family life, abuse alcohol, and are prone to infidelity, depression, and violence” (1301). Utrata claims that many men cling to the view that passable fathers need only provide for their families monetarily as a sort of emotional armor against the castrating consequences of this discourse (1302).

\textsuperscript{14} Indeed, when I was living in St. Petersburg, Russia in the late 1990s, I encountered the negative public perception of the military. I heard anecdotes of couples divorcing so that their draft-age son could be declared the family breadwinner and avoid conscription. The media also published disturbing stories of extreme hazing of
social traumas and organizational disintegration aptly demonstrates what I believe is meant by the cavalier usage of the term “masculinity in crisis.”

5. Masculine Typologies. Despite the diverse, shifting, and tiered conceptualizations of masculinities, some scholars have noted that over time and across cultures certain archetypes of manhood nevertheless have persisted. Beynon notes, “The still widely accepted view among the general public is that men and women fundamentally differ and that a distinct set of fixed traits characterize archetypal masculinity and femininity” (56). Indeed, as is evident from the foregoing discussion of crisis in the American and Russian contexts, “worker” and “father” are positive figures in the array of culturally sanctioned masculinities. Moore and Gillette identify the king, the warrior, the magician, and the lover as four overarching masculine archetypes, which they detect diachronically across traditional global cultures (10). They intimate that individual men comprise all four archetypes; the archetypes do not divide men into discrete types (14-15). Thus, when I invoke the term “archetype” in my dissertation in conjunction with masculinities, I am referring to the frequently occurring “stock figures” seen to exist and persist in different flavors across the ages, not to any real-life men. In contrast to the assumptions and assertions of Jungian scholars, archetypes need not imply any sort of “deep masculinity” or ineffable mysticism. Rather, in dealing with cultural texts such as film, archetypes can be utilized as productive groupings of certain traits that disparate cultures accept as masculine and imbue with new recruits, further prompting families to take measures to forestall the involuntary conscription of their sons.
significance. Archetypes need not be taken as essential, immutable, or discrete; rather, they may be deployed as permeable frameworks in which to situate the existence and experience of self-identified men. Indeed, in his similarly framed analysis of post-World War II British masculinities in film, *Typical Men*, Andrew Spicer supports this contention.

Cultural types—such as the gentleman, the Everyman, or the rebel—are the staple representations of gender in popular fiction because they are easily recognizable and condense a range of important attitudes and values. Richard Dyer helpfully distinguishes between stereotypes which are rigid, limited, and serve to stigmatize the group they refer to, and types which are much more fluid, flexible, and ‘open’ in their meaning and can perform a range of narrative functions. (1)

The Russian cultural environment definitely abounds in valorized, as well as subordinated and marginalized masculinities. Examples include the following: whether a tsar, a Soviet premier, or a Russian president, the head of state is seen as the “father of the nation.” The Stakhanovite, or heroic industrial worker of the Stalin era, stands out as the ideal laborer in a time of mass industrialization. Additionally, there existed in Soviet discourse and art the type of the New Soviet Man, who was to acquire socialist consciousness and render Soviet ideology a reality through tireless labor and bodily sacrifice (Clark, Kaganovsky). Even as a cultural outsider, I can conjure up, if not archetypes, resonating typologies of the prince, the *bogatyri*, and *Ivan Durachok* from Russian folklore and fairy tales; the venal “*burzhui,*” the effete
Soviet intellectual, and the disciplined Soviet athlete from the Communist era; and
the New Russian (Graham, Lipovetsky), the unscrupulous bandit, and the
longsuffering unpaid miner from the post-Soviet milieu. Of course, this laundry list
is nowhere near exhaustive. And to forestall a descent into “categorizations” of
masculinities, it is imperative to maintain that these types are embedded in certain
cultural moments and redound to the conceptualization of those specific points of
time. Moreover, these types, as well as all the types discussed in this dissertation,
are generalizations, idealizations, and caricatures. Still, I maintain that these types,
when brought into play, convey condensed social meanings to anyone conversant
with Russian culture by dint of the narratives and symbols with which they are
associated.

One Russian film director who examines multiple instantiations of the
hierarchy and range of Russian masculinities is Pavel Lungin. He may not deal with
archetypes writ large, but he certainly employs cinematic hypostases of Russian
masculinities that bear cultural currency in the post-Soviet era. Indeed, Lungin
stands out among the current crop of renowned post-Soviet directors in that he
consistently considers multiple Russian masculinities, whether idealized,
subordinated, or marginalized. He does not dwell on fantasized, hegemonic, or
heroic masculinities, the search for which dominated Russian cinema in the 1990s
(Hashamova, Larsen), and the representation of which has become de rigueur in the
age of the Russian blockbuster since about 2004. My dissertation analyzes nine of
Lungin’s ten feature films in terms of their depiction of culturally viable Russian
masculinities, as well as their array of alternatives, which are juxtaposed as antidotes to the failures of the formerly prevailing, but now floundering, idealized models. Whether his films feature duos or ensemble casts, Lungin orchestrates comparisons between an intuitively valorized or potent hypostasis of Russian masculinity and a traditionally marginalized or culturally under-esteemed type, injecting or withholding sympathy for the characters as a variable, as well. I propose that the director’s oeuvre, which is finely attuned to even minor changes in Russian society and its hierarchies, functions as a diachronic exploration of uniquely post-Soviet Russian masculinities.

6. Outline of Chapters. Precluding the unexpected release of any concurrent projects, my dissertation will be the first scholarly study to evaluate Lungin’s entire body of directed works. Since my dissertation focuses on Lungin, masculinity in cinema, and Lungin’s treatment of Russian masculinity in cinema, Chapter 1 adopts the following framework: In the interest of background, Chapter 1 “In Post-Soviet Russia, Film Watches You: Pavel Lungin’s Masculine Typologies and the Specter of Subordination” commences by summarizing key elements of Lungin’s biography, as well as recounting his entry into the late-Soviet and post-Soviet Russian film industry. This section relies on existent academic writing and film reviews, as well as on statements regarding family history and personal philosophy made by Lungin in numerous interviews given to journalists over the years. Next, in the interest of historical and cultural context, which is indispensible to any discussion of masculinity, Chapter 1 offers a survey of the state and the output of the next
Soviet/Russian film industry in the late 1980s, the 1990s, and the 2000s, in order to situate Lungin among contemporary directors, themes, and trends in production. Next, to address the topic of masculinity in Russian film—inasmuch as my dissertation functions under the assumption that mainstream film is an art form that has privileged heterosexual male subjectivity and viewship—Chapter 1 summarizes the historical development of the extant scholarship on the link between the cinematic gaze(s) and masculine subjectivity. As these theories have arisen primarily in Western academia, this section also specifically addresses the recently emerging scholarship on masculinity in Russian cinema, as well as the types of masculinities that frequent screens across the Russian Federation. Finally, the remainder of Chapter 1 outlines what I see as Lungin’s modus operandi in depicting various Russian masculinities in his works. This portion of Chapter 1 lays out the different hypostases of masculinity Lungin considers, as well as the visual and narrative techniques he employs to place the varying idealized and marginalized typologies of masculinity into confrontation in his films, as well as their impact upon theorized viewers. Subsequent chapters consider Lungin’s films in groups of three, united by common themes, approaches, and typologies.

Entitled “Sweeping away the Remains of the Celluloid New Soviet Man: *Taxi Blues* (*Taksi-Bliuz* 1990), *Luna Park* (*Luna Park* 1992), and *Lifeline* (*Liniia zhizni* 1996),” Chapter 2 analyzes Lungin’s first three films, which emerged during the tumultuous decade of the 1990s, when Soviet masculinity could be considered to be in the most spasmodic throes of sociopolitical crisis. To bypass the chaos in the
recently privatized Russian film industry, Lungin turned to French producers for financing, and was subsequently accused of peddling films not to Russian viewers, but to Western film-festival audiences, even though the director maintained Moscow as each film’s primary setting and Russians as central characters. What unites Lungin’s first three films thematically is their contemplation of now-diminished, economically repurposed, formerly idealized Soviet masculinities, as well as their proposition of previously marginalized Soviet masculinities as viable if unsympathetic alternatives. *Taxi Blues* and *Luna Park* were produced back-to-back in the Soviet Union’s twilight years. The two films posit a binary of masculinities, polarizing a hardworking, strong-backed proletarian devoted to his own (warped) sense of moral justice, and an artistic, weak-bodied male generally unencumbered by a strong sense of propriety or responsibility. “The Jewish Question” also figures prominently in these first two films. Lungin’s anomalous *Lifeline* was released during the nadir of the post-Soviet film collapse in 1996. In it, Lungin compares a diminished Mafioso father figure reminiscent of Stalin to an itinerant, neurotic French composer. *Lifeline* resembles *Taxi Blues* and *Luna Park* thematically in that it also presents an exoticized musician as an alternative to defunct idealized Soviet instantiations of masculinity: the national father figure and the New Soviet Man in his strategic employ. This chapter analyzes how Lungin suggests an othered artist as an exemplar to reshape or replace shopworn Soviet models, ultimately crowning the marginalized, introspective creative type as the head of a new design of family to replace the Soviet Great Family.
Chapter 3, “The Rise and Fall of the Russian Father: The Wedding (Svad’ba 2000), Tycoon (Oligarch 2002), and Poor Relatives (Bednye rodstvenniki 2005),” analyzes Lungin’s next three films, which, beyond their chronologically consecutive releases, share significant elements. First, in the early 2000s, Russia rebounded from the crises of the 1990s, and the country slowly had crawled up from the depths of economic catastrophe to (partially) reinvigorated world-class status by Vladimir Putin’s second term in 2004. This new prosperity did not touch everyone, however, and these three films by Lungin reflect the disparity in the recovery among Russian masculine types. Each film features one clear male protagonist, but each of the heroes hails from a different economic and social class. In addition to depicting Russia’s evolving social milieu, rather than wallowing in the carnivalesque chaos of the 1990s, Lungin alters his method of juxtaposing idealized and marginalized types. Instead of pairing men off in dyads as he had in his first three outings, in his fourth, fifth, and sixth films Lungin operates with ensemble casts. Chapter 3 analyzes how Lungin still centers his narrative on one struggling man’s perspective—whether an underpaid miner, tycoon, or small-time con artist—no longer pitting his masculine types against each other mano-a-mano, but against many others in groups. Or rather, the protagonist, still beset by the social system on every side, now must contend with a host of rivals. Finally, and curiously, Lungin taps deeper into Russian cultural mythology, drawing on fairy-tale types, the cultural phenomenon of the New Russian, and the cultural myth surrounding World War II. Chapter 3 highlights, however, that the unifying thread through the diverse characters and
characterizations of these three films is the protagonists’ relationship to masculinity and how it informs their sense of manhood vis-à-vis their economic livelihood and position in society as a whole.

At the height of Russia’s reinvented economic and political clout on the global stage, resulting primarily from high oil prices on the world market, and due in large part to President Putin’s strengthening of the office of president, Lungin stepped away from contemporary models of masculinity grounded in topical Russian events. Instead, he launched three films featuring historical models of masculinity in crisis, as well as his tenth film, which takes place primarily in the Holy Land. In other words, as Russia re-amalgamated its power internally and externally, Lungin filmed narratives set distantly from this Russia temporally and geographically.

Furthermore, at this moment of the state’s regeneration/reimposition of absolute power over its citizens at home, Lungin’s films scuttled secular, state-sanctioned masculinities—as well as The Jewish Question—and instead focused on masculinities steeped in Eastern Christianity. Chapter 4, “Lungin’s Orthodox Turn: The Island (Ostrov 2006), Tsar (Tsar’ 2009), and The Conductor (Dirizher 2012),” analyzes three of Lungin’s most recent films following his astounding turn to Russian Orthodox themes. This chapter also probes Lungin’s reprisal of dyadic pairings of masculinities from ensembles. Only this time, Lungin’s films juxtapose overbearing, active typologies with passive, religious, creative types. Thus, my dissertation’s final chapter considers the advocacy in Lungin’s most recent films for a passive instantiation of masculinity to lead Russia through episodes of crisis, or a
man who leads through inspiration and example, not through violence and compulsion.
Chapter 1
In Post-Soviet Russia, Film Watches You: Pavel Lungin’s Masculine Typologies and the Specter of Subordination

1. Lungin’s Career. As of 2013, internationally acclaimed director Pavel Lungin has helmed ten feature-length narrative films, beginning with his award-winning 1990 debut, *Taxi Blues* (*Taksi-Bliuz*). Lungin took the coveted best director award (Prix de la mise en scène) for *Taxi Blues* at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival, joining an elite cohort of earlier Soviet directors who had garnered this distinction. Although Lungin’s first work attracted rave reviews (at least in the West), the director did not continue to produce rapturously received films. Lungin’s follow-up project, *Luna Park*, which, as it happens, features many of the same tropes as its much-esteem predecessor, and was screened in competition at Cannes in 1992, failed to collect any significant accolades there. The film did win an award for best musical score, which perhaps appears less impressive in retrospect because a great deal of the soundtrack is cribbed from classical composers such as Wagner. Despite *Taxi Blues*’s relatively frequent and enduring invocation by critics and scholars, and the film’s current wide availability on DVD, Netflix, and Amazon, *Luna Park* has all

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1 Only a few Soviet directors won the Prix de la mise en scène at the Cannes Film Festival. Sergei Iutkevich won twice: in 1956 for *Othello* (*Otello*) and in 1966 for *Lenin in Poland* (*Lenin v Pol’she*). Iuliia Solntseva won in 1961 for *Chronicle of Flaming Years* (*Povest’ plammenykh let*). Andrei Tarkovsky won in 1983 for *Nostalgia* (*Nostal’giia*). Lungin was the last to win in 1990, and no Russian director has won since the collapse of the Soviet Union.
but faded into celluloid obscurity. In the United States, *Luna Park* is out of print and available as of 2013 for legal purchase only on used videocassette off the Internet. Lungin’s next film, *Liniia zhizni* (*Lifeline* 1996) is even more difficult to procure, evidently popping up only occasionally on Russian television\(^2\) and wholly absent from distribution in the United States. The film screened at the 1996 Kinotavr Film Festival, but beyond this exposure, has basically vanished, likely due in large part to the critical drubbing it received. Throughout the rest of the nineties, Lungin occupied himself by working on documentary films, such as *The Underground Pioneer* (*Podpol’nyi pioner* 1993) and *Eskimos: A Superfluous People* (*Eskimosy: Lishnii narod* 1994). Thus, in spite of a promising debut, it appeared that Lungin’s cinematic star was destined quickly to implode—a fate that would befall many Russian directors working at the twilight of the Soviet Union (Lawton *Imaging* 13)—as his output diminished precipitously in terms of quality and recognition.

Obsolescence for Lungin was, however, not in the cards. He returned with a vengeance to top form in 2000 with his fourth feature film, *The Wedding* (*Svad’ba*), which marked a noticeable shift in his work as regards genre and cinematography. This comedy-tinged film was to become exceedingly popular among domestic audiences. At the time of my dissertation, *The Wedding* was readily available on Russian DVD, albeit without foreign subtitles, which is increasingly the case in the West for any Russian films that do not circulate widely on the international film-festival circuit. In any event, based on *The Wedding’s* success, both critically and financially, Lungin proved once again that he could direct with the best of Russian

\(^2\) This is where I acquired my copy of *Liniia zhizni.*
filmmakers. He released five more films in the 2000s: the lauded, fictionalized biopic *Tycoon* (*Oligarkh* 2002); the screwball comedy and Kinotavr favorite *Poor Relatives* (*Bednye rodstvenniki* 2005); the breathtakingly lensed, yet politically conservative *The Island* (*Ostrov* 2006); the continent-hopping Rachmaninoff drama, *A Twig of Lilac* (*Vetka sireni* 2008); the expensive, historically revisionist, joltingly violent *Tsar* (*Tsar’* 2009); and the Orthodox oratorio-inspired *The Conductor* (*Dirizher* 2013).

*Tycoon, The Island,* and *Tsar* are all easily accessible in the West in compatible formats and with English subtitles, a fact that speaks to the director’s reinvigorated impact on Russian and international cinema. Thus, despite difficulty in initially replicating the runaway critical success of his first film,³ Lungin was able to redouble his stride in the early 2000s and remain a vibrant, relevant, and generally profitable figure in post-Soviet cinema, whose films are periodically exported beyond Russia’s borders.

Lungin has amassed a significant and undeniably noteworthy, if uneven, body of work, and done so over three turbulent decades in the post-Soviet film industry. His achievements as a director of ten feature-length films—which span Russia’s transition from moribund superpower, through frightful economic and political upheavals, to ascendant petrostate status—certainly warrant a diachronic treatment to analyze the constancy and evolution of the director’s themes, characters, styles, and ideology. Lungin’s oeuvre chronologically spans and, as I shall argue, critically tracks the various calamities and triumphs that Russian culture, politics, and, of course, cinema have traversed over the past twenty-five years. It

³ See Pally. Soviet critics were less thrilled than Western critics and audiences.
documents Russia’s ups and downs beginning with the Soviet Union’s final death throes under Gorbachev, through the chaos of the Yeltsin years, and into the reconsolidation of power under Putin, who has fashioned himself into a virile national savior in a country obsessed with its public discourse on heteronormative masculinity (and fertility). Indeed, one of the most striking elements of Lungin’s filmography is its refusal to ply viewers with fantastical male heroes. It is no revelation that film, or perhaps especially Russian film, tends to be dominated by male filmmakers and male characters on screen. Where Lungin’s films differ from this staid scenario is in their portrayal of a spectrum of Russian masculine typologies—not just the morale-raising war heroes offered by most other mainstream directors. Lungin’s work showcases not only hegemonic models of masculinity, such as mythic heroes and revered father figures, or “ideal” complicit masculinities, such as rank-and-file soldiers or brawny steelworkers, but the entire array of Russian men who are vying—or not—for social relevancy and self-worth. Indeed, Lungin’s films traffic not only in powerful male characters who are rewarded at the end of their struggles, but also in those trodden under by the vicissitudes of history.

2. Lungin’s Biography. Pavel Lungin hails from a secular Russian-Jewish family deeply immersed in the arts of the Soviet Union. Given his parents’ livelihoods, it is not surprising that Lungin would enter into a related field of work. His father, Semen L’vovich Lungin (1920-96; henceforth transliterated as Semyon), was a renowned, versatile screenwriter, penning more than two dozen scripts for Soviet filmmakers. Semyon wrote many screenplays for children’s movies and the
theater, but some of his immediately recognizable works for adults are *Agony* (*Agoniia* 1974), Elem Klimov's long-shelved biopic about Rasputin, and *Three Men in A Boat, Not Including the Dog* (*Troï v lode, ne schitaia sobaki* 1979), the cinematic adaptation of Jerome K. Jerome's hilarious novella *Three Men in a Boat* (1889). Semyon's screenplays continued to be developed into feature films into the perestroika and late-Soviet periods.

Lungin’s Russian-Jewish mother, Liliana Zinov’evna Lungina (née Markovich 1920–98), was even more famous than her screenwriter husband. Lungina grew up in France, Germany, and Palestine, where she learned French and German fluently. At university in the Soviet Union, Lungina studied to be a linguist and translator, but, following her graduation, at times was prevented from working in French and German translation on account of her Jewish ethnicity. *De facto*, yet rampant anti-Semitism in the Soviet system resulted in unofficial quotas that barred many Jews from certain occupational fields (Cullen 256), including, apparently, translation from popular West European languages. Lungina, however, turned lemons into lemonade and excelled as a linguist and translator of Scandinavian languages, a more obscure line of work in which she could distinguish herself. She produced Russian translations of classics by Henrik Ibsen, Astrid Lindgren, and Johan Strindberg, and her renditions of Scandinavian children's literature are beloved by

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4 I know this from firsthand experience, as well. Between 2006 and 2008 I worked as an interpreter for United States Citizenship and Immigration Services at the American Embassy in Moscow. I interpreted for interviews with members of religious and ethnic minorities (including Jews), who claimed systematic education and employment discrimination that precluded their participation in selected sectors of Soviet society.
many, and garnered her widespread public adoration. In 2009, director Oleg Dorman released his shelved biographical documentary about Lungina, the multi-episode, award-winning *Literal Translation (Podstrochnik)*, in which Lungina candidly reflects on her life and work. This series, as well as the resultant book, proved to be a minor sensation among the consuming public, ironically feeding Russians’ appetite for Soviet nostalgia (Beumers “National Identities” 56). As a side note, Lungina also turned in a cameo role as an intellectual dissident modeled on herself in *Luna Park*. Her and Semyon’s other son, Pavel’s younger brother, Evgenii (b. 1960), also works in the Russian film industry as a screenwriter and director, albeit much less prolifically than his older sibling.

Pavel Lungin was born in Moscow on July 12, 1949. He graduated from Moscow State University in 1971 with degrees in mathematics and applied linguistics, like his mother—a far cry from the path to film studies or screenwriting, his father’s bailiwick. Perhaps the influence of Lungin’s father in film proved inevitably too magnetic a force to allow him to veer down any other career trajectory. Despite a late and rough start in the industry, Lungin has exceeded his father’s contribution to Russian film, becoming a veritable cinematic factotum.

Lungin began his career as a screenwriter in the 1970s, and his first script adapted into a film became Valentin Gorlov’s children’s romp *The Deal Is My Brother (Vse delo v brate* 1976). Lungin continued to write screenplays into the 1980s, penning scenarios for such films as Vladimir Sarukhanov’s children’s “Eastern” epic, *The End of the Emperor of the Taiga (Konets imperatora taigi* 1980) and *Invincible (Nepobedimyi* 1980), a schlocky Socialist martial arts movie (!) directed by Iurii
Boretskii, which appears to have been filmed in the steppes and mountains of Central Asia.\(^5\) Disappointed with Soviet directors’ unsanctioned distortions of his scripts (Pally n. pag.), Lungin set out to render one of his screenplays on his own terms. To do so, however, required connecting with financial sources outside the Soviet Union. With primarily French backing, Lungin proved his directorial credentials with Taxi Blues. As mentioned earlier, his premier film proved a festival hit, attracting further funding from generous Western sources. During the 1990s, these connections permitted Lungin not only to continue directing feature films, but also to branch out into documentaries and television programming, while continuing to pen the odd screenplay for fellow directors.

In 2004, Lungin at last founded his own production studio, which he named, simply enough, The Studio of Pavel Lungin (Masterskaia Pavla Lungina). Since then, the studio has released not only his own narrative, television, and documentary productions, but also has taken chances on budding directors such as Marina Liubakova, Andrei Kudinenko, and Evgenii Serov, who were responsible for the Renata Litvinova vehicle Cruelty (Zhestokost’ 2006); The Prize (Rozygrysh 2008), a remake of Vladimir Men’shov’s 1976 film based on Semyon’s screenplay; and the thriller I’m Waiting for You (Ia vas zhdu 2009), respectively.\(^6\) Since the March 2013 release of The Conductor,\(^7\) however, the studio’s website has been devoted entirely

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\(^5\) It appears that none of the films based on Lungin’s early screenplays, nor any of Lungin’s early documentaries or shorts, received official distribution in the West.

\(^6\) As of October 2013, the link to the website for The Studio of Pavel Lungin was http://www.lunginstudio.ru/.

\(^7\) Lungin’s film The Conductor (Dirizher 2013) surprised me with its release. While writing my dissertation, I periodically checked the studio’s website for updates on
to this most recent film. The splash page allows only two options: to watch a
Russian-language trailer for *The Conductor* or to continue to the site, which brims
with sundry information, interviews, and press releases about the film and teaser
media about Lungin’s upcoming screen adaptation of Aleksandr Pushkin’s classic
story “The Queen of Spades” “Pikovaia dama” 1825). Some of the site’s background
art is of the Holy Land: bleached out desertscape, towering religious structures,
and rows of palm trees and Mediterranean conifers. These visuals do not lead one to
reflect on traditional images of Russia. In my opinion, however, *The Conductor* is
emblematic of the relationship between Lungin’s oeuvre and the cultural context in
which he releases his films. True, *The Conductor* was a minor blip in the Russian film
industry, which is now dominated by glossy genre pieces, special-effects heavy
action films, and historical dramas/literary adaptations. In *The Conductor* and
elsewhere Lungin swims against the cultural tide. He removes the narrative from
Russia and eschews topicaly profitable genres, yet manages to remain productive.

It is as a prolific cinematic helmsman that Lungin is most often both
celebrated and reviled in the Russian film industry. As a tribute to his achievements
in film over the past four decades, in 2008 President Dmitrii Medvedev bestowed
upon him the title of National Artist of Russia. It is likely that Lungin earned this

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any forthcoming work. Information about *The Conductor* became available only just
before the film’s release in Russian theaters. Lungin claims to be currently working
on a cinematic adaptation of Aleksandr Pushkin’s supernatural short story *Queen of
Spades* (Pikovaia dama).

8 Народный артист Российской Федерации (National Artist of Russian) is an
award that recognizes the remarkable impact of a member of the performing arts on
Russian culture. It is awarded to a select cohort of artists, so the bestowal of this
honor testifies to Lungin’s looming presence in the Russian film industry.
title owing to his works’ dialogue with the still unsettled national debate over the identity and *raison d’être* of Russian cinema, a conversation that has endured two decades of material and “spiritual” crisis. In fact, Lungin has flourished as a director, and has continued to release film after film, even after intermittent critical opprobrium and the occasional financial flop. This, in and of itself, is a remarkable feat, as the Russian film industry endured a breathtaking collapse in the 1990s, and many of the directors who worked through this period have released fewer and fewer films, or perhaps even fallen into obscurity, signaling a change of the cinematic guard. Lungin has continued to release films into the recent “blockbuster” age of the Russian film industry, which, since the mid-2000s, has witnessed an increasingly sizable number of critically tolerated, if not praised, bankable films, to which the public has eagerly flocked for popcorn entertainment. Lungin’s works, therefore, provide a long-running view not only into what has resonated in Russian cinema for domestic viewers, as well as for Western patrons intrigued by celluloid products from the land of Eisenstein and Tarkovsky, but also supply a voice of critical dissent to popular filmic models. It is not in the scope of this dissertation to retread at length the thoroughly trampled ground of the late- and post-Soviet film industry’s sundry financial and philosophical quandaries; scholars such as Birgit Beumers, Anna Lawton, and Susan Larsen have already

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9 For example, the output of Aleksandr Rogozhkin, who rose to fame with such hits as his *Peculiarities* trilogy and acclaimed arthouse entries such as *The Cuckoo* (*Kukushka* 2002), has slowed to a trickle and dwindled in popularity. His last release was 2008’s *The Game* (*Igra*). Rogozhkin’s wife committed suicide in 2011, but the tempo of his work slowed before this tragedy. Lawton provides a list of authors who weathered, floundered, and perished in the 1990s (*Imaging 13*).
analyzed the gradual decline of Soviet cinema in the 1980s, its coterminous collapse with the Soviet regime in 1991, post-Soviet cinema’s existential dilemmas of the 1990s, and its remarkable recovery in the mid-2000s. I will, nevertheless, summarize these scholars’ works regarding the basics of Soviet and post-Soviet film history, as they pertain to the timeline of Lungin’s cinematic career, as well as the cinematic production and representation of Russian masculinities.

3. Russian Cinema in Crisis. In the 1970s and early 1980s, when Lungin began work as a screenwriter of children’s films and karate flicks, the Soviet film industry was approaching its zenith. It was a time in which generally inoffensive comedies and “slice-of-life” melodramas routinely drew in 50-100 million viewers to behemoth movie halls (Beumers “Soviet and Russian Blockbusters” 451-52). In fact, Lawton notes, “Allegedly, the film industry was so financially sound that it brought to the state treasury one third of its annual global revenues” (Imaging 22). Granted, films that rankled the Communist brass for whatever reason were shelved indefinitely/until glasnost’, and some directors, such as Aleksandr Askol’dov and Sergei Paradzhanov, were severely repressed during this period. Nonetheless, the

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11 After the release of his controversial but brilliant film Commissar (Komissar 1966), Askol’dov was barred from working in the industry. Paradzhanov spent four
continual release of consistently gainful films permitted a reliable stream of ample funding to flow not only to new crowd-pleasers, but also to auteur projects, as long as they did not stray outside ideological limits (Beumers “Cinemarket” 871). As the 1980s rolled onward, however, average attendance per film and the yearly number of films viewed per Soviet citizen progressively waned. By the end of the 1980s, only a tiny number of films attracted more than 40 million viewers, and most new releases were failing to recover their production and distribution costs through ticket sales (Beumers “Cinemarket” 877-79, “Soviet and Russian Blockbusters” 452). Additionally, with the relaxation of censorship under glasnost’, filmmakers were much freer to depict/indulge in images of violence, sex, and depressive narratives on screen (the notorious aesthetic phenomenon of chernukha), a proclivity that arguably repelled viewers even more (Larsen 491, Pruner 294). But as the government continued to dole out production grants, filmmakers were under little pressure to craft films that would appeal to the public and, hence, make money.12 Lungin fortuitously gauged the way the wind was blowing, first teaming up with French producer Marin Karmitz, and later with other sources of French and German funding to supplement evaporating government support.

The situation in the Russian film industry degenerated simultaneously with the collapse of the Soviet Union, as the fledgling successor Russian government

years in prison on various sexually based charges and after his release in 1977 was forbidden from working in film for a lengthy period.
12 Regarding the Soviet film industry of the late 1980s, Birgit Beumers writes, “Film production was thus an entirely artificial industry: more films were produced than were in demand, and the films made were not the sort of films that would draw large audiences” (“Cinemarket” 871).
could ill afford the allotment of adequate production grants, and a perfect storm of deleterious market forces decimated demand (Lawton *Imaging* 12). A deluge of “novel” and inexpensive Western B-movies (14), rampant videocassette piracy (17), a tax code that failed to incentivize investment in domestic film (Beumers “Cinemarket” 875), and filmmakers’ persistent insistence on wallowing in chernukha dissuaded the consumption of Russian films (Larsen 491). Production consequently tanked, dropping from near 300 films in 1990 to a paltry 30 films in 1995 (Larsen 491-3), and 21 in 1996 (Lawton *Imaging* 12). What anemic state support did exist permitted the few films that were made to see the light of day (Beumers “Cinemarket” 879). Vida Johnson christened this period of Russian filmmaking “a new era of ‘little film[s]’ (malokartin’ë), a term referring to the last years of Stalin’s reign when production for the whole of the Soviet Union fell into the teens for feature films” (281). Between 1990 and 1996, however, Lungin churned out three feature films, as well as several documentaries, a screenplay, and a pair of French-language television productions.

4. Celluloid Soviet and Russian Masculinities. The material crisis in the post-Soviet Russian film industry spawned a concomitant philosophical debate over how best to adapt the form and content of Russian cinema to the changing, challenging material reality. Johnson notes, “The lack of excitement about [films from the mid-

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14 According to Johnson, the sobriquet malokartin’ë carries two connotations; films from the era were both few in number and insignificant in budget and impact (281).
1990s] and the concerns about reduced production reflect the sense of crisis of the CIS that is shared by critics, viewers, and filmmakers alike” (282). As an antidote, filmmakers sought to develop a self-sustaining industry and produce insightful, compelling visual commentaries on the dire situation surrounding them. Ludmila Pruner comments that, as a first step, directors of the mid-1990s “began to appeal to the psychological comfort zone of genre cinema, where everything is either familiar or recognizable” (294). Lungin’s *Lifeline*, for example, went in the direction of the crime thriller and the globetrotting epic. But filmmakers wanted to produce popular films without merely mimicking Hollywood’s cookie-cutter genre narratives and spectacular cinematic techniques (Larsen 492, Norris 1-5); they wanted either to preserve or else rediscover some uniquely Russian ethos in their work and produce what they called “our cinema (*nashe kino*)” (Larsen 492). As Yana Hashamova notes, “in 1992 [Daniil] Dondurei, chief editor of the Russian film journal *Iskusstvo kino*, urged filmmakers to work on a national cinema and create a ‘national hero,”’ in order to combat the decrease in cinematic output and increase demand for domestic pictures (*Pride and Panic* 41).¹⁵ Later, before the Fourth Congress of the Russian Filmmakers’ Union (*Soiuz kinematografistov Rossii*) in 1998, new president Nikita Mikhalkov, on top of proposing a special catalytic production fund, in the words of Beumers, “argued strongly for the need to instill hope in the cinema audience, and dwelt on the need to create the myth of a Russian national hero in order to regain a spirit of patriotism that bonded the Soviet Union in the past, and that bonded

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¹⁵ See also Lawson’s discussion of Mikhalkov’s tenure as president of the Congress of the Filmmakers Union of Russian (*Imaging* 27-30).
“America now” (“Cinemarket” 875). Of course, this call was not merely a cry to rally the nation around (doubtlessly masculine) celluloid heroes, but also an enunciation of the desire for the cratered-out Russian film industry to commence generating Western-level profits. Strikingly enough, Lungin’s name receives scant mention in the literature regarding the nadir of the 1990s in comparison to other directors, yet he weathered the decade to make another half-dozen films to date.

Dondurei’s and Mikhalkov’s entreaties for inspiring new cinematic myths and heroes were hardly novel proposals in Russia’s film tradition. The heroes for whom they pled have existed (at least intermittently) since the birth of Soviet cinema; moreover, these heroes have tended overwhelmingly to be men—men who, during Soviet years, performed on-screen masculinities steeped in amenability to the prevailing political spirit. To serve as the fulcrum of enticing filmic narratives, the Soviet film industry, beginning in the Stalin-era, offered up a spectrum of ideologically complicit male figures (i.e., devoted Soviet subjects), such as Commander Chapaev (Boris Babochkin) from The Vasil’ev brothers’ Chapaev, (Chapaev 1932), the circus athlete Martynov (Sergei Stoliarov) from Grigorii Aleksandrov’s Circus (Tsirk 1936), the burly peasant Klim Iarko (Nikolai Kriuchkov) from Ivan Pyr’ev’s The Tractor Drivers (Traktoristy 1939), and the record-shattering steelworker Alesha (Boris Andreev) from Mikhail Chiaureli’s sycophantic epic The Fall of Berlin (Padenie Berlina 1949). Each lead from these wildly popular, and

16 See also Norris’s summation of Mikhalkov’s entreaties before the special congress of the Union of Russian Filmmakers in 1998 (Blockbuster History 26-31).
17 Beumers notes that Mikhalkov’s call for heroes came eerily close to the model of Stalin-era mythologies of social engineering (“Cinemarket” 893).
arguably very entertaining Soviet films showcased varying instantiations of masculinity—some were wiry, others were muscular; some were intelligent, others were uncomplicated; some were confident around women, others were awkward—but all displayed dedication to the Soviet project of the moment and a commitment to overarching Soviet philosophy as they overcame obstacles and dabbled in romance. In addition, they eagerly submitted their physical bodies to the state’s social principles—either tempering said bodies into steely fighting machines or offering them up to disfigurement. After Stalin’s death, cinematic heroes became less blatantly ideological, and their formerly hulking and wounded bodies atrophied to realistic proportions, but the intriguing men on screen still functioned in accordance with the predominant ideology while offering a pleasurable viewing experience to Soviet moviegoers. Male heroes from some of the most popular films of the 1960s include the wiry Kolia (Nikita Mikhalkov) from in *I Walk around Moscow* (*Ia shagaiu po Moskve*), and the buffoonish Shurik (Aleksandr Dem’ianenko) from the comedic trilogy of Leonid Gaidai.\(^{19}\)

Although the 1970s saw the introduction of narratives that occasionally concentrated on women’s lives and broader social issues (Lawton *The Red Screen* 9), men continued to dominate the large and small screen, albeit in often less

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\(^{18}\) Lilya Kaganovsky observes, “Under Stalinism, exemplary masculinity, at least as it appears in the literature and films of the period, consists of two contradictory model: the virile and productive male body on one hand and the wounded, longsuffering invalid, on the other” (21). In either case, pumped-up and wounded bodies alike were offered as a sacrifice to Stalin and the nation.\(^{19}\) According to Birgit Beumers, “The protagonists of Leonid Gaidai’s and El’dar Riazanov’s films are fools and clowns, but they are happy within the [Soviet] system ("Soviet and Russian Blockbusters" 443).
heroicized, yet still entertaining forms. The understated spy Shtirlits (Viacheslav Tikhonov) in *Seventeen Moments of Spring* (*Semnadtsat’ mgnovenii vesny* 1973) captivated audiences for a season. Even the stodgy, soft-bodied Soviet intelligent made frequent celluloid appearances in beloved films. Characters including Andrei Miagkov’s Zhenia from El’dar Riazanov’s *The Irony of Fate* (*Ironiia sud’by* 1975) and Novoselt’sev from *Office Romance* (*Sluzhebnyi roman* 1977), Oleg Basilashvili’s sad-sack Buzykin from Georgii Danelia’s *Autumn Marathon* (*Osennii marafon* 1979), and Aleksei Batalov’s Gosha from Vladimir Men’shov’s crowd-pleaser *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (*Moskva slezam ne verit* 1979) still persist today in Russian cultural memory.

Although post-Stalin leading men were not as assertively masculine in appearance or in deed—especially when compared to the contemporaneous steely, trigger-happy models of 1970s American action thrillers or the brawny action stars of the 1980s—^20^—they nevertheless tapped into something that attracted tens of millions of viewers to the theater to laugh, cry, and cheer with them. Perhaps Soviet viewers—especially men—saw elements of these protagonists in themselves; or perhaps they merely enjoyed watching the triumphs and foibles of fictional men to

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^20^ In her thorough exploration of 1980s American cinematic cops and action heroes *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (1994), Susan Jeffords observes that the masculine (anti-)heroes who populated movie screens in the 1970s tended to be cynical, antagonistic to the social status quo, and hostile to authority (15-17). The 1980s overthrew such portrayals of masculinity, replacing them with behemoth, grotesquely athletic action heroes in a battle against a government bureaucracy that was thwarting true American ideals (19). Jeffords’ argument labeling 1980s action heroes as cinematic emissaries of Reaganist ideology (11) aligns their role with Mikhalkov’s rationale behind calling for analogous cinematic heroes to restore patriotism in a crisis-ridden Russia.
whom they could relate. Masculinity in these films took on a less visible form, and retreated to the intangible realm of morals and will not showcased in dramatic action. Regardless, these Stagnation-era blockbusters, despite their softer masculine models, peddled to audiences the so-called “fascination of film” that Laura Mulvey mentions in her analysis of film's function in constructing gender discourses (22). This “fascination of film,” or in more familiar parlance, “the magic of the movies,” holds viewers rapt in an identificatory dialogue with the images on screen while entertaining them with visual delights.

5. The Cinematic Gaze and Masculinity. The preponderance of men involved in film production on both sides of the camera cannot but influence the thought process and identities of viewers regarding the way men should be and act when they see men be and act on screen. In other words, films redound to men’s (and society’s) attitudes regarding acceptable and discouraged (i.e., hegemonic, subordinated, and marginalized) masculinities. John Beynon concurs:

It is obvious that cinematic masculinity comes in visually crafted, carefully packaged and frequently idealized forms. These representations often have a more powerful impact than the flesh-and-blood men around the young and with whom they are in daily contact. Screen images are likely to be far more exciting and seductive than father, teachers, neighbors and older brothers. Indeed, masculinity as it is enacted is a mixture of the situation and previous experience and always has an imagined element.... (64)
Heroes on screen—by dint of their appearances, feats, beliefs, and morals—shape concepts of masculinity, and do so by capturing the gaze of viewers with their bodies and actions. Todd Reeser writes, “In a large sense, the ways in which a man looks are very commonly ways to construct masculinity, largely because men create certain types of bodies in the visual field that correspond to their ideas about gender” (109-10). In other terms, cinema’s endless barrage of images and its illusion of movement provide the perfect apparatus for shaping ideas about masculinity that are based on appearances and actions. But masculinity is more than observable qualities. Pat Kirkham and Janet Thumin divide male characters’ roles in a film’s diegesis into an “external world,” which pertains to men’s behavior and practices within social structures (18-21), and an “internal world,” which refers to men’s emotional and psychological deliberations, as well as their anxieties over their relationship to said structures (22-26). In other words, battle scenes, business endeavors, and romantic conquests on screen serve as trials by which men prove their masculinity and inspire viewers. But the way in which men relate to these trials, as well as the angst or exuberance they experience in relation to pressures to perform can also bubble to the surface visually in a film. Finally, the formal

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21 In their essay “You Tarzan” (1993), Pat Kirkham and Janet Thumim comment on the visual qualities of masculinity in film. They write, “By the body, we refer to the visual representation of the male, to dress, to the spectacle of the male body and the invitation to audience pleasure in this spectacle; we refer also to the actor’s presence, his star persona, as an important element of this material construction. Action references various manifestations of the physical, including violence, competition, aggression, skill, and endurance, in which these attributes are depicted in terms of the male body in action. Thus the filmic construction of being (the body) and of doing (the body in action) are both sites where assumptions about masculinity are made manifest” (11-12).
components of a film, such as photography, editing, mise en scène, etc., also redound to characterizations of masculinities, depicting them as either ideal or unsavory, captivating or repellent.

Indeed, film production and consumption have come to be seen not only as instrumental in shaping social perceptions and expectations of gender, but have been recognized as a gendered system unto themselves, serving up satisfaction to viewers. In her groundbreaking essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975), Laura Mulvey posited that the traditional cinematic experience of the early Hollywood era captivated presupposed male viewers by peddling two sorts of scopic pleasure: a narcissistic thrill from identifying with male heroes and their exploits on screen, and a voyeuristic buzz from scrutinizing female objects on screen. Mulvey singled out three looks in the production and consumption of film: camera/director to filmic object, character to filmic object, and spectator to screen. The entire network of gazes, she argued, was gendered, inasmuch as it was always a male doing the looking—whether director, hero, or spectator. The cinematic male was, therefore, positioned to be an active subject, and the female a passive object to be conquered by the male subject through punishment or fetishization. As Todd McGowan summarizes, “The cinema, according to [Mulvey's active] conception of desire, establishes sexual difference through the way that it caters to male desire: male subjects go to the cinema—they desire to see films—because the cinema provides for them an active experience, a way of mastering passive objects” (9). Mulvey, in essence, argued that, in its praxis, Hollywood was instrumental in
perpetuating masculine privilege for men, as well as key in propagating justifications for men's oppression over women.

It is important to note that Mulvey grounded her analysis in mainstream Anglo-American film from Hollywood's Golden Age: specifically, profit-oriented genre films, such as Westerns and film noir. Almost immediately upon the release of Mulvey's article, film scholars began to attach caveats to her argument, cautioning that her thesis could no longer be taken as universal in even mainstream cinema of the 1970s and 1980s. One of the first scholars to do so was Paul Willemen, whose article “Anthony Mann: Looking at the Male” (1981) observes that the cinematic object most frequently providing pleasure to viewers is actually the male body as it performs and exists (16). Willeman posits that eroticization of the male body on screen is forestalled by the staging of brutal violence against that body (16). Writing in a similar vein was Steve Neale, whose article “Masculinity As Spectacle” (1983) proposes the concept of the cinematic spectacle to displace eroticized male bodies on screen. Neale argues that film deliberately stages competitive athletic events and violent battle scenes as diversions from confrontation with sexualized male bodies as potential objects of desire.22 In Hard Bodies (1994), Susan Jeffords observes that

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22 A telling current example of the disavowal of eroticized male bodies by way of the spectacle in Andrei Maliukov's 2008 film We Are from the Future (My iz budushchego). This film dispatched four modern-day reprobates to World War II to acquire “true” manliness. To arrive in the past, the men strip off their clothes and dive into an enchanted lake. A worm's-eye-view shot reveals abundant full-frontal male nudity as the young men leap into the water. This revealing of the body, however, does not read as homoerotic, since the protagonists immediately begin battling Germans, falling in love with local girls, and otherwise learning to be upstanding Russian men in an action-packed environment. Attention is diverted
the eroticization of hulking heroes in 1980s action films was shunted into the inculcation and maintenance of the prevailing political ideology of Reaganism: “individualism, liberty, militarism, and a mythic heroism” (16). In The Difficulty of Difference (1991), David Rodowick critiques Mulvey’s discrete bifurcation of cinematic gender into active masculine and passive feminine, positing that viewers themselves cannot be taken for granted either as inhabiting a fixed spectatorial position or adhering to consistent object choices (4-17).

Yet other scholars have highlighted cinematic pleasures that do not hew exclusively to the active model of viewing (i.e., mastery, voyeurism, fetishization). Feminist film scholars, such as E. Ann Kaplan in her book Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera (1990), have investigated at length psychoanalytical processes that can furnish putatively female viewers with various cinematic pleasures. Even Mulvey has revised her own thesis, and in her article “Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ Inspired by Duel in The Sun” (1981), she considers “the freedom of action and control over the diegetic world” female spectators might experience in transgressively identifying with the active male hero on screen” (24). In The Desire to Desire (1987), Mary Ann Doane addresses the phenomenon of “woman’s film”—films produced until approximately the 1960s with specifically female spectators in mind, and which “deal with a female protagonist and often appear to allow her significant access to point of view (sic) structures and the enunciative level of the filmic discourse” (3). Judith Mayne’s book Woman at the from their flaccid members onto screeching bullets, gunfights, and omnipresent explosions.
Keyhole (1990) points to the existence of films that, when viewed by women (and not “Woman” as demarcated by the patriarchal film industry), provide alternative pleasures in spite of a system that wants to deliver limited viewing pleasures based on prevailing gender norms (5-7).

Still other scholars have considered the phenomenon and purpose of male viewing of and identification with masochistic narratives. For example, in Male Subjectivity at the Margins (1992), Kaja Silverman critiques the gratifying fantasy of universal masculine invincibility in cinema, marshalling as evidence post-World War II films that ruminate at length upon men who endured disabling physical trauma during the war. These films, argues Silverman, “ultimately work to reconfirm the dominant fiction” of males as masters by showcasing the unpleasant alternative (54). In the article “Spectacular Pain” (2008), Tim Edwards asserts that an alternative outcome of exhibiting male suffering on screen is to peddle an indentificatory sense of valiant masculine subjectivity, which “centers on processes of masochistic spectacle whether through the display of physical, emotional or spiritual suffering in defense of honor, an ideal or self” (176). This cursory survey of scholarly addenda and modifications to Mulvey’s thesis does not begin to approach the exhaustive. On the other hand, all these sundry critiques do not entirely nullify one key component of Mulvey’s argument: that the gaze is located within or mastered by the active spectator.

6. A New Cinematic Gaze. In the 1990s, however, film scholars singled out a fourth act of seeing in the filmic process, and attributed to it (at least) a (supporting) role in the interpellation of viewing subjects. In his straightforwardly titled essay
“The Fourth Look” (1994), Willemen conceives of this fourth visual phenomenon as inhering primarily in actors on the screen. He points specifically to films by Stephen Dwoskin and Andy Warhol as instances wherein the fourth wall is broken, so to speak, between actors peering out from the screen and the spellbound audience staring back. Citing Dwoskin’s experimental 1975 film *Girl*, in which an unclad and visibly anxious young woman stares back at viewers, Willeman defines the locus and effect of this look (107). Although the woman on screen is not *in actuality* looking at the audience, her line of vision causes viewers to make the leap in believing that she is indeed watching them as they watch her. Willeman asserts that the actress in Dwoskin’s film, as well as the film itself, “looks” at the audience, and causes to register in spectators’ head the kind of viewing subjects they are (e.g., male, heterosexual, unwanted, etc.), as well as the (unjust) pleasure they are experiencing at the actress’s expense. Willeman writes

> the act of sadistic viewing rebounds on the subject as the viewer becomes aware that the look upon the girl is having disagreeable effects on her. Instead of the ‘innocent’ pleasure of watching a naked girl, the viewer now has to confront the considerable sadistic components present in his or her act of looking and, by implication, confront the castration anxieties provoked by the investigation of the naked female form in the diegesis. (107)\(^\text{23}\)

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\(^\text{23}\) A much earlier film, Tony Richardson’s *Tom Jones* (1963), presents characters who momentarily break off contact with other on-screen characters to address viewers directly and unambiguously. In this genre film, which is a screen adaptation
This process, nevertheless, engenders the viewer, again, as masculine. Willeman, unfortunately, cites experimental arthouse films as evidence of the fourth look. True, Dwoskin and Warhol’s films demonstrate the revolutionary volte-face film is capable of performing vis-à-vis the cinematic gaze, but these avant-garde auteurs were hardly producing films that the public was consuming en masse and on a regular basis. To make a broader conclusion, popular films must enter the equation here.


the ‘look back’ is an integral function of all cinema, whether this responsive ‘look of the screen’ is foregrounded by the work or not. It is not so much the returned gaze of the actors within a film, or the intensity of subject matter (as Willemen suggests) that introduces this phenomenon, but rather the combined, cohesive act of the entire cinematic apparatus in operation: the production, presentation, and ultimate reception of a film. (3-7)

In other words, films are manufactured texts, and viewers, laden with life experience and cultural baggage, enter into dialogue with a film’s images and narratives, negotiating meaning and positioning themselves in relationship to the of a literary work, characters indubitably break down the fourth wall. This is the cinematic version of the ‘Dear Reader’ convention in novels.

24 Curiously, the cover of the book features a distorted portrait of Andy Warhol.
process. The public and communal act of consuming a film situates viewers in relationship to the industry that creates this experience. Dixon continues, “This ‘gaze of the screen,’ or ‘look back,’ has the power to transform our existences, to substantially change our view of our lives, and of the world we inhabit” (7). Thus, Dixon maintains that the cinematic look can be conceived as instrumental in shaping viewers’ subjectivities and social positionality. Additionally, Dixon permits cinematic form to enter into this dialogic exchange, as well. “For me,” writes Dixon, “the ‘look back’ gathers force from shot duration, composition, and editorial patterning; it can also gain power from the gender origins of its address” (8). It is here that Dixon’s argument gains traction in relationship to cinematic masculinities. Viewers, taking in representations of the array of multiple masculinities, can identify with, among, or against the variations on display.

Todd McGowan takes the concept of what can be deemed as the fourth look in further productive directions. He asserts that cinematic images harbor elements that position viewers and, hence, determine their subjectivity in relationship to film. He equates the gaze in cinema with Lacan’s objet petit a, locating it within the Real:

As the objet petit (sic) a in the visual field, the gaze is the point around which this field organizes itself. If a particular visual field attracts a subject’s desire, the gaze must be present there as a point of an absence of sense. The gaze compels our look because it appears to offer access to the unseen, to the reverse side of the visible. It promises the subject the secret of the Other, but this secret exists only insofar as it remains hidden. The subject cannot uncover the secret of
the gaze, and yet it marks the point at which the visual field takes the subject’s desire into account. The only satisfaction available to the subject consists in following the path (which psychoanalysis calls the drive) through which it encircles this privileged object. (6)

As an illustrative example, McGowan recounts Lacan’s exegesis of Hans Holbein’s painting *The Ambassadors* (1533), which features two wealthy merchants flanked by material riches, globes, and navigating devices. In the lower portion of the painting, between the two merchants, an anamorphic skull challenges viewers. McGowan enumerates three functions the skull fulfills in the visual field: it mars the aesthetic harmony of the painting, emblematizes the mortality of the merchants and the viewers, and causes viewers to reposition themselves physically in order to detect the skull as a recognizable image (7). It must be noted, however, that not all viewers will notice the skull. Moreover, in film, which moves on screen, such an element may escape some viewers’ notice.

In symbolizing loss and repositioning viewers, the skull thus fulfills a function similar to that of the gaze. McGowan continues:

> Understood in Lacan’s own terms, the gaze is not the spectator’s external view of the filmic image, but the mode in which the spectator is accounted for within the film itself. Through their manipulation of the gaze, films produce the space in which spectators can insert themselves. Of course, not every spectator does so. There is, as the contributors to *Post-Lacanian Theory* rightly point out, an unlimited number of different possible positions of empirical spectatorship.
These empirical spectators have the ability to avoid the place that a film carves out for them, and we might even imagine a film that no actual person watches from the proper position. But this failure does not change the structure of the film itself, nor does it change how the film constitutes spectatorship through its deployment of the gaze. (7-8)

Even if the gaze is situated within the image on screen or within the cinematic apparatus itself, rather than inhering in the viewing subject or somewhere between the subject and object, it still plays a leading role in the apprehension of gender. Inasmuch as McGowan’s theory of the gaze is grounded in psychoanalysis, it accounts for the projection of, identification with, and enjoyment of masculinity in film: not only ideal masculinity, but multiple masculinities, ideal and otherwise.

While I do not concur with McGowan’s intimation that films “carve” out a singly prescribed viewing position, his contention regarding multiple positions of viewing and identification is compelling. McGowan’s concept of the gaze accommodates the existence of various hypostases/typologies of masculinity in film and in viewing subjects. But in a hierarchy that he valorizes, viewers, regardless of their identities and object choices, can negotiate their places among the array of hegemonic, subordinated, and marginalized masculinities in a film, as well as in their life experiences.

Still, throughout the history of Western cinema topically “ideal” masculinities—which are not equivalent to hegemonic masculinities—have tended to predominate in the most popular films and draw the most sizable viewing
crowds. Filmmakers interested in profit resort to these types. This formula persists today, even amid the handwringing over the supposed crisis in masculinity. Currently in the United States (2013), comic-book-based and action-hero films rule the box office.\textsuperscript{25} And, as noted earlier in this chapter, Russian film luminaries Dondurei and Mikhalkov called for re-imagined, heroic, uniquely Russian masculinities to resuscitate their flagging industry. Many of the highest-grossing Russian films of the 2000s have been based on war or fantasy narratives that traffic in rugged, valiant soldiers and supernatural crime fighters.\textsuperscript{26} Ideal heroes, though, are never the only men on display in a film. There are villains, underlings, intellectuals, etc., a casting panoply that mirrors the cultural reality of multiple, diverse, hierarchical masculinities.\textsuperscript{27} Masculine types interact with one another (and with femininities, for that matter) in the diegesis, and their status becomes determined by their position in relation to other forms. Thus, viewers may identify with any instantiation on screen, but also position their masculinity in the web of relationships among all types on screen. In other words, the identification with onscreen masculinity is not with a single model, but with the entire contextually

\textsuperscript{25} Since 2008, many of the highest-grossing film releases in the United States have been based on fantasy, super-hero, or comic-book narratives (and have been sequels), a trend that definitely speaks to a desire to identify (repetitively) with heroes and observe their spectacular exploits. For example, James Cameron’s \textit{Avatar} (2009), John Whedon’s \textit{The Avengers} (2012), Christopher Nolan’s Batman films \textit{The Dark Knight} (2008) and \textit{The Dark Knight Rises} (2012), and Jon Favreau’s \textit{Iron Man 2} (2010), and Shane Black’s \textit{Iron Man 3} (2013) have all drawn in upwards of $300 million in domestic box office receipts. Various adaptations of Spider Man and Superman have also proven highly profitable.

\textsuperscript{26} See Footnote 46 in Chapter 3, which lists several of the highest-grossing post-Soviet films which have starred Konstantin Khabenskii.

\textsuperscript{27} These typologies may also not exist in actuality, but rather in lore or fantasy. Still, viewers will link them to topical typologies.
based array of masculinities in the social environment from which the film emerged. The identification is with a system, a place in that system, and the interrelationships within that system.

If the gaze can truly be relegated to the realm of the Real, it must, then, do more than merely interpellate viewing subjects; it must also harbor something unsettling, something utterly disruptive to the image. With regard to masculinities, instead of the anamorphic skull of Holbein’s painting, films unveil viewers’ subservience before hegemonic masculinity, as well as their failure to embody ideal cinematic heroes. As R.W. Connell asserts, most men—especially the sort of men who go to theaters to see popular movies—do not enact hegemonic masculinity in their daily lives or adhere to the ideal standard set by the soldiers, policemen, athletes, and comic-book heroes in the films to which they flock. Rather, they live complicit masculinities that prop up patriarchies—patriarchies that permit the complicit to accede to the patriarchal dividend by toeing socially mandated gender lines. Films, via their representation of the tiered array of masculinities, convey the disavowed truth to male viewers that they are indeed not hegemonic, or even ideal much of the time, but are instead subordinated and, God forbid, perhaps marginalized. The gap between masculine-identified viewers’ sense of self and the “idealized” masculinities of cinematic protagonists who defeat the enemy, champion their country, and seduce women on screen must be patched over to ensure pleasure. Moreover, an anxious sensation of guilt over the injustice of partaking in the patriarchal dividend at the expense of others may accompany the sinking feeling of failing to measure up. Film, as a palliative to this potential psychical trauma,
bridges the chasm between ideal and actual by dazzling viewers with the spectacle, narrative pleasures, and identificatory processes that have been outlined by the scholars discussed in the previous paragraphs. Thus, for men who enact socially privileged heteronormative masculinities, the cinematic gaze, if conceived of as the filmic essence that positions viewers within a given gender framework by triggering the realization of the structure of tiered multiple masculinities, emerges as the specter of subordination before hegemonic masculinities, and perhaps an underlying, yet ardently disavowed feeling of guilt over reaping the patriarchal benefits despite underperforming.\textsuperscript{28}

7. Lungin’s Films and Masculinity. In my dissertation I wish to argue that the films of Pavel Lungin are particularly suited to the exploration of the intersection between a gendered cinematic gaze that accounts for multiple viewpoints and objects, insofar as his films feature narratives that foreground a broad array of both

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{28} As anecdotal evidence of this conceptualization of the cinematic gaze, I can offer my own background. I attended a high school in a semi-rural Utah community located an hour’s drive south of Salt Lake City. Given its peculiar population—a mélange of cowboys, blue-collar farmers, and white-collar Mormons, the town was a place where traditional American masculinities were never questioned. (Of course, things have changed in the past fifteen years.) My classmates, whose worldviews had been shaped by the community morals in which they had grown up, permitted certain enactments of masculinity, and either ignored or actively persecuted others. As a studious young man, I was acutely aware of the social imperative to act out sanctioned forms of masculinity (e.g., the athlete, the cattleman, the engine repairman, the Mormon priesthood holder), dress in sanctioned garb (e.g., athletic gear, Wrangler blue jeans, a letter jacket, a white shirt and tie) or else face reprisal in the form of bullying or ostracizing. My relationship to these typologies forged the way I conceived of masculinities in general. It goes without saying that this relationship to the array of multiple masculinities from which I emerged shapes the way I view characters in film. I always get a little tingle of satisfaction when the idealized forms of masculinity among which I grew up get their comeuppance in some way.
\end{footnotesize}
topical and historical Russian masculinities. Similar to the majority of Russian films of today, Lungin’s are supremely homosocial artifacts and engage almost exclusively with masculine typologies as main and supporting characters. True, his films do feature a limited number of female characters who fulfill roles greater than love interests or family members, such as the Valkyrie-like gang-matriarch Alena in *Luna Park*; the daughter-cum-secretary Oksana in *Lifeline*; the world-weary bride Masha (Mariia Mironova) in *The Wedding*; and the vindictive soprano Alla (Inga Oboldina) in *The Conductor*. These female characters contribute to the conceptualization of masculinity by dint of their interactions with the male protagonists, but beyond this instrumental function, they, as individuals, pale next to the spectacle of the struggles of (and between) the male leads.

Lungin does not consistently prefer one type of male lead or consistently select leads that can be seen as ideal in the post-Soviet context. Rather, his films evoke an encyclopedia of Soviet and post-Soviet masculine types, some of which are based in reality, but some of which are fictional and embedded in Russian cultural history. From real life Lungin culls as protagonists blue-collar workers, bodybuilders, musicians, artists, Jewish intellectuals, crooks, and mafia kingpins. From the cultural canon of literature and lore, he draws upon Ivan the Fool, the New Soviet Man, the holy fool, and even the venerated Russian father figure. Lungin allows some of his male characters to succeed by film’s end—to consummate a romantic relationship, vanquish foes, or merely obtain freedom from oppressive surroundings. Yet others he causes to fail—to forego their desired livelihood, lose their families, or wind up utterly alone. Moreover, two patterns emerge in Lungin’s
portrayal and deployment of these typologies. In his three earliest films, as well as beginning anew with *The Island*, Lungin juxtaposes opposing models of masculinity in dyads. Men with generally antagonistic qualities—those who are or have been seen as ideal versus those who are generally marginalized in post-Soviet social discourse—clash head-to-head, revealing their various traits to be propitious or deleterious to both themselves and to society as a whole. In his films from the early 2000s, Lungin contrasts one type with a network of different types in an ensemble cast to the same ends. Additionally, not only do Lungin’s typologies interact in conflicting and complementary displays of manly behavior, but his multiple masculinities also frequently coexist in one character (e.g., artist, Jew, father figure). Lungin’s films, therefore, exemplify Connell’s contention that masculinities are multiple, tiered, overlapping, and porously bounded; they provide a superb diachronic survey of a welter of Russian-flavored masculinities and thus myriad points of reference for viewers’ identificatory cathexes.

Finally, as the three ensuing chapters of this dissertation will demonstrate, Lungin’s films are also fortuitously poised to allow a consideration of “masculinity in crisis” in Russian film.29 Granted, conflict (i.e., crisis) provides the narrative thrust of all compelling literature and film. But Lungin’s films track the ups and downs in

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29 The concept of crisis in post-Soviet film is relevant to any discussion of its themes and representations of society. As Norris writes in his survey, *Blockbuster History in the New Russia: Movies, Memory, and Patriotism*, “Most Russians believed they had lived in a permanent state of crisis during the [1990s], transforming the extraordinary into the routine as the economy experienced a downturn far worse than the Great Depression. By the time Russian cinema had recovered [in the mid-2000s], and in part because of the messages Russian blockbuster history offered, the feeling of a permanent state of crisis had ended” (7).
particular of Russian masculine typologies in relation to calamity in three key regards. First, as Lungin’s films until 2006 all feature contemporarily society, they trace how various male characters respond to the crisis-ridden years following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. His films situate male characters in a milieu of constant tumult and gauge which instantiations possess the necessary qualities to weather the storms more successfully than others—and perhaps deserve to do so, as well. Second, Lungin’s films address individual male characters’ internal struggles (à la Kirkham and Thumim’s “internal world”) with forging a new, yet socially viable sense of masculinity as the social structure that had previously permitted them to enact their gender identities crumbled around them.

Third, Lungin’s films propose alternative masculine heroes to a film industry that teetered on the brink of collapse in the mid-1990s due to its inability to mobilize domestic audiences. Although Lungin’s films feature socially ideal masculinities, they do not traffic exclusively in these types or present them as a balm for society’s ills. In fact, they often rehabilitate foundering former ideals and champion unconventional masculinities. In other words, Lungin selects deeply subordinated and marginalized masculine typologies as his protagonists, at times even nominating them as normative models. This dynamic stands in stark contrast to most mainstream cinematic fare in Russia in the era of revived blockbusters, which have almost universally featured some sort of male hero who gives hope under dire circumstances. The earliest example of such a hero was Danila (played by the late Sergei Bodrov, Jr.) of Balabanov’s Brother films, who captivated viewers and almost singlehandedly breathed life into the gasping film industry. Stephen Norris
notes that "Danila became a representation of the move from a patriotism of despair, one that centered on loss and a nihilistic outlook on post-Soviet life, to a patriotism of pride, one in which Russians could reassert themselves and view their history differently" (11). The character of Danila did so through his magnetic masculinity, one that offered reenergized hopes to a hungry public in its denunciation of the West. Danila’s masculinity was not Stallone’s or Connery’s masculinity, however. Yana Hashamova observes that the Brother films “construct masculinity as a moral strength beyond physical qualities. Masculinity is also a key element for the resurrection of national pride and identity and for the construction of a new fantasy that structures power and identificatory relations” (Pride and Panic 40). Thus, the male body has figured less significantly than its actions or convictions in the representation of masculinity in the age of Russian blockbusters.

The protagonists of Lungin’s films do not assay to replicate the paradigm of Danila’s masculinity of cynical patriotism and categorical rejection of the West. If there is an ideal masculine type in Lungin’s films, it is definitely not one that harbors patriotic pride and exhibits a nationalistic morality. For Lungin, as the next three chapters will argue, agency, creative freedom, and individual integrity are the primary attributes that determine admirable masculinities. Whether or not this was his primary aim, Lungin is critical of his male leads, problematizing representations of Russian masculinity rather than simply doling out heroes to slake the public’s thirst for champions of whom they can feel proud. Lungin actually considers the whole spectrum of Russian masculinities in his films, invoking less successful, but still recognizable types of Russian men, allowing some to succeed and others to fail
in various degrees. This primary trait of his oeuvre, in my opinion, makes his contribution to the debate over ideal masculinities all the more compelling to ponder, and his films, all the more worth viewing.
1. *Taxi Blues*. Lungin’s debut film, financed by Romanian-French producer Marin Karmitz, not only was screened in competition at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival, but took the award for Best Director (Prix de la mise en scène). On top of this, the film proved a controversial sensation among viewers and critics alike on both sides of the former Iron Curtain. Although *Taxi Blues* (*Taksi-Bliuz 1990*) has come to be seen as a resoundingly successful first effort, critics were initially divided (especially geographically) in their estimations of the film. If not gushing, most American reviews were quite positive. Writing for the *New York Times*, Janet Maslin called Lungin’s premier a “superb tragicomedy” (n. pag.), and Peter Travers of *Rolling Stone* similarly intoned that Lungin had crafted “a caustic comedy of startling originality” (n. pag.). Hal Hinson in his review for the *Washington Post* characterized the actors and the film as uncomfortable to watch, yet compelling nonetheless: “As an experience, “Taxi Blues” [sic] is way beyond the blues, it’s about sorrows that sap the marrow” (n. pag.).
Russian critics were less glowing about *Taxi Blues,* however, and their main criticism seemed to be that the film appeared too “Western.”¹ Marsha Pally, writing for *Cineaste,* summarizes Russian critics’ responses to Lungin’s directorial debut.

The Moscow establishment was less enthusiastic when *Taxi* opened there in September [1990]. *Sovetskaya Kultura* [sic] assigned the review to a conservative critic who pronounced the film anti-Russian and immoral. Rastislav Yurenev [sic], a seventy-eight-year-old critic and teacher who now writes only occasionally, contributed a piece insinuating that, with European backing, Louguine had deliberately overblown Soviet decay to flatter his producers’ anti-communism. In response, Louguine thanked the writers for opprobrium that would no doubt guarantee long lines at the theaters. (n. pag.)

Not all Russian critics balked at the film’s supposedly Western cinematic style, however. In spite of a generally negative review, Piotr [sic] Shepotinnik wrote,

“Attention to both East and West does not tear director Pavel Louguine’s *Taxi Blues* (1990) apart. On the contrary, the pompous grandeur of the Stalinist architecture serves as a setting for the wild bohemian slickness that, as acted out by Pyotr [sic] Mamonov, appeals to the West” (133). *Taxi Blues* caused Russian critic Sergei Lavrentiev [sic] to declare, “We have a ‘Soviet film of international standards,’ which our filmmakers have been dreaming of since the beginning of the end of the Soviet Union” (135). Lavrentiev further noted that, while not a roaring success in the

¹ Here, Russian critics seem to have Hollywood filmmaking in mind when they say “Western.” I would argue that mainstream Hollywood and French cinema, the latter of which financed *Taxi Blues,* do not have that much in common.
twilight years of the Soviet Union, *Taxi Blues* was quite popular among young Russian viewers, if not among the critical cognoscenti (136). Perhaps making a film popular with the masses is more significant anyway, especially when it comes to peddling and questioning archetypes of cinematic masculinity, since the critically untrained may be more likely to be influenced. In any case, the film was the Soviet Union’s submission to the Academy Awards for the category best foreign film (although it was not nominated), and Lungin’s strong debut attracted the attention of additional French producers who would continue to finance his films.

As noted in the introduction, Lungin first traveled to France in 1987, where he made significant contacts, including *Taxi Blues*’ producer, Karmitz (Shepotinnik 133), who would go on to produce, among other important films, Krzysztof Kieślowski’s *Three Colors* (1993, 1994, 1994). Lungin’s second film, *Luna Park*, attracted yet another French producer, the prolific George Benayoun. The sudden support of the French coincided not only with the fall of the Soviet Union, but also with the evaporation of the socialist government’s largesse, which had permitted favored directors to release films in excess of the public’s appetite for them. Although the Soviet cinematic complex had turned a healthy profit into the 1970s, average attendance per film progressively waned in the 1980s. By the end of that decade, most new releases were failing to recover costs through ticket sales. Moreover, with the relaxation of censorship, filmmakers had become much freer to indulge in images of lurid violence and sex on screen, a proclivity that arguably
repelled viewers (Beumers, Lawton). Finally, under the dire economic conditions that beset the crumbling USSR, people simply had less expendable income for entertainment and, in any case, preferred to watch television in the relative privacy of their own apartments (Larsen, Lawson, Beumers). Had Lungin not hooked up with massive foreign financing when he did, he may not have been able to produce feature films on the scale that he has enjoyed for more than two decades. The success of *Taxi Blues* was instrumental in this. According to Pally, Lungin had spent his formative adult years pursuing a variety of livelihoods, from linguist, to researcher, to unsuccessful lush (n. pag.). In his early forties, Lungin, who had cut his teeth in the Soviet film industry churning out middling action-film scripts on demand, suddenly became a Russian cinematic darling in the West.

The demise of the Soviet government and society, as well as model narratives and tropes of Soviet filmmaking, left Russian directors scrambling to adapt to the changing tides—to create heroes and stories that would tap into and influence the changing public discourse and attract viewers. During Soviet times, the Great Family Myth and Socialist-Realist Master Plot, as discussed by Katerina Clark in *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, had provided narrative fodder for many a Soviet screenplay. Alexander Prokhorov notes, however, that this shopworn tale of a cinematic orphan-hero who found a domicile in the arms of his ideological comrades no longer comported with shifting political and cultural sensibilities. Prokhorov writes that “by the end of perestroika the official mythology was defunct, together with the

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2 Review Chapter 1 for a summarized discussion of the decline of the Soviet film industry in the 1980s, including the phenomenon of *chernukha*. 
Soviet film industry. The demise of the Great Soviet Family left post-Soviet cinematic characters deracinated, lacking a sense of stable family and national identity” (273). Seth Graham adds, “The ruptured families that filled Soviet screens in the 1980s and 1990s most often figured as victims of, and metaphors for, comprehensive system failure, rather than isolated, externally caused, temporary anomalies in an otherwise stable and functional social order” (“Models of Male Kinship” 73). In short, film in the perestroika era reflected the breakdown and ultimate rejection of Soviet ideology and material reality. Cinematic characters were likewise disillusioned with their lives, as well as bereft of positive social and interpersonal connections. Not only was the significance of the heretofore unimpeachable father figure in Soviet film called into question, his sons, or the New Soviet Men, were left foundering without a respectable patriarch, country, or ideology for which to serve and sacrifice. Thus, a crisis in cinematic masculinity accompanied the general crisis in the Soviet (and later, Russian) film industry. Film cried out for alternative models.

This material crisis in the late-Soviet and early post-Soviet film industry spawned a philosophical debate among filmmakers about how best to adapt the form and content of Russian cinema to the changing, challenging social reality.

This crisis touched Lungin, as well, and in a 2008 interview for Seans with Konstantin Shavlovskii he commented:

I began the 1990s by writing Taxi Blues, the first script that corresponded to my internal world, the first script not ordered [by a studio]; I wrote about myself, my impressions. In a way it was liberating. I remember how in 1989 we were shooting Taxi Blues.
There was a television in our office, and during breaks in between shooting, we constantly watched the debates. People there were constantly talking and fighting. This all seemed extremely important at the time – extremely significant. With perestroika in the country, changes were starting to happen in my life, too. I, as a director, somewhat unexpectedly made a film. I wound up at Cannes and won a prize. I was unprepared for this emotionally. And, groping my way, I set off on this mode of life. (n. pag.)

As viewers can surmise from the director’s early success, Lungin did not let the changing times weigh too heavily on him, however, as he has enjoyed a directorial career of nearly 25 years, which has traced the ups and downs of post-Soviet Russian society. Lungin’s “heartfelt” script for Taxi Blues attempted to participate in the shifting social discourses of the early 1990s in the Soviet Union, and his subsequent films have carried on the same project. As he noted in his 2008 interview with Seans, “I viewed the chaos more as a chaos of opportunities than of ‘inopportunities’” (n. pag.).

3 Начались для меня 90-е с того, что я написал «Такси-блюз», первый сценарий, который соответствовал мне и моему внутреннему миру. Первый, написанный не на заказ — я писал о себе, о своих ощущениях. И как-то освободился. Я помню, в 89-м году мы снимали «Такси-блюз». В нашем офисе был телевизор, и в перерывах между съемками мы непрерывно смотрели дебаты. Люди там все время говорили, спорили. И все это казалось очень важным тогда, очень замечательным... С перестройкой в стране начались перемены и в моей собственной жизни. Как режиссер я, несколько неожиданно для себя самого, снял фильм. Попал в Каннь, взял приз. Я был к этому внутренне не готов. И как бы на ощупь пошел по этой жизни (n. pag.).

4 “Я этот хаос воспринимал скорее как хаос возможностей, чем невозможностей (Shavlovskii, n. pag.).
From the outset, Lungin has dabbled in alternative models to Soviet masculinity to fit the changing times. His first three films, which he released in the 1990s, when Soviet narratives were no longer tenable, progressively toy with dismantling on screen the myth of the active New Soviet Man, who is devoted to the (Socialist) government and father figure, who cultivates his body, and who sacrifices it to gain recognition from the state and viewers. Such films also variously attempt to redeem or overthrow the male bearers of this typology. In place of these aging paragons, Lungin in his first film proposes a passive, non-ethnically Russian musician to serve as a model for contrast. The musician in *Taxi Blues* is a semi-foreign entity—a man ‘othered’ enough to upset the status quo of masculinity on the Soviet screen. And to add to the otherness of the story, in *Taxi Blues* Lungin brings in foreign filmic elements such as jazz music, the buddy-movie genre, car chases, and explosions. So, beginning with his first directorial effort, Lungin borrows Western cinematic elements not only to enhance his work, but also to inform his alternatives to the tired New Soviet Man. Thus, Lungin’s directorial debut, along with his ensuing two efforts, maps the changes in Russian cinema funding, film content, and masculinity by injecting modified Western tropes.
Taxi Blues establishes a gender dynamic that will obtain throughout Lungin’s following two films, of juxtaposing a tainted descendant of the paradigmatic Soviet ideal with an othered artist, a member of the intelligentsia. Neither of the men in these antithetical pairings is very sympathetic in the first three films. The progeny of the New Soviet Man are cantankerous, violent, and generally anti-social, while the artists tend to be equally irascible, disconnected, and dauntingly quirky. The removal of sympathy allows for objective comparison. Thus, in spite of the revulsion they may initially raise in viewers, the artists serve as an alternative model to the outmoded cinematic hero. In Taxi Blues, Lungin sets up an opposition between the burly Ivan Shlykov (Petr Zaichenko), who at times goes by the name Vania, and Aleksei Seliverstov (Petr Mamonov), chiefly called by the familiar names Lesha⁵ or Lekha. Shlykov is a true exemplar of the stiffed New Soviet Man. Lesha remarks that Shlykov’s very surname sounds “reliable, like a brick.”⁶ Shlykov’s physiognomy

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⁵ Lesha is the transliteration of Лёша, which is pronounced “Lyosha.” It is the diminutive of the man’s name, Алексей (Aleskei).
⁶ “Фамилия надежная, как кирпич.”
matches his stalwart name. Despite his wrinkles, slightly expanding waistline, and receding hairline, his robustness and vigor are immediately apparent: a stocky, but not overweight frame, imposing dark eyebrows, piercing eyes, a jutting cleft chin, bulging biceps, and fleshy pectorals. Shlykov takes immaculate care of his body, tempering its musculature according to old Soviet maxims. Each morning he lifts weights like a powerhouse, utilizing bodybuilding as a method to allay the stress of sitting in place and chauffeuring Muscovites around the city all day in his taxi. The film emphasizes his physical regimen: after working out, he takes a shower and, wearing a ridiculous shower cap and chewing with his mouth open, nourishes his muscles with hard-boiled eggs. He even keeps a dried fish in the sun visor of his taxi for extra protein while on the job. Whatever waking time he is not exercising he devotes to his job as a cabbie. This discipline informs his attitude toward every aspect of life.

Figure 2. Taxi Blues. Shlykov trains.
Even if he is past his prime, Shlykov not only undeniably looks the part of an aging New Soviet Man, but also possesses the internal discipline to match. He would not seem out of place forging steel or pursuing Nazis alongside Aleksei in Mikhail Chaureli’s *Fall of Berlin* (1949). But Shlykov no longer has anyone or anything to which to devote his body and his discipline. He no longer has faith in Soviet ideological platitudes, and actually sells bootlegged liquor as a side business, flouting Soviet laws. It is Shlykov’s elderly roommate, Pops (Ded), played by subsequent Lungin regular Vladimir Kashpur, who is still a true believer in Soviet propaganda; he sits all day in the communal flat he shares with Shlykov, listening to Soviet radio propaganda about record-breaking harvests that have resulted from Socialist agricultural advances. Though Shlykov no longer believes in Soviet ideology, he humors Pops and continues to go through the physical motions of the behavior historically identified with the New Soviet Man.

Since he maintains the formulaic rituals advocated by Socialist Realism, Shlykov's pumped-up body and razor-sharp discipline demonstrate that he wishes to align himself not only with the former literary and cinematic exemplar of the New Soviet Man, but also with graphic portrayals of and social discourses surrounding one of his primary avatars – the Soviet athlete, as explicated by Julie Gilmour and Barbara Evans Clements (210-22). Gilmour and Clements write:

The masculine values promulgated by [the magazine] *Sovetskii sport* [*Soviet Sports*] came just as directly out of Stalinist ideas and the Bolshevik Marxism that gave birth to Stalinism. Self-control, hard work, study, submission to superiors, patriotism, and the individual
success that all this dutiful behavior brought were the defining characteristics of the New Soviet Man. (221)

As one living, breathing iteration of Socialist Realism’s stock positive hero (Clark), athletes were expected to serve as flesh-and-blood examples to young Soviet men (and women). Gilmour and Clements observe,

Athletes were presented to the public as exemplars of three principles. The first was that pre-eminence in sport was more a function of training than of talent. Secondly, any Soviet citizen could achieve such pre-eminence and by doing so would contribute to the nation’s greatness. And thirdly, it was the responsibility of Soviet men and women who did become sports heroes to serve as examples, especially to the younger generation. (210)

Insofar as he trains relentlessly, Shlykov appears to meet the first qualification of a Soviet athlete. The film offers no hint that he was born with any talent, instead exhibiting that he attains his physical prowess through sweaty hard work, as he scowls to pull down heavy weights. However, Shlykov lacks the proper form, agility, and grace inherent in the athlete – he lacks athleticism. He is an amateur bodybuilder, and a clumsy one at that, as he sits in his bedroom in a pair of worn briefs and inelegantly yanks on the overhead bars of his makeshift Nautilus machine, grimacing and heaving. Neither does the second point apply to Shlykov, and, it is perhaps for this reason that he is so disgruntled – the social discourse that created the mandate he lives by no longer furnishes him with a way to realize it fully. Shlykov’s efforts do not contribute to the Soviet Union’s greatness, as required
by the second point. In fact, the country is disintegrating around him, and he is relegated to the indignity of shuttling social degenerates around in his taxi. No fatherland remains, the glory of which to promote. Even teenage punks on the street call him a fascist, naming him as the antithesis to the New Soviet Man.

In his own way, however, Shlykov devises a way to accomplish the third point, the injunction “to instruct Soviet youngsters and the readers of the nation’s sports magazines in the essentials of masculinity, which included such ‘healthy’ behavior as hard work, physical exercise, service to profession and nation, and devotion to family” (Gilmour and Clements 210). As Taxi Blues begins, Shlykov has no younger family members or protégés to whom he can bequeath his discipline in work and dedication to physical fitness. In fact, the only “family member” he can tally is his on-again, off-again love interest, Kristina, played by Lungin regular Tat’iana Koliakanova, who seems to specialize in hysterical and nymphomaniacal roles. And the only colleagues he can turn to besides Pops are his co-cab drivers at the taxi depot, who are only good for an occasional comradely shot of vodka.

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7 Koliakanova revises the role of a sexually repressed woman in two of Lungin’s subsequent films. She plays the bride’s uptight aunt in The Wedding (2000) and a smug interpreter in Poor Relatives (2005). Both characters finally unwind after bouts of vigorous, but initially uninvited sexual congress, which are played for comedic effect. Koliakanova plays a hysterical widow in Tycoon (2002), where she dons geisha garb and hides in the bathroom following the death of her husband.
Figure 3. *Taxi Blues*. Shlykov inspects a punk's hands for signs of masculinity.

About halfway through the film, however, after Shlykov leaves Lesha in a jail cell at the police station, he runs across the aforementioned punks, who are visually effeminized with short, striped tops, lily-white skin, svelte frames, long hair, and supple palms. Shlykov slams on the brakes and assaults the youths, berating them for not knowing the true meaning of hard work, tearing one young man’s striped t-shirt and holding up his limp, white hand to expose its owner’s idleness. He demands that the hoodlums ask his forgiveness (Shepotinnik 133)—forgiveness for failing to be protégés and, thus, denying Shlykov the opportunity to fulfill his assignment as a New Soviet Man by mentoring the next generation. This episode sets off a bell in Shlykov’s mind. What clicks in this strange scene is that Shlykov has found an opportunity to fulfill the final expectation of the New Soviet Man subset of the athlete – he needs to teach someone else to train hard, to pass along his love of discipline. Although Lesha is approximately Shlykov’s age, the bohemian musician will come to stand in as the “young man” Shlykov can mentor. Here is where Lesha’s character becomes significant; he represents an alternative that resists molding. His
character stands in opposition to Shlykov, whose life is shaped by stymied attempts to live up to the sterling standard of the ideal worker-athlete in the Soviet Union.

Shlykov definitely fits the bill as a member of the proletariat (especially if there were a factory in which he could apply his physical strength), but fails to embody the bodily finesse associated with the discursively vaunted Soviet athlete. Concerning this typology, Gilmour and Clements write, “This masculine ideal, described in Russian as kul’turnyi or ‘cultured,’ was juxtaposed in the sports press to a much criticized antithesis, nekul’turnyi or ‘uncultured’ male behavior” (210). Here, being cultured does not mean being well versed in the arts; rather, it refers to behavior in public. The “cultured” New Soviet Man was expected to respect his body, train it, and comport himself with dignity. As mentioned, Shlykov’s ungainly tugging on weights, comical flexing of his stomach, and generally boorish manners disqualify him from instantiating this type. But Shlykov’s cinematic rival, Lesha, is even less congruous with the Soviet ideal. As a perpetually inebriated, indolent musician, he
cuts a stark contrast to discursive paragons of Soviet masculinity, as well as to Shlykov’s pathetic attempts to embody it. Regarding this opposition Gilmour and Clements aver, “Uncultured masculinity valorized self-indulgence (typically expressed in smoking, drinking, and sexual adventures) and aggressive physical self-assertion both in relation to other men and women” (210). This description sounds as though it were constructed precisely from observing Lesha’s behavior, as well as that of iconic Russian bard Vladimir Vysotskii and other macho film stars. Although he is a musical genius, Lesha drinks to excess whenever possible, causes a ruckus in Shlykov’s cab, starts violent fights in alleys where beer is served, and shamelessly seduces women, including his ex-girlfriend and Kristina. Following this logic, the intelligentsia, who were much more traditionally educated than steel workers and athletes, but who drank, smoked, and entertained numerous romantic affairs, can be seen as “uncultured” according to authoritative Soviet standards. Lesha, in spite of his homelessness, is perfect as a member of the intelligentsia, a counterweight to the state’s ideal male citizen. Whether or not members of the Soviet intelligentsia appear cultured to objective onlookers is beside the point—they were deemed less useful to the state than the “cultured” athlete in portrayals of the masculinity the state invented.

Lesha’s first appearance in the film is with a group of inebriated colleagues in Shlykov’s cab, and his first request is to purchase some black-market alcohol from Shlykov, who complies. After Shlykov opens the box in which the bottle of vodka is concealed, Lesha takes it in his hands and gazes at it fondly, clutching it and
weighing its heft, declaring, "There it is!" Alcoholism is Lesha's defining feature, but it is a double-edged sword. True, it destroys his body and his relationships with everyone, but it also opens his mind. He is able to produce enrapturing impromptu music when he is intoxicated. But Lesha's overall decrepitude extends far beyond alcoholism. Whereas Shlykov continues to go through the motions of the devoted Soviet son, it appears that Lesha has never felt the need to comply. He simply exists outside the system, as Gosha does in Vladimir Men'shov's Oscar-winning *Moscow Does not Believe in Tears (Moskva slezam ne verit* 1979). He does not see the need to work, as, he remarks to Shlykov, he can earn enough money by simply playing a few gigs. His failure to expend any effort results in a body that is scrawny and feeble, and neglect of nutrition and hygiene has certainly contributed to his lack of teeth and thinning head of hair. Of prime significance is the fact that Lesha does not condition, or temper, his body, to use Soviet terminology. Rather, he must tear his body down in order to create. He destroys his body and mind to reach an inspired state that allows his musical talent to shine through. Neither does Lesha give much thought to any other necessities in life. He is basically homeless, bedding down wherever he can at night, and eventually moving in with Shlykov. Thus, Lesha is passive; he lets life happen around him and relies on his talent just enough to survive. He has an extensive inner life based on music; he sees no need to conform to public expectations. Rather, he spends the bulk of his days in pursuit of a fix. Regardless of

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8 “Вот она!”
his physical condition and lackadaisical attitude, Lesha, as well as others, refers to him(self) as a “genius who talks with God.”

Not only is Lesha physically and attitudinally othered from Shlykov, he is ethnically and socially differentiated, as well. First of all, he is Jewish, and the Russian Empire, Soviet Union, and Russian Federation have a checkered history, to put it mildly, with their Jewish population, the discussion of which exceeds the scope of this dissertation (Cullen, Kornblatt, Doubly Chosen). Suffice it to say that Shlykov’s attitude toward Lesha’s ethnicity is not out of the ordinary. Shlykov drops a few racial epithets, comments on the size of Lesha’s nose, and, in a moment of anger, blames Jews for his dire economic predicament, but he is not guilty of any blatant anti-Semitic violence in the film. Thus, the “Jewish question,” as Sergei Lavrentiev calls it, does crop up in *Taxi Blues*, but never commands the narrative (135). It merely serves as another layer of othering applied to Lesha. What is highlighted more in *Taxi Blues* is Lesha’s membership in the intelligentsia, which, according to Soviet ideals of masculinity, renders him less desirable in the eyes of the state, as well as his connection to Western culture. The music Lesha plays is not Soviet or traditional Russian folk music. His genius lies in the unrehearsed

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9 Может я гений. Может, я с Богом разговариваю.
10 Violent anti-Semitism will emerge in Lungin’s next film, *Luna Park*.
11 Soviet Jews and the Soviet intelligentsia are two overlapping circles in a Venn diagram of ideological others in the Soviet Union. Shmuel Ettinger writes that, in spite of periodic, rampant anti-Semitism, a many Soviet Jews were highly educated and comprised a large portion the intelligentsia (50-51). This state of affairs was destabilized, however, during the Brezhnev era, as Jews were systematically banned from key sectors of the economy and culture (52-54). This hobbled their employment opportunities and compelled many to emigrate to North America and Western Europe.
performance of jazz music, a Western (specifically American, and African-American, at that) form of music – on a saxophone, a Western instrument. Moreover, Lesha immediately bonds with the African-American saxophone great Hal Singer, and the two kindred spirits declare to Shlykov that they are “brothers.” This soul-connection with an American ethnic minority only serves to alienate Lesha further from mainstream proletarian Soviet masculinity.

Lesha wears Western clothing, as well, most prominently a garish red\textsuperscript{12} silk shirt. This clothing automatically sets him apart in the Russian cinematic tradition. In regard to early Soviet films, Emma Widdis writes, “In Soviet Russia, dress and clothing functioned as symbols of belonging, defining participation in the collective project, and exclusion from it. A specifically Soviet form of dress, therefore, was an ideological imperative, a means first of distinguishing the good and the bad, the loyal citizen from the saboteur or class enemy” (51). The red shirt, in opposition to

\textsuperscript{12}Ironically, red was the supreme emblematic color of the Soviet Union.
Shlykov’s demure navy blues and grays, is another element that marks Lesha as other, in spite of the irony that red was the supreme color of the Soviet Union.

Clearly, Liosha obtained the shirt on the black market. Indeed, when Shlykov considers acquiring Lesha’s clothing as part of payment toward the musician’s debt, he lowers the amount he is willing to pay for each piece when he discovers that the clothes were manufactured in the West. Embracing the West, however, is not an anti-Russian thing to do. In Tsarist Russian the so-called “Westernizers” (zapadniki) for decades advocated the assimilation of Western European cultural and political models into Russian life in order to modernize the empire. It was the later Soviets who fought to keep out too many Western influences.

But Lesha’s embrace of the West is not the only “Russian” quality that overcomes the Jewishness that Soviets use to other him in their society. Scholars and critics have observed that Lesha represents a sort of present-day version of an ancient Russian character type – the holy fool, or iurodivyi. In her article discussing the phenomenon of the holy fool in Lungin’s Taxi Blues and The Island and Tengiz Abuladze’s Repentence, Svetlana Kobets defines the role of the holy fool thusly: “The holy fool, in whose form is melded together self-annihilation, a symbolic (ascetic) departure from the world and the ‘cursing of the world,’ is one of the most salient characters in Russian culture” (n. pag.).

It is the holy fool’s job to hold a mirror up to society so that people may discern its flaws. And traditionally, holy fools, in spite of their antisocial behavior, were highly esteemed: they were considered close to

13 Юродивый, в образе которого спаяны самоуничтожение, символический (аскетический) уход от мира и “ругание мира” – один из самых ярких персонажей русской культуры (n. pag.).
God.\textsuperscript{14} In fact, Lesha muses aloud that he may converse with God and cries out to pursuing police not to touch him, claiming that he is holy or a saint (sviatoi). Of course, Lesha is anything but religious, and the type of the holy fool is drawn from old Orthodox heritage. Lesha is, instead, a sort of secular holy fool, whose job it is to expose the flaws in the Soviet Union’s atheist culture, including its ideal forms of masculinity. In Taxi Blues, the invocation of the type of the holy fool serves to tie Lesha to the Russian tradition, mitigate his otherness, and combat the numerous levels on which he is alienated from that tradition. Thus, Lesha’s membership in the intelligentsia, as well as his role as a secular holy fool, ally him with the Russian tradition. What Lesha is not is Soviet. Thus, Lesha introduces a complex constellation of Western, old Russian, and spiritual traits—a mélange that can be rather offensive at times—to confront Shlykov’s failed attempts to embody Soviet manliness.

On the night Shlykov first encounters Lesha, the saxophonist and his drunken comrades run up a cab fare of 70 rubles, each slyly slinking away to weasel out of paying. Gravely offended, Shlykov hunts Lesha down to a “House of Culture,” which is full of various artistic types, to demand the money. When Lesha confesses he cannot pay, Shlykov shoves the musician into a bathroom stall and confiscates his saxophone in order to pawn it for the cash. At this point Shlykov reveals a refreshing honesty, establishing himself as a gruff, yet intermittently positive character, inasmuch as when he learns that Lesha’s saxophone is worth a lot more than 70 rubles.

\textsuperscript{14} Here one need only think of Sonia and Lizaveta in Dostoevsky’s Crime and Punishment. Lungin will again use Mamonov in a later film, The Island, as a holy-fool type, and in Tsar as Ivan the Terrible.
rubles, he declines to pawn it. Instead, asserting his calling as a mentor, he tracks Lesha down again and compels the reluctant savant to work off the cab fare, as well as a subsequent bill for damages from flooding several floors with an overflowing bathtub. Shlykov exhibits great relish as he forces Lesha to complete such odd jobs as washing taxi floor mats and hefting luggage for passengers. At first the relationship seems to be one of a master-slave dynamic, but when the trope of the mentor-New Soviet Man from Soviet films past is factored in, Shlykov’s cruelty seems more like self-affirming tough love than mere sadism. Here, Shlykov finally realizes how to reestablish himself as an ideal model of Soviet masculinity. Instead of being a New Soviet Man, he will train a New Soviet Man, much the way that Commissar Furmanov shaped the raw material of Chapaev into a Civil War hero.¹⁵

But Lesha is no Chapaev. He merely wants access to alcohol, and this is the sole reason he stays with Shlykov. Lesha simply does not possess raw, innate character fertile enough for the inculcation of Soviet consciousness, according to the Social Realist master plot as dissected by Clark. Lesha is far too passive, and exists outside Soviet societal norms. All his passion lies in music, to the neglect of contributions to state welfare and his own material welfare. He cannot even take decisive action for his own physical or economic welfare for the same reasons. Indeed, Lesha is reluctant to stay with Shlykov and continue to do odd jobs, but the would-be mentor has enough resources to provide Lesha with unlimited vodka and a bed, so Lesha lingers. Thus, there develops a peculiar relationship of dependence

¹⁵ The Brothers Vasil’evs’ wildly successful film Chapaev (1934) lays out this storyline on celluloid just before Socialist Realism was officially adopted as the artistic aesthetic of the Soviet Union at the 1934 Congress of Socialist Writers.
between the two men. It does not appear to be a relationship of homosocial desire, but rather a symbiotic partnership in which Shlykov’s masculinity is (temporarily) validated, and in which Lesha can have a floor on which to flop and a bottle from which to swig.

Living in such close quarters, Shlykov and Lesha cannot help but become rivals sexually. Neither man, however, is allowed to accede to the position of father figure and attain complete hegemonic masculinity; therefore, *Taxi Blues* does not stray too far from the prohibition on fully realized sexuality in Socialist Realism. In literature and film the New Soviet Man is forestalled from attaining adult sexuality (Kaganovsky 67-118). Bending, but not breaking this prohibition, Shlykov and Lesha are never depicted as having a “healthy” sexual relationship with anyone. Their sexual potency is diverted, and concerns each other only inasmuch as it positions them as rivals. For example, Lesha figuratively makes love to his saxophone. In one scene, after consuming a “half-and-half cocktail” of Pops’ eau de cologne and tapwater, he plays an enchanting melody on his instrument. The camera shoots him from behind, erotically zooming out to reveal his glistening, soapy buttocks. If romantically drawn to anyone or anything, Lesha is attracted to his music. Shlykov confiscates Lesha’s object of desire, but ultimately returns it to him.

The two heroes’ literal sexual encounters in the film are dysfunctional and stymied, as well, and no encounter ever ends in success. Shlykov and Kristina’s first scene together culminates in a quick kissing session in a grimy elevator at Kristina’s place of employment – a dank slaughterhouse. After Lesha locks his girlfriend in a

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16 This is an argument forwarded in an upcoming article by Frederick White.
bathroom to get high on the pills in her medicine chest, the two reconcile by eating chocolates in the bathtub. During an evening of relaxation, Lesha serenades Kristina on his saxophone, which he refers to as a “sexophone,” prompting Kristina to sidle up to him for a slow dance. Enraged, Shlykov forcefully tears them apart, but is met with a blow over the head by Kristina. When he regains consciousness, he finds Kristina arranging a boxful of trophies on a windowsill, muttering under her breath that Shlykov is the “champion of dicks.” To overpower her, he pushes her facedown onto the windowsill, penetrating her from behind, presumably anally. Their congress is interrupted by a telephone call, forcing Shlykov to pull up his trousers and abandon the sex before completion for either partner. The end of the film leads viewers to believe that Lesha will remain an impotent in alcoholics’ rehabilitation, and informs viewers that Kristina parts with Shlykov to marry another man. In challenging the prohibited sexuality of the New Soviet Man, the film never completely backs away from it. Thus, the prohibition against sex is bent a bit, but never fully violated. Both men remain single, never reaching the level of patriarchy.

Lungin’s film emphasizes the changes ushered in by glasnost’, though, as the talent Lesha has to offer is what Western record labels are interested in. Lesha is fortunate. He is in the right place – Moscow – at the right time – perestroika – to be discovered by talent scouts from the West. Lesha’s success undoes the discourse surrounding, and the promise to, the New Soviet Man, and demonstrates to Shlykov that his efforts have been basically for naught. Lesha’s talent for music is innate. He

17 чемпион хренов
does not labor to earn the chance of signing a contract for a massive record label, nor does he necessarily deserve it. And he certainly does not serve as a mentor to any up-and-coming musicians or contribute to the glory of the Soviet Union or Soviet ideology. He is simply a \textit{schastlivchik} of the times. His success is painfully galling to Shlykov, who champions hard work as not only the path to success, but almost an end unto itself. Why does Shlykov labor so hard for no reward, whereas Lesha does virtually nothing and is rewarded with a lucrative record contract and a tour of the United States?

As soon as Lesha hits the big time, Shlykov begins to experience more sympathetic feelings toward him. Shlykov attends one of Lesha’s concerts. As he stands amidst the crowd, absorbing Lesha’s music, tears stream down his cheeks. He finally understands that Lesha has become a star through no particular effort of his own – and that he, Shlykov, has been taken down a peg in terms of ideal masculinity in spite of his unceasing labor. The film renders visual the fall of Soviet masculinity and the ascendance of capitalist masculinity in a scene wherein Shlykov stops his cab in the middle of traffic on the New Arbat to gaze upon his failed protégé on a jumbo screen. Lesha, maniacally riffing on his saxophone in New York City, is illuminated in neon green. The screen on which he is projected dominates the rest of the frame, which is shrouded in night. Shlykov stands with his back to the camera at the bottom of the frame, while cars whiz past him on the relatively modern thoroughfare. This episode, more than any other in the film, visually conveys the New Soviet Man’s obsolescence on the late-Soviet silver screen.
Lesha brings back expensive gifts for Shlykov and Pops from his American tour, turning the tables on who pays for whom in the duo’s relationship. Lesha and some rowdy friends show up at Shlykov and Pops’ kommunalka, where Shlykov has prepared a cozy meal of soup to welcome Lesha back to Moscow. Lesha et al. burst in and unload a suitcase full of tasteless (“uncultured”) souvenirs. These gifts reflect Lesha’s sense of style and irony. They dress Shlykov up in a top hat and a red silk kimono, the fabric of which recalls the loud shirt Lesha was wearing the first night the two men met. To complete the picture of the New Soviet Man’s demise, one of Lesha’s fellow revelers blows up a sex doll and tosses it into Shlykov’s arms. The camera slowly zooms out on Shlykov as he stands motionless, and this pathetic spectacle is intercut with a panning shot of Lesha’s friends as they howl with laughter at the ridiculous sight of the formerly proud, hard-working New
Soviet Man. Shlykov’s masculinity is ultimately dismantled, and, by proxy, so is that of the idealized, yet antiquated typology he symbolizes. He wears the extravagant color of Lesha’s deadbeat character from the film’s beginning, only this time the garment is marked as Eastern, with a Chinese character on the back. Finally, Shlykov is left holding the plastic sex doll, the only specter of adult male sexuality he will be able to obtain, as he cannot even maintain Kristina’s affections. The Soviet creative class then roars in laughter at him. After Lesha and his friends depart, stumbling and cackling as they shuffle out, Shlykov awakens from his stupor and commandeers a car (not his own cab). He initiates the notorious climactic car chase after Lesha that smacks of Western action cinema.

As the film’s action draws to a close, two cars screech to a crash and explode on what appears to be the Borodinskii Bridge, sending flames and columns of smoke into the air, obscuring in the background the Stalinist-gothic Ministry of Foreign

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18 I have taught *Taxi Blues* three times in a film course about ethnic and other minorities in East European cinema. On two occasions, students have commented that they did not like the film since it treated Shlykov so cruelly. The gesture is cruel, but so is Shlykov’s treatment of Lesha during the early phases of their relationship.
Affairs (*Ministerstvo inostrannykh del*, or *MID*). The camera pans upward to the sky, following the acrid plumes as they billow into the dawn. The film does not end ambiguously here, however, with Shlykov in despair and Lesha in clover. Lungin seems uncomfortable leaving Shlykov in the lurch. To abandon the cabbie standing next to a burning taxi holding an injured Asian stranger is too unpleasant a fate to bestow on a man who so assiduously struggled to be a paragon of masculinity. To lighten the blow, Lungin inserts a textual epilogue over the clouds of noxious smoke, which briefly delineates what becomes of the four main characters in the wake of the film’s events. Pops dies, is buried, and is immediately forgotten. Kristina obtains employment as a waitress and marries a policeman. What happens to Lesha and Shlykov is more telling, and perhaps not as rosy as the final words on the screen may imply. Lesha, the Jewish musician who disturbs the hallowed position of the New Soviet Man in Soviet cinema, relocates to New York and begins work on his second album. Unfortunately, he is unable to slough off his alcoholism and lands in a rehabilitation clinic. Shlykov, instead of being charged for vehicular manslaughter, saves up enough money to buy his own taxicab, and a Mercedes at that! Thus, it appears that Lungin does not dare to let his musician succeed too much or let his proletarian meet an ignominious end. As a result, I argue that Lungin backs away from taking a definitive stand against the New Soviet Man and rescues the finale with his *deus ex machina* epilogue, which redeems Shlykov to a degree and besmirches Lesha’s success with a stint in rehab. In softening the blow, Lungin also provides viewers with a happy “Hollywood” ending, which aligns with the Western cinematic tropes that critics have impugned the film for utilizing.
When viewed against the paradigm of the New Soviet Man’s expectations, however, the ending is not as happy for this archetype as it perhaps first appears. In fact, the film undoes Shlykov’s idealized masculinity, if not Shlykov himself, to a greater degree than viewers may think. The epilogue prevents Shlykov from fulfilling the three expectations that define the New Soviet Man. True, he is rewarded with his own cab, and perhaps comes to acknowledge the benefits of Lesha’s example of freedom. Indeed, until the mid-1990s, according to Marina Peunova, this was a primary trait of the intelligentsia. “Freedom has historically been a *prima facie* for the Russian liberal intelligentsia” (231). Yet as a clan they received special privileges, such as food, from the state. More important, though, is that his ability to instantiate the New Soviet Man is irreversibly thwarted. He still has his strong body and work ethic, but there is still no country for him to which he can devote himself, and, as history has shown, that country was soon to disappear altogether. More important, however, is that Shlykov loses his protégé, as Lesha moves to New York City. Shlykov cannot be a New Soviet Man, neither can he mentor a new Soviet man to take his place. Furthermore, Shlykov’s prowess as a potent sexual being is reduced by Lesha’s ability to charm both women characters in the film, despite his unsympathetic behavior. However, the film also limits the musician’s success, as he is unable to break the cycle of self-destructive alcoholism that inspires his work, yet ravages his body. Thus, Lesha’s attributes serve as a catalyst to deprogram Shlykov’s defunct ideas about masculinity, even if Shlykov as a person eventually succeeds economically. Lungin will have to wait until his next two films, *Luna Park* and *Lifeline*, to dismantle in increments the cinematic myth of
the New Soviet Man and the men who fulfill the role, as well as to allow the othered, Westernized, internationalized musician in his films to ascend to a position of respectability and identification on screen.

2. *Luna Park*. Two years after the spectacular international success of *Taxi Blues*, Lungin released his much-anticipated follow-up, *Luna Park*. According to Lungin, the film was a fruitful collaboration between Russian and French production companies (Kolodizhner, n. pag.). In 1992 Lungin told interviewer Asia Kolodizhner of *Seans* that the French government, much to the chagrin of native French directors, oversaw a program that doled out small, but vital amounts of money for East European films, and that he was grateful for this resource (n. pag). For *Luna Park*, though, he dropped the micromanaging Karmitz (n. pag.), and instead picked up producer Georges Benayoun, who was simply smitten with his work and ceded (total) control over the production and editing processes. Again, the timing of Lungin’s French connection was fortuitous, especially since the Soviet

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19 Lungin spoke with Asia Kolodizhner of *Seans* magazine regarding the production of *Luna Park*. The interview transcript is recorded on *Seans*’ website, but no date is given as to when the conversation between Kolodizhner and Lungin actually transpired.

20 Lungin tells Kolodizhner: “Работай я с Марином Кармицем, денег было бы гораздо больше. В финансовых делах он человек очень яркий и талантливый, но при этом очень жесткий и авторитарный, так что отношения у нас были сложные.” If I were to work with Marin Karmitz, there would be much more money for my films. He is a very astute and talented person in financial dealings, but at the same time he is strict and authoritarian, so the relationship between us was complicated.

21 “By my second film I was able to choose, and I chose the young producer Georges Benayoun, who was in love with me and film, and who gave me money. Well, rather, he collected it for me.” / “На втором фильме я уже мог выбирать и выбрал молодого продюсера Жоржа Бенаюна, который был влюблен в меня, в мой фильм и дал мне деньги. Вернее, собрал их для меня” (Kolodizhner, n. pag.).
Union and its previous generous funding of cinematic projects had evaporated on December 31, 1991, ostensibly during the filming, editing, or post-production of *Luna Park*. What emerged from this Franco-Russian endeavor was a muddled film that defied genres and prompted one critic to take it to task for tawdrily peddling an incest narrative (Belopol’skaia, n. pag.). Ultimately, it failed to garner the critical attention and box-office receipts at home and abroad that its predecessor had attracted. Nevertheless, in *Luna Park*, Lungin creates an exhilarating, if frustrating tale, which continues the exploration and remedy of defunct Russian masculinities through their interaction with previously derided alternative models.

As they had done with *Taxi Blues*, Russian critics reacted with mixed reviews to Lungin’s second effort. *Seans*, in its ninth edition in 1992, compiled a sampling of critics’ responses to the film. Viktor Matizen thought that it felt even more foreign to Russian viewers than had *Taxi Blues*, whereas Kirill Razlogov attempted to explain the West’s lack of interest in the film by its “much more Soviet character” (n. pag.). A third critic, Denis Gorelov, praised Lungin for capturing the phenomenon of modern urban life in Russia, into which Western influences had inevitably seeped (n. pag.). Other film reviewers immediately detected Lungin’s concern with Russian masculinities in the film. Powerhouse critic Daniil Dondurei assessed,

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22 Belopol’skaia herself does not extrapolate this narrative, but merely reports that another critic had done so.
23 гораздо более советский характер (н. паг.).
24 “Фильм Лунгина ругают за то, что он похож на биг-мак. Я его за это хвалю. Лунгин — единственный сегодня в России режиссер-урбанист. Поэт мегаполиса. А современный город иначе как биг-маком быть и не может” (н. паг.). Critics attack Lungin’s film for being too much like a “Big Mac” But I praise him
In playing with Western and Soviet myths about the intelligentsia, Lungin has crafted a myth about Russia that is acted out/executed with energy and ironic sentimentality. But this myth harbors an aesthetic deception, defamiliarization. Through the exaggerations and hypertrophy of chernukha realism, Lungin himself undermines the foundations of this myth, creating a romantic fairy tale of masculine friendship. (n. pag.)

Theater critic Inna Solov’eva, who evaluated the film negatively, also sensed its foregrounding of masculinity: “There are occasions when inane repertkom definitions such as ‘perverse film’ or ‘dangerous film’ are absolutely appropriate... Luna Park is deeply disgusting in its combination of pathological national complacency with pathological male fear” (n. pag.). Indeed, Luna Park tackles the same two brands of masculinity that Taxi Blues had put on display – the disillusioned proletarian and the dissolute intelligent. In other words, Lungin yet again shows two unsavory hypostases. And it is to his credit that he does not cast the intelligentsia in a rosy light. The only difference is that the social moment from which Luna Park emerged was even less stable than the late perestroika era in which Lungin is the only “urban” director in Russia today. A poet of the megalopolis. And a modern city cannot be anything but a Big Mac.

25 Играя с западными и советскими интеллигентскими стереотипами, Лунгин творит миф о России, исполненный бешеной энергии и иронической сентиментальности. Но в нем же заложена эстетическая обманка-остранение. В преувеличениях, гипертрофии чернушного реализма Лунгин сам подрывает основы этого мифа, сочиняя романтическую сказку о мужской дружбе (н. паг.).

26 Бывают случаи, когда глупые реперткомовские определения — «порочный фильм», «вредный фильм» приходятся абсолютно впору... «Луна-парк» глубоко омерзителен по своему патологическому национальному самодовольству в сочетании с патологическим мужским страхом (н. паг.)".
which the previous film was set. *Luna Park* was released at precisely the moment that the Soviet Union imploded, when the myths of Soviet masculinity could no longer be feasibly sustained. As Janet Swaffar argues, the film proffers “alternative” identities (95), and these alternatives are sorely needed.

As critic Maiia Turovskaia noted, there is no place in Moscow called Luna Park (n. pag.), but that matters little. In fact, Lungin transforms the entire city of Moscow into a much darker, more carnivalesque milieu than in the frenetic *Taxi Blues*. Russia’s capital becomes a veritable amusement park, and one of the recurring visual motifs used for narrative and editing purposes is to track characters as they ride gleefully on a roller coaster. But this Moscow is no Disneyland. Lungin’s capital city is not a bustling family-friendly enclosure, the concourses of which hum with excited families. It is a decadent, decaying metropolis of forsaken souls desperate to belong anywhere they can and survive anyhow they can, insanely jealous of any non-Russians – especially men – they perceive to be profiting at their expense. The amusement park in the film is huge, yet oddly empty. The film’s main characters often ride the roller coaster alone. As in the case of *Taxi Blues*, Lungin shoots most of his scenes on cloudy days or at night. Any illumination is harsh or fluorescent, making even brightly lit scenes aesthetically disagreeable. Lungin carries over the photography techniques of handheld cameras and rapid tracking shots, which, when taken indoors, convey a sense of head-spinning claustrophobia, in contrast to the deserted streets. The public buildings and communal apartments where the film’s characters gather teem with riff-raff, criminals, and freaks, all confined by narrow corridors and low ceilings. Body odor, vodka-tinged breath, and
pungent cigarette smoke linger almost palpably in the air. All is grimy and derelict. No wonder the Russians of *Luna Park* feel so despondent and trapped, in search of someone to blame.

Lungin admits that he intended this film to press viewers’ buttons. He remarked in the aforementioned interview with Kolodizhner, “*Luna Park* is supposed to provoke. It’s supposed to get under one’s skin (scratch)” (n. pag.). And the film does so, especially with respect to masculinity and its relationship to the discourse of ethnic and political loyalty in the aftermath of the Soviet Union’s collapse. Indeed, Lungin ramps up to the nth degree the “masculine fear” experienced by the ethnically Russian men vis-à-vis their ethnic others. *Luna Park* takes the degraded avatar of the New Soviet Man that Shlykov represents in *Taxi Blues*, plucks him out of the relative isolation of a cab, halves his age, doubles his frustration, and places him in the service of a nationalist, anti-Semitic ideology of a gang of like-minded and like-bodied young hooligans. The film’s protagonist, Andrei, played by untrained tough guy Andrei Gutin with the perfect balance of naïveté and seething anger, is one of approximately a dozen physically fit Russian nationalist youths in the employment of a lusty, busty matron named Alena Georgievna (Natal’ia Egorova). Her agenda it is to create, in the wake of the Soviet Union’s demise, a fascist society for ethnic Russians by oppressing, confiscating the property of, and even eradicating ethnic minorities, especially

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27 «Луна-парк» должен дразнить, должен царапать (Kolodizhner, n. pag.).
Jews. According to *New York Times* film critic Janet Maslin, Lungin selected Gutin based solely on physical type for the role of Andrei, as the young man was a “muscular, blandly handsome bodybuilder with no acting experience (‘a socialist realist fresco become flesh and blood,’ the director has said of his character) and a bellicose air” (n. pag.). He is perfect for the role of a disenchanted, disenfranchised young man who was promised a decent life under communism, but has been left with virtually nothing, thanks to the disappearance of the government that made that promise. As such, Andrei, along with the other grotesquely muscular men with names like Python and Zhigan,28 do Alena’s dirty work for her. Like Shlykov, they devote their spare waking hours to bodybuilding, cultivating physical discipline, and sculpting their torsos and limbs. They hang a poster of Arnold Schwarzenegger on the wall in the gym, declaring him their god, and inventing a racist anecdote concerning the origin of his surname.

28 *Zhigan* is informal Russian for “criminal-trickster.” Coincidentally, Zhigan is the name of the leader of the group of hooligans in one of the first Soviet talkies, Nikolai Ekk’s *Road to Life* (*Putevka v zhizn’*) [1931].
These men dedicate their physical labors to Alena, who is emblematic of a bitter Mother Russia. Although she loathes her jobs, Alena earns “respectable” money as a clown at the film’s eponymous amusement park, but also as an on-call lounge singer. Additionally, she relies on her gang’s intimidating muscles and credible threats of violence to augment her income. In fact, she uses them to carry out the violence she only imagines meting out herself. For example, while Alena serenades diners at an upscale supper club, the young men rob its clients and attack the owner, whom they “accuse” of being Jewish. Andrei’s gang even begins harassing non-Jewish people, such as punk rockers and lithe teenage boys whom they perceive as gay, without her explicit orders. At a concert one evening, they scoop up two effeminate-looking men (skinny frames, styled hair, punk-style clothing) and inspect their hands for signs of the calluses, which are the traces of disciplined hard work, just as Shlykov does with the rabblerousing punks in Taxi Blues. Convening a mock
court in their weight-room, they accuse their victims of failing to satisfy Russian women’s smoldering lust and thus leaving them without children to replenish the vulnerable Russian nation. As punishment, the gang threatens not only to circumcise the poor youths, but also to cut off their testicles, thus symbolically and perversely effeminizing them and ‘othering’ them through a traditionally Jewish ritual. In her analysis, Swaffar contends that the gang members buttress their own identities as virile Russian males through the process of abjecting the men they accuse of impotency and homosexuality (98) by threatening to disfigure their bodies into closer alignment with female and Jewish stereotypes. This mock trial scene displays the gang’s engagement in authority-sanctioned protest masculinity as an attempt to reinforce the value of an idealized masculinity and re-proclaim virility as vital to the state, similarly to how the Soviet Union created the myth of the New Soviet Man to peddle a certain brand of masculinity as essential to vouchsafing the country’s future. Thus, in Luna Park, the New Soviet Man no longer lets his traditionally revered attributes atrophy in a dingy taxicab. His shiftlessness has been noticed by
nefarious forces with genocidal designs, and he has been recruited into a new set of social principles. He is to apply his aforementioned talents and physique to the malevolent ends of stamping out ethnic and gendered others.  

Andrei, however, has an encounter with an alternative masculinity that cuts very close to home and furthers Taxi Blues’ attempt to deconstruct the cinematic version of the corrupted New Soviet Man. One night after their robbery, while riding the bumper cars at the park and swilling bottles of champagne they pilfered from the restaurant, Alena teases Andrei that he is actually the son of a Jewish man who had impregnated his blonde mother and disappeared. Since Andrei was orphaned as a child, the story sounds wholly plausible and, therefore, utterly horrifying to him; hence, he tracks down his aunt for clarification and visits ZAGS to retrieve his birth certificate. These efforts, however, prove fruitless. Finally, Andrei locates the man listed as his father on his birth certificate, and it is at this juncture that Luna Park aligns its juxtaposition of masculine typologies with that of Taxi Blues. The relationship that develops between Andrei and his potential Jewish father, Naum

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29 In considering films in his book Masculinity in Crisis Roger Horrocks posits, “The violent male often secretly fears he is not a man, and sees no other way of proving he is than the method demonstrated to him by society – violence and oppression. Patriarchy recruits and trains violent males as its shock-troops, but the cost to them as individuals is enormous” (31).

30 I do not read that Alena is Andrei’s mother in the film – which Belopol’skaia (n. pag.) reports as one critic’s opinion and which I noticed in several informal reviews of the film on blogs. She is the right age, but she is definitely not his mother. She comments at one point that she was his mother’s friend, and that Naum seduced her and Andrei’s mother in the same way. Furthermore, her motives for telling Andrei are unclear to me. Alena clearly expects that Andrei’s anti-Semitism will overpower any familial attachment that develops between Andrei and his father when they meet. As a matter of fact, on the following day Alena confesses that she was intoxicated and joking when she made the suggestion that Andrei could be half-Jewish.
Kheifits (Oleg Borisov), is more emotionally loaded than the one between Lesha and Shlykov, as film critic Maslin observed regarding the odd-couple pairs in Lungin’s first two films: “In Taxi Blues, they were accidental acquaintances; this time they are blood relatives” (n. pag.). Here, Lungin’s discredited New Soviet Man has more reason to fraternize with his Jewish musician, and less reason to mentor him – they are supposedly son and father. Moreover, as Lesha does in Taxi Blues, Naum offers an attractive bohemian lifestyle and the pursuit of individual freedoms, though, as putatively Andrei’s father, he could command Andrei’s respect and companionship regardless of his way of life. Luna Park reverses Taxi Blues’ masculinity dynamic: instead of a fading New Soviet Man’s assumption of the role of mentor to a Jewish musician, a Jewish musician becomes a mentor to a disaffected post-Soviet Man.

Naum shares many of Lesha’s traits. A scrawny Jewish musician, whose music touches the lives of those who hear it, Naum writes songs for many different special occasions, and for customers of many different ethnicities of the former Soviet Union. Like the improviser in Pushkin’s “Egyptian Nights,” he is an artist who adapts his craft to any given scenario, writing songs for Uzbek birthday parties as well as for drunken soirées aboard moving trams. He also attracts artistic types to him, and at one point even a band of visiting Siberian natives in parkas are shown playing traditional instruments in his flat. But the similarities to Lesha run deeper than mere profession and physical stature. Although Naum is popular, he also is a womanizer and has a temper. Not only countercultural, he also can be antisocial. Furthermore, like Lesha, Naum is an alcoholic who drinks at breakfast and stashes beer bottles in the tank of his toilet for special occasions. Though, unlike Lesha, he
does not need to drink to be inspired, the steady consumption of alcohol does wreak havoc on his already frail frame.

Despite his less-than-virile body and marked passivity, Naum has a colorful history with women. As mentioned, Naum broke Alena’s heart when she was much younger, which accounts for why she dispatches Andrei to become acquainted with him. Naum is such a womanizer that he cannot remember whether he actually had an affair with Andrei’s mother and merely goes along with the story, taking Andrei’s word for it. Here, another element of Naum’s passivity emerges – he is passive not only in terms of his body, but also in terms of his casual acceptance of statements and events around him. In other words, he utterly inverts Russian father-figure stereotypes.

Owing to his live-and-let-live attitude, Naum’s sprawling communal apartment becomes a rendezvous site for all manner of hipsters, reprobates, and freaks. Men gamble in one room. A Russian woman brings her Turkish lover to have sex in a small tent in another room. At night, a desultory crowd of all ages – including Andrei and Naum – shares one large bed for sleeping. Naum’s laissez-faire attitude about people’s activities, combined with the great respect he enjoys as a songwriter, has earned him the sympathy and admiration of a large, diverse swath of post-Soviet fringe society. He not only presides over his own little commune, but also makes numerous friendly inroads into various communities around Moscow,

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31 This bevy of characters even includes Lungin’s mother, Lilianna Markovich Lungina, who makes a cameo appearance at Naum’s as a political dissident who has survived a labor camp in Siberia. The film’s dialogue references her real-life persecution by the Soviets and academic experience in the West.
and his activities are not designed to promote the glory of Russia, just as Lesha does not compose music for the glory of the Soviet Union. Naum’s concern is providing a physical and spiritual refuge for the marginal and downtrodden.

There are some key differences between the two Jewish musical savants, though. Lesha is physically weak, but Naum suffers from heart problems, and is liable to experience an attack at any moment. Perhaps more pertinent to this discussion of masculinity is the fact that Naum’s prostate gives him fits. Some days he urinates uncontrollably, and some days he cannot initiate the flow. He is governed by an organ accessed through the anus. If one considers Leo Bersani’s famous article on the homosexual challenge to men’s subjectivity based on sex acts and organs, then Naum’s submission to the prostate, even though involuntary and asexual, challenges heteromormnative ideals of active, penetrative masculinity (“Is the Rectum a Grave?”). Ruled by a temperamental prostate, his bodily dependencies make him passive. It is under circumstances surrounding the prostate that Andrei first encounters Naum: the musician mistakes the youth for a medical worker who has come to collect a urine sample.
Naum says that if Andrei wants to experience freedom, he should write a novel, start a bohemian co-op, or leave for Paris in order to thumb his nose at the powers that be. Andrei responds to this pronouncement by grabbing Naum by the lapels and declaring that people like him – men who are inferior in masculinity and insufficiently patriotic – should be crushed like cockroaches. This remark mirrors Shlykov’s attitude toward Lesha, though Shlykov prefers to maximize his pleasure and self-reassurance through belittling Lesha while he trains him. Naum initially banishes Andrei for his insolence, but the son tries to regain paternal love. Eventually the liberal life espoused by Naum appeals to Andrei, and the family ties provide a convenient excuse for Andrei to begin abandoning the aggressive hatred and bodily activity that had so defined his existence in Alena’s gang. In fact, Andrei rather easily accepts the fact that his father is Jewish, and soon dons a yarmulke and openly admits to being Naum’s son. Not only does he embrace his Jewish roots, but he comes to embrace the alternative paternal leadership, and the alternative passive, anationalistic masculinity that Naum embodies. *Luna Park* demonstrates
that, just as in the American political arena, you become much more accepting of the ‘other’ when you get to know one, especially if that one is a member of your immediate family – and if you turn out to be ‘other’ yourself.

Figure 12. Luna Park. Andrei waves a white flag.

Having no comrades who are others, the gang escalates its violence and attacks a Jewish girl who lives in Naum’s building. Andrei decides to take Naum out of the increasingly hostile dystopian amusement park that is Moscow. This decision provokes a showdown between Andrei and his gang and, thereafter, with Alena, whose anti-Semitic sentiments have metastasized. Andrei endures a beating from the gang, but sees his father as more important. The film ends with Andrei and Naum’s departure from Moscow on the standard green-and-orange Russian train. Andrei has shed his racist hooliganism, and has accepted Naum’s model of masculinity, which is that of a tolerant patriarch indifferent to macho self-assertion. On the train, Andrei finally pulls out a photograph of his mother. Naum does not recognize the portrait, and the film’s conclusion reveals the twist that the two men
are not related, after all. By this point, however, Andrei has reformed for the better.
The realization causes both men to burst into such riotous laughter that Naum’s prostate relaxes and he wets the sheets on which he is sitting. In a comical symbol of surrender, Andrei dries the white sheet by hanging it out of the train’s window, essentially flying a white flag on his defunct macho masculinity as the train speeds away from the racist, carnivalesque nightmare of post-Soviet Moscow. Lungin allows a happy ending for his hero, as well as for the Jewish musician, but takes down the peskily persistent ideal of the burly man in service to a state/social ideology.

Swaffar’s claim that *Luna Park* is one of several early post-Soviet films engaged in “a quest for alternative identities” (95) is on the mark, but the film goes beyond merely debating alternative Russian identities. It continues Lungin’s exploration of alternative masculinities, which combat the defunct and corrupted attributes of the post-Soviet heir to the New Soviet Man. Despite its Western-influenced form, *Luna Park* suggests that these alternatives can come from within Russia – from its ethnic and sexual minorities.

The conclusion of the film is adumbrated in its beginning with a visual prologue that hints at the intent of the narrative – to smooth over the conflict bred by fascist masculinity—a masculinity descended from the New Soviet Man, who, like the German male, was truly fascist. In its place Lungin posits alternative masculinities that run counter to Soviet ideology. In this prologue, Andrei stands in
front of one of the “Seven Sisters”32 flanked by his brothers-in-muscle. He shouts the query: “Who are we?” several times, receiving the forceful reply: “The Cleaners!”33 He then asks, “What are we cleaning up?” The response comes, “Russia!”34 as he flings the resurrected tricolor Russian flag from his shoulders. Next, he squeezes a red can of soda pop in his bare hand until it bursts, shouting “Down with Coca Cola!”35 The mise en scène of Andrei’s outburst links Andrei to Stalinist ideology, and thus, the New Soviet Man, and ties in the element of ethnic cleansing in which Stalin so excelled. Thereafter ensues a fierce (and what must have been expensive) battle between the bare-chested Russian youths and men who represent other active (Western) masculine identities that Soviet ideology would have condemned, such as rockers, bikers, and other hooligans. For these vicious young men, the elements of degeneracy combined with the incursion of Western capitalism coalesce into a single dangerous front that threatens the fledgling post-Soviet Russian Federation. The two sides flog each other with chains, hold each other’s heads up to rapidly spinning motorcycle tires, and beat each other mercilessly. This chaotic scene concludes with a low-angle shot of Andrei steering a bulldozer, which covers with dirt a mound of twisted vehicles and twitching bodies. Andrei paves over the fight between active masculinities – the struggle between state-sanctioned

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32 The Seven Sisters, or seven Stalinist high-rises (Сталинские высотки) built around Moscow in the aftermath of World War II, are visible from about everywhere in the city center. The Soviet gothic skyscrapers are enduring symbols of Stalin’s power and will.
33 Кто мы? Чистильщики!
34 Что мы чистим? Россию! The verb чистить carries more of a connotation of “to cleanse” than merely of “to tidy up.”
masculinities gone bad and state-discouraged masculinities come to prominence. Both types are disavowed in favor of the passive musician. Yet Lungin is still uncomfortable with demoting the individuals who fulfill the role of the macho man in service of the prevailing ideology. His next film, Lifeline, will dismantle not only the latter type, but also the men who benefit from forging their identities through its mandates, partaking of the patriarchal dividend.

3. *Lifeline*. *Lifeline* (*Liniia zhizni* 1996) is Lungin’s only non-Russian-language feature-length film, yet it appears to have been aimed at a global audience in several regards beyond the director’s decision to feature dialogue in French. In fact, one could not be faulted for surmising that Lungin was trolling for an international career with *Lifeline*, which exceeds his first two films in scale, scope, and spectacle. First, in *Lifeline* Lungin abandons the odd-couple buddy formula of *Taxi Blues* and *Luna Park*, instead opting for the genre of the crime-thriller, which continues to generate a welter of blockbusters in Western Europe and the United States. Second, while the cast showcases primarily Russian actors doing their damnedest to speak French, the film also features Swiss star Vincent Pérez in the leading role as classical composer Philippe, as well as French theater staple Jérôme Deschamps as the reluctant brains of a Russian mob operation. At this point in his career, Pérez had already starred in acclaimed/popular French films such as *Indochine* (1992), with Catherine Deneuve, and *La Reine Margot* (1994), with Isabelle Adjani, as well as the American-made film *The Crow: City of Angels* (1996), the less-seen sequel to the immensely successful Brandon Lee vehicle *The Crow* (1994). In casting Pérez, a rising international star in the 1990s, Lungin seemed to be taking a stab at wooing a
specifically Western European viewership. In addition to its two bona fide Westerners, *Lifeline* recruits a slough of Central Asian extras for exotic episodes of horseback riding in the desert and bellydancing at feasts. Finally, playing the primary supporting role of Papa—the leader of a gang of violent thugs—is prolific Armenian actor Armen Dzhigarkhanian, who, while appearing mainly in Russian films, has usually been cast as a character of Caucasian ethnicity. Thus, the diverse cast of *Lifeline* is both international and exotic, distancing the film from the Russian-Jewish question Lungin tackled in his previous two efforts. There are no openly Jewish characters in the film.

On top of including a large cast of varied international types, in terms of sets and production value *Lifeline*’s aims are more grandiose than those of *Taxi Blues* and *Luna Park*. *Lifeline* begins in the international terminal of Moscow’s Sheremét’evo Airport, but from there the action adopts a globetrotting nature, transporting viewers first to what appears to be the sands of Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan, then a clandestine brothel in Turkey, and, in its climax, to the glittering nightlife of Paris—to the Moulin Rouge, no less. In assimilating this more Western style of directing, Lungin also includes much more graphic violence in *Lifeline* than he had earlier, even in *Luna Park*. There are numerous gruesome killings, severed heads, force-

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36 Armenian Dzhigarkhanian (b. 1935) continues to act in popular Russian films, recently playing God’s secretary in the tasteless 2008 Comedy Club spoof film, *Samyi luchshii fil’m (The Best Film)*, and reprising his *Lifeline* role as a crime lord in the 2008 crime-thriller *Domovoi (The House Spirit)*.

37 I find the acting in *Lifeline* to be universally terrible: Vincent Pérez is petulant. Papa is irritatingly saccharine. Oksana’s bipolar behavior is hysterical and inscrutable.

38 Unfortunately, in my estimation, the film misses in respect to these two goals.
feedings, gunfights, attempted rapes (anal and otherwise), and explosions.\textsuperscript{39}

Furthermore, the film assumes a modality of magic realism (in contrast to his first two films’ hyperrealism), in which supernatural killings and healings occur, and dreams merge with the real-time narrative. Finally, Lungin intensifies the melodramatic romance between Philippe and Papa’s only biological daughter Oksana (Tat’iana Cherkasova [née] Meshcherkina), eventually granting a Hollywood happily-ever-after ending (Gorelov, “Tanets” n. pag.) to the lovebirds in place of the typical Russian conclusion of ambiguity or disappointment.

It appears, then, that after being screened twice and winning once at Cannes, Lungin was indeed fishing for an international reputation as a director of blockbusters, as well as raking in the attendant lucrative paychecks by appealing to Western cinematic sensibilities. This point was not lost on Russian film critics.

Marina Timasheva, writing for \textit{Nezavisimaia gazeta}, penned an excoriating review of \textit{Lifeline}, in which she derided what she considered the film’s unsuccessful imitation of Hollywood cinematic form.\textsuperscript{40} She derogated the film for lacking any sense of

\textsuperscript{39} A particularly baffling scene of violence occurs when Philippe kills a Turkish pimp by stabbing him in the eye with a large peppermint stick.

\textsuperscript{40} Режиссеру Лунгину голливудский кинематограф явно ближе европейского. Создается даже впечатление, что он проработал всю жизнь в Голливуде. И благодаря тому, что сидел где-то рядом и что-то ремонтировал, слушая профессиональные разговоры, хорошо знает, по какому лекалу изготавливаются середняковые голливудские фильмы. Но при произведении получается не голливудский, и не середняк (n. pag.). [Pavel Lungin is clearly closer to being a Hollywood filmmaker than a European one. In fact, you get the impression that he has worked his whole life in Hollywood. And since the whole time he has been sitting around and repairing something, listening to professional conversations, he knows full well the format for making an average Hollywood film. But what results in the execution is certainly not Hollywood, and it is not average. (Timasheva, n. pag.)]
moral compass. I concur with Timasheva’s appraisal. *Lifeline* is one of Lungin’s least successful efforts, and since its release, critics by and large have ignored the film. It is exceedingly difficult to procure not only a copy for viewing, but also any substantial scholarly or critical reviews for consideration.41

In spite of its genre shift, grander narrative, and pretensions to international success, *Lifeline* generally replicates the visual aesthetic and carnivalesque milieu that characterized so much of the editing and cinematography in *Taxi Blues* and *Luna Park*. Lungin’s third film is shot primarily in low-key lighting and in what appears to be soft focus. These two traits coalesce to create the impression that the film’s events take place perpetually at dusk. There is also Lungin’s characteristic frenetic, documentary-style hand-held camera work, as well as choppy editing when the action speeds up. Characters often succumb to jovial outbursts, breaking into song and generally engaging in acting that critics have dubbed “chewing the scenery.” Papa’s thugs, as well as the various members of the film’s other criminal groups, incorporate a heavy dose of physicality in their interactions, slapping each other on the face, whipping each other around, and striking each other over the head. Their actions are not merely sophomorically comedic in the vein of the Three Stooges, but oddly vicious and life-threatening. The characters do not behave in true slapstick fashion because the result of their hamming is not (intentional) humor, but irksome aggression. Such behavior becomes confoundingly more childish and more

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41 I had to obtain my copy for viewing through a source who found an .MP4 version on a torrent site. This file had clearly been ripped from Russian television, as the logo from *Kul’tura* channel festooned the upper right-hand corner of the frame for the duration of the film.
violent here than do similar actions in *Taxi Blues* and *Luna Park*. This brew of childishness and violence in Papa’s henchmen comes to serve as the primary attribute of the now defunct Soviet masculinities in the film. It is unclear what Lungin’s objective was, but, perhaps read against the grain, the film showcases the lamentable current state of the previously touted New Soviet Man—sensationalized as simultaneously sadistic and immature—and the nation’s strong ruler/father figure. The earlier ideals of Soviet cinematic masculinity have become risible, but *Lifeline* warns that they harbor serious danger to those who cross them.

Although nothing in the film identifies the time of its narrative, one can deduce from several factors that *Lifeline* takes place in the immediate aftermath of perestroika and the collapse of the Soviet Union, during the darkest moments of the 1990s; several characters verbally rue the aftermath of glasnost, and part of Papa’s devious plan involves the primitive photoshopping of images of Philippe into handshake shots with such figures of the 1990s as Yeltsin, Reagan, and Thatcher. Notably, no one ever references the Soviet Union. Thus, there is enough visual and aural evidence to situate the film as chronologically topical to the mid-1990s, when it was made. As noted, the 1990s were not a decade of heroic men in Russia. It was a time of financial chaos, in which the traits that communist ideology demanded of men were either obviated or discursively demoted by changing economic conditions. *Lifeline*, even more than Lungin’s two previous films, portrays the formerly venerated New Soviet Man as marooned in an economic and cultural environment where his previously valued traits are no longer acclaimed or even deemed useful; they are repurposed to nefarious ends. Moreover, there is no father
figure to serve as a patriarch for these wayward Soviet sons. Thus, in *Lifeline*, both the descendants of the New Soviet Man and his subsequent foundering avatars—Shlykov and Andrei in Lungin’s first two films—have been transformed into thugs in the service of a mob leader, Papa. Instead of serving and leading the Russian people, this “negative father” causes fear and destruction among them as he profiteers at their expense.

![Image of Papa's thugs infantilize and assault Philippe.](image)

**Figure 13. Lifeline.** Papa's thugs infantilize and assault Philippe.

Papa’s lead minions are the pitiless, chain-smoking pyromaniac Vadim, played by Lungin regular Aleksandr Baluev, and the wisecracking, portly, equally ruthless Uluk, played by Sergei Stepanchenko. Among Papa’s other employee-children is a laconic, brutish bodyguard, played by bodybuilder and armwrestling champion Sergei Ruban. These instantiations of the New Soviet Man no longer form a coterie of morally devoted, physically fit men striving to build communism and to serve as an example to others. Nor are they any longer in the service of a national leader/father figure. They are simply childish criminals who obey orders from a
thief. For example, Vadim boxes Philippe’s ears and slices his palm with a knife, attacking the two body parts most important to a composer. Uluk teaches the nonplussed Philippe such Russian words as underwear (trusy), impulsively dances about, and sings asinine songs about fried chicken. All of Papa’s men must sneak cigarettes behind his back, as Papa brooks no smoking on his watch.

The hoodlums’ infantilism coexists with extreme brutality; they are capable of extreme violence, which the film does not shy away from depicting in gruesome detail. For example, the men plan to decapitate Philippe and situate his head in a fishbowl with seaweed and figurines. (Papa envisions this episode in a dream.) Vadim shoots up the Turkish brothel in a tremendous firefight, and his cohorts burn the aftermath of the shootout down with a flamethrower. To highlight the absurdity of the destruction, Vadim lights a cigarette on the burning arm of one of the corpses in the carnage. Earlier, Papa’s thugs hang one of Papa’s disgraced colleagues by his back from a meat hook in a scene of striking viciousness. The men bury Philippe and the bodybuilder thug in sand up to their heads and play soccer between them. Papa then force-feeds the bodybuilder a Zippo lighter and a gold chain. Indeed, the men leave a trail of destruction and impact craters in the wake of their service to Papa. It is as if the film sets out to show how the physical strength of the New Soviet Man or his descendants has degenerated into mindless violence. A danger to whoever would obstruct Papa’s execution of his agenda, these infantile, atavistic sadists no longer are the men in the service of a father figure offering up their own bodies for slicing and dicing, as observed by Kaganovsky (7, 29). Instead, they inflict horrific,
gratuitous wounds on others. The wounding of the male body for the sake of the nation and its symbolic father has been turned outward in *Lifeline*.

Regardless, this Russian cinematic standard of devoted masculinity, which is channeled toward the realization of a greater cause, turns out to be useful to Papa, a father figure who is savvy enough to tap into it. In the late post-Soviet world of *Taxi Blues*, Shlykov is totally abandoned by a sociopolitical discourse in flux. In *Luna Park*, the fascist mother figure, Alena, is able to redirect this type’s talents for wreaking havoc on Jews and other ethnic minorities, using their hate crimes as a cover for petty larceny. In mid-1990s *Lifeline*, however, the typology of the muscular, dedicated son has become useful to hegemonic masculinity once again. Just as in *Luna Park*, the acting out of Papa’s men can be seen as the “masculine protest,” a term coined by Alfred Adler (Connell *Masculinities* 15-6), at having their understanding of masculinity undervalued (at least, in their estimation). In its depiction of the men as both juvenile and violent, *Lifeline* captures the uneasy dichotomy of the discourse surrounding the devoted Russian son-in-service, for the men’s masculine protest, or anti-social behavior, is exploited in Papa’s criminal activity. The film thus aligns the economic chaos of the 1990s, as overseen by crime bosses, with the masculine protest of the formerly revered and, now, alternatively belittled New Soviet Man. Perhaps in *Lifeline* their frustration is increased by the Papa’s prohibition on heterosexual sex (Kaganovsky). As mentioned earlier, Shlykov in *Taxi Blues* and Andrei in *Luna Park* defy the prohibition of any sex and engage in dysfunctional sexual activity. But the brutes Vadim and Uluk, as well as the rest of
the men in Papa’s employ, are wholly prohibited from sex by Papa, although they perhaps desire Papa’s daughter, Oksana.42

Like his underlings, Papa is reduced to a debased figure, although he remains in control of his domain and every bit as dangerous as the men in his employ. In fact, he is a diminished Stalin to their infantilized New Soviet men. Papa resembles the Soviet Generalissimus in terms of his role vis-à-vis the other male characters, as well as in his looks. He sports a closely cropped crew cut, a shop-broom of a mustache across his upper lip, as well as bushy eyebrows. Furthermore, Papa openly exhibits many of Stalin’s physical characteristics that were deemphasized or eliminated in visual depictions of the leader so as to mask his physical shortcomings. For example, Papa is extremely short in stature and clearly advanced in years. He also has a fraught relationship with his right hand, which at times acts independently of his

42 When Papa insists that he has authority over Oksana’s life, she barks back bitingly by asking, “Может быть ты имеешь право трахать меня?” “Maybe you have the right to fuck me?” This bizarre interaction signals a sublimated pseudo-Oedipal complex underlying the relationship between Papa and his thugs.
control.\footnote{Stalin also had an arm that disobeyed him; only Stalin’s arm was crippled. In photographs and paintings, this arm was often hidden behind Stalin’s body to obscure the disability. Papa’s unruly arm could also be a strange allusion to Peter Sellers’ eponymous character and his Hitler-heiling arm in Stanley Kubrick’s 1964 satire \textit{Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb.}} This powerful/strong arm, or \textit{sil’naia ruka}, in contrast to Stalin’s disabled arm, is instrumental in Papa’s exercise of power, as exhibited in the film’s opening sequence, when this arm is responsible for the death of the gang’s first French janissary, played by Deschamps. Finally, Papa adopts some of the fatherly condescension Stalin’s cinematic instantiations demonstrate toward other characters in movies such as Mikhail Chiaureli’s \textit{Fall of Berlin (Padenie Berlina}} 1949). In \textit{Lifeline}, all fondly regard Papa as a legitimate leader who means business but usually projects a jolly disposition. He continually hands out sweets to his underlings, as would be expected of some beloved, but, perhaps, doddering grandfather, and repeatedly pats them on the face and shoulders, as well as meddles in their personal lives. Oksana matter-of-factly states to Philippe that Papa is everyone’s father because he is better than everyone, a sentiment not far from that espoused by Natasha in her overblown speech to Stalin in \textit{The Fall of Berlin}.

Moreover, Papa has promoted a veritable cult of personality among his subordinates. His reputation precedes him across Russia, as well as in Europe and Asia, and all characters seek to remain in his good graces.
In maintaining parallels to Stalin, not only is Papa a father figure to his minions, he is also the architect of massive projects, such as the diverting of rivers and the cultivation of new cropland. Like some of Stalin’s plans, Papa’s plans do not come to fruition, and, in fact, are proposed as a scam, with no intention of realization. In the film, Papa’s scheme is to procure financial backing for a cotton-processing factory in Central Asia that he has no intention of ever constructing. The chump in his scheme is a surly young Central Asian scion named Nurali, played by Dmitrii Pevtsov. Papa calls his massive con “chudo chudnoe,” and rhapsodically describes to Philippe the giant whirring machines and breathtaking scale of the imagined facility, much in the same vein that one could picture Stalin’s imagining colossal monuments to Soviet glory and to himself. While flying to Central Asia to pitch the project, Papa shows Philippe the unsystematically developed landscape of the Russian provinces, and declares that he wants to bring televisions and cars to these rural areas, aping the promises of Soviet leaders to bring technological advances to Russia’s masses. Papa pronounces that the Soviets robbed the people of
their land and their resources, and that the narod would not be happy until it received remuneration in full—something Soviet revolutionaries claimed in their promises to rectify the abuses of the preceding tsarist regime. Papa then asks Philippe, “What is the greatest danger in Russia today?”\textsuperscript{44} Philippe retorts: “You!” Papa shrugs off the insult/compliment and responds: “The most dangerous moment happens when you determine the size of the piece you want to take. You need others to respect you, and you’ve got to respect yourself. You’ve got to know exactly how much you’re worth.”\textsuperscript{45} Papa, thus, mimics Stalin’s megalomania; only he transports this overblown self-worth and cult of personality to chaotic 1990s Russia, which must grapple with the perils of unregulated capitalism and globalization, and come to terms with the legacy of Soviet power.

Like his men, and like Stalin, Papa can be extremely dangerous, and people who know him justifiably fear his potentially lethal (re)actions.\textsuperscript{46} As discussed, Papa wields a preternatural power to kill and restore with the mere touch of his hand. When he first meets Philippe, he rubs his palm against the carpet and holds it against the knife wound on Philippe’s hand, causing the cut miraculously to vanish. When Nurali insults Oksana by calling her a “little slut,” Papa clutches the young

\textsuperscript{44} These direct quotations are taken from the Russian dubbing over the French dialogue.
\textsuperscript{45} Самый опасный момент, это когда ты определяешь размер части, которую ты хочешь взять. Нужно, чтобы другие уважали тебя, а ты должен уважать себя. Ты должен точно знать, сколько ты стоишь.
\textsuperscript{46} In the grotesque scene of Papa’s henchmen playing soccer on a sandy beach, Philippe and the bodybuilder are buried up to the necks in sand. Papa force-feeds the bodybuilder a gold chain and a Zippo-style lighter. As blood trickles down the brute’s chin, he calls out, “Mama!” Papa responds, “You should have thought about Mama earlier!” (Раньше надо было думать о Маме.)
Uzbek’s face with his spread fingers and squeezes blood from Nurali’s eyes and nostrils. And at the film’s conclusion, Papa divines that Oksana is expecting a child by merely placing his palm against her stomach, which shows no signs of pregnancy. In a dream, Papa envisions that Akhmet amputates his hand with a sword because Papa has refused to hand over Philippe in accordance with the new zakon,\(^47\) or “law” of international business among criminals. However, after he kills Nurali, he responds by cursing his palm, striking it angrily with his other fist. Clearly, he is uneasy with his powers.

But Papa is ultimately not the Stalin from the heyday of Socialist Realist films or the cult of personality that gripped the Soviet Union during the leader’s regime. He is no longer the visual representation of masculinity and patriarchy par excellence, as described by Kaganovsky (145-48). He wears a ridiculous black vest and massive red bow tie, a little bit like a member of the Pioneers or a circus clown. As mentioned, he leads a ring of not-so-petty Mafiosi, and his power has an international reach, but he is now only one of many crime bosses across the former Soviet Union, as is demonstrated when the council of crime lords meets to discuss how to deal with Philippe’s insult of Nurali. As a diminished figure, Papa must subject himself to the greater law in deference to other regional patriarchs such as the powerful oligarch Akhmet from Central Asia. Nonetheless, Papa creates a sub-

\(^47\) The new “international law” on display in the immediate post-Soviet world of Lifeline seems to have veered somewhat from the concept of “thieves in law” (vory v zakone) that had existed during Soviet times. Men on the crime syndicate were expected to abide by a “code of ethics” with each other as they conducted their extralegal affairs. Of significance here is the prohibition of establishing a family (i.e., becoming a patriarch by having a wife and children).
law for his own domain, which Oksana articulates as follows: “Our rules are as simple as can be. You behave well, and we’ll be good to you. You behave badly, and we’ll take bad measures against you.”\textsuperscript{48} What qualifies as good, however, tends to be relative and subject to Papa’s whims. In any case, Papa’s law is subordinated to the larger \textit{zakon}\textsuperscript{49} observed by the pantheon of post-Soviet crime lords. Papa is the supreme leader of his underlings, but he is no longer the supreme ruler of the former Soviet Union, or even the post-Soviet criminal network that sprang up in the wake of the superpower’s collapse.

As did Shlykov and Andrei in Lungin’s two previous films, Papa realizes that brute force, or even sacrifice of a physically powerful body (Kaganovsky 29), is no longer sufficient for success in the post-Soviet socioeconomic climate, and that other forms of masculinity have come to be just as, if not more, valued. Only, Papa is a masculine paragon, whereas the protagonists from \textit{Taxi Blues} and \textit{Luna Park} figure as offshoots of the outmoded New Soviet Man, who was subordinated to that father figure. In fact, Shlykov and Andrei would likely be working for Papa were they to appear in \textit{Lifeline}. Thus, the realization that ideal masculinities have shifted has reached the pinnacle of the masculine hierarchy. At the top stands Papa, a degenerated Stalin figure, who resigns himself to the fact that he must recruit a Lesha/Naum type if he wishes to maintain his position there. He rationally decides to exploit the newly valued “Western” forms of masculinity in Russia.

\textsuperscript{48} Порядки у нас очень простые. Ты ведешь с нами по хорошему, и мы с тобой по хорошему. Плохо себя ведешь, мы поступим с тобой по плохою.
\textsuperscript{49} закон – law
As do Lungin’s two previous films, *Lifeline* unseats the flailing posterity of the New Soviet Man and the Great Father Figure of the Soviet Union with a gentler, more passive masculine type. In fact, Papa has already come to grips with the necessity for change and realized that his own position as the wealthy leader of a crime circuit has become dependent upon the talents of a foreign artist—a man who does not constantly rely on force or the sacrifice of his physical body, but one who persuades through improvisation, inspiration, and creativity. Papa needs a foreigner ‘with good ears,’ perhaps indicative of a man who is able to sense the environment.50 Of course, it does not hurt that Philippe is a Westerner, and perhaps would be heralded as more trustworthy in international business transactions than the Russian mob. This material dependence/survival of old Soviet forms on exoticized new forms perhaps exceeds the filial or familial dependence that Shlykov and Aleksei experience vis-à-vis the Jewish artists to whom they attach themselves.

Indeed, Philippe does not strike viewers as the paragon of Russian cinematic masculinity on either side of the chronological divide. First, Philippe is a Westerner with no ties whatsoever to Russia outside of familiarity with its classical composers. Awkward and petulant in his interactions with the film’s Russians, he is hyperactive and physically unprepossessing—scrawny and coifed with a wispy ponytail pulling tightly at his receding hairline. What Philippe claims to excel in is the composition and production of music, though the film only displays his playing a piano once and,  

50 At the outset of *Lifeline*, Papa realizes that he has squeezed all the usefulness out of his first Frenchman (Deschamps), which results in the Westerner’s death. As Papa’s thugs push this poor man around before his death, one comments that the man’s ears ‘stink.’ Ears will play an important role with the new artist they recruit/entrap—Philippe.
on another occasion, a harmonica. Apparently, Philippe can produce music by ear and has numerous classical pieces memorized. In fact, Papa calls Philippe “Mozart,” and quips that he will serve as Philippe’s “Salieri,” referencing Pushkin’s playlet, as well as Peter Shaffer’s 1979 play and Miloš Forman’s 1984 filmic adaptation of Amadeus, in which Antonio Salieri, a hardworking yet undistinguished composer, decides to kill Mozart, a musical genius who refuses to take his talents more seriously.

As a composer, Philippe values his perfect sense of pitch over all other physical attributes. The film sets up its primary opposition of masculinities in the metaphorical comparison between Philippe’s ears and Papa’s strong arm. When Philippe is stranded at Sheremet’evo Airport, he browses a souvenir shop, and decides to purchase a prototypical Russian shapka ushanka to cover his ears. He does this to drown out the irritating noise in the airport so that he can sleep. He is awakened from his fitful slumber by Oksana’s execrable attempt at playing the harmonica. Later, Philippe withstands the buffeting and teasing of Papa’s thugs quite well; the only time he snaps back at them fiercely is when they strike his ears. He shouts: “Don’t touch my ears! Are you mad? I’m a composer!” Philippe’s ears are his most cherished physical attribute and he strives to protect them at all cost. These very ears can be seen as gendered, according to Russian philosophical history. Petr Chadaaev, in writing to the Russian nation, subjectifies the people as feminine, as they are listening to his words, taking them in passively (Aizlewood 123-4). In Lifeline, however, these “feminine” ears become masculinized, though they remain

51 Только не уши! Вы спятили? Я композитор!
passive. Philippe must be receptive to sounds, pitch, and inspiration, but he employs this passivity to create. Just like Lesha and Naum, who also let life happen to them, live passively, but create music to inspire Russia and the world, Philippe comes to triumph over the active descendants of the Soviet Man and Stalin by dint of that very passivity. Lungin’s musicians are able to absorb input, and process that input in a way that helps them succeed financially, and in Philippe’s case, romantically, in the chaotic 1990s in Russia. This combination of introspective creativity and outward passivity will come to serve as a hallmark of respected masculinities in Lungin’s oeuvre. Passivity is key in the desirable new masculinity. It is, however, a proactive passivity, inasmuch as the passive artists leave themselves open to inspiration, then act upon it.

Papa’s arm represents a different form of activity, which is aggression. The owner of the arm uses it to lash out, whereas the ear, as a passive organ, listens and absorbs. The active organ is a source of wonder, but also a purveyor of death. By contrast, the passive ear allows Philippe to stay alive, and it will provide for him once he has returned to Paris. Papa’s arm nearly controls him, and he is in constant fear of losing his arm or succumbing to its seemingly independent will. Philippe knows that if he protects his ear, it will serve him well. Thus, in Lifeline, Papa’s ‘strong arm,’ formerly a symbol of hegemonic Russian patriarchy/masculinity, loses out to the ‘ears’ of the musicians, who harbor a new form of heroism.

In a stroke of charitable foresight, Papa realizes that his defunct brand of active masculinity, along with that of his rambunctious, ribald sons, is diminishing in socioeconomic value with the changing, globalizing times. The hard work, the active
application of the self of Salieri has morphed into the violent force wielded by the Russian mafia. And this iteration of masculinity has begun to lose out discursively to the passive genius of Mozart—at least in the universe of Lungin’s first three films. Unlike Salieri, however, Papa opts against offing the object of his indignant jealousy, Philippe. With the new information that he will become a grandfather, Papa decides to cede the future to Philippe’s masculine typology. When Akhmet and the other former-Soviet crime bosses demand Philippe’s head as compensation for Nurali’s death, Papa eventually offers himself as a sacrifice to satisfy the zakon, rather than pursue Philippe any further. In the film’s final scene, Papa envisions Oksana and Philippe’s daughter as she waves goodbye to him, while he climbs into Akhmet’s car, where he will be chauffeured to his death.

Of course, the men who are still invested in the obsolete Soviet models—the men in Papa’s employ, and especially Vadim—feel betrayed by their father figure, who, they realize, has placed his hopes for posterity in a passive foreigner, not in them as devoted sons. In response to this sense of betrayal, along with the indignation at the waning respect toward their formerly venerated masculine qualities in the wake of the ascent of the New Passive Artist, the bandits ‘act out’ first by tormenting Philippe. They attempt to drag him down to their level of immaturity and violence. They dress Philippe in the blazer of a schoolboy’s uniform, complete with embroidered insignia, as well as in a boy’s tight white briefs. They cut his hair in nasty fashion, remarking that they will “cut off everything that sticks
out.”52 As mentioned, Vadim slices a “lifeline” along Philippe’s palm, which Papa later heals. When Philippe escapes, the henchmen threaten to rip off the Frenchman’s testicles, threatening that he will not need them anymore.53 They repeat the actions of Alena’s gang—they threaten to alter Philippe’s body to make it more feminine by removing masculine markers. On one occasion, after Philippe has suffered a severe beating, Vadim and Uluk touch up his bruises with foundation and lipstick before he does his performance to the Asians to sell the cotton factory. Even police officers in the film are under Papa’s power and strive to bring Philippe down to their level of childishness. Before handing the apprehended Philippe over to Papa, one of the officers spits on a handkerchief and wipes off the Frenchman’s face, exclaiming, “How can I show you to Papa? You’re so dirty!”54 Thus, all the men in Papa’s employ try to humiliate Philippe. But their agenda is not long for this world. One by one, the men are killed off, either by Akhmet’s men or by Papa himself. The last of Papa’s men to die is Vadim, who, in Paris, realizes that Papa has abandoned him and the crime circuit. Vadim, Papa’s most devoted son, dons a pair of costume angel’s wings in the dressing room of the Moulin Rouge and then commits suicide by discharging a pistol in his open mouth. Papa, the diminished Stalin figure, and his men, the infantilized, perverted descendants of the New Soviet Man, all meet horrific ends, leaving the path open for the artist whom Lungin posits, but never quite champions, as a viable new type, in his first three films.

52 “Мы отрежем ему все, что торчит.”
53 “Когда я его поймаю, я ему яйца оторву. Они ему все равно не понадобятся.”
54 “Как я тебя покажу Папе? Ты такой грязный!”
*Lifeline*, even more than *Taxi Blues* and *Luna Park*, rewards its alternative artist and punishes its formerly idealized (post-)Soviet masculinities. The film concludes with the removal of all masculine types except for Philippe (and Akhmet, who ostensibly returns to Central Asia with Papa’s head as a trophy). Philippe is rewarded with the largesse of the patriarchal dividend in ways that exceed the successes of Lesha and Naum. True, Lesha garners a lucrative recording contract. Naum is able to escape the anti-Semitic hell that is fermenting in Moscow. But Philippe is able to escape Russia entirely. He also receives Oksana’s hand as a wife/partner, and the film intimates that the two are expecting a child together. Furthermore, Philippe’s ears are intact. Thus, he is able to retain his most cherished physical attribute and continue his composing career in France. He himself will become an actual biological father, as he has overcome the prohibition on heterosexual contact. His passivity and creativity win out in the long run over the active aggression of Papa and his sons-in-crime. Unlike in Lungin’s first two films, the passive artist wins in no uncertain terms, and the old Soviet models, as well as the men who exemplified them, are quashed.

With his most Western movie, *Lifeline*, Lungin lets the alternative artistic masculinity prevail in terms of social success and benefits. He also utterly unravels the New Soviet Man archetype, as well as the men who seek gender benefits by hewing to its mandated characteristics. In *Taxi Blues*, Lesha achieves financial success, but he is unable to kick the vice that destroys him, to cast off the bodily destruction that must take place for him to achieve that success. In *Luna Park*, Naum escapes the horrific carnival of the immediate post-Soviet-collapse, but Naum is not
Andrei’s father, and there is no epilogue to suggest any future successes. In *Lifeline*, Lungin permits his artist to prevail over the proletarian and the father figure in no uncertain terms. All of Papa’s henchmen end up dead, either at the hands of their Eastern analogues, or at their own hands. Papa himself meets his demise. Philippe, the foreign artist type, reaps the rewards men get in classical Hollywood happy endings. In *Lifeline*, the exotic, reluctant, unwitting artist is rewarded with a woman and a child, thanks to a chance run-in with the formerly on-top Russian men. Thus, passivity – even proactive passivity – comes into play in Lungin’s alternative artistic masculinity. He is even rewarded with the role of patriarch, usurping the position from Papa. It is this masculine imperative to patriarchy that Lungin will address in his next three films: *The Wedding* (*Svad’ba* 2000), *Tycoon* (*Oligarkh* 2002), and *Poor Relatives* (*Bednye rodstvenniki* 2005).
Chapter 3
The Rise and Fall of the Russian Father

1. *The Wedding.* Lungin takes a much-needed four-year hiatus between the cinematic train wreck that was *Lifeline* and the release of his fourth feature film. This choice seems wise in retrospect, as *The Wedding* (*Svad’ba* 2000) is much more coherent in its narrative (if less so in its characters’ motivations) and more expertly crafted in its visuals than was its predecessor. With *The Wedding*, Lungin spurns the glitzy neon of Paris in favor of the ramshackle wood and crumbling cement of post-Soviet Russia. To heighten the decrepitude, Lungin heads for the provinces, to the real-life mining town of Lipki in the Tula District, and deliberately eschews the metropolis of Moscow that served as the anarchistic backdrop of the plots in his first three films.

Perhaps Lungin feels himself to be on firmer ground when filming exclusively in Russia. Indeed, *The Wedding* garnered the best critical reviews and awards he had received in a decade since 1990’s *Taxi Blues.* *The Wedding* was screened in competition at Cannes in 2000, and although it failed to win the Palme d’Or, it did take home the prize for Best Acting Ensemble at the festival.¹ As usual, of course,

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¹ This award makes me question the cinematic taste of Cannes’ judges, as Lungin continues to insist his actors overact and embarrass themselves through their inability to dance.
Russian critics were less enthusiastic about *The Wedding* than were their Western counterparts, who throughout the 1990s kept extending festival invitations to Lungin despite the diminishing success of each successive film. In fact, prolific critic Andrei Plakhov rued the Western film industry’s continued regard for Lungin while shunning, in his view, more interesting Russian filmmakers such as Aleksei Balabanov, Aleksei German, and Gleb Panfilov (n. pag.) Writing for *Itogi*, Iurii Gladil’shchikov, who also clearly preferred Panfilov’s and Aleksandr Sokurov’s films, deemed *The Wedding* “odiously conjunctural” (of/to the moment), a cinematic quality that he contended was “not a coincidence, but a regularity” ² for Lungin (n. pag.). He also derided the film as “formally French” ³ (n. pag.). To fund his “French” fourth film, Lungin turned to French producer Catherine Dussart, with whom he would work on his fifth and sixth films, as well. He was also able to glean financial backing from German production companies, such as Lichtblick Films and Westdeutscher Rundfunk, rendering *The Wedding* more of an international effort than even his previous globetrotting releases.

Although *Lifeline* and *The Wedding* differ vastly in terms of setting and critical reception, the basic plots of the films are similar. Both films open with an educated, well-traveled Russian woman, who chooses an unwitting man from a crowd of men to become her husband. The man she selects must navigate a litany of trials to be worthy of her. When he succeeds in overcoming these obstacles, as well

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² одиозно конъюнктурная, совсем не случайность, а закономерность. By “conjunctural,” I believe Gladil’shchikov means that Lungin’s films are cynically tailored to appeal to the topical whims of the film-consuming public.
³ она [картина] формально французская
as in fending off other potential suitors, he is rewarded with her hand in marriage, as well as a child. There are key differences, though. In *The Wedding* the alluring Russian woman calculatedly chooses a Russian miner, not an exotic French musician, to become the father of her child, who is already a toddler. Furthermore, the focus of *The Wedding* logically shifts to the nuptials, and subsequently to the introduction of the child into the couple’s relationship. Thus, more than *Lifeline*, which trafficked in spectacle and violence, *The Wedding* showcases on a provincial scale the traditional crowning achievement of men’s maturation – gaining a wife and becoming a father. What is germane to the discussion of Russian masculinities is the fact that the character arc *The Wedding* requires its male protagonist to traverse parallels two traditional Russian narratives that also require their male leads to undergo trials on the path to patriarchal interpellation. First, *The Wedding* draws upon Vladimir Propp’s formalized structure of Russian folktales, in which marriage serves ineluctably as the conclusion. And, as often happens in Russian fairytales, a male character in the vein of Ivan Tsarevich or Ivan Durachok, who can be considered less-than-macho by current cinematic standards, ascends to the position of prince/patriarch. Second, in contrast to Lungin’s previous films, the narrative embraces the Soviet-Realist metaphor of tempering with regard to the protagonist’s transformation from veritable teenager to full-fledged patriarch. Indeed, the film repurposes the Soviet narrative process of social alchemy to forge an unsuspecting, underpaid miner into a celluloid hero who surpasses, in spite of their efforts, all other men in the film.
The theme of a man’s relationship to his paternity unites The Wedding with Lunig’s next two films, Tycoon and Poor Relatives, comprising a sort of trilogy exploring multiple angles of the nexus between fatherhood and Russian masculinities. In fact, Lungin’s three films from the early 2000s officially address one of the most omnipresent themes of Soviet and, later, Russian cinema: the role of the father, or rather, what the role of the father figure should be. The reestablishment of the father figure in post-Soviet cinema was just one aspect of filmmakers’ offerings of masculine heroes to inspire the populace and lure them and their rubles to the box office. Whereas contemporary hit films and television series in Russia, such as Balabanov’s Brother (Brat 1997) and Brother 2 (Brat 2 2000), Nikolai Lebedev’s The Star (Zvezda 2002), and Aleksei Sidorov’s The Brigade (Brigada 2002-4), served up soldiers-turned-heroes as avengers of the Russian (Soviet) nation, The Wedding never hints at a military past for its protagonist. Furthermore, it is not this protagonist’s responsibility to conquer a foreign element to redeem an imperiled Russia. In accordance with the aforementioned fairytale structure, it is the “hero’s” job simply to inhabit the role of an exemplary father – not on the level of Stalin from Soviet film, but merely a working-class father who loves and supports a vulnerable nuclear family. Thus, The Wedding offers an alternative cinematic Russian father three years before Andrei Zviagintsev’s treatment of the topic in The Return (Vozvrashchenie 2003). It does not posit a godlike, powerful father; instead, it takes an exploited, immature type and elevates him to said role over other types who hold more authority in terms of politics, money, and age.
Ironically, in the introductory shots of the film, *The Wedding* looks as if it will disrupt Lungin’s track record of trafficking purely in male heroes and instead feature a female lead – but this is ultimately not the case. The opening sequence expertly adheres to the narrative theory of “Show, don’t tell” as a very unstable handheld camera trails the provincial homecoming of beautiful, nubile Tania, played by Mariia Mironova. The film emphasizes that her hometown south of Moscow was a wretched place to grow up, and is probably even more wretched now, a fact to which the bus’s sullen, unwashed passengers, including a squealing pig, attest. Tania has spent the last several years of her life experiencing the chaotic ups and downs of life in transitional Moscow, where she has cultivated a successful career as a model. But this cosmopolitan existence has left her wanting; after living extravagantly she requires something the hustle and bustle of the capital and the capitals of the West cannot furnish her. As Tania alights from the bus with a fur coat draped over her shoulder, a marker that distinguishes her from the poor folk on the bus who are dressed in knock-off track suits, she mingle with the Russian salt of the earth. A shaky camera tracks her stroll through a quaint cemetery, in which she briefly pauses to prop up a fallen cross. The camera cuts and then spins around her as she paces through her childhood home, stopping on photographs of her as a beauty queen. From these two short episodes viewers can infer that both her parents have died. The flood of memories unleashed by returning home are intercut with a recollection from school when Tania played Snegurochka in a holiday play and selected as her prince one simpleton, Mishka, who collapsed from joy at being chosen. After living in Moscow and Europe, she realizes that all she needs is this
simple *muzhik*. The film suggests that she must descend deep into the Russian hinterland to find her savior. The depths are emphasized by a jump-cut from a relatively stable shot of Tania in her childhood home to a downward tracking shot made by a camera positioned on a railcar or elevator in a mine. Tania’s knight in shining armor must be dug from the bowels of the earth and transformed, just like the ore he obtains from the mine.

![Image](image.png)

*Figure 16. The Wedding. Mishka waits unalloyed underground.*

With the camera’s abrupt entrance into Mishka’s underground place of employment, the film brusquely abandons Tania as the character with whom viewers had expected to most readily identify. From this jump-cut forward Tania displays no real depth as a character. If anything, she serves as a personification of post-Soviet Russia. She is a feminine personage – and mother – who, like Russia, after surviving the social turbulence of the post-Soviet years, is now desperately searching for stability in a provincial prince. The unwitting young man she recruits

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4 In my copy of the film, which projects the credits in English, Mariia Mironova receives second billing after Marat Basharov.
to morph into her discursive savior, Mishka, is played as an adult by Marat Basharov, an actor of unabashed Tatar heritage. Mishka’s profession as a Russian miner circa the year 2000 bears several implications, and this plot choice was certainly not random, as it provides symbolic fodder for the two borrowed traditional Russian narratives in the film, as well as links Mishka to Lungin’s recurrent theme of (irrational) self-sacrifice for creation. Mishka is not only a miner, but, in social terms, can be seen as analogous to the terrestrial raw materials he excavates. He is a crude and unalloyed hunk of human ore ready to be tempered into a cinematic Russian patriarch. The camerawork insinuates as much with its rapid downward tracking shot into the mine, which is lit with a single circular light, as if emanating from a miner’s helmet. Viewers imagine that they are descending not only into a deep mineshaft, but also into the depths of humanity. The second of such tracking shots ends with Mishka dancing for joy at having been chosen by Tania.

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5 The first and last names of Basharov’s character in The Wedding are Mikhail Krapivin. The characters in the film most often call him Misha, Mikha, and Mishka. Reviews of the film, as well as the cast list refer to him as Mishka (Мишка), which is a special “pejorative” or infantilizing diminutive, often used by children to refer to each other. In Using Russian: A Guide to Contemporary Russian, Derek Offord writes that, “When used of adults about children or about other adults these forms may express disapproval or even express coarseness” (182). The interpellation of the young man as Mishka serves to further diminish him in relationship to the other male characters in the film.

6 In 2012 Marat Basharov received the award for Meritorious Artist of the Republic of Tatarstan (Заслуженный артист Республики Татарстан). Before he landed the starring role in The Wedding, Basharov had played supporting roles in the films The Voroshilov Marksman (Voroshilovskii strelok 1999) and Nikita Mikhalkov’s The Barber of Siberia (Sibirskii tsiriul’nik 1999), but went on to star in such Russian blockbusters as Dzanik Faiziev’s adaptation of Boris Akunin’s The Turkish Gambit (Turetskii gambit 2005) and Vladimir Khotinenko’s historical epic 1612 (1612 2007).
When Mishka emerges from the mine after his shift, the film allegorizes him as an element obtained from the earth, ready for transformation. Tania’s choice liberates him from the lowest rungs of Russian society and sets him on a path toward a revered masculine identity. The trials Mishka will endure in the ensuing twenty-four hours before his wedding night are the processes of social alchemy that are akin to forging an acolyte into a revered masculine figure of elevated societal value (Hellebust 25-28). Rolfe Hellebust contends that this revolutionary metaphor of forging exemplars out of metal permeated early Soviet literary thought (29).

Lungin, through invoking the miner, is toying with a similar allegory. Thus, instead of seeking alternative masculinities in exotic musicians as he did in his first three films, for his fourth film, Lungin plunges the depths of the Russian provinces to find one of the lowliest, but most patient Russian workers to offer up as the raw material to fashion into a substitute for war heroes on screen and rich men in real life.

Mishka’s humble position on the totem pole of masculine figures is merited not only by his young age. His profession plays into the equation, too. Russian miners in the decade following the Soviet Union’s demise were paid infamously poorly, if at all. Coal miners in rural regions, including Siberia and the Caucasus Mountains, worked for months without so much as a solitary paycheck – yet they still continued to labor. Groups of miners eventually protested their dire plight by blocking railroad tracks. But, for the most part, they continued to extract the fossil fuels that allowed Russia to operate. Nevertheless, the country and its network of semi-privatized mining companies did not value the miners enough to pay them a living wage. Indeed, in an interview with Marina Bagdasarian and Aleksandr Klimov
of *Ekho Moskvy*, Lungin comments apropos of his visit to Lipki that he could not fathom how the destitute, jobless youth there occupied their abundant free time (n. pag.). In a sort of meta-cinematic gesture, Lungin invited the unemployed miners of Lipki to be extras in *The Wedding* (Bagdasarian and Klimov, n. pag.). More significantly, though, Lungin’s film furnished a celluloid opportunity for the proverbial down-and-out Russian miner to accede to a discursive social position above the bosses who delayed their pay and the citizens for whom their labors provided electricity, warmth, and locomotion. *The Wedding* provides a fantasy narrative of hope for the underclass of manual laborers.

Not only is Mishka’s profession not highly valued in Russian society of the time, but he as an individual is subjected to exploitation, mistreatment, and even bullying at the hands of the other men in Lipki. First of all, he is the youngest member of the crew. Second, he is physically less imposing; he is smaller. He lacks the impressive muscles, height, or beer belly\(^8\) of the other men. Finally, he is the

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\(^7\) Lungin’s cinematic carpetbagging did not impress Russian critics, however. Gladil’shchikov sniped, “Regardless of how hard Lungin tried to make his film humane and hopeful, we still get the sense that it is an outsider’s [tourist’s] view of the country, its people, and its problems. It is as if a completely pure person has arrived and shot a film about the life of cockroaches. Sure, he adores the cockroaches, but they are still cockroaches” (n. pag.). Как ни старался Лунгин сделать кино гуманистическое и обнадеживающее, туристский взгляд на страну, людей и проблемы все же ощутим. Приехал чистенький человек и снял фильм из жизни тараканов. Тараканов он обожает, но они все же тараканы.

\(^8\) Some might be inclined to see a beer belly—instead of six-pack abs—as an anatomical symbol of weakness in men. Roger Horrocks offers a counter argument: “The beergut is a formidable defence (sic). You walk through a crowd, and people have to get out of the way because your gut precedes you. You can hide behind it, you can almost hit people with it. It is also a badge of manliness—I can drink sixteen pints a night, and I wear this to prove it. Never mind that it could easily kill me, the sheer effort of carrying it around—I’m proud of it. It shows I’m a real man” (161).
poorest. As he has no money to buy a wedding gift, he spends the first half of the film trying to procure a paltry sum to purchase Tania a trinket and some flowers. As he cannot afford wedding bands, his mother surrenders hers for the ceremony. The other men in the film, looking down on his lot, stand in the way of his relationship with Tania. (This section will subsequently discuss some of these trials in its analysis of the other masculine types in the town.) These various slights and hurdles are analogous to the tests in fairytales by which the hero proves his mettle, and to the tempering process of Socialist Realism by which a literary/cinematic protagonist comes to full social consciousness according to that aesthetic mandate’s master plot. And as in Russian fairy tales, Mishka successfully navigates the obstacles and setbacks, but he does so not entirely on his own. He has a helper in his workmate Garkusha, played by the late Russian actor Aleksandr Panin.9

Ultimately, the series of tribulations figuratively fashions Mishka into a discursively full-fledged adult male. But Mishka does not get his “social reward” until he has taken on one very important final responsibility. The newlyweds sneak away from their reception to consummate their marriage, but everything goes wrong. Mishka behaves awkwardly, as is expected, but even the furniture gives out from beneath them, interrupting the couple’s momentum. At this juncture, Tania admits that she has a son from a previous affair. Mishka mulls over her confession for only a moment before he agrees to spring little Mitia from a children’s home. In a

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9 In March 2013, Panin was discovered dead in his apartment in southwestern Moscow. Forensic experts concluded that he had been beaten to death with an ottoman and glass bottles (Afanas’eva n. pag.).
situation where other men would have annulled the marriage, Mishka embraces the challenge of rearing a fatherless boy. Although he does receive help along the way to becoming a traditionally *bona fide* adult Russian man – help (and hindrance) from Garkusha, the ring from his mother, and the love of his new bride – he has to take the final step and take on another man’s child. As soon as the couple retrieves the child from the orphanage, the film allows Mishka sexual congress with Tania in a haystack. The couple returns to the wedding reception, where Mishka announces that he has a son, much to the guests’ bewilderment.

![Figure 17. The Wedding. Mishka inherits the patriarchal dividend.](image)

This unqualified adoption of another man’s son highlights the primary trait separating Mishka from the other men in the film, and from the other alternative masculinities Lungin has offered in earlier films. Mishka is innocent and sympathetic. He may seem a bit weak and willing to let everyone take undue advantage of him, but he is utterly charming and generously self-sacrificing. His general social passivity links him to the religious masculine types that Lungin will
introduce beginning with *The Island*. From the outset Mishka’s goodness is self-evident, and Tania cannot bring herself to get angry with her groom even when Garkusha gets him drunk a few hours before the wedding ceremony. Instead, she merely washes him up, tenderly calling him “my little alcoholic.”* Whereas Lesha, Naum, and Philippe in previous films spanned the spectrum from annoying to repellent, Mishka is a wholly likable character, whose happy ending viewers would likely cheer. The film entreats viewers to believe the notion of a country bumpkin’s masculinity triumphing over other paradigms in the film. In showcasing Mishka, the film both champions and challenges a very traditional form of heteronormative masculinity. On one hand, Mishka is willing and eager to assume the paternal role; but at the same time, he accepts another man’s child as his own, which is hardly heteronormative. Moreover, Mishka is gentle, generous, and tolerant—traits not generally among the constellation of variously viable characteristics in a Russian that valorizes a man’s role of responsible paternity in protecting and regenerating the nation.

As in Lungin’s previous films, Mishka is juxtaposed with other topical iterations of Russian masculinities for the sake of contrast. In *The Wedding*, which relies on an ensemble cast more than any of Lungin’s earlier works, there are numerous other types with whom Mishka interacts. Besides a compassion that activates his sincere/naïve desire to treat others humanely (Tania remarks at one point that Mishka would not hurt a fly), what differentiates Mishka from the other men is his position as a seemingly irredeemable beta male. Most of the film’s other

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10 Алкоголик ты мой!
men hold positions of greater authority or significance in the town and Russian society at large. (Garkusha does not, but he is too drunk to care.) The other men’s rivalry with Mishka is not surprising, as they are all heteronormative and, therefore, indentured to competition as a testing ground for their own masculinity. Tania is, indeed, a desirable object, and even brothers in folk tales—whether biological or metaphorical—resent Ivan Durachok’s success in all spheres and, particularly, with regard to ‘the princess,’ which Tania most certainly is. When Mishka finally speeds away from Lipki on his motorcycle with his little family in tow, he does so triumphantly snubbing all the men who have stood in his way.

The most formidable masculine type in the film is that of Tania’s former beau and current stalker from Moscow, the petty New Russian Vasilii Borodin, played by Vladimir Simonov.\textsuperscript{11} Borodin cuts an imposing figure with his tall frame, radiates

\textsuperscript{11} Lungin will treat the phenomenon of scheming, well-connected New Russians at length in his next film, \textit{Tycoon}, and will satirize this type in the following, \textit{Poor Relatives}. 

Figure 18. \textit{The Wedding}. Mishka and Borodin tussle over Tania.
wealth with his foppish clothing and large black Suburban, and resorts to violence in
order to get his way—something Mishka cannot and would not do. Given Borodin’s
self-satisfaction, Tania’s choice of a “lesser” man clearly wounds his pride and leads
him to undertake “typical” masculine measures. He travels from Moscow to Lipki,
seeking to rekindle his previous affair with Tania and eliminate Mishka from the
equation. Invading Tania’s pre-wedding hairstyling appointment to beg her to
return to him, he positions his pair of thugs at the foot of the stairs to punch Mishka
in the stomach, then attempts to lure Tania from his rival by presenting her with an
expensive ring. He crashes the wedding reception and enlists locals to sing Tania
emotionally moving songs in an attempt to revive her romantic interest in him. All of
his efforts, though, amount to naught. The film portrays Borodin, who should be able
to procure anything he wants by dint of money and force, as pathetic. His wife
periodically telephones him with interrogations as to his whereabouts and
activities. As mentioned, his clothing (most obviously his ascot) renders him less-
than-serious. Furthermore, although Borodin provides for his family materially, he
betrays them morally. Most importantly, however, Tania, as the symbol of a Russia
that has gone through the Klondike capitalism represented by Borodin, refuses his
advances. She tells him honestly that she left him because she wanted to be in love
and to be with a man who really adored her. Russia tells the New Russian a
resounding no in favor of a peasant laborer.

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12 He reacts incredulously to Tania’s confession of love, actually asking her about
Mishka: “What do you want to do with this holy fool?” (Что ты хочешь сде
лать с этим юродивым?) The invocation of the holy fool ties Mishka in with Lesha from
Taxi Blues, as well as foreshadows Lungin’s next exploration of this Russian type in
Father Anatolii in Ostrov.
Figure 19. *The Wedding.* Borzov’s technological ineptitude.

Portly Officer Borzov, played by Aleksandr Semchev, is a policeman galled by his post in a small town, who seeks to tap into Borodin’s clout in order to procure a transfer out of the provinces into Moscow. When Borodin comes into town determined to destroy Mishka’s wedding, Borzov proposes to jail Mishka on his wedding night – under unsubstantiated accusations that the groom robbed Tania’s aunt – so that Borodin will have the opportunity to abscond with Tania. The chubby cop extends this offer in the hope that Borodin will draw upon his connections to secure him a more prestigious post in the capital. Clearly not an effective public servant, Borzov is out of shape, cannot operate a computer, lacks the townspeople’s respect, and cannot see beyond his own self-interest. Unhappy with his employment in the Russian provinces, where police work lacks drama and attention, Borzov takes out his frustrations by persecuting the one young man who looks as though he may succeed in life.
Even Mishka’s own father (Vladimir Sal’nikov) complicates his son’s attempts to throw a special wedding for Tania. He does so to inflate his own (rather ridiculous) reputation in the community. Obsessed with cultivating a public perception of a storied, moneyed man, he still wears his Soviet medals on his lapels, and his only goal in the film is to organize a lavish banquet so the town will awe at his largesse. Accordingly, he requisitions all of his son’s delayed salary from the mine – including the paltry amount laid aside to purchase a modest gift for Tania – to fund the feast. He also wishes to maintain authority over Mishka, as if he is unwilling to cede the narrative to the next generation, and he plans for Mishka to continue boarding at his home so as to have control over his son’s life and salary. Obviously, however, not everyone in the town respects the father’s cultivated persona, as shown in a comedic scene in which he wipes away an epithet written in chalk on a large portrait in his honor on the town square.

The final male type that is juxtaposed to the protagonist is Mishka’s perpetually intoxicated, mercurial comrade, Garkusha—the caricatured drunk Russian that so incensed critics such as Gladil’shchikov. Since Garkusha gets drunk whenever he can, his overburdened wife, Zoia, collects her husband’s pay to forestall his immediately liquidating it on vodka. When drunk, he beats his wife and sexually assaults women.¹³ Garkusha perpetrates the bulk of the mischief that

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¹³ “Everything you would expect from the European-oriented film of Pavel Lungin about a wedding in the [Russian] boonies is there on the screen. The main characters first get drunk, then sober up, then rob a visiting aunt, then go on a spree at a wedding, then get drunk again, sing ‘Am I Guilty?’ pilfer a cop’s pistol, and beat each other’s faces – but hope remains. The folk are spiritual, but rowdy and insane.”

“Все, что можно было ожидать от фильма Павла Лунгина про свадьбу в глухой

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throws obstacles in Mishka’s path prior to and during his wedding. Regarding Panin’s portrayal of Garkusha, Igor’ Mantsov wrote in Seans:

Here Panin is a typical trickster: simultaneously a peacemaker and a joker. He is a powerful character who possesses magical (sexual) power, a sly devil, and a dumb fool. He eventually finds a common language with [the town’s Caucasian] street vendors, the criminal elements [from Moscow], the police, and the bride’s aunt from Khar’kov. He – never giving false hope that he has any potential – consequently turns out to be the main character of the plot, the motor.

He variously boils up porridge (creates complicated situations), and then energetically swallows it all up (resolves them). As is expected to be the case, everything ‘base’ and unattractive in and around this character is eventually transformed into something lofty. The psychophysics of Andrei Panin suited Lungin perfectly and, perhaps, even spurred the director’s movement in the film in the direction of folkloric archaism. (n. pag.)

провинции, ориентированного на Европу, - все это на экране и есть. Сначала главные герои напиваются, потом трезвуют, потом грабят заезжую тетку, потом гуляют на свадьбе, опять напиваются, поют "Виновата ли я", воруют ментовский пистолет, бьют друг другу морды, но остается надежда. Народ душевный, но буйнопомешанный" (Gladil’schchikov, p. pag.).

14 “Панин здесь типичный трикстер: одновременно мироустроитель и плут. Он и могучий герой, обладающий магической (сексуальной) силой, и хитрец, и дурак-безумец. Он рано или поздно находит общий язык и с кавказскими торговцами, и с криминальными авторитетами, и с милицией, и с харьковской теткой невесты. Он — «не подающий надежд» — оказывается в результате главным героем сюжета, мотором. Он многократно заваривает кашу, и он же энергично ее расхлебывает. Как и положено, все «низкое», неприглядное
Although I disagree with Mantsov’s assertion that Garkusha is the protagonist of *The Wedding*, I concede that he is the amoral catalyst who ignites the tempering fires that forge Mishka into a masculine paragon. Like Baba laga in Russian folktales, Garkusha provides trials for the hero, who gains wisdom from his interactions with Garkusha. For example, Mishka foolishly deposits the funds collected from his workmates for Tania’s present with Garkusha, who promptly spends it on alcohol and in the next scene appears fall-down drunk. Garkusha spends the next sum of money on vodka and ice cream, encouraging Mishka to get drunk, too. Later, after Mishka has passed out, Garkusha steals Tania’s aunt’s earrings for a wedding present. Borzov investigates and, during the wedding reception, concludes that Mishka has stolen the earrings. On the other hand, Garkusha helps Mishka out of this predicament by seducing/raping the aunt, and

вокруг героя и в нем самом в результате обращается в «высокое». Психофизика Андрея Панина идеально подошла Лунгину, а может быть, даже подсказала режиссеру вектор движения — в сторону фольклорной архаики.”
thus satisfying her hysteria so that she will not press for prosecution. He later takes Borzov hostage so that the newlyweds can escape Lipki to start a new life in a freer, more propitious locale. Garkusha, thus, both hinders and helps the protagonist. He functions not so much as a masculine type, but as an enabler for the folkloric underdog to navigate his rites of passage. In Propp’s terms, he is both an antagonist and a magical helper.

The film leaves Mishka, the protagonist and masculine type under scrutiny, completely triumphant—an anomaly in Lungin’s oeuvre. Moreover, Lungin takes the air of exoticism out of the alternative masculinities he cultivated in his first three films, awarding full adult masculinity to a member of the working class. The camera registers his triumph as it tracks alongside his exodus out of town on a motorcycle, Tania and Mitia perched beside him in a sidecar. Mishka stands up on the pedals, shouting and beaming ear to ear as dust billows behind the speeding motorcycle. This final visual unites the joy of growing up with the “phallic frisson” experienced by speeding drivers in road movies (Hark 214). The ‘little man’ has been granted patriarchy and triumphed over his domineering father, Borodin, and the police. His endurance and passivity have paid off. So with Mishka, Lungin offers a modern Russian fairytale in which a nice young man grows up and attains the crowning heteronormative achievement of marriage and fatherhood. And just as in fairytales, time does not matter much, for this dramatic reversal happens in the space of twenty-four hours. The Wedding elevates a man from the bottom rung to one of the peak roles of Russian cinematic masculinity. As Matthew attributes to Jesus in the
Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (KJV Matthew 5:5).

Figure 21. The Wedding. Mishka’s phallic frisson.

Lungin’s The Wedding was filmed in 1999 and released in 2000, just two years after the festival success of The Celebration (Festen 1997) by Danish auteur Thomas Vinterberg. In several regards Lungin’s film parallels Vinterberg’s, which is superior, in my estimation. First, each film is titled after a festive occasion – a birthday, an aging father’s sixtieth jubilee, and a wedding, the traditional initiation of a young man’s path to fatherhood, which arrives much more quickly than it would after even a shotgun wedding. Both films ostensibly venerate the role of the paterfamilias. Moreover, formally, both films adopt a similar aesthetic in that they use natural lighting and a hand-held camera. This look is imperative for The Celebration, which is the first film to receive certification by the now defunct cinematic movement of Dogma 95. As far as I can tell, Lungin’s film had no such
pretensions. But its ensemble cast, celebration of a patriarch, and stripped-down look definitely invite comparison with *The Celebration*.

One key difference emerges, however. In Vinterberg’s film, as the family gathers to fete the father, the painful history emerges that he has molested several of his children, causing one daughter to commit suicide and one son to live a disturbed life. The film ends with the remaining children, and notably, the mother, rejecting the father, leaving him outside the home and banishing him from the family. Such a plot twist and conclusion could not appear in a Russian film in the late 90s, not even in Lungin’s films, which never resort to typical masculine heroes. The search for and rehabilitation of the cultural father figure in cinema was too pressing, a trend which still obtains almost fifteen years later. Lungin does not stray from cultural and cinematic expectations in this regard. *The Wedding* serves as an early volley in the a search for a revitalized hegemonic/patriarchal masculine figure in Russian cinema, one that would continue in more popular films, such as Andrei Zviagintsev’s *The Return* and Timur Bekmambetov’s *Night Watch*. With *The Wedding*, the director’s most upbeat film, Lungin launches a trilogy of films that will explore Russian fatherhood on screen in several iterations.

2. *Tycoon*. After heroizing an underpaid, but diligent lower-class laborer, Lungin projected his sights on a contemporaneous, but antithetical masculine typology – that of the “New Russian,”¹⁵ which he had toyed with as a supporting

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¹⁵ According to Seth Graham, New Russians (новые русские), the class of driven, wily, savvy businessmen who rose to power during Russia’s tumultuous experiment with privatization of state assets during the 1990s, have obtained a mythological, folkloric reputation. The greater public, however, did not necessarily appreciate the
character in *The Wedding*. Lungin does not choose just any average New Russian to be the focus of *Tycoon* (*Oligarkh 2002*), but bases his hero on the apex of this type, the oligarch. The film’s protagonist, Platon Makovskii (played by Vladimir Mashkov), is culled from Iulii Dubov’s bestselling novel, *Bol’shaia paika* (*The Big Share 1998*). The character of Platon in the novel was, in turn, inspired by the recently deceased multibillionaire Boris Berezovksii, who amassed his fortune via automobile imports during the freewheeling, laxly regulated Russian economy of the 1990s. Thus, in the space of two years, Lungin shifted from *The Wedding’s* offering up a sympathetic gaze on an underappreciated staple of the Russian provinces and rewarding him with adult male subjectivity and freedom, to *Tycoon’s* objective view of a nigh mythic figure perched briefly atop the post-Soviet economic hierarchy.

*Tycoon* stands out from Lungin’s earlier releases in that it is the director’s only film up until its release to feature a storyline that transpires over an extended period of time—roughly fifteen years. The film begins during the reforms of the perestroika era under Gorbachev, continues through the oligarchs’ meteoric rise to economic dominance and political influence, begins to wind down with encroaching government (per/pro)secution, and concludes on the eve of the election of Vladimir Putin to the office of president. Theoretically, the film covers ground from just New Russians’ business acumen, and dwelt primarily on their aggregation of obscene wealth at a time when much of the country was living in abject poverty. Popular stereotypes arose, which persist today, that characterized New Russians as lacking taste, culture, common sense (39), and a gratefulness for the Russian tradition (41). Graham asserts that the media depiction of this type has encouraged people who fancy themselves as New Russians to fashion their behavior in accordance with that depiction, creating a reflexively influencing cycle (38). I recognize that oligarchs and New Russians are not the same class of individuals, but they both arose from the same socioeconomic milieu of the 1990s.
Before *Taxi Blues* up to the moment of *The Wedding*. Of course, little mention is made of real-life political figures during that period – only a diminutive, solitary photograph of Boris El’tsin appears on an office wall in the Kremlin during one scene, and his name is dropped on a few other occasions. The glaring lack of references to the presidency deflects attention from the first, lackluster, and later, dynamic, personalities of the individuals occupying the Kremlin in the post-Soviet era, placing the film’s focus squarely on the figure of the oligarch and his ability to achieve “greatness” in spite of the traditionally omnipotent Russian state. The film’s setting of Moscow—Russia’s primate city—further centers the narrative on the struggle for and against authority at a time when authority was contested and disregarded. Seth Graham productively defines the 1990s in Russia as a “discrete sociopolitical chronotope: Yeltsin-era Russia” (37).

*Tycoon* considers this scenario and points to the gendered nature of economic success in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union’s disintegration. Although the country lacked a strong figurehead/father figure (El’tsin’s reputation spans the gamut from drunkard to clown), 1990s Russia was unquestionably a man’s world, and the decade was indubitably a man’s era. Alexei Yurchak writes, “Most active and successful participants in the world of Russia’s private business constitute a group defined quite precisely along generational and gender lines” (72). *Tycoon* takes a look at one fictionalized example of the incredibly powerful, fabulously wealthy, extremely small class of entrepreneurs who profited from Russia’s experiment with privatization before these men were forced to heel, into prison, or into exile by the ascendant Putin regime. The film links stunning financial
success and social preeminence with the immemorial masculine traits of competition and conquest, ascribing to its protagonist a warrior mentality. In *Tycoon*, Lungin once again jettisons sympathy for his lead and instead makes salient overtures to the personal costs and social externalities that result from the compulsion to vanquish.

As has every film by Lungin, *Tycoon* garnered geographically mixed reviews from critics. Across the board, reviewers tended to note that *Tycoon* was “professionally” shot and assembled, although not everyone deemed said professionalism as an asset to its message. Americans balked at the film’s chronologically scrambled *siuzhet*. Writing for the *Chicago Sun Times*, Roger Ebert gave *Tycoon* two-and-a-half stars out of four, asserting: “The movie is handicapped by a jittery editing style that prevents us from getting involved in the flow of the narrative” (n. pag.). Stephen Holden of *The New York Times* concurred, adding that the film’s “frustrating lack of narrative coherence...doesn’t [sic] linger on the strands of its complex story long enough for any of them to resonate” (n. pag).

Russian critics, on the other hand, were disparaging as usual. Writing for *Iskusstvo kino*, Andrei Bykov condemned the film for its, as Bykov perceived it, gross inelegance. Bykov called *Tycoon* a “*lokhotron,*” and likened the film to one of its recurring visuals: “[guzzling] vodka straight from the bottle: frantic, rapid, strong.

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16 The film begins late in the *fabula* with the thirteenth failed assassination attempt on Platon (although the media believes he is dead), and constructs its story through flashbacks and memories as recounted in interviews conducted by a government investigator named Shmakov (Andrei Krasko), brought in from the Urals.
17 *лохотрон* – a lottery game set up to fool gullible people
and head-bashing” (n. pag).\(^{18}\) He charged Lungin with appropriating a gimmick Berezovskii purportedly used in public speaking—relying heavily on shopworn Soviet tropes and talking down to listeners as if they were “dummies” and “Soviet stiffs” (n. pag.).\(^{19}\) Also penning a review for *Iskusstvo kino*, Leonid Radzikhovskii agreed that the film was bogged down in motifs and allusions to (superior) Soviet films.\(^{20}\) Pozefsky summarized Russian critical reception thusly: “Those that [sic] liked the film focused on the clever ways that Lungin played with the American genre [of the gangster movie] to depict Russian life, while those that [sic] disliked it reacted strongly against an interpretation of history that they considered biased in favor of the oligarchs” (300). Perhaps even an objective view of men who prospered grotesquely while the remainder of the country wallowed in poverty was too offensive for Russian critics. It is important to note, however, just as Gladil’shchikov berated Lungin as a “tourist” director who came to Russian to ogle its filth, many

\(^{18}\) как паленая вода из горлышка — любимый лейтмотив лунгинского фильма. Лихо, быстро, крепко, по башке ударяет.

\(^{19}\) Bykov writes, “Lungin, like Berezovskii, possesses the ability to instill in the viewer wholly liberal ideas with the aid of wholly totalitarian, truly Soviet clichés...Lungin acts in an analogous way—exactly like Berezovskii, keeping in mind that before him stand Soviet stiffs and dimwits.” Лунгин, как и БАБ, обладает способностью внушать зрителю отменно либеральные идеи с помощью отменно тоталитарных, истинно советских клише. Соответствующим образом действует и Лунгин — точно так же, как Березовский, помня о том, что перед ним совки и лохи.

\(^{20}\) Radzikhovskii labels several elements from *Tycoon* as derivative from the boat races of Grigorii Aleksandrov’s *Volga-Volga* (*Volga-Volga* 1938) and El’dar Riazanov’s *A Cruel Romance* (*Zhestokii Romans* 1984), Gosha’s train ride in Vladimir Men’shov’s *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (*Moskva slezam ne verit* 1979), and the young, dynamic physics expert Gusev in Mikhail Romm’s *Nine Days of One Year* (*Deviat’ dnei odnogo goda* 1962) (n. pag.).
critics attacked Lungin solely on account his erstwhile residence in France. In spite of the drubbing by Russian film critics, Tycoon went on to break box office records to date (Ebert, n. pag.). Finally, although critics saw the film as expertly crafted, and audiences flocked to screenings, it is telling that Tycoon did not pick up any significant award nominations at noteworthy film festivals. Not even Mashkov received any mentionable nominations for his role as Platon. This snub is particularly puzzling, as Mashkov had already been declared a Meritorious Actor of the Russian Federation in 1996 and won numerous awards for his lead turn as the thieving Tolian in Pavel Chukhrai’s critically acclaimed The Thief (Vor 1997).

Platon is clearly the most unironically powerful, dynamic, “macho” hero Lungin has ever placed on the screen. As mentioned, Platon is played effectively by the handsome Russian actor Vladimir Mashkov. That Platon is often referred to by his first name gives Russian culturists reason to pause, as male characters in the Russian literary tradition are more often hailed by their surnames. It is women who are called primarily by their first names. Platon’s given name, though, unabashedly points to Plato, a historical figure of classical philosophical thought, mathematics,

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21 Bykov again lumps Berezovskii and Lungin into a class of émigrés who hold themselves in “too high” of regard vis-à-vis their homeland—as virtual “saints” (святой). He writes, “To a degree we have seen these dissidents, listened to their speeches, observed them in action, and yet we still believe that saintliness equals a combination of disgust toward Soviet power and equidistance from the country” (n. pag.). Вроде повидали мы уже диссидентов, послушали их речи, пронаблюдали в действии, а все еще верим, что святость есть отвращение к советской власти плюс равноудаление из страны.

22 Заслуженный артист Российской Федерации

23 Think Vronskii and Anna, Raskol’nikov and Sonia. When women are referred to by their last names and men by their first – think Odintsova and Arkadii – the author is conveying a sense of radicalism or referencing the woman’s power over others.
and aesthetics. Indeed, this is one of Platon's strong suits. He is a convincing peddler of attractive ideas, a valuable personal trait for entrepreneurs during the 1990s in a Russia where everyone was trying to figure out how to generate capital and attract investment in an essentially unregulated capitalist system following seven decades of rigid central planning.

![Figure 22. Tycoon. Platon's logic games.](image)

Platon's nimble thinking and captivating presence work miracles in this milieu, unlike Lifeline's Papa, whose attempt at creating miracles from nothing backfires fatally. Platon and his three comrades from university (Mark, played by Mikhail Vasserbaum; Viktor, played by Sergei Iushenko; and Musa, played by Aleksandr Samoilenko), of whom he is the undisputed leader, put their idle intelligence to profitable use by writing made-to-order doctoral dissertations. When this endeavor proves insufficient at satisfying their creativity or appetite for

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24 Platon's accountant, Nina, played by Natal'ia Koliakanova in her only meaty role in Lungin's oeuvre, calls her boss a “ratcatcher/ratcharmer” (крысолов). With his beautifully formed schemes he charms the lowlifes around him, luring them to their demise.
something more, they organize a business for hawking blue jeans when the garment was still a hotly desired commodity. When laws change to forbid the sale of foreign merchandise for hard Russian currency, Platon oversees a plan to swap millions of brooms for cars (!). It is through this enterprise that he ascends to power and begins to agglomerate his own media and business empire.25

Thus, the key component of Platon’s character is his ingenuity and polished delivery. Like the musicians from Lungin’s first three films, Platon is an artist of sorts. Like a jazz musician, he can compose on the fly, and it is telling that the film’s soundtrack is primarily comprised of relaxed saxophone jazz, a genre renowned for its improvisation and signals his forward-looking persona, contrasted to the folk music of the representatives of the status quo. In addition to a keen entrepreneurial spirit, Platon possesses common sense in spades. He is not so naïve as to think that he will not need protection from the unscrupulous Russian mafia, who are more than willing to resort to violence to benefit from the schemes of a cleverer, yet physically weaker competitor. Platon enlists the help of well-connected Larri (played by Levan Uchaneishvili and based on Berezovsky’s Georgian-Jewish collaborator Badri Patarktsishvili) to mollify and fend off his mentally less resourceful, yet physically more violent opponents. In fact, the film intimates that Larri may be simply using Platon’s business genius to line his own pockets, as he plots intrigue behind the scenes. Consequently, Platon can be seen as savvy enough

25 Infocar is the film’s analog for Berezovsky’s company LogoVaz. Berezovsky, a member of the Duma, also owned a controlling percentage in the state television channel ORT/Channel One, the airline Aeroflot, and the newspaper Kommersant”. By the late 1990s he had, according to Forbes, a fortune approximating $3 billion.
to realize ideas that can churn out money given current economic circumstances and to surround himself with people brutal enough to safeguard his creative enterprises.

As an icon of virility, Platon is a traditionally masculine cinematic hero whom viewers might desire or wish to emulate. Attractive as Platon, Mashkov is proverbially tall, dark, and handsome, with black slicked-back hair, piercing dark eyes, and a swarthy complexion (Mashkov is part Jewish and has Italian heritage on his mother’s side). He always leaves just enough five-o’clock shadow to hint at an abundance of testosterone without appearing slovenly. Although Russian characters in the film occasionally drop references to his partial Jewish heritage (Koretskii calls him a half-breed; picket signs demand he leave to Israel; etc.), Pozefsky notes that Platon’s physiognomy is mostly deracinated and does not exhibit stereotypical Jewish features (306). Although Platon does require physical protection from mafia gangs, he is in fine physical shape – not ripplingly burly like Andrei from Luna Park or Papa’s thugs from Lifeline, but trim and healthy. He wears suits well, can tolerate large quantities of alcohol, and controls his overall consumption. He does not suffer from any physical ailments like the asthmatic provincial legal investigator, Shmakov, or lack of courage like the true mathematics wunderkind in the group, Viktor. In fact, Platon does not appear anything like real-life tycoon Berezovsky, who was

26 In his review, Ebert problematizes this impression, claiming that Mashkov “in some lights looks handsome and in others feral” (n. pag.).
27 полукровка
28 In her review for Kinokultura, Lucy Fischer discusses the Jewish Question in the film, drawing parallels between Platon and Jesus, as well as Platon’s friends and Jesus’s disciples. She lists Platon’s “temporary” death, Musa’s Judas-esque betrayal, and Platon’s return to Moscow as evidence to buttress her convincing argument.
short, stout, and bald – hardly a quintessential physical specimen of masculinity (Eksler n. pag.). On screen, Platon injects a visual and attitudinal masculinity into a character based on Berezovsky, whose image was undercut in public discourse, not least by the abbreviation of his initials used to refer to him in the press: BAB.29

Of course, when dealing with heteronormative masculinity in cinema, the hero must be able to attract and “conquer” the woman he desires, whether or not this desire is long-term. Platon seems less focused on seriously courting women than he does on his business. Attracting women is merely another gamble, especially since there tends to be a sense of risk or lightness to all of his sexual encounters in the film. He takes none of them seriously and, thus, never cultivates a mutually devoted romantic companionship in the film. His first conquest is of Masha (Maria Mironova, Tania in The Wedding), whom he encounters on a train to an academic conference at the outset of the film’s fabula. At this point Platon is unaware that Masha is the wife of one of the lead ideological scholars from the Kremlin at the conference, Koretskii (played by Aleksandr Baluev, Papa’s lead henchman, Vadim, in Lifeline). With the promise of shish kabobs and revelry for the evening, Platon lures Masha back to his compartment, where he and his friends entertain her with music, dance, and vodka. In retrospect, Mark tells Shmakov that Platon impressed Masha during this first encounter by drinking vodka straight from the bottle. Later, Platon and Masha consummate their mutual attraction by having graphic sex in an upper-floor room of the conference hotel while presentations are taking place on the

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29 The Russian semantic root -bab- (BAB, Boris Abramovich Berezovsky), connoting “woman,” is used pejoratively to convey a sense similar to the English “broad” or to refer to peasant women, thus referencing class.
ground floor. This risky assignation is Platon and Masha’s only sexual encounter seen in the film, and the narrative implies that their son is conceived during their intercourse.

Beyond Masha, Platon’s other encounters with women are likewise pleasant diversions. When he is holed up at his French villa evading government investigations, he ships a Russian call girl back to the motherland without hesitation when she blocks his view of the television. When she proves recalcitrant and pours a glass of wine down his collar, he has a servant carry her away under arm. At his birthday party, he receives a cellophane-wrapped living “Miss Russia” figure, who chooses to dance with him, but he immediately passes her on to a bystander in order to attend to a vital business matter. Toward the film’s climax, Platon successfully woos the female journalist who has been interviewing him at the nationalist political demonstration against him at the courthouse. During their exchange, he indirectly conveys his interest in her, and they depart the rally in separate cars. This tryst serendipitously saves his life as, along the way, he switches cars to ride to her apartment. While engaged in foreplay on the floor, they glance at a newscast on television announcing that Platon’s car has been blown to smithereens by a rocket launcher. Here, as in the scene at the French villa, his attention is on the television, not the willing woman. In extrapolating from Platon, the film posits that the business barons of the era – men interested in accruing an empire of power and money – had little time for women, except as diversions and trophies of their romantic victories over rival men. Indeed, Platon sees women as just another way to gamble and extract fleeting personal utility. Unlike Mishka in
The Wedding, he is not interested in cultivating a family, for Masha becomes one of his business aides instead of his wife, and he quickly dispatches his son to a boarding school in England, as, indeed, the oligarchs did in the 1990s.

In the end, however, Platon is more than a ruggedly handsome face dreaming up new schemes to strike it rich. Making more money than everyone else is only one aspect of his drive, even though he is tickled when the journalist he picks up mentions that he is among the richest hundred men on the planet. More than this, though he claims that he is a free man, Platon is obsessed with proving himself better than all other men – in terms of income, intelligence, conquest of women, and, most significantly, social standing. He wants to win at every game in every venue. He begins by upstaging his main romantic rival, Koretskii, with a persuasive demonstration of reason at the same conference where he has sexual congress with Masha. A proponent of socialism (or any prevailing economic ideology) Koretskii accuses Platon’s band of mathematicians of anti-Soviet sentiment when their economic equations contradict Marxist ideology. To save the situation, Platon abandons his lovemaking with Masha mid-thrust, bolts downstairs, and seizes the opportunity to humiliate the smug communist ideologue whose wife he is sleeping with. Platon responds to Koretskii’s accusation of “strange” logic with a ‘logic

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30 In a promotional interview with Ol’ga Fedenkova of Vash dosug, Mashkov commented regarding the perceived similarities between himself and Platon: “If we talk about comparable traits, I also had the desire, when I came to Moscow, to conquer it. I came here with nothing. Apparently Lungin needed this element of gusto, which he detected in me. Gusto and cockiness” (n. pag). Если говорить о схожих чертах: у меня тоже было желание, когда я приехал в Москву, победить ее. Я приехал ни с чем. Видимо, Лунгину нужна была эта нота азарта, которую он видел во мне. Азарта и легкости.
exercise’ of his own, in which he sketches on a blackboard to prove that a crocodile is longer than it is green, since it is long on the top and the bottom, and only green on the top. His deft takedown of Koretskii by way of wordsmanship is met with amusement and applause from the delighted audience. Platon’s little victory becomes all the more galling for Koretskii when he learns that Platon had interrupted the act of cuckolding him in order to humiliate him in front of government officials.

This episode first demonstrates what Platon must sacrifice in order to prove himself cleverer, shrewder, richer, and stronger than his competitors. When Platon returns to the hotel room, Masha is understandably upset that he has deserted her for so long. He flippantly apologizes and turns his back on her momentarily as she steps away from the bed. Before he can turn back around, Masha vanishes from the room and from Platon’s life for nearly the next decade. Hence, Platon sacrifices a budding relationship (which he may or may not have pursued; it is still early in the film’s fabula and in Platon’s career) to compete against rivals. After he is reunited with Masha on a river cruise, he discovers that she has born his son and even named the child in his honor. Instead of stepping into the role of doting father, Platon responds by shipping the boy off to boarding school. He also arranges for Masha to work as a secretary in his office, but the erstwhile lovers rarely interact in the film beyond telephone calls. Platon, then, is financially capable of providing for his family and does not need to sacrifice himself to intensive labor like Mishka in The Wedding. But the cost of Platon’s drive is his role as a father, which Lungin had already established as fundamental in Luna Park, Lifeline, and The Wedding. The cost of
Platon's pursuits is the disintegration of his nuclear family. And, ironically, while Platon does not exhibit any lasting emotion or fealty to the women he attracts, he categorically demands loyalty from those in his employ, including his best friends Mark, Musa, and Viktor, as he schemes to expand his empire.

Figure 23. *Tycoon.* Platon conducts the orchestra and the crowd.

Platon desires not only to compete, but also to vouchsafe the freedom to compete, a liberty the political milieu of the 1990s affords him. Although he cavalierly remarks to the journalist the he does not fear jail, his statement is not credible. When Platon senses state and public sentiment shifting against him, he hurries to influence the national narrative by purchasing a television station and running a puppet candidate for president. In short, Platon seeks to counter the government’s trumped-up charges against him. Even the communist minority in the government expresses its approval at the “democratically elected” government’s prosecution of Platon. Platon’s personal philosophy finally surfaces in so many words in the television reporting of the female journalist he seduces, as well as in
his brief interview with her at the outset of the film when he is arriving at the courthouse. He explains in a cynical, curt statement to the reporter that the reason the government is persecuting him is because he is a “free man.” Although his assets are worth five billion dollars, and he could easily seek asylum in Europe, he chooses to stay and fight. As if on a fool’s errand, he continues to battle against other men – this time, the politicians in the new Russian Federation’s government, which has turned the tables and again seized the balance of power in the country.

Platon is at his peak of power at his 44th-birthday party, which is the visual centerpiece of the film. Movement of camera and actors coalesce to testify to Platon’s charismatic power over the population. The oligarch arrives at his party on an elephant, high above his adoring friends and fans. Low camera angles make him appear larger than life as he alights from the kerchief-waving pachyderm amidst scores of acolytes and hordes of people he cannot possibly know. As Platon moves through the crowd, throngs of sycophantic faces part as the camera swiftly pans past them while they cede a path. Hardly acknowledging Masha, Platon strolls onto a stage where a full orchestra has been accompanying his arrival, and there he commandeers the conductor’s wand, thanking his guests for having come to wish him well on his birthday. In a long crane shot, the camera zooms out as Platon cues the orchestra to begin playing, then twirls around to wave the wand at the rapt, jubilant crowd below, as if he is cuing their applause to commence, as well. As a fitting finale to the birthday party, Platon, his three friends, and Larri, who have stood by Platon since they were all dyeing black-market blue jeans, toast their friendship and success with a shot of vodka. After downing the shot, the quartet
smash their shot-glasses on the ground and run whooping into a shower of sparks of a firework display – into the fire, so to speak. This shot of falling sparks dissolves into a shot of a rainy day in Moscow as Shmakov conducts an interview. Platon’s leaping into the fireworks, followed by his friends, creates an image of his philosophy in life. He gets a thrill from jumping into dangerous situations whilst dragging his friends along for the ride. From this point onward, however, Platon’s empire will incrementally decline until state powers ineluctably dismantle it.

Platon’s brinksmanship does not produce universally successful results. He meets failure – violently so – on several occasions, as his competitive drive gets him into trouble. His first brutal defeat comes when a Volga-based gang demands that he and his new car importing business pay them a percentage and protection. When Platon flatly refuses and insults them, the bandits punch him in the stomach and beat him over the course of 24 hours until Larri rescues him with his own criminal-world connections. Years later, during the river cruise when he reunites with Masha, he races his boat against a passing vessel just to prove he is more macho – he cannot help not competing. The exertion overheats the motor, and Platon winds up sinking the boat in the Moscow River, forcing all passengers to swim ashore. His biggest mistake, though, arrives a few years later, when he attempts to enter politics by bankrolling a would-be puppet candidate for president, Lomov (Vladimir Gusev). Platon cannot stop himself from competing with Lomov, even during a casual pool game at his residence, not allowing his presidential candidate to win even one game. Platon makes the defeat even bitterer for Lomov, accusing him of general stupidity for making unrealizable campaign promises, such as bringing the value of the ruble
to par with the dollar. Lomov finally boils over with indignation and shouts that
when he is president, he will remove Platon’s “breed” (does he mean the oligarchs,
the Jews, or both?). This episode precipitates Platon’s falling out with Lomov and his
ultimate undoing.

Platon’s gutsy threat has sealed his fate; he has played one card too many. In
Lomov, and in Lomov’s treacherous backing by the Kremlin, Platon has run up
against a resurgent state—a state that grows stronger every day thanks to its crass
public appeals to nationalist sentiment. Owing to pressure from the Kremlin (and
Larri’s internal machinations), Platon loses his empire. His final mistake in the film
is to respond flippantly to a pair of police officers in the cemetery where he is sitting
on his empty grave. In

![Figure 24. Tycoon. After and before: Platon sits graveside.](image)

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31 “When I become president, I’ll get rid of your entire breed!” Вот стану
президентом...всю вашу породу выведу!
32 Fittingly enough, the root of Lomov’s name, -lom-, means crowbar in Russian, just
the sort of instrument that could be employed to break up a grip on power.
response, one of the policemen beats Platon with his nightstick, drawing an unsettling amount of blood, for merely looking like the photograph of the man supposed to be in the coffin. Platon presumably spends the rest of the night unconscious in the cemetery before hitching a ride back to Moscow with Larri the next morning. While Platon sits in defeat in the back seat, bruised and caked with dried blood, he scowls menacingly at the camera, as if breaking the fourth wall. This provides an echo shot to Platon’s grave-sitting in the cemetery, as he again swigs vodka straight from the bottle, intriguing viewers just as he had Masha that first night on the train. As ever, though, Platon maintains his composure, and only the nearly imperceptible twitch of small facial muscles belies his titanic wrath. It is at this point that the film finally flashes its title, printed in bright red capital Cyrillic letters, over Platon’s intimidating face. The oligarch, the paragon of powerful and unbridled masculinity in the heady 1990s, comes to the end of the road with a revived state apparatus full of men clambering for power. Platon fumes at this realization. Despite hiccups along the way and the eventual loss of his empire of power and influence, Platon’s determined, irate stare suggests that he will return to Moscow and continue to fight (unlike Berezovsky, who claimed political asylum in

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33 This restrained rage is characteristic of Platon throughout the film. First, Platon becomes infuriated when Viktor enters into a scurrilous moneymaking deal with a criminal gang headed by an Afghanistan war veteran named Belen’kii (Vladimir Steklov). Platon registers palpable rage not only at Viktor’s betrayal, but also at the fact that Platon does not have complete control over the workings of his enterprise. As mentioned, Platon keeps stoic composure during his confrontation with Lomov over billiards. Finally, as Platon’s partners begin to die around him, Larri convinces Platon that Musa is the traitor in the gang. Platon’s anger, which never bursts the seams, crops up again as he interrogates Musa in his hospital bed. Platon projects as much charm as possible, even when he is incensed.
Great Britain when pressure from the Putin regime intensified, and continued to “fight” Putin from there. This is masculinity in the film: the untrammeled drive to remain on top at any cost—even at the cost of losing all meaningful personal relationships in one’s life and sacrificing the opportunity to fulfill the sacrosanct role of father figure.

Of course, Platon’s brand of masculine swagger is most troubling to government men, who themselves are trying to reestablish a semblance of power over the country. The men tapping into power via government affiliation are Platon’s main rivals, as he eventually comprehends, and they become enemies from whom Larri cannot effectively shelter him. As soon as the media announce Platon’s “death,” a government council, overseen by a man referred to only as ‘boss’ (played by Konstantin Berdikov), convenes in a bania to weigh the situation. The scene is immediately reminiscent of ancient Rome and the trappings of power that accompanied Roman emperors. The men sit around a table, draped in towels and robes that look like togas, and feast on imported beer and snacks. Their clothing and the episode’s mise en scène establish them as the fledgling Russian Federation’s patriarchy. Their grip on Russia, which had been seriously undermined by the sweet-talking, fast-dealing oligarchs, such as Platon, seems assured once more. They are pleasantly surprised, but utterly nonplussed as to who killed Enemy Number One, whom they had been trying to dismantle publicly through judiciary channels, if

34 главный
35 Fischer describes this scene as an inverted “Last Supper,” thus continuing her analogy of Platon as a Christ figure (n. pag.).
not secretly by assassination. The men in the Kremlin, painted as a patriarchy, will benefit from Platon’s downfall and assimilate his fortune into state coffers.

Figure 25. Tycoon. The “senate” convenes in a bania.

In *Tycoon*, Lungin is savvy enough to bring in an outsider to serve as a foil to the men caught up in the power play in the capital. The film recruits Investigator Shmakov, an impartial voice of integrity from the Urals—who is not caught up in the political machinations of Moscow—to shape the film’s narrative with a semblance of justice. Originally, Shmakov travels to Moscow to supervise the government’s corruption case against Platon, but after the rocket attack on Platon’s car, Shmakov remains in the capital to help investigate the assassination (attempt) as deputy to upstart Detective Koshkin, played by Marat Basharov (Mishka from *The Wedding*). The story unfolds through Shmakov’s collection of interviews, confessions, and memories, which are told in retrospect by Platon’s associates. But perhaps Shmakov’s personal traits as well as his status of outsider qualify him to judge the situation. First, unlike the men around him, he does not harbor a drive for power or
money. Second, he is an unabashed alcoholic, and the first shot in the film shows him waking up in a dingy apartment with an obvious hangover. He carries an inhaler that he employs when confronted with stressful situations. In the scene where the government officials are conferencing in the bania, one of them confuses Shmakov's name for Shlykov, providing a sly bit of intratextuality that points to a down-and-out type from *Taxi Blues*. He conducts his investigation in a thorough, methodical way, rarely raising his voice or losing his temper. His only violent outburst occurs when Koshkin informs him that he must return to the Urals, without having completed his investigation. When viewers see Shmakov returning home by train, sorting through loose change for tea, they get the impression that the government has rid itself of any impartial servants whose sole interest is for justice and the people. Although Platon returns to Moscow to fight, justice will be exiled, and the government council, which presages Putin, will take up the reins of the national discourse in the twenty-first century.

Platon Makovskii exemplifies a powerful strain of Russian masculinity that could have sprung up and existed only when it did, thanks to the contraction of state power during the 1990s. A select cadre of men of non-noble background, like Platon, ascended to politicoeconomic hegemony and became as powerful as the country's ruling class and richer than anyone had been during the Soviet experiment. But this paradigm of masculinity does not obtain long, since the Russian state will again arise to be more powerful than the oligarchs. The economy picks up, cultivating a consumer class, and Putin begins his campaign to silence all the billionaires who have resisted his claim to absolute power. The film's narrative regarding the rise
and fall of Platon posits that sometimes certain kinds of masculinity are viably ascendant only under certain conditions—or, perhaps, ideal masculinity is always socially conditioned and fleeting. Drive and ambition work splendidly in a time with few regulations. But when a strong state reclaims authority, the former big men are subjugated to the position of beta males once again.

![Figure 26. Tycoon. Platon bends beneath the specter of the Kremlin.](image)

The ending of the Berezovsky story is well known. He was fabulously wealthy in exile in one of the best-known cities in the world and, yet, he still committed suicide. Thus, in *Tycoon*, Lungin provides an objective portrayal of the qualities—with unrelenting ambition as the most prominent—that propelled certain men to the top during the 1990s. This depiction is only slightly soured by the fact the Platon

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36 Platon’s fate at the end of the film mirrors Berezovskii’s up to the point of his exile. Ebert does not accept the moral lesson of Lungin’s tale, musing: “At the end of his career Plato is lonely, isolated and tired, and that is supposed to be the moral of the story. Yes, but since all of us face the possibility of loneliness, isolation and exhaustion, perhaps it is better to face that fate as a billionaire.”
failed as a husband and father, a role that could have elevated him as a man (in Lungin’s films) after the paydays of the 1990s had fizzled.

3. Poor Relatives. 2005 proved to be a prolific chapter in Lungin’s career, as his sixth feature film, Poor Relatives\(^{37}\) (Bednye rodstvenniki 2005), was his second directorial release of the year. The film won numerous awards at the 2005 Kinotavr Film Festival in Sochi,\(^{38}\) although it scored only one 2006 Nika nomination for best supporting actor\(^{39}\) and failed to rack up any awards at notable foreign film festivals. Maintaining their track record regarding Lungin’s work, most Russian critics despised the film.\(^{40}\) The director’s first release of the year was The Matter of Dead Souls (Delo o mertvykh dushakh 2005), which played as an eight-part television

\(^{37}\) Lungin’s sixth film was not extensively reviewed in the West and did not receive English subtitles in its distribution. Michelle Kuhn’s film review for Kinokultura translates the film’s title as Roots. I will be translating its title literally, as I feel that Poor Relatives describes the film more aptly than Roots.

\(^{38}\) At Kinotavr Poor Relatives won best film, best screenplay, best actor, and a special acting award for Ester Gorontin. Kuhn quips, “The fact that the jury awarded Roots numerous prizes indicates not so much the merit of the film as an unfortunate lack of quality films in general” (n. pag.).

\(^{39}\) Sergei Garmash lost the award for Best Supporting Actor in 2006 to Sergei Batalov in Nikolai Dostal’s Kolia Rolling in the Fields (Kolia, perekati pole 2005).

\(^{40}\) In a review for Iskusstvo kino, Dmitrii Bykov damns the film with faint praise. “In Lungin’s case, the picture is too professional to be a revelatory and involuntary commentary on the essence of things, but also insufficiently clever and talented to discuss the topic seriously and conscientiously. It is an unremarkable, middling, typically interim product, suitable for export, but condemned to half-success in domestic circulation.” В случае Лунгина — картина слишком профессиональна, чтобы быть откровенной и невольной проговоркой о сути вещей, и недостаточно ума и таланта, чтобы высказаться о том же серьезно и сознательно. Нормальный, среднекондиционный, типичный промежуточный продукт, годящийся на экспорт, но обреченный на полууспех в отечественном прокате ("Bednye dushi” n. pag.).
miniseries. As its title suggests, the series is based on Nikolai Gogol’s picaresque literature-course staple, *Dead Souls*, which traces the exploits of the unlovable con artist Chichikov as he fleeces the even less lovable, vapid, venal landowning class of imperial Russia.

On the heels of *Tycoon*, this series, alongside *Poor Relatives*, bespeaks Lungin’s fascination with rogue protagonists in the early 2000s, a time when his films were also pondering the role of Russian fathers. As the films from this period evolve, Lungin elevates Garkusha’s role of the second-fiddle trickster in 2000’s *The Wedding* to the serious, ambitious Platon in 2002’s *Tycoon*. Three years later, in *Poor Relatives*, Lungin carries over the theme of the enterprising swindler, but debases it in his new protagonist, Edik (played by bankable Russian star Konstantin Khabenskii), but does so with attempted/misguided comedic flair. Lungin assimilates elements of Chichikov into Edik. The connection is strengthened by the fact that Khabenskii plays the lead roles in the series and the film: Chichikov in *Dead Souls* and Edik in *Poor Relatives*. Thus, Lungin has essentially updated *Dead Souls* with a twist (Bykov, n. pag.). On a related note, other critics almost universally have likened Edik’s role to a post-Soviet Ostap Bender, the charming cheat from I’lf and Petrov’s *Twelve Chairs* (*Dvenadtsat’ stul’ev*) (Fedina, n. pag.; Maslova, n. pag.).

In *Poor Relatives*, Lungin diminishes the charm of his swindler and the scope of his racket. He demotes the novel’s defrauded proprietors from the class of landowner to destitute townsfolk, and also makes them complicit in Edik’s scheme.

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41 As mentioned earlier, since my dissertation is concentrating solely on Lungin’s feature films, it will not analyze *The Matter of Dead Souls*, which consists of eight hour-long episodes.
Instead of buying up the titles to deceased serfs, Edik creates false family members in Ukraine with whom to reunite gullible members of the Russian Diaspora. He resurrects a dead Ukrainian town, Golotvin, which had been razed by the Nazis in World War II, by staging his scheme in the nearby town of Golotvin with the willing participation of its residents. Instead of paying landowners for their “dead souls,” he pays his impecunious co-conspirators risibly paltry sums ($20, $50) to feign kinship with rich Western descendants of the Russian and Jewish Diaspora or, as Edik himself refers to them, “lost soul[s].”

Unlike Chichikov’s plotting in *Dead Souls*, Edik’s role and motivations in *Poor Relatives* continue to forefront Lungin’s filmic consideration of the relationship between Russian masculinity and fatherhood. As earlier mentioned, the early 2000s witnessed the release of numerous Russian films exploring the former/current inadequacy, as well as the long-desired re-ascendancy of the discursive father figure in Russian culture. Such films include Zviagintsev’s *The Return* (*Vozvrashchenie* 2003), Sokurov’s *Father and Son* (*Otets i syn* 2003), Vladimir Mashkov’s *Papa* (*Papa* 2004), and Bekmambetov’s duo *Night Watch* (*Nochnoi Dozor* 2004) and *Day Watch* (*Dnevnoi dozor* 2006). *Bednye rodstvenniki*, in particular, unites the sociological and cinematic conversations about how to sweeten the discourse surrounding Russian fathers – of both “Great Fathers,” such as national and community leaders, and the domestic-scale fathers Jennifer Utrata interviewed in her study about Russian men’s morale as it pertained to work and family during the

42 потеряная душа
43 Recall that Mashkov played Platon in *Tycoon.*
transitional period of the post-Soviet economy. In Poor Relatives, Edik is a failure of a father who falls short in preserving his own biological family at the micro-level, but unintentionally succeeds in creating a false communal family between his local co-conspirators and Western dupes on a macro-scale. Edik’s failed paternity and inadequate masculinity, moreover, are juxtaposed with contrasting masculine types, just as Mishka and Platon were in Lungin’s previous two films. In Poor Relatives, though, all modes of incarnated masculinity are equally dissolute, rendering Edik’s undoing at the film’s conclusion of little disappointment for viewers; the film makes no effort to solicit viewers’ sympathy for Edik in the first place. In fact, it essentially indicts all the film’s men (and, indeed, the film’s society at large) for their profound moral turpitude. Poor Relatives proved to be Lungin’s last film about the enterprising trickster type before he turned to films permeated by Russian Orthodoxy that explore alternative masculinities based on religion.

Edik’s small-time enterprise, “Roots,” is just as distasteful and morally repugnant as its proprietor, not least because he preys on the elderly. Though Edik lacks the physical appeal of Platon from Tycoon, it bears repeating that Edik is played by Konstantin Khabenskii, who has starred in numerous Russian blockbusters—moreover, in five of the ten highest-grossing films in post-Soviet

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44 See Chapter 1 for a discussion of Utrata’s study.
45 This type of business exists legitimately in Ukraine, and has been treated earnestly in Jonathan Safran Foer’s 2002 book, which inspired Liev Shreiber’s 2005 film, Everything Is Illuminated. I have met such genealogical tourists myself while taking a train from L’viv to Kraków in the summer of 2005. My compartment-mates were traveling to see where their ancestors had lived in Ukraine, but, unhappily, the Nazis had eliminated all traces.
cinema.46 (Box-office success, however, should not be equated with impressive physical presence on screen.) Not a man of hulking musculature or steely nerve, Edik is unprepossessing in appearance and cuts a rather comic figure: his chest hair sticks out of his summer shirt in tufts; he wears an oversize beige linen suit and floral-print boxer shorts. Furthermore, he does not think through all the contingencies of his plan, and his behavior does not encourage viewers’ sympathy for his failures. Whereas Mishka was utterly sympathetic in The Wedding, and Platon, though morally suspect, was nonetheless magnetically intriguing in Tycoon, Edik is wholly repellent in Poor Relatives. He takes advantage of sweet old ladies, such as the nonagenarian Ester (Ester Gorontin), who actually was separated from a baby brother during World War II. Additionally, to keep up the charade, he goads a family to persuade their war-hero grandfather to pretend to be a Nazi collaborator for week.47 Edik simply comes across as a repugnant loser – one who gets himself into his own messes.

Poor Relatives again revives Lungin’s assertive ekrinizatsiia of the Jewish Question, which, while present in Tycoon, does not commandeer the narrative as it

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46 In particular, Khabenskii was just coming off the roaring success of Bekmambetov’s Night Watch (Nochnoi Dozor 2004). He would go on to star in more monumental box-office successes, five of which stand in the top-ten highest grossing Russian-language films by Russian directors (six if one counts Bekmambetov’s English-language Wanted [Osobo opasen 2008]), according to the website Kinopoisk. The five are Bekmambetov’s Day Watch (Dnevnoi dozor 2006) and The Irony of Fate: The Sequel (Ironia sud’by: Prodolzhenie 2007), New Year’s Trees (Elki 2010), New Year’s Trees 2 (Elki 2 2011), and Andrei Kravchuk’s The Admiral (Admiral’’ 2007) (“Samye kassovye fil’my”). Therefore, although he is not a conventionally handsome actor by Western standards, he is a massive draw in the Russian film industry.

47 As anyone familiar with the Soviet Union’s history of World War II can venture, such a request would be anathema to the convictions of a dedicated Russian soldier, who likely faced untold atrocities in the battle against Nazism.
does in 1992’s *Luna Park*. Here, though, Lungin does not invoke the suffering Jewish musicians of the Soviet intelligentsia; rather, he traffics in stereotypes of Jewish avarice, approaching the subject in such a way as to have prompted Kuhn to indict the film for indulging in racist stereotypes (n. pag.). It should be noted, however, that although the film merits this criticism, it does not present Jews alone as greedy. The Russians and Ukrainians are equally venal and willing to debase themselves for a fast buck. Not even the visiting Westerners seem admirable, as each one turns out to be morally bankrupt in his own way.

In addition to the stereotype of the money-hungry Jew, Lungin invokes another Jewish typology, as well, which has been common in Western film since its inception: the schlemiel. David Buchbinder summarizes Leo Rosten’s definition of the schlemiel as “a sort of cosmic fool combined with cosmic victim. Accident-prone and ineffectual, he is the universe’s unfortunate passive bystander, to whom life happens, especially as embarrassing circumstance, and for whom taking the initiative and seeking active agency ends almost invariably in frustration and humiliation” (229). Although no one in the film, including Edik himself, ever identifies Edik as Jewish, he most certainly instantiates this type based on his failure to succeed at every turn. And the universe – if not he himself – seems to bear the responsibility for his misadventures.

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48 According to David Buchbinder, Woody Allen is the apotheosis of this type in American cinema, but Ben Stiller is nipping at Allen’s heels for the title (238-43).
In cinema, however, the schlemiel serves as more than just an object of pity or derision for the audience. The schlemiel interpenetrates and is interpenetrated with concepts of masculinity in a given social milieu. Buchbinder avers:

The schlemiel fails at some level to meet the performance and attitudinal requirements of traditional masculinity: despite his desire and efforts to the contrary, the schlemiel may be physically awkward and socially inept, he may lack the ambition and competitive drive that characterizes many ‘proper’ men, and so on. The schlemiel figure, I suggest, is the inadequately or incompetently masculine male; and, by ‘the inadequately masculine male,’ I mean a man who seems constitutionally incapable of being masculine according to the current norms of the culture, while by ‘incompetently masculine male’ I mean a man who tries to meet those norms but fails. (230-1)

After invoking Judith Butler’s concept of gender performance, Buchbinder poses an apt question: If masculinity is a performance anyway, then how does the man who cannot or will not enact that performance figure in regard to given gender prescriptions (233-35)? Buchbinder provides a couple of answers. First of all, the schlemiel could truly be revolutionary in exhibiting a “refusal” to place stock in the requirements of masculinity (235). On the other hand, especially in cinema – a medium in which, some cinema studies scholars argue, viewers project themselves

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49 Buchbinder does provide a few examples of the schlemiel character that may contravene his argument concerning ethnicity and gender. He discusses at length the eponymous gentile character in *Napoleon Dynamite* (2004). He also labels Sandra Bullock’s hapless policewoman character in the American comedy *Miss Congeniality* (2000) as a female instantiation of the schlemiel.
into the story and indentify with narrative situations – the role of the schlemiel does not serve to disrupt masculinity so much as it functions to assuage the gender anxiety of male spectators.

Buchbinder asserts that films featuring a schlemiel protagonist are often comedies, and, therefore, work within the framework of the classic genre of comedy. Thus, at the conclusion of the narrative, the hero gets to keep the “girl.” This is comforting to viewers who may feel inadequate in their own masculinity – they ingest a narrative in which someone who is even more inadequate succeeds in spite of his shortcomings (236). In Buchbinder’s words, “The central schlemiel figure need not actively or consciously refuse or challenge normative masculinity: the narrative structure and genre do it for him” (237). Such films allow schmucks to trust the myth that they can ascend to the patriarchal dividend (such as Mishka in The Wedding) in spite of their failure to perform normative gender. Buchbinder successfully posits that “the comedic context allows the male viewer, no matter how incompetent at masculinity he may be, to feel relieved that there is someone up there on the screen who is worse than he is, or who deflects inspection and criticism from himself” (236).
In its positioning of Edik as a schlemiel, *Poor Relatives* repeatedly catalogues its anti-hero’s attempts to fill the role of the admirable masculine instantiation of the enterprising businessman of questionable morals à la Platon. Ultimately, Edik is simply unable to cope with the bodily rigors and mental acuity required of a Russian con artist. He cannot fill this type’s shoes, and a visual motif of feet peppers the film’s visuals from the opening frames. As Russian does not use the expression “to fill someone’s shoes,” the metaphor of the *shtiblety* could, on the other hand, signal the lowest common denominator. In fact, the film’s *fabula* opens with a shot of Edik’s attempt to jump into the shoes of an entrepreneurial flimflam artist. A close-up shot tracks left to follow Edik’s feet as he kicks off a pair of worn canvas tennis shoes and slips into a pair of garish alligator-skin loafers – the kind one might imagine on New Russians who have not yet internalized the rules of fashion. Significantly, Edik cannot tolerate large quantities of alcohol like a proper Russian man, and he winds up with a severe hangover on several occasions, resting his bare feet in the town’s dilapidated bania. Finally, Barukh (Leonid Kanevskii), Edik’s client
and member of the Israeli mafia, uncovers the sham. He had come to the town to bury his mother’s remains in a cemetery plot arranged by Edik – only this gravesite has been rented from the town’s rabbi. Enraged, Barukh secures Edik’s feet in a tub of cement and tosses the swindler into the town’s pond to sleep with the fish there. The jig is up, and Edik’s scheme has unraveled before his eyes.

Virile Russian entrepreneurs are expected to be able to handle not only their liquor and the competition, but also their women. Edik attempts to woo women in order to advance his scheme, but he ultimately fails to rise to the occasion in this regard, as well. In fact, the women he seduces come to dominate him. In the beginning of the film, Edik charms Nina, a voluptuous maid at the town’s only hotel. He invites her to sit with him, and as he poses crass pseudo-philosophical questions about love, he coyly slips off one of his scaly shoes and slips his foot up her skirt. She gasps and wriggles with delight as the camera cuts to Edik’s face, which registers feigned surprise. The camera then cuts to the couple’s post-coital frolicking in a sudsy bathtub. As part of their tub-talk, Edik glibly muses that the most important thing in life is love. Edik obviously does not believe this sentiment—he believes that making money, not cultivating loving relationships, defines his manhood. Indeed, at the film’s end, while Edik is drowning in the town’s lake, a buxom mermaid swims up to mock him for never having loved in his life. Ultimately, his affair with Nina goes awry, as she switches allegiances to Barukh, and is instrumental in delivering Edik up to the mob for assassination.

To safeguard his ploy, Edik also seduces Regina, the distracted and sexually repressed interpreter for one of Edik’s wealthy clients. She realizes that Edik’s
“Roots” enterprise is fraudulent after she sees the true spelling of the town’s name in a local newspaper. Of course, the interpreter’s role in the film is interpreted on the screen by none other than Lungin’s go-to actress for Freudian hysteria, Natal’ia Koliakanova, who, fortunately, would not appear in the director’s subsequent films. To stymie Regina’s burgeoning curiosity, Edik works his “lady-killing magic” on her. He consummates his seduction of her by again kicking off his alligator shoes and making what seems like

Figure 28. Poor Relatives. Regina bests Edik in lovemaking.

Writing for Kommersant, Lidiia Maslova calls Koliakanova “Lungin’s beloved sex symbol” (излюбленный секс-символ Павла Лунгина) and oddly concludes that the actress’s interaction with Khabenskii “lends the film’s extreme erotic scenes a provocative and humorous tinge” (придает их с Хабенским экстремальным эротическим сценам провокационную и юмористическую окраску) (n. pag.). This is the third such scene Koliakonva has acted in a film by Lungin (the first was the anal-penetration scene in Taxi Blues and the second was her turn in The Wedding as the visiting aunt who is seduced/accosted by Garkusha), in which the director peddles the dangerous patriarchal adage that “no means yes,” and that “neurotic” women merely need to be satisfied by a virile man. Lungin, thus, stages (borderline) rape scenes for laughs. On the other hand, the comedy in Poor Relatives serves to mitigate the film’s exceedingly degrading view of human nature.
unwanted love to her in a tree over a lake. At first Regina rebuffs his advances in
disgust, but later turns the tables, pursuing him with insatiable lust. Edik realizes
that he is out of his league with Regina. He is obviously not physically or mentally
prepared to deal with two women who are able to outwit and outsex him. The film's
final scene between Edik and Regina highlights his utter failure. Desiring to possess
Edik, Regina fishes him out of the water. The camera peers down from a high angle
while Regina administers artificial resuscitation. Edik is lying on his back and Regina
is straddling his chest, in dominant position. As Edik regains consciousness, he
expectorates a mouthful of water into the woman's face.\footnote{The spitting out of water can be viewed as an ejaculation, an analogy that jibes with Edik’s verbal abilities’ superiority over his physical capabilities.} Instead of registering
disgust, Regina shrieks with joy, announcing that Edik is all hers. Somehow he frees
his feet from the cement, leaving behind the alligator shoes – the sartorial symbol of
the masculine typology he was trying to embody. As a final insult to Edik’s manhood,
Regina shouts that she will teach him to row a boat. The thoroughly emasculated
Edik can no longer bear these indignities, so he jumps overboard.

It is not that Edik never tries to regain his masculinity. On several occasions,
he repairs to a traditionally masculine venue, the men’s bania,\footnote{Banias, or Russian public baths, were operated for both men and women. During the 1990s, criminal elements began using banias as cordoned-off locations to conduct their shady dealings. Still, the public male bania (not banias on private property) was a venue off-limits to most women. Perhaps an elderly woman would work there as an attendant, but the public male bath was/is a gender-segregated venue in which men can engage in homosocial bonding out of eyesight of the feminine gaze.} to refresh his spirits
and restore his virility after being bested in grifting, drinking, and lovemaking.

Ethan Pollock argues that the bania was for post-World War II Russian men “a
respite from both the state’s demands on them in public and the family’s demands on them at home. In their minds the bania was a place for men simply to be men. For scholars, representations of interactions in the bathhouse are clues to how Soviet men negotiated and shaped new identities after the war” (53). In the bania, men were ostensibly free from feminine and state gazes (51) and could relax in “a place where ideals of masculinity...could be laughed at or tweaked” (62). Pollock notes that the bania fulfills this function in many Soviet films, such as *The Irony of Fate* (*Ironiia sud’by* 1975) and *You Scratch My Back, I Scratch Yours* (*Ty mne, ia tebe* 1976). I would add that it plays an important role in post-Soviet film, as well, in such films as not only *Tycoon*, but also Nikita Mikhalkov’s *Burnt by the Sun* (*Utomlenny solntsem* 1994), Aleksandr Rogozhkin’s *Peculiarities of the National Hunt* (*Osobennosti natsional’noi okhoty* 1995) and *The Cuckoo* (*Kukushka* 2002), and the aforementioned *Brother 2* and *The Thief*.

![Figure 29. Poor Relatives. Golutvin’s woeful bania.](image-url)
Poor Relatives taps into this tradition, but denies the bania the male-bonding, palliative properties associated with it during the Soviet era. Moreover, Golutvin’s bania does not rise to the level of the refurbished, elaborately decorated banias constructed in the post-Soviet era by New Russians and their ilk.\textsuperscript{53} Lungin’s bania is just as ineffectual at reviving Edik’s masculinity as Edik is at being a successful man. It is woefully dilapidated. Its attendant is a lying alcoholic, Misha, who, instead of rousing Edik’s spirits, brags about a pet catfish and pleads with his sole client for drinking money. No other men in town, or from Edik’s “Roots” tour group for that matter, go to the bania. It seems, then, that Edik is the only man in the film who feels as though he needs a shot of proverbial testosterone, and there are no other “real” men there with whom he might commiserate.

The discursive space of the bania does have one effect on Edik, however. During one sad visit, Edik confesses his failures as a father to the attendant, relating one occasion in particular when he ignored his son’s request for a briefcase as a birthday gift. This one-way conversation with the attendant instills in Edik the courage to telephone his son to wish the now teenager a happy birthday and offer him the briefcase he never received as a schoolboy. Edik’s son lashes out at the gesture, declaring that he had stopped thinking about his father long ago and extending the grotesque threat, “Disappear from our life. If you dare call again, I’ll

\textsuperscript{53} See David Cronenberg’s Eastern Promises (2007) for an excellent cinematic rendering of a post-Soviet bania designed and utilized by the criminal underworld.
It is here that Edik’s failure as a father comes definitively to light. He has devoted his whole life to devising moneymaking schemes. His drive to be a slick entrepreneur in the new capitalistic Russia has destroyed all feelings of kinship within his biological family.

It is ironic, then, that in his latest scheme, Edik, a failed father, has succeeded in his endeavor to create false families on a large scale, which can be seen as a cynical allusion to the Soviet myth of the Great Family, in which Stalin was a political father figure who united disparate nationalities. Considering the role World War II plays in Poor Relatives – the real fatherland of Edik’s suckers was obliterated by Nazi Germany – the allusion becomes all the more contextualized. That the families Edik brings together are not related by blood matters little to them. The duped Westerners form heartfelt bonds with their new Russian / Ukrainian / Jewish “relatives.” At the end of their “reunion week” they hold a lavish send-off banquet and vow to remain in touch with each other. But Edik, whose efforts have created these bonds, is not invited to the festivities, as he has offended everyone and has wound up at the bottom of the lake in cement shoes. Edik’s submersion is cross-cut with scenes from the banquet and a dissolve into a commemorative photograph with the entire cast. Edik creates a successful family, yet he is still a failed father figure – a petty, failed Stalinesque patriarch.

The figure of Edik can be seen as engaged in an intratextual dialogue with Lungin’s other cinematic fathers, as some successfully embody and others fail to

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54 Ихчесни из нашей жизни. Еще раз позвонишь, я тебе глаз на жопу натяну. The film, in opposition to Lungin’s earlier works, is surprising vulgar and full of salty language.
personify normative prescriptions of large- and small-scale patriarchy and, hence, one guise of ideal masculinity. For example, Naum from *Luna Park* presides over a house that welcomes a diverse range of people with sundry agendas. He takes a pseudo-son, Andrei, under his wing, yet he is ultimately too aloof and neurotic to be seen as a model father figure. From *Lifeline* emerges Papa, a cut-rate Stalin figure and Lungin’s most odious patriarch, who, like Edik, aggregates a “family” of biologically unrelated, yet criminally connected individuals. In the end, though, Papa’s family disintegrates, clearing a path for the emergence of a revitalized form of Russian family between Philippe and Oskana. This family is based on love and must escape from Russia to thrive. Edik’s relationship to fatherhood is similar to Platon’s in *Tycoon*, in that both men’s pursuit of money estranges them from their biological families. Platon at least provides for his family materially, if not emotionally; Edik neglects his family on all counts and does so in vain, since he fails to fill the pointy alligator shoes of the type he so longs to become. Consequently, Lungin removes all redeeming qualities from his latest instantiation of the father figure in Edik. He is not a revolutionary schlemiel, but one who, as Buchbinder posits, serves to make viewers feel more secure in their own masculinity. In fact, at the end of the film, as he loses consciousness underwater, Edik imagines that a mermaid swims up to him and, after having called him “shithead,”55 utters the platitude, “Poor, poor Edik! You’ve never loved anyone!”56 When taken in the context of Lungin’s other father figures, the pronouncement does not seem so trite.

55 говнюк
56 Бедный, бедный Эдик! Ты никогда никого не любил!

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In fact, Edik can be seen as diametrically opposed to Lungin’s most sympathetic male figure – Mishka in *The Wedding*, who earnestly and willingly sacrifices himself for the family he obtains due to his benevolence.

![Figure 30. Poor Relatives. Edik sleeps with the fishes.](image)

Like *The Wedding* and *Tycoon*, *Poor Relatives* features an ensemble cast. In the first two films, the multitude of men provided manifold instantiations of masculinity as alternatives to the man who wields significant economic or civic power. In Lungin’s first three films, the director offered up possible masculinities to the defunct New Soviet Man. In *Poor Relatives*, however, the ensemble cast includes no attractive alternatives to Edik; the other men are just as despicable and frequently surpass him in deviousness.

Not only Edik, but also other fathers in the film are in some sort of domestic crisis—at least in the universe the film establishes. Samuel Goldman, also known as Sima (Otto Tausig), was smuggled to America at the age of one to escape the Nazis and has since become a millionaire. He has an estranged, bratty, Americanized
daughter, who (wisely) refuses to accompany him to Ukraine. He ineluctably succumbs to greed, fighting over his ancestors’ gold teeth. The Swiss teenager Mark (Gregoire Leprince-Ringuet), who attends the reunion in place of his opera diva mother, clearly lacks a traditional fatherly presence in Switzerland and introduces “questionable” influences to his host family such as smoking, cross-dressing, and measuring penis length. As mentioned, Barukh is a lethal Mafioso. He respects his mother’s remains, but is clearly not a model of nurturing masculinity. Finally, Iasha (Sergei Garmash), who seeks to tap into Uncle Sima’s largesse because he cannot provide a comfortable life for his wife and children, is a deranged individual who binge drinks, chases his wife with a shovel, and threatens to burn down Ester’s house because he doubts Sima’s relationship to her. Iasha has lost his job at a cement factory, and is merely acting out his frustrations. As a result, not only does the film dissuade viewers from sympathizing with Edik, but it paints all its male supporting actors as inadequate fathers or in need of an adequate father. The entire cast of the film is held up for ridicule. For the first time in a film by Lungin, *Poor Relatives* offers no normative or acceptable masculine model of patriarchy.

*Bednye rodstvenniki* is a complex contribution not only to Lungin’s ongoing commentary on Russian masculinities, but also to the greater cinematic and sociological conversation about Russian father figures and rallying heroes. It manages to combine two trends that Aleksandr Prokhorov identifies in post-Soviet cinema’s quest for new heroes: the “humanist” and the “grotesque realis[t],” both of which sought to rekindle some semblance of Great Family cohesion (292). In the humanist trend, the “protagonist plays the role of a consoler who promises to lead
the viewer to a new harmonious mythology and community,” in the vein of authors such as Pushkin and Tolstoy (273). The grotesque trend follows in the footsteps of Gogol’ and Sologub (274), featuring an “outsider protagonist” who is capable of uniting Russians, but defies identification inasmuch as he is a cultural other, such as a Muslim or a Finn (292). Adhering to both trends, Edik serves as a protagonist who unites a collective of Russians (and Ukrainians and Jews). In accordance with the humanist trend, Edik is a figure with whom many Russian men—if we consider the subjects of studies by Sarah Ashwin and Tatiana Lytkina, and Utrata—could easily, if reluctantly, identify. But as in the grotesque trend, Edik is cast out of the community he is responsible for creating as an (abject) outsider. Perhaps here the genre of comedy is an ideal way to present the serious issue of absent post-Soviet Russian fathers, who may be more driven to succeed financially than cultivate stable households. Poor Relatives certainly conjures up reference to another work by Gogol’, The Inspector General, posing to Russian patriarchs that play’s famous question: “What are you laughing at? You’re laughing at yourselves!”
Chapter 4
Lungin’s Orthodox Turn in *The Island* (2006), *Tsar* (2009), and *The Conductor* (2012)

1. Lungin’s Orthodox Turn. The narratives and problems of Russian masculinities that Lungin engages in his first six films suggest that they are indeed representations and products of the chaotic era from which they emerged. But following the screwball antics of 2005’s *Bednye rodstvenniki*, Lungin’s films undergo a seismic shift in terms of setting, tone, and ideological content. In these more recent outings, Lungin has distanced himself from the milieu of late-Soviet and post-Soviet Russia both temporally and geographically. He situates his next three releases – *The Island* (*Ostrov*, 2006), *A Twig of Lilac* (*Vetka sireni*, 2008), and *Tsar* (*Tsar’,* 2009) – successively further back in time, during moments of intense social upheaval in Russian or Soviet history. *The Island* begins during World War II (1939-45), the catastrophic event that persists as the subject of an unassailable cultural mythology today. The film then leaps forward to the Brezhnev years, but is set at an island monastery that is physically and ideologically remote from the Stagnation era and the present. *A Twig of Lilac* (*ATOL*) is a biopic about the composer Sergei Rachmaninoff, which traces his exodus from Russia to the United States during the tumultuous years of World War I, the communist revolution, and the civil war (1914-22). I shall omit analysis of *ATOL*, not because of its inferior quality, but
because Lungin claims that he lost control over the final product and renounced the film, which did not play in cinemas and went straight to television.\textsuperscript{1} \emph{Tsar} is set during the reign of Ivan the Terrible (1547-81), when the survival of Muscovy was threatened not only by Polish attacks on its western borders, but also by the boyars' internecine political fractiousness at home. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, it is also possible to infer analogies to today's culture and politics in each of these films.

Lungin's latest film continues the setting of alienation from present-day Russia, but does so with a difference. Although \emph{The Conductor} (\textit{Dirizher}, 2012) begins in 2012 Moscow, it takes place primarily on an airplane and in Israel, a country renowned not only for its large immigrant population from the Soviet Union/Russia, but also for its incessant interfaith violence. Thus, a unifying element running through Lungin's four newest films is their staging in times or places of extreme political or cultural turmoil for Russians – but at a distance from today's Russia. This development is ironic, considering that beginning with \emph{The Island}, Lungin has been more and more embedded within the Russian film industry. He appears to have all but dropped his longtime French producers (Catherine Dussart, Canal +, etc.) and to be working with Russian financiers. Apropos of this change, Lungin commented in a 2006 interview with Tat'iana Tolstaia and Avdot'ia

\textsuperscript{1} In an interview dated July 14, 2008 with \textit{Komsomol'skaia pravda}, Lungin brusquely replied when asked about \emph{ATOL}: "Excuse me, but I never comment on \textit{A Twig of Lilac} and, in general, do not consider myself its creator. It doesn't contain my editing, \textit{and} I was placed in very unpleasant circumstances...in general, I try not to talk about it or remember it." (Простите, я не даю комментариев по поводу «Ветки сирени» и вообще не считаю себя ее автором. Там не мой монтаж, я был поставлен в очень неприятные условия... в общем, я стараюсь не говорить и не вспоминать об этом ("Режиссер Павел Lungin" n. pag.).
Smirnova on the television talk show *Shkola zaslovitia (School for Scoundrels)* that he returned to Russia from Europe because filmmaking was simpler and more interesting in his homeland ("Pavel Lungin")\(^2\); paradoxically, though, Lungin seems to have returned to present-day Russia physically only to distance his films from it temporally and geographically in terms of his output.

The later films differ from Lungin's previous efforts aesthetically, as well. They strike me as *thinking* movies, or at least as movies designed to be perceived as such. These later films assume an almost exclusively somber tone, and efforts to inject a sense of buoyancy into the bleakness increasingly vanish, especially after *The Island*. The pacing in these films is deliberate – perhaps even plodding – and there are extended sequences devoid of dialogue. While these later films still feature stylized editing and camerawork, the techniques come across as more controlled and polished than the documentary-style editing and handheld photography of earlier efforts. Gone are the earlier films' medium shots of characters quarreling in cramped, dilapidated *khrushchevki*, as well as Lungin's signature tracking shots down dimly lit corridors teeming with sundry riff-raff. Beginning with *The Island*, Lungin's camera spends significantly more time establishing location, surveying breathtaking landscapes that furnish a pensive atmosphere. This ruminative aura is intensified by the use of classical or liturgical music, rather than the jazz, rock, and popular numbers that accompany Lungin's earlier works.

\(^2\) The interview with Tat’iana Tolstaia and Avdot’ia Smirnova originally aired December 18, 2006. I accessed the video on YouTube.com: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKsKwqstnM8.
In tandem with his films’ formal and aesthetic shifts, Lungin’s treatment of multiple Russian masculinities takes a markedly more solemn, starker turn. The first six films portray traditionally respected, but hobbled Soviet and Russian masculinities, anchored in work, strength, and discipline. Lungin juxtaposes these “ideal” types with historically othered masculinities rooted in artistic inspiration and detachment from the mainstream. Creativity and quick intellect enter into the depiction. Here, the various masculine types interact in a critique and, sometimes, rehabilitation of the damaged ideal models. This process occurs in a frantic, carnivalesque atmosphere, with copious amounts of drinking and sex, and, as mentioned, results in a retreat of the masculine type under scrutiny from the collective/community. Most distinctively, in all these earlier cases, Lungin’s cinematic masculinities have been staunchly secular, including the ethnically Jewish (anti-)heroes of Liosha, Naum, Platon, and Edik. But with _The Island_, Lungin jettisons the Jewish question, sloughs off secularism, and concentrates on masculinities informed by Russian Orthodoxy. This, however, is no run-of-the-mill Russian Orthodoxy; rather, it is the (un)orthodoxy of Old Believers, recluses, martyrs, and holy fools. These spiritually informed masculinities feature in stark opposition to secular masculinities and masculinities of established religion. This shift is fascinating in that, quite unexpectedly, the later films of Lungin, who is of Jewish cultural heritage, champion a regressive strain of Russian Christianity, which has often been hostile to Judaism. As it turns out, Lungin attends Russian Orthodox
services, but, unlike his frequently collaborating star, Petr Mamonov, does not make inflammatory, evangelizing pronouncements in interviews.

2. Masculinity, Religion, and Russian Culture. Though Lungin may be arriving a trifle late to the religious debate in post-Soviet Russia, he nonetheless is putting in his two rubles. Writing in 1996, Jerry Pankhurst explains: “The former Soviet Union is undergoing a religious revival. People inside and outside the Russian Orthodox Church are reexamining its ancient ways, rediscovering its long-forgotten saints, and searching its institutional memory for answers to urgent questions facing the nation” (127). Pankhurst contends, though, that the resurgent Orthodox Church is still too obsessed with pro forma ritualism and has yet to disentangle itself from the oversight of secular Russian powers. According to this critic, “Ivan IV’s strict formalism left a strong impression on the Church of his time, and the pattern of strict outward piety (ritual, crossing, genuflections, and so forth) became established as in the Russian Orthodoxy under Tsar Alexis (1645-76), whose police measures forced it upon a previously lax and often indifferent population” (136). The church’s unswerving adherence to the pageantry of ritual, as well as its neglect of the cultivation of a capacity to furnish a profound, guiding spirituality, still obtains today, to the detriment of the devout. Such relationships between clergy and congregation are crucial for establishing a strong religious culture; as Pankhurst

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4 The Island won six Golden Eagle Awards in 2007. During his acceptance speech for Best Actor, Mamonov harangued the Russian public on account of what he perceived as too many abortions and the collapse of the Russian nation.
muses, “the devout Russian Orthodox believer needs first and foremost a ‘spiritual father’; he needs to restore the historical bond with a priest or monk with whom he has a special relationship of trust and confidence” (149-50), and the Russian Orthodox Church’s failure to produce such spiritual fathers impedes the establishment of nurturing patriarchal relationships (150). This lack of wide-scale “bonding” between spiritual mentors and believers perhaps permitted the Church to be “subordinated to political authorities, a condition firmly established in Russia at least from the time of Peter I through the communist period” (132). Even today, President Putin arguably calls the shots for the Church, his desire to placate it notwithstanding. Pankhurst observes, however, that the influence in the state-church dyad did not flow entirely in one direction. Not only was the church subjugated to the will of the Russian and, later, Soviet ruler, its dogmatic formalism infiltrated the operational philosophy of the state. Even in communist times, contends Pankhurst, “The atheist state professed by Stalin could not escape completely the formative influence of Russian Orthodoxy. Its vestiges shone through the public rituals and were clearly visible in the communist craving for political monopoly, cultural orthodoxy, and sanctimonious rigorism” (129). This fetishization of form was one of the hallmarks of Soviet indoctrination, as the state co-opted the Church’s scuttled role of vospitannik for its members.

The Soviet Union instilled collectivist principles and images in its citizens in order to recruit their support in building, maintaining, and upholding the state’s material and ideological structure, unleashing a raft of policies and sanctioning media to “socialize” its population (Pankhurst 139). One such diktat was the
aesthetic mandate of Socialist Realism in all forms of art, along with its accompanying figure of an ideologically converted positive hero, or the New Soviet Man, who was not only a philosophical, but also a visual exemplar of the “tempered” physicality and resolute self-discipline deemed necessary to build communism for the halcyon future. Pankhurst explains, “Soviet ideology mandated that the ‘New Soviet Man’ be created from the raw materials of the Russian citizenry. The builder of communism was to be peace-loving, internationalist, patriotic, law-abiding, collectivist, hard working, and – militantly atheist” (139). Soviet cinema served as a perfect medium to showcase the form of The New Soviet Man, who was almost without exception a soldier or an industrial laborer. He had strong muscles and a square jaw. He wore uniforms and coveralls. He sacrificed all, including his carnal appetites, to the communist cause. And this cause required manpower; the socialization process of the New Soviet Man, his cinematic avatars, the imagery associated with him, and the rituals he was called on to perform in service to the construction of the state were all thoroughly gendered.

In compliance with Socialist Realism, someone – some sort of a father figure – would be conscripted to inculcate in the next generation a physical and psychological commitment to communism, as well as serve as a role model for future paragons of productive Soviet masculinity. In the introduction to their collected volume *Cinepaternity: Fathers and Sons in Soviet and Post-Soviet Film*, Helena Goscilo and Yana Hashamova write, “Since the Soviet regime shared Plato’s interest in the stability of the state, its official doctrine of socialist realism required that metaphorical paternity directly facilitate sons’ ideological maturation.
Accordingly, in exemplary canonical texts on page and screen, ‘enlightened’ mentors function as surrogate father figures for the ‘spontaneous’ positive heroes in what are essentially political Bildungsromane and stories of secular conversion” (8).

Goscilo and Hashamova continue, “As figures of priority and authority, fathers tend to script sons’ lives, fruitfully or fatally. Ideally, fathers bond with beloved sons, benignly facilitating their maturation into manhood through openness, wise counsel, and the provision of a behavioral model premised on identification and continuity” (4). Thus, not only was the process of creating ideal Soviet citizens gendered, it was also domesticated. This dynamic played out on the big and small screen in Soviet Russia, as Goscilo and Hashamova’s collection elucidates.

Turning an eye to the decimation of the adult Soviet male population due to Stalin’s purges, World War II, and other mortality factors, Goscilo and Hashamova’s collection analyzes how in cinema “surrogate” fathers stepped in to accomplish the task of instilling ideal masculinity in men, who would in turn summon up their acquired traits in order to build and support society. Films themselves, as well as television shows and propaganda posters, in essence fulfilled a surrogate paternal role, in that they demonstrated to Soviet men how to be masculine in accordance with state expectations. Stalin, of course, stood at the head of the chain of role models, embodying the supreme father of the union.

After Stalin’s death during the Khrushchev Thaw, though, the doxa of the Socialist Realist framework began to come undone, as filmmakers dismantled the cinematic entries in Stalin’s cult of personality and contemplated Soviet fathers’ absences and shortcomings in such war films as Mikhail Kalatozov’s The Cranes Are
Flying (Letiat zhuravli, 1957), Grigorii Chukhrai’s Ballad of a Soldier (Ballada soldata, 1959), and Andrei Tarkovsky’s Ivan’s Childhood (Ivanovo detstvo, 1962). Following the renewed chill of the Brezhnev regime, however, as Goscilo and Hashamov perceive, “Popular television miniseries rearticulated the masculinist, patriarchal paradigm of official ideology, most notably in the genres of the spy thriller and the historical melodrama. Male fantasy reigned supreme in the former, which showcased the protagonist’s powers of ratiocination, imperturbable self-discipline, and imperviousness to sex, all crystallized in the cult series Seventeen Moments of Spring [Semnadtsat’ mgovenii vesny, 1973]” (18). Thus, ideal Soviet forms of masculinity made a comeback of sorts. But as Gorbachev’s policies of glasnost’ and perestroika commenced, earnest, popular films, such as Tengiz Abuladze’s Repentance (Pokaianie, 1984, 1986) and Vasili Pichul’s Little Vera (Malen’kaia Vera, 1988), questioned the unimpeachability of Soviet fathers/mentors. Thereafter, the cinema of the post-Soviet Yeltsin years foundered without the form of a viable paternal anchor, and films of the 1990s and early 2000s – Aleksei Balabanov’s Brother duo (Brat, 1997 and Brat 2, 2000), Andrei Zviagintsev’s The Return (Vozvrashchenie, 2003), and the three films by Lungin discussed in the foregoing chapter of this dissertation – reflect the search for Russian patriarchal exemplars who might teach and embody productive masculinities.

The search for Russian celluloid father figures, along with popular cinematic masculine models that these celluloid figures would inspire, extends into Putin’s era of the present day. Of course, heroes on screen in the twenty-first century are not
plotted out and approved of by the government for public indoctrination as they were during Stalin’s tenure. Market forces now play a more significant role in determining what kinds of films can be produced and what kind of protagonists can feature in those films. But, as the list of the highest-grossing post-Soviet Russian films attests, iconic cinematic masculinity is still to be found in war heroes and action stars – and the role of paternity figures significantly in many of these films, just as it did in the Soviet film industry. In Fedor Bondarchuk’s 9th Company (9 rota, 2005), a platoon of dissolute young ruffians morph into upstanding, fatherland-defending soldiers, thanks to their commanding officers’ tough love, which instills in them self-discipline and a sense of camaraderie. Vysotskii: Thank You for Being Alive (Vysotskii: Spasibo, chto zhivoi, 2011) traces the last years and death of the bard who, Helena Goscilo and Andrea Lanoux argue, “apotheosized machismo in multiple roles and genres” (19) in the Brezhnev era. Timur Bekmambetov’s blockbusters Night Watch (Nochnoi dozor, 2004) and Day Watch (Dnevnoi dozor, 2006), of course, trace the rise of a “Great One,” who is simultaneously avenging a father who tried to abort him when he was in utero. Even Sergei Bodrov’s film Mongol (Mongol, 2007) follows the maturation into manhood of Ghengis Khan, painting him as a devoted husband and committed family man! Popular, profit-churning films such as these speak to the Russian viewing publics’ appetite for films that conjure up masculine fantasies, which are ignited through the guidance and example of some sort of father-figure mentor.

3. Lungin, Masculinity, and Religion. Lungin undergoes his religious turn at the moment of the birth of the Russian blockbuster – those films discussed above
that generated a whopping profit and attracted mass viewership. But his religious films do not adhere to formulaic Russian-Soviet masculine paradigms passed down from mentors. In fact, Lungin’s spiritual films question the “ideal” masculine forms of solider, tsar, father, and even Orthodox priest. Lungin’s latest films search for outsider masculinities as alternatives to established ideal models, thus engaging the cultural binarism in Russia famously conceptualized by Iurii Lotman and Boris Uspenskii. Lungin sets up his challenge to today’s popular and esteemed cinematic masculinities by drawing upon pre-Soviet, even pre-Petrine models of Russian spiritual masculinities that have succumbed to current ideals. That is, Lungin adopts types that have fallen away and have been replaced by current revered Soviet and post-Soviet standards. It is crucial to note, however, that although Lungin’s alternative Russian masculinities may destabilize the ideals with which they conflict, they do not undermine the primacy of masculinities over femininities in film.

Lungin’s opposing types, nevertheless, cannot come into contact without igniting sparks. As Lotman and Uspenski assert regarding the progression of Russian cultural history, “Duality and the absence of a neutral axiological sphere led to a conception of the new not as a continuation, but as a total eschatological change” (32). Thus, dialectical masculinities cannot ascend to the cultural fore in the Russian context without producing a calamitous imbalance. “Under such conditions, the dynamic process of historical change has a fundamentally different character: change occurs as a radical negation of the preceding state. The new does not arise out of a structurally ‘unused’ reserve, but results from a transformation of the old, a process of turning it inside out. Thus, repeated transformations can in fact lead to
the *regeneration* of archaic forms” (33). The process outlined by the two critics accounts for the placement of the films’ narrative in times and places of crisis, as well as their recourse to said archaic forms.

In utilizing these bygone Russian forms, Lungin also engages several of the frameworks operative in the contemporary Russian cultural debate. His post-Orthodox-turn films directly tackle the question of sociopolitical authority, which in Russia is conceived as a national father figure. Indeed, Lungin’s religious turn also coincides with Russia’s relative economic recovery during Putin’s second term, which also witnessed a recentralization of power. Even though post-Soviet tumult has mostly ground to a halt, Lungin has continued to meditate on what he views as a cultural malaise gripping Russia. As much is evident in the director’s responses in a 2009 interview with Ian Shenkman of Ogonek magazine, in which he remarked apropos of his cinematic mission: “The world of changes has gone away, and we have entered a swath of stability [stabil’nosti] ... the time has come to answer pressing, existential questions.” He remarks in another interview: “Our problems of power have still not been resolved – neither from above nor from below”

5 The oppositional movement lacks a cohesive agenda and a charismatic leadership, so has largely been ineffective...
6 As an opener to his interview, Shenkman asks Lungin whether the chaos of the ’90s in Russia has subsided forever. Lungin’s response reads as follows: “Мир перемен ушел, мы вошли в полосу стабильности. И интерес к меняющейся личности в меняющемся мире тоже ушел. Пришло время отвечать на бытийные, сущностные вопросы. Сейчас главная проблема России, как, впрочем, и всего мира, — полная потеря смысла жизни. Кто мы? Какие? Зачем? Главное, конечно, зачем” (Shenkman n. pag.).
What Lungin likely means by these cryptic statements is that the problem has not been resolved in a way he finds salubrious for Russian society. To explore the problem, Lungin’s latest films orchestrate collisions between secular powers and influences, on the one hand, and various strains of spiritual/religious influences, on the other.

Lungin’s “problem of power” is an inherentlygendered question. Indeed, this has been the case throughout all periods of Russian history. As previously discussed, tradition has dictated that the [man at the] head of the Russian government be not simply a man, but a manly man, a father figure, a paragon of masculine resolve, enabling Russia to construct a discourse of relative constancy, at least between revolutions (Goscilo and Hashamova 1-5; Treisman 377-88). In prerevolutionary times the tsar was revered as the father of the nation and either affectionately or sarcastically referred to as *batiushka-tsar*, which translates roughly as “daddy-tsar.” Ivan IV (The Terrible) was the first Russian ruler consistently to bear this title, and later, the Romanov dynasty provided over three centuries of autocracy, with this paternal tsar at the helm. Later, during the Soviet years, Lenin took on the role of sole male leader of the country, followed by Stalin’s self-conceptualization as the plenipotentiary father figure of the Great Soviet Family (Clark, Goscilo and Hashamova).

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7 Mashukova asks Lungin why he thinks Ivan the Terrible has experienced renewed popularity in Russia. Lungin replies, “Мне кажется, это все потому, что у нас не решены проблемы власти — ни сверху, ни снизу. Это какой-то главный вопрос сейчас. Людям не хватает воздуха. А идею русской власти сформировал именно Грозный — своей неистовой личностью, своим умом и талантом, своей патологической жестокостью и несправедливостью” (n. pag.).
The discursive requisite for a strong male leader in Russia still obtains today, even though it did encounter complications in the immediate post-Soviet years, with Boris Yeltsin's infamous failure to live up to the ideal. Presiding over the aforementioned Russian “return to stability” in the second half of the 2000s was Vladimir Putin, who has undeniably developed a reputation as a strong-armed leader (sil’naia ruka). But Putin has exceeded merely consolidating power beneath him. He has constructed a public image to match the part. As Helena Goscilo documents in her recent work, Russian president Putin has strategically staged photo ops and journalistic scoops to cultivate a hypermasculine persona based on a strong, active body (183-87). For instance, among other manly pursuits, Putin practices black-belt judo, rides horseback shirtless across the tundra, rescued a flock of cranes, and even piloted a helicopter to assist in extinguishing the devastating forest fires of summer 2010. Goscilo contends that Putin's swaggering performances, together with his no-nonsense public pronouncements, help to convince Russians that their country is stable domestically and respected/feared internationally (186-87).

In contemplating Putin-era masculinities, Lungin's religiously permeated films participate in several current trends of Russian artistic inquiry, united in their search to renegotiate post-Soviet identity and revise a contested history. Rosalind Marsh addresses this wave of thought in her book *Literature, History, and Identity in Post-Soviet Russia (1991-2006)*, in which she contends that many of today's prominent Russian writers, filmmakers, and thinkers have alternatively revived or satirized the hoary assertion of pre-Soviet Russian philosophers and artists that
“Russia’s history is radically different from that of any other country (despite all evidence to the contrary)” (353). This belief has spiritual and patriotic overtones and resounds in both major and minor keys. Marsh continues, “Russian history can be seen as either uniquely significant (the messianic impulse) or uniquely terrible (a tendency to eschatological and apocalyptic thinking)” (353):

Russians of a religious and nationalistic inclination have frequently expressed the traditional messianic view espoused by the Slavophiles and Dostoevsky that Russia is a unique country which must pursue its own path of development that is necessarily different from that of the West, and that it will have a special, distinctive role to play in the future.

Such a conception of Russia’s historical mission dates back beyond the Slavophiles to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when eschatological traditions that were already well known in Russia became readily assimilated into the Russian Orthodox doctrine of ‘Moscow, the Third Rome’: the utopian conception of a succession of sacred kingdoms representing unsullied Orthodox Christianity which were destined to lead a degenerate world to the culmination of history in Christ’s Second Coming. (Marsh 354)

The issue of appropriate authority is intimately imbricated in Russia’s role as a Third Rome. And, in harmony with Lotman’s description of Russian identity as duality-based, leadership comes in two polarized varieties, spiritual and secular. It would seem that Russia’s tenability as a Third Rome, along with the welfare of its
people, lies in the hands of its leader, or at least depends on him in large part. The secular brand, although revered, remains suspect, and this suspicion originates in medieval times. Marsh observes that “the Pope had often been stigmatized as the Antichrist, and so were all Russian rulers after Patriarch Nikon’s church reforms of 1652-1655, which were perceived by Old Believers as a blasphemy against the true Orthodox Church” (355). Accordingly, the question of whether and to what extent citizens ought to surrender to authority continues to crop up in cultural venues and media productions.

Thus, Lungin’s religiously themed films engage with concepts of Russian masculinity on several fronts. First, they feature reinvigorated forms of allegedly retired Russian masculine exemplars as an antidote to the current cinematic staple of action heroes in service of state ideology. Second, they posit alternative father-figure mentors to demonstrate alternative masculinities. Third, they combat the notion that Russia requires an aggressive, strong-armed masculine type at the head of state. Finally, they advocate the decoupling of spirituality from state control, from under the supervision of said aggressive ruler, who concomitantly instantiates the national apotheosis of masculinity. In considering Lungin’s return to Russia and the cinematic challenges he poses to Russian ideal masculinities both on and off the silver screen, this chapter analyzes *The Island*, *Tsar*, and *The Conductor*.

4. *The Island*. As mentioned, *The Island* (*Ostrov* 2006) heralds a marked shift in Lungin’s oeuvre on several fronts. To begin with, it is the first of Lungin’s films to be set entirely in the past, and the distant past, at that. Until this point, Lungin’s filmic narratives had taken place roughly in the same year a given film was shot. *The
*Island*'s historical and geographically remote setting signals a change from dealing with the immediate problems of late-Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, and hints at timeless themes in Russian culture. Next, *The Island* represents a pronounced deceleration from the mostly frenetic, carnivalesque atmosphere of Lungin's earlier works. The physical setting of the film is expansive and bleak, but the cinematography is deliberately paced and lush, with desaturated blues and grays comprising the bulk of the color palate. The cinematic pulse of *The Island* is further subdued by the film’s slow-moving action by a cast primarily comprising aged and infirm monks and pilgrims. This calmer rhythm prompts a more contemplative viewing experience than one expects on the basis of Lungin's previous offerings. Finally, the film plunges deep into themes and tropes of Russian Orthodoxy. True, Lungin's earlier films feature Jewish characters, but they are wholly secular. The inclusion of the religious dimension of Russian culture can perhaps alienate or intrigue viewers. But it also introduces a new facet of analysis to Lungin’s works, particularly as they confront government-sanctioned masculinities.

*The Island* was a departure not only for Lungin. It was quite an unexpected phenomenon on the Russian cinema scene, dividing critics (Norris 182-83), igniting a debate in the media, and garnering praise from the Russian Orthodox Church. According to Stephen Norris, “Perhaps the most surprising success of the zero years was Pavel Lungin’s art-house film turned national sensation, *The Island.*” Norris goes on to label the film “the blessed blockbuster,” since at the urging of his more progressive advisors, Patriarch Aleksei II blessed the film (171). Unfavorable reviews deemed the film simplistic and heavy-handed in its religious message, yet,
as Norris reports, "For its supporters, The Island served as a spiritual guide to Russians looking for answers to tough metaphysical questions facing them" (171).

Norris may be stretching the definition of blockbuster here, as he concedes, “[The Island] made 2.5 million [dollars], a relatively modest amount, but also one that proved unexpected for what many initially believed was an art-house movie” (175). To put things in perspective, contemporary films like 9th Company and Day Watch, which are categorical blockbusters, raked in over 25 million dollars and over 32 millions dollars, respectively. Nevertheless, even though The Island was not a runaway financial hit, it did turn a respectable profit based on production costs, in addition to striking a chord with the viewing public and the media. It also appears to be one of Lungin’s most analyzed films by scholars in cinema studies, both in Russia and the West.

Unlike the other blockbusters analyzed by Norris in his volume, The Island does not position in its lead role a male hero who exhibits a physically robust, patriotically devoted, or even financially shrewd character. In fact, The Island’s eccentric protagonist, Father Anatolii, played again (somewhat autobiographically) by Petr Mamonov, projects a pronounced contrast to the ideal masculine types that head the cast of characters in contemporaneous Russian blockbusters. Father Anatolii does not conform to expectations. For instance, he betrays his Fatherland

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8 See Footnote 5.
9 See Norris’s discussion of the public’s reaction to The Island in his chapter “The Blessed Blockbuster.”
10 While conducting research for my dissertation I came across more articles and books that consider The Island (moreover, in greater detail) than publications devoted to any other previous film by Lungin.
during World War II and ignores the daily routine and worship services in Russian Orthodox monastic life in the 1970s. Moreover, he provides a foil to the masculinity of actual heroic paragons in the film, who through their traits represent pinnacles of manhood in three time periods in Russian and Soviet history – the crisis of World War II, the reinvigorated Stagnation era, and even the ascendant Putin years. In posing a challenge to heroic cinematic masculine types in such an influential film, Mamonov’s Father Anatolii essentially calls into question the form of established ideal types of Russian masculinity.¹¹

*The Island* begins during World War II in the middle of nowhere in the far north of European Russia. Steely barge captain Tikhon Petrovich (played as a young man by Aleksei Zelenskii), immediately emblematic of stoic Soviet military masculinity, is navigating a coal barge across the White Sea on a frigid night in 1942. The only other soul on board is a grimy-faced youth (Timofei Tribuntcev), arduously shoveling the black fuel into the engine’s furnace. Without warning, a Nazi warship overtakes the Soviet vessel. Several Germans brusquely board the barge, capturing the young stoker immediately. The Germans order the youth, blubbering uncontrollably and cowering before his captors, to point out the captain. They then order the cowardly youth, under threat of death, to shoot his commanding officer. The hysterical young man tries to resist, but ultimately succumbs under the Nazis’ blows, and a shot sends Tikhon tumbling overboard into the icy water. Assuming

¹¹ Despite providing an alternative, this alternative should not necessarily be seen as a radical shift in the functioning/purpose of masculinity/patriarchy. Lungin’s films destabilize certain strains of hegemonic masculinity only to replace them with others.
that he has killed the captain, the youth collapses in a teary heap on the deck as the Germans sail away. Thinking his life has been spared, the young man moves from terror to jubilation. But his rejoicing is cut short when a bomb blasts the barge to smithereens. The craven furnace stoker survives the explosion and washes ashore by an island monastery.

The narrative then flashes forward some three decades to 1976 and the Stagnation years of the Brezhnev regime. The spineless young man from the boat has aged to become regarded as an eccentric starets.\textsuperscript{12} Father Anatolii (Mamonov), who spends his days hauling coal by wheelbarrow to fuel the monastery’s heating system. On top of shouldering this grueling task, Anatolii devotes every private moment to self-castigation over his lack of courage thirty-something years earlier, when he shot Tikhon at the behest of the Nazis. He takes frequent trips to a rocky islet to prostrate himself abjectly in the subarctic moss. To maximize his self-degradation, he denies himself all creature comforts. He sleeps on a heap of coal in the monastery’s boiler hut, without even a blanket to cover him. He wears uncomfortable boots and rough, unlaundered robes. He eats little and prefers to pray before a makeshift icon shelf in a corner of his hut. Father Anatolii’s public persona is not one of abject suffering, however. He antagonizes his fellow monks by playing pranks on them, as well as flouting monastic protocol during worship services, mumbling into the corner instead of following the carefully choreographed liturgy. Moreover, he refuses to be tonsured officially as a monk. Despite these

\textsuperscript{12} Unlike some translators of Dostoevskii’s fiction, who render the term starets as “elder,” Fedotov translates it into English as “spiritual father” (The Russian Religious Mind 139).
antics, a steady stream of pilgrims flocks to the island, desperate for advice, succor, and healing by the *starets*. Ever the troublemaker, Anatolii doles out blessings and tough-love counsel to his followers in equal measure.

![Figure 31. The Island. Father Anatolii hauls coal.](image)

One such desperate wayfarer turns out to be Tikhon Petrovich (as an elderly man played by Iurii Kuzetsov), who survived the shooting and has since ascended to the rank of admiral. He has escorted his mentally afflicted daughter, Nastia (Viktoriia Isakova), to Father Anatolii as a last resort, since no Soviet doctors or psychiatrists have been able to help her. As fellow eccentrics, Anatolii and Nastia bond immediately by crowing to each other from afar like roosters. After soberly assessing the situation, though, Anatolii deems the young woman possessed and performs an exorcism on her. After the ritual, the two former shipmates recognize each other. When Anatolii begs Tikhon’s forgiveness, the admiral responds that he had forgiven Anatolii years ago. Subsequently, Anatolii realizes that his *raison d’être* – suffering to expiate his transgression – has evaporated. As if summoning his own
death, Anatolii climbs into a casket and peacefully expires. The film ends with his funeral, during which monks transport his coffin and a large wooden cross into the open water, away from the island into the greater Soviet territory.

*The Island* marks Lungin's second of three collaborations to date with Mamonov, in all of which the eccentric singer-turned-actor plays a leading role. Mamonov’s Father Anatolii is the center of *The Island*’s universe and basically steals every scene in which he appears. Just as in *Taxi Blues*, Mamonov seems not so much to be acting, but playing himself, as critic Irina Shtefanova notes (n. pag.).

In *The Island*, Mamonov again plays an obstreperous social outcast, but one who nevertheless has something extremely valuable to offer to society: virtues that come from a dark place of contemplative suffering. Instead of the role of an alcoholic yet inspired musical genius, Mamonov inhabits the persona of a cantankerous spiritual guru. This change in characters corresponds to the actor’s change in lifestyle. In the intervening years between *Taxi Blues* and *The Island*, Mamonov abandoned heavy drinking and profligate living. In an about-face not unlike that of Cat Stevens/Yusuf Islam, Mamonov scuttled his rock-star existence, found religion, and converted to Russian Orthodoxy in the mid-1990s. He has been living more or less as a hermit in the Russian provinces ever since.

He has aged conspicuously, growing more emaciated and losing more teeth and hair.

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13 “Petr Mamonov, as if literally playing himself (Петр Мамонов, играющий словно бы самого себя...)” (n. pag).
14 [http://russned.ru/Members/mamonov](http://russned.ru/Members/mamonov). On YouTube, you can even watch Mamonov give lessons on Russian Orthodoxy.
On screen, Mamonov’s Anatolii is far from a feeble weakling. He has some traditionally masculine traits already within his character, even traits that the Soviet Union smiled upon and included in its character sketch of the New Soviet Man. For one, even though his bodily frame is not the quintessence of manly physique, Anatolii is an unflagging laborer. As mentioned, he spends hours carting coal across a small bridge to the monastery’s boiler hut, a seemingly Sisyphean labor he has performed for decades, but one that benefits all the island’s inhabitants. If he ever tires, he does not complain about his fatigue. Although he lacks the chiseled jaw and muscles of the New Soviet man, he possesses that type’s diligence in service to a greater cause. Additionally, in a recurrent motif, Anatolii rows a boat to an even smaller, more remote island, and wallows in abject repentance in the rocks and moss, weeping over his past cowardice, the moment when he chose self-preservation over the righteous course of action. He also bears the titles “father” and *starets*, both of which intimate a position of influence.

Thus, in spite of his physical decrepitude, Father Anatolii embodies an ideal of masculinity on screen through his spiritual strength, becoming a surrogate father figure to Soviet citizens who turn to him for counsel instead of to the official church brethren or the state structure. He achieves his status by appropriating those entities’ cultural functions/roles through his deeds, while ignoring the expected form associated with them; what he fails at in form he makes up for with his success in content, becoming a paternal spiritual surrogate of remarkable dedication. Anatolii’s example of masculine-imbued leadership stands in opposition to several historically idealized models of Soviet masculinity in the film. The first is the New
Soviet Man in one of his most popular iterations, the World War II military hero of Tikhon Petrovich in his youth during the war, and later in his admiralty during the Brezhnev years, with their renewed attempts to revive Stalin-era mythologies (Prokhorova 131-50). Similarly, Father Anatoli provides a superior surrogate father role in contrast to stock Orthodox monks Father Filaret (Viktor Sukhorukov) and Father Iov (Dmitrii Diuzhev), who seek to follow his example as they strive to live a holier existence. Finally, Anatolii usurps and redirects the patriarchal prerogative of the pronatalist state during the Brezhnev years, when the film is set (and, perhaps, the state under Putin, when the film was produced). Even though no official representative of the Brezhnev government makes an appearance in the film, Father Anatolii advises his followers to make family-planning choices that run counter to the Soviet agenda of industrial production. It must be noted that he has come to embody this alternative only after thirty years of self-inflicted, private suffering, suggesting not an inherent masculinity, but one that is earned through much tribulation, or tempering, to invoke Sovietspeak. Perhaps it is owing to these years of suffering that Anatolii’s behavior and leadership come across as no less impressive than the customary brands of patriarchy and masculinity – it is hard-fought and personal, stemming from sheer endurance, not conferred by any earthly authority.

The first model of masculinity contrasted to Anatolii is that of Tikhon Petrovich, an archetypal Soviet war hero from World War II and veteran in the 1970s. Tikhon’s name may have been selected to elicit comparisons to Viacheslav

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15 See Michele Rivkin-Fish's article “From 'Demographic Crisis' to 'Dying Nation'...".
Tikhonov, the paragon of Brezhnev-era masculinity who starred as Shtirlitz in the immensely successful television series *Seventeen Moments of Spring* (*Semnadtsat’ mgnovenii vesny*, 1973)\(^\text{16}\)—a program that Elena Prokhorova contends was “engaged in the process of rearticulating Soviet national mythology by linking it to complementary aspects of representations of masculinity” (135). While on the coal barge with the young Anatolii, Tikhon exhibits exemplary leadership and resolve. He has a strong, upright frame and an ever-composed, steely-eyed, handsome countenance that never falters, even at the prospect of imminent death. His persona corresponds to the ideal military man summed up by Karen Petrone: “The stoicism of the ideal Russian solider in the face of death was a product both of his self-control and of his belief in a heavenly reward. In the Soviet Union, ideal soldier-heroes gave their lives with the ultimate goal of communism rather than the ‘cross of Christ’ before their eyes” (173). Tikhon’s allegiance to the Soviet cause is further signaled in the mise en scène, for he is positioned next to a portrait of Stalin in the barge’s steering room. He occupies the center of the frame and is all too obviously connected to the New Soviet Man propagated by Stalin’s regime. Tikhon’s masculine form is exemplary, a template for emulation, intended to bolster the myth of Soviet bravery and to inspire the citizenry.

While Anatolii is atoning for his cowardice at the island monastery (and presumably hiding from the Soviet authorities, who likely would have executed the young man for treason), Tikhon marries, has a daughter, and gets promoted to the rank of admiral in the Soviet navy. Seemingly, his life has been wonderful, and

\(^{16}\) Shtirlits, however, was the subject of a series of jokes in Soviet times.
apotheosizes Soviet manhood: he serves the state in his work and raises a child, who, theoretically, will continue building communism for the Soviet Union.

However, all is not perfect. Tikhon’s martial masculinity cannot comfort his mentally tormented daughter, Nastia, whose plight doctors have been unable to ameliorate since her husband’s death in a submarine accident. Thus, this paragon of Soviet masculinity is at his wits’ end with his stricken daughter and seeks a different kind of fatherly advice. As a last resort, Tikhon ignores the system he has so faithfully complied with and escorts his daughter to the famed starets. Incidentally, Tikhon is the only man in the film to appeal to Father Anatolii for intervention. Up until this point, only women have traveled to Anatolii in search of spiritual guidance. All of Tikhon’s achievements as an exemplar of Soviet masculinity cannot assist him in perhaps his most important role – that of a father. The contrast is striking between the postured, uniformed, and self-composed Tikhon and the roughly clothed, spasmodically shouting Anatolii, who greets him. It is Anatolii’s exorcism that is able to cure Tikhon’s afflicted daughter, not Tikhon’s Soviet-approved iteration of paternity.
Next, Father Anatolii’s masculinity stands in opposition to that of the monks, also bearing the familiar title of father, in the monastery where he lodges. As mentioned, Anatolii never permits himself to be tonsured into the brotherhood, even in the face of imminent death, preferring to remain an outsider from mainstream Orthodoxy. He sleeps away from the other brothers’ cells in the monastery boiler hut, inhaling coal dust despite his poor respiratory health.

Anatolii’s refusal to be tonsured also indicates his aversion to formalized ritual, even rituals deemed beneficial by church authorities. All the brothers live in more comfortable quarters than Anatolii, and they worship ritualistically in an official chapel. The two monks Father Anatolii most frequently confronts in terms of behavior and philosophy, and thus, models of masculinity in practice and on screen, are Father Filaret (played by a barely recognizable Viktor Sukhorukov in a whispy beard), and the younger Father Iov (Dmitrii Diuzhev).17 Before starring as monks in

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17 A bit of generic intertextuality here is inescapable, as it concerns these two actors. Sukhorukov starred as Danila Bagrov’s double-crossing murder-for-hire brother, Viktor, in both of Balabanov’s Brother films, as well as a corrupt police officer in
The Island, the two actors had a reputation for playing ideal masculine roles on the large and small screens in Russia, so it is amusing to see them bedecked as pious men of the cloth. They bring an undercurrent of swaggering masculinity to their monastic characters by dint of their cinematic reputation.

Breaking type, Sukhorukov’s Father Filaret runs the monastery as a devoted, if less than ascetic monk. He kindly, if slightly condescendingly, addresses Anatolii, and sweetly attempts to get the latter to comply with monastic ritual. Although he is a kind and religiously observant man, he enjoys too many physical comforts for Father Anatolii to stomach. As a result, his cell “mysteriously” burns down, and the igumen\(^\text{18}\) is compelled to lodge with Anatolii until his quarters can be reconstructed. Anatolii reticently permits Filaret to bunk with him and immediately takes notice of his new roommate’s warm boots and soft blanket, obtained during a pilgrimage to a monastery in Greece. Filaret wakes up to Anatolii’s roasting his boot leather in the furnace and releasing his blanket to float on the sea outside, all to drive out the demons that Anatolii perceives to inhabit the objects. Diuzhev’s Father Iov is a piously observant monk, sincerely trying to lead his life – and ascertain that all other monks are living their lives – in accordance with monastic protocol. Iov complains to Filaret about Anatolii’s failure to wash his face and pray in the proper manner during services. To rebuke Iov for being a stickler for the rules, Anatolii plays pranks

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\(^{18}\) An igumen is a monastery overseer in the Eastern Orthodox tradition.

Balabanov’s Dead Man’s Bluff (Zhmurki 2005). Diuzhev has starred as a revered masculine character in numerous films and television programs, particularly as a soldier in the television series about the Russian war in Chechnya, Brigade (Brigada 2002), as a soccer goalie in the series The Team (Komanda 2004), and as the small-time crook Saimon in Balabanov’s Blind Man’s Bluff.
on him, such as smearing a door handle with soot and asking him puzzling questions.

In confronting the thoroughly institutionalized monks on the island, Father Anatolii combats the strain of Russian Orthodoxy advocated by Joseph of Volotsk in sixteenth-century Moscow, which supplanted the older vein exemplified by Saint Theodosius, who founded the Pechersk Monastery with Father Antonius in Kyiv circa 1050 and lived a kenotic life of asceticism. Fedotov explains that the sixteenth century saw “the Russian Church split between the builders of the Muscovite Kingdom and the ministers of the Kingdom of God. The ‘Josephites,’ the nationalist party in the Church, and the ‘Oprichniks,’ the G.P.U. of the Tsar, Ivan the Terrible, emerged victorious. The triumph of Joseph of Volotsk’s party over the disciples of the mystic Nil Sorsky had a paralyzing effect upon spiritual life” (“Russia and Freedom” 18). In another article Fedotov continues, “The victory of ‘Josephitism’ in the official church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries accounts for the triumph of ritualism, for the decay of mystic currents in the church and, finally, for the withering of religious life in general” (“Religious Background” 45). The “inert” Josephite strain of Orthodoxy prompted Patriarch Nikon to introduce reforms to rituals, as well, prompting the schism in the church between Old and new believers.

19 In another article Fedotov adds, The Josephites stressed ritual over inner spirituality, and placed a premium on the observance of physical rites and rituals. The strain of Josephitism became connected with economic life, with a striving for a certain standard of well-being which would allow for organized social work, with the ideal of order, strictness[,] and ritual beauty in private, domestic life as well as church worship...Well-to-do peasants, merchants [,] and clergymen exhibited this practical tendency...but the peasantry also generated perpetual wanderers, pilgrims [,] and ‘holy fools,’ bearers of kenotic Christianity” (“Religious Background” 45), which has been associated with St. Theodosius.
Later, it was the Josephite premium placed on form that allowed for the church to be subjugated to the authority of the monarchy and the subsequent Soviet regime. Nevertheless, while the predominant strain of Josephite Orthodoxy inhaled among the upper classes and the clergy, the kenotic model of Saint Theodosius remained much beloved among the lower classes and those on the fringes of Russian society, as it was much more sympathetic to their hardscrabble existence. In *The Island*, Father Filaret and Father Iov initially reflect the Josephite philosophy in their actions. They lead a less-than-kenotic patriarchal existence, and offer a less-than-kenotic example for believers to emulate. As a son of Theodosius and a father of an alternative religious paradigm, Anatolii undoes their hollow, yet “unemptied” model of religious patriarchy through shunning its staid forms.

Lungin’s film, therefore, reaches back into Russian history for an older model of religious leadership to juxtapose with the content-light Josephite school. In his actions and attitude, Father Anatolii bears many similarities to Saint Theodosius, who, according to Fedotov, “is the father of Russian monasticism. All Russian monks are his children bearing his family features. Later on, new trends developed in Russian monasticism, but the image of Saint Theodosius will never tarnish” (*The Russian Religious Mind* 111). Whereas his mentor, Saint Antonius,²⁰ retreated to meditative seclusion in a cave, Theodosius preferred to live an ascetic life and work among the people (119). Fedotov observes,

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²⁰ St. Antonius cofounded the Pechersk Monastery with St. Theodosius in approximately 1050 AD (*The Russian Religious Mind* 110).
Saint Theodosius is depicted wearing ‘uncouth garb’ and rejoicing in humiliations. His figure may be identified as the prototype of nearly all Russian saints. Since the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries this ‘kenotic’ type of holiness took the form of ‘holy foolishness’; the most popular saints in the centuries of Moscow's tsardom were men, laymen, who would take upon themselves the cruel role of pretended madness. Poverty, simplicity, self-humiliation[,] and acceptance of suffering are the predominant elements of Russian piety.” ("The Religious Background..." 44-45)

Indeed, critics and scholars alike have labeled Father Anatolii a modern-day or “Soviet-era” holy fool (Kobets; Norris 172). Anatolii aligns himself was the downtrodden, and his erratic behavior holds a mirror up to the abuses of power in church and state.

Theodosius’ and Anatolii’s ministrations, therefore, are not emblematic of Christ Pantocrator,\(^\text{21}\) but of the kenotic Christ, who empties himself of his divine traits, debases himself, and suffers alongside the impoverished faithful. In following this example, Anatolii never turns any seekers away. Theodosius spurned material possessions and encouraged the faithful to follow his example. Instead of upbraiding

\(^{21}\) Fedotov defines Christ Pantocrator as “the Lord Omnipotent.” This deity is a magisterial combination of God the Father and the Son, “the Christ of the Last Judgment or the “Terrible Judgment as it is called by the Greeks, not the Redeemer, but the Judge—as He is expected by the faithful” (The Russian Religious Mind 30). Thus, Christ is split in two, and the other half is the kenotic Christ, or the deity who sloughs off his divinity to descend among humankind in order to suffer for/with them.
people directly, Theodosius punished them through his treatment of their material goods. Fedotov explains, “Most of all, [Theodosius] was zealous about the statutory poverty, taking away from the cells everything superfluous in vestments or food to be burned in a stove as ‘the devil’s part’ ... It is noteworthy that even in this case, he did not punish the guilty but destroyed the material goods which became imbued with the demonic element of avarice and self-will” (The Russian Religious Mind 123). This is exactly what Anatolii does with Filaret’s cozy boots and blanket – he casts the demons out of them, not out of the igumen. For Anatolii, people and their souls come first, before physical comfort and material possessions.

As Pankhurst contends, the Orthodox Church’s strict devotion to form continued into the twentieth century, when it infected the Stalin regime as its cultural operations were subsumed into the latter (148). The loyalty to form influenced all facets of Soviet life, not least of which was the production and display of state-sanctioned masculinities on film, which always had to comply with state mandates and were always meant to agitate the viewing public regarding how to look, live, and behave. Manliness in Soviet cinema was conveyed by how well a character complied with the qualities of The New Soviet Man and sacrificed his mind and body to the communist cause (Kaganovsky 3-10); viewers were supposed to glean inspiration from this repeatedly reproduced, rigid model of masculinity. Therefore, situating a film in a monastery with a holy fool monk to act as a surrogate spiritual father and model for emulation in Brezhnev’s Russia is not as outlandish as it may appear at first blush, if the goal is to break down the forms that crossed over from the Josephite tradition into Soviet ideology. In hard physical work for a cause,
Father Anatolii’s masculinity meets that of the New Soviet Man. Anatolii, though, disregards that masculinity’s official forms—a quality that sets him apart from the state-approved model.

Father Anatolii combats Soviet forms of ideal masculinity by undermining one of its pinnacle avatars – the New Soviet Man as World War II hero and his successor, the veteran. He also challenges the complacent monastic brotherhood. But Anatolii treads on the Soviet patriarchal prerogatives and their forms in another important way, too. The advice to his followers counters the arch-patriarchal pronatalist policies of the Soviet regime under Brezhnev and, thus, the entire Soviet system. World War II exacted a tremendous decline in fertility in the Soviet Union that had still not recovered even in the 1970s. Michele Rivkin-Fish writes, “This pattern was worrisome, since demographers and politicians widely viewed a national demographic politics as necessary for planning the socialist state; predicting and organizing labor supplies and pension resources; accumulating military power; and maintaining the Soviet Union’s status as an international superpower” (155). The Stagnation-era Soviet state had an interest in policing its citizens’ reproductive practices in order to ensure the propagation of its policies and production forecasts. It required a continuous new crop of citizens to effect its goals. But Father Anatolii has a different agenda for commanding people’s reproductive and family plans. He doles out sober, often unpalatable instructions to those seeking

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22 In fact, the Russian fertility rate remains among the lowest in the world, a condition with which the Putin regime also has been gravely concerned.
his wisdom, advising them to suffer and place raising families over economic and social stability.

Anatolii’s patriarchal advice provides a new directive of cultural values that contravene the theoretical Soviet premium on production, which, in the film, is shown to come at the material expense of nuclear families by separating women from fulltime wife- and motherhood. Indeed, it is largely women who travel to the remote monastery to seek Anatolii’s guidance, and this guidance mostly relates to choices between devoting themselves to their present family and safeguarding their future social or economic situation. This aspect of the narrative accurately reflects the double burden Soviet women faced with shouldering domestic and employment responsibilities. In one of the first episodes at the monastery, a frantic, single, pregnant woman wants Father Anatolii to give his blessing for an abortion.\(^{23}\) Anatolii, incognito as simply a monk, says he will relay the request, and then reemerges with the belly of his cowl stuffed with a blanket, as if to mock the young woman’s pregnancy. As the woman tearfully pleads with Anatolii, he snaps back at her, “You’ve decided to go to hell, and you want to drag me along with you?” Anatolii instructs her to keep the baby, combating all her excuses for procuring an abortion and promising that the little bundle will bring her great happiness in life. In his characteristic mercurial fashion, he then shouts at her to vacate his island, flailing his arms at her as she scurries across the dock.

\(^{23}\) For Mamonov’s real-life opinion of abortion, see Footnote 4.
Later, a working mother brings her crippled son Vania to Anatolii, desperately hoping to have the boy’s festering hip miraculously healed. Again, Father Anatolii initially makes light of the situation and bonds with little Vania. He agrees to heal the boy on the condition that his mother subsequently accompany her son to the monastery’s chapel for communion. After the mother hurriedly concurs, Father Anatolii abandons his air of silliness and prays, genuflecting, to cure the boy. Curiously, as he prays, the mother and her son, who are praying in tandem with Anatolii, are framed as if to resemble an Orthodox icon of the Bogoroditsa and the baby Jesus. Anatolii does not face them, but faces forward in the frame. At prayer’s end, Anatolii tosses Vania’s crutches aside and enjoins the boy to walk, which he does, placing his full weight on his leg and hobbling around Anatolii’s hut unassisted. His mother, in a tone intimating that she takes her son’s cure for granted and would rather forego his communion, states that she must hasten back to work to attend to important business. As mother and son are departing in a rowboat, Father Anatolii rushes into the water to retrieve the boy for communion. When the
mother protests, insisting that she will be fired from her job, Anatolii promises her that there has been a flood at work and that there is no point in hurrying back. He deposits the boy in Father Iov's arms, instructing the latter to give the boy communion and lodge the little family for the night. Again, familial and spiritual matters come first in Anatolii's world. Curiously, it is only here that Anatolii ever brings up an Orthodox ritual in his insistence that the boy be baptized. According to Fedotov, Theodosius generally shunned ritual, but the only time he ever condoned it was as an act to place new or weak believers on the path to secure faith. Theodosius was leery of the "theme peculiar to Russian piety: the external, bodily aspect of worship"; he was concerned primarily with the content of one's faith, not the formal actions a believer undertakes to demonstrate that he is acting in harmony with the church's rites (The Russian Religious Mind 135). Thus, it would seem that in this case, in recommending baptism Anatolii is still operating in harmony with Theodosius's general distaste for form.

In a third episode, a middle-aged woman approaches Father Anatolii to ask for permission to divorce and forget her husband, who, she believes, was killed in Europe decades earlier, during World War II. Again not revealing his true identity, Anatolii instructs the woman to listen through the door while he conveys her request. Staging a conversation between his two personas, Anatolii divines that the husband is not dead after all, but has been living in France since the war. He instructs the woman to sell her farm and all her possessions, and travel to France – a capitalist country – to be reunited with her long-lost beloved spouse. At first the
woman wails, balking at this advice to relinquish all her belongings, but eventually acquiesces to his enjinder and ruefully departs.

The final scene in which Anatolii aids in resuscitating a family comes when Tikhon Petrovich visits the island. His daughter has gone insane, or, as Anatolii diagnoses, has become possessed by a demon, since her husband died. Despite his ideal New-Soviet-Man masculinity, Tikhon is unable to care for his daughter or bring her life back into balance. Although he has reservations, Tikhon is ultimately grateful that Anatolii is able to restore Nastia’s senses, and this, the film’s climactic episode, vaunts Theodosian paternity as a masculine model and agent above that of the Soviet ideal.

In these four instances of healing, Anatolii’s prescriptions align his positions with those of traditional heteronormative patriarchy, which maintains its privilege through directing and policing women’s sexuality and family life. As Rivkin-Fish maintains, the Soviet Union had an interest in ensuring that there would be future workers in its industries and supporters of its politics. Anatolii’s counsel consistently mandates that women devote themselves primarily to matrimony and motherhood, suggesting that they flout the (at least theoretical) first half of the Soviet directive that women work outside the home like any patriotic Soviet citizen and attend to reproduction and domestic management like traditional Hausfrauen. He, nonetheless, urges a conservative approach to women’s roles, subjugating them to a paternity that oversees their choices, in essence removing choice. This dynamic perhaps connects Anatolii’s outlook on gender roles to the Domostroi, which during the Russian medieval period prescribed the subjugation of women’s behavior to
their husbands’ ‘rules’ in the domestic sphere. In any case, since he sacrifices and suffers on a ceaseless basis himself, he is no hypocrite in asking others to submit to his patriarchal instructions—to sacrifice their goals and comforts for the sake of raising children according to old Orthodox ideals.

One aspect of Anatolii’s paternalistic masculinity that does not jibe with Theodosius’ spiritual prototype is his seclusion at the island monastery. Granted, Anatolii permits throngs of pilgrims to visit him in his hermitage, where he dispenses advice and ridicule equally, but he does not travel into the countryside to be among the faithful, as Theodosius is reputed to have done. In fact, he wills himself to die on the island after receiving forgiveness from Tikhon and does not continue his ministering. According to Fedotov, Theodosius not only meets the world at the gates of his cloister; he himself “goes into the world” (*The Russian Religious Mind* 124). Perhaps the film’s conclusion resolves this quandary. During this episode a kind of posthumous *khozhdenie v narod* transpires. As the closing music begins to play, Father Iov heaves a large cross onto his back, and he and several other of the island’s brethren transport Father Anatolii’s coffin by boat off the island into the open water. Thus, while Anatolii does not travel among the people, he helps to reform Father Iov’s outlook on practicing religion and inspires him and other monks to go forth “into the world.” The film’s finale leads viewers to believe that Anatolii’s example has inspired the monks, who will disseminate his legacy and example among the Soviet people. Just as in *How the Steel Was Tempered*, the hero does not survive, but his example can motivate all who hear about it. Like the New Soviet Man, Anatolii provides inspiration, and his acolytes respond in kind. Fedotov writes
that “the dislike of reclusion marks the first generation of Theodosius’ disciples” (“The Russian Religious Mind” 148). Such proves to be the case with Anatolii’s disciples, as well.

Figure 34. The Island. The brethren export Father Anatolii’s example to the nation.

Lungin’s film taps into the post-Soviet trope of Messianism, as discussed by Marsh (358-72), in that it proposes new models and ideas to Russia and the world. *The Island* suggests a passive, kenotic model of masculinity to shape society, in opposition to the New Soviet Man’s teleological activities, intended to build communism. “It is clear that empires, even those [empires] calling themselves holy, are not built upon Kenoticism. When Moscow began to build a strong centralized state with the aid of the Russian Church, Kenoticism had to be put aside and to yield to another, more positive, more earthly and reasonable idea of Christian life. The ritualistic and social Christianity of St. Joseph of Volotsk became a truly Muscovite form of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (Fedotov, “The Religious Sources,” 35-36). Perhaps, then, *The Island* does not advocate the founding
of an empire. It aims for an example to inspire the reformation of the Russian people. Not an evangelizing philosophy like that of the Soviet Union, it is clannish and Russo-centric. Norris deems Lungin’s *The Island* “a good blockbuster meant to combat bad blockbusters” (187). It proffers a salubrious spiritual masculinity as a model for leadership and for emulation in order to indicate an alternative path for post-Soviet Russia.

5. *Tsar.* In a negative review of *Tsar* (*Tsar’* 2009) in *Komsomol’skaia pravda,* Stas Tyrkin observes, “The plot [siuzhet] in many of Lungin’s films consists of a moral battle between polar-oppositely charged male protagonists [geroev-muzhchin]” (n. pag.).\(^{24}\) Indeed, my dissertation has argued that this very narrative configuration is Lungin’s cinematic *modus operandi.* All of Lungin’s masculine characters to this point, with the exception of Platon in *Tycoon,* have been low on the totem pole of Russian power figures, or else a damaged exemplar of some form, like Shlykov in *Taxi Blues* or Tikhon Petrovich in *The Island.* *Tsar,* however, takes Lungin’s moral battle between opposing male characters to the highest realm possible in the Russian context. Lungin transports the model of kenotic masculinity exemplified by Father Anatolii in *The Island* and injects it into the most senior figure

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\(^{24}\) Tyrkin begins his review for *Tsar* in the October 29, 2009 edition of *Komsomol’skaia pravda* thusly: “Сюжет многих фильмов Павла Лунгина составляет моральное противоборство полярно заряженных героев-мужчин: таксиста и саксофониста в «Такси-блюзе», отца и сына в «Луна-парке» и т.д. То же и в «Царе»: облезлому и бесноватому, с одним гнилым зубом во рту русскому царю Ивану Васильевичу (Петр Мамонов) противостоит благообразный и рассудительный митрополит Филипп Колычев (Олег Янковский), само воплощение христианской добродетели. Русский Антихрист против русского святого, добровольно восходящего на Голгофу. Упырь, мающийся в потных ночных кошмарах, против праведника, непоспособного сказать ни слова лжи (n. pag.).”
in the Russian Orthodox Church – the Metropolitan of Moscow, Filipp. Lungin also bypasses the standard model of devoted national subject/son, and instead includes the figure of plenipotentiary monarch. Thus, Lungin continues The Island’s comparison between alternative religious and mainstream secular masculinities: only in Tsar, he squares off the two supreme instantiations of each type. Additionally, Lungin transfers his battle of masculinities from an isolated island in the Russian Far North during the stable, if stagnant, Brezhnev era to sixteenth-century Muscovy during the tumultuous reign of Ivan IV, or, as he is better known around the world, Ivan the Terrible. Thus, instead of geographical isolation, Lungin furnishes viewers with temporal distance. This time and place are not entirely random choices, however, given the confrontation Lungin sets up, for Ivan the Terrible was instrumental in subjugating the Russian Orthodox Church to the secular monarchy (Fedotov “Russia and Freedom” 18; Pankhurst 136). It makes sense then, that Lungin consider a showdown between Ivan the Terrible and Metropolitan Filipp, who are the hegemonic models of their respective ‘social camps.’

In his consideration of gendered power in Tsar, Lungin appears to be taking part in a larger national debate about Russian identity that goes beyond the religious themes Marsh identifies ( messianism, apocalypticism, and resurrection.) Tsar participates in a national dialogue through its engagement with another trend Marsh notices among post-Soviet creative minds. “Many post-Soviet writers (and, again, filmmakers) rewrite and recombine the events of Russian and Soviet history and the Russian and Soviet classics in order to disorient their readers and make
them perceive traditional themes or language in a new way, or to transform and transcend their cultural heritage” (351-52). I quote Marsh further:

Instead of feeling the ‘anxiety of influence’ and the ‘burden of the past,’ which, according to some western critics, affects contemporary writers in relation to their literary history, many Russian writers [and filmmakers] are following the tradition of the Formalist critics of the 1920s, for whom, in the words of Gary Saul Morson: ‘Far from exhausting possibilities, history may, in fact, create new ones as a longer succession of works and schools offers greater opportunities for allusion, cross-reference, and parody.’ (352-53)

As I understand it, Marsh is arguing that artists (including filmmakers) in today’s Russia are channeling Viktor Shklovskii’s 1917 concept of defamiliarization (ostranenie) from his essay “Art As a Device” (“Iskusstvo kak priem”), which compels audiences to reconsider the mundane objects of cultural patrimony in an unusual new light in order to home in on their true essence. On the other hand, her argument also parallels that made by Iurii Tynianov in his 1929 critical treatise Archaists and Innovators (Arkhaisty i novatory), which posits that, in the development of new poetic language out of outmoded prose, novelty comes about through parody of outworn materials in an endless process of evolution. In any case, Lungin is tapping the Russian cultural canon for symbols of power to rework. It appears, here, that Lungin’s Tsar is tackling the legacy not only of the first Russian tsar, but also of the cinematic classic, Ivan the Terrible (Ivan Groznyi 1944 and 1958) by Sergei Eisenstein—a film that is by far the most iconic ekranizatsiia of the monarch’s reign.
If Lungin intended to channel art that investigated and represented hegemonic masculinity, then Eisenstein’s film delivers as a source material on two levels. First, Ivan’s time was fraught with crisis, and the first tsar of all the Russias was faced with unruly boyars at home and invading Poles on the western border. Ivan had to exert uncompromising political force to protect Muscovy. Second, *Ivan the Terrible* was produced at the behest of Stalin during WWII, to boost morale and rally the populace around Russia’s great historical narratives during the dark days of the struggle against fascism. In short, the film was produced to reinforce the narrative of a powerful father-figure leader in times of calamity.

Eisenstein’s *Ivan* goes beyond sheer feel-good propaganda, however. Due to its meticulous attention to detail, the film is renowned for its multifacetedness, which permits contradictory interpretations. Yuri Tsivian justifiably asserts, “*Ivan the Terrible* is a complex movie – some people even think the most complex movie ever made...” (7). Joan Neuberger adds, “From the beginning, Eisenstein was intent on representing Ivan as a complicated character. In both published articles and private notes, Eisenstein wrote that he wanted to ‘humanize’ the tsar, to look beyond his one-sided reputation for brutality in order to understand what motivated him: ‘Not to whitewash,’ as he put it, ‘but to explain’” (29). In other words, Eisenstein wished to clarify why the ruler had to revert to violent masculine traits to maintain order. Ivan is a conflicted, but resolute ruler. His will and conviction consolidate ultimately to preserve a fledgling Muscovy. Naturally, critics have traditionally read parallels in the film between Stalin’s era and Ivan’s time, as both
rulers were compelled to resort to odious cruelty to thwart threats from within and abroad.

Eisenstein’s film categorizes the burden of carrying Russia’s destiny on one’s shoulders as virtually impossible. Anyone would shrink from this endeavor. But if one man was up to the task, it was Ivan, played by the spellbinding Nikolai Cherkasov to many accolades. The film begins with a young, virile Ivan’s coronation and his subsequent seizure of absolute power. He is a handsome, austere, astute sovereign from the start, a leader who commands loyalty, and one to whom the Orthodox Church, the treasonous boyars, and a condescending Europe will ultimately have to submit. Ivan inherently possesses the traditional masculine characteristics of strength, wit, and resolve, charming the peasants with his humor and wisdom. In response to the Khan’s provocations, he conquers the Tatar kingdom of Kazan’ on the eastern border. He then tamps down a plot to overthrow him undertaken by his treacherous aunt and bumbling cousin Vladimir. In Eisenstein’s projected third part, Ivan was to conquer Livonia, securing unrestricted trade access to the Baltic Sea—a victory that never eventuated. In all of these feats, Ivan only resorts to violence when provoked and when nothing else will save Russia. Of course, a heavy toll is exacted on Ivan for his unflagging efforts on Russia’s behalf. His mother and his beloved wife Anastasia are poisoned, and his friends Kurbskii and Kolychev desert him. He occasionally wavers in his courage, but in due course marshals inner strength to prevail. He takes decisive action solely with Russia’s survival in mind. The film can be read to rationalize, if not exonerate, Ivan’s, and, by extension, Stalin’s cruel actions. Ivan delivers Russia from ruin, at
least for a while, and he does so thanks to the traits of hegemonic masculinity so valued in Russian heads of state today.

Lunin’s Tsar is unquestionably in dialogue with Eisenstein’s Ivan, especially in questions of masculinity and Russian power. There is unmistakable visual intertextuality in several formal allusions. The abundant use of shadows in profile on the walls in Lunin’s film alludes to Eisenstein’s formalistic images. The introductory scene of Lunin’s Tsar, in which the Russian people crawl in a queue shaped like a snake references the final shots of Part 1 of Eisenstein’s film, where the tsar stands at the head of the wriggling Russian narod. But Tsar begins at a different moment in the ruler’s reign – when Ivan passive-aggressively feigns abdication and withdraws to his provincial estate after discovering a boyar plot to refuse to swear allegiance to his infant son as heir. Bereft of their leader and ashamed, the people of Moscow penitently trek to Ivan’s hermitage and plead for his return. In Lunin’s film, however, the reunion is not a jubilant reconciliation, but a
lesson in abjection. When the Muscovites arrive at Ivan’s estate, he is secluded in his chambers, mumbling from the Book of Revelation like an insane monk. To don the exemplary form of masculinity needed on this occasion, Ivan requires a bevy of servants and his second wife to clothe him in royal raiment and Monomakh’s crown, which lend his frail frame a much more imposing appearance. Ivan is loath to greet his subjects, and when he finally does, he implores heaven to forgive them for their betrayal, compelling them to wallow in the snow while buffeted by his militia. Ivan is pulled along on a rug at the head of this pathetic procession, and the impression is that Ivan relishes orchestrating misery for his people. Lungin’s Ivan is concerned not with Russia’s wellbeing, but with maintaining a stranglehold on his subjects’ devotion in order to secure his own salvation.

Figure 36. Tsar. Ivan pleads to God for forgiveness for his people.

Petr Mamonov, the countercultural Russian rock icon turned Orthodox hermit, shoulders the role of Ivan in his third collaboration with Lungin. The director justifies this bewildering choice of casting with the statement that
Mamonov, just like Ivan, is a bit of a beast, yet at the same time always praying
("Detiam do 13" n. pag.). Critic Elena Savina praises Mamonov's penetrating gaze as
tsar, but other critics have balked at his decrepit appearance, from his historically
inaccurate age to (mean-spiritedly) his rotten teeth. For example, Tyrkin writes,
“the untrained actor Mamonov is unable to cope with the massive role of the
Antichrist of all the Russias, which Lungin has bestowed on him. What emerges is
more a scary holy fool, and at worst a distasteful petty demon” (n. pag.).

Even Mamonov admits that his Ivan did not pan out, and despite “stripping down and
baring [his] soul almost completely,” he was disappointed with his own acting after
watching the film (“Detiam do 13” n. pag.).

Nevertheless, Mamonov's enfeebled Ivan is meant to embody unlimited
secular power. He wields the full authority of the Russian government and its
concomitant castigatory apparatuses; in fact, he imports torture devices from the
West (!), establishes a “torture amusement park,” and organizes the fearsome
oprichnina, a band of mercenaries on horseback who spy, maraud, and generally

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25 Tyrkin continues in his scathing review of Tsar for Komsomol'skaia pravda:
“Удачно совпавший со своими героями в «Острове» и «Такси-блюзе»
nепрофессиональный актер Мамонов откровенно не справляется с
масштабной ролью Антихриста всея Руси, возложенной на него Лунгиным.
Получается скорее не очень страшный юродивый, на худой конец пакостный
мелкий бес” (n. pag.)

26 A review for Tsar in RIA Novosti provides Mamonov's comments on what he views
as a less-than-successful iteration of Ivan: "'Как же я могу понять царя русского?!
Это надо им родиться. Мы даже представить себе не можем, что это была за
власть! Одной бровью армией управлял. Личность огромная. Как такого
сыграть? Можно только сбоку притронуться. Не потянул я роль, слабо сыграл.
Хоть и разделяя, оголил душу почти полностью. Но фильм получил не о
царе, а о русской святости", - сказал он "Московскому комсомольцу" ("Detiam
do 13” n. pag.).
wreak havoc in the countryside. As Ivan grows more fearful of god’s retribution on
him and Russia, he executes more people designated as traitors. Contrary to the
strong-arm discourse, Ivan’s acts as ruler do nothing to further Russia’s interests.
They unleash slaughter on the boyars, but they do not halt the onslaught of the
approaching Poles, and the Russian populace bears the brunt of the fallout.

In the face of perceived internal and external threats against his authority,
Ivan recalls to Moscow his childhood friend, the tacitly stalwart Metropolitan Filipp,
incarnated on screen by beloved actor Oleg Iankovskii, in what was to be his final
role. It is in Filipp that Lungin proposes an alternative to the strong-arm ruler.
Eisenstein’s Ivan also summons Filipp, but the latter (formerly Kolychev) is more a
traitor than a savior. In Lungin’s film, Ivan installs Filipp as Metropolitan in Moscow,
hoping to curry the church’s blessing on his bloody campaign. Lungin’s Filipp
instantiates the polar opposite of the ruthless despot, refusing to approve of Ivan’s
deeds, instead advocating patience, mercy, and forgiveness for the accused. The
Metropolitan recommends leaving judgment to a higher power. Filipp’s laconic
approach, as well as his genuine sympathy for his flock, garners a following of
disciples in his challenge to Ivan’s *modus operandi*. Ivan, in response, develops an
even greater Messiah complex, envisages traitors all around him, and brutally
deposes Filipp as Metropolitan. The active Ivan then schemes to have the passive,
yet more politically viable Filipp sequestered and assassinated. Filipp remains
composed through all his sufferings and incarceration, resolute in his gentle
approach to crisis, and even advises his fellow monk brethren to flee before Ivan’s
wrath reaches them.

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But Filipp’s unmerited death does not contain Ivan's vengeance. Failing to heed Filipp's plea to escape, but hewing to his model of passive suffering, the monks hole up in an onion-domed church with Filipp’s corpse. Ivan’s henchmen set the wooden structure alight, immolating the faithful sufferers within. In one of the film's final sequences, the church’s cupola and cross come crashing down in flames. In the closing shot, Ivan sits alone in eerie solitude in his torture garden, with wolves howling, snow swirling, and blood staining the scaffolding. His strong-arm tactics most certainly succeed in rooting out and dispatching any and all traitors, as well as countless innocent citizens. But in the process, Ivan annihilates an ancient component of Russian cultural consciousness, and creates for himself a veritable wasteland to rule over.

According to Nancy Shields Kollman, masculinity was not as debated an issue in medieval Russia as it was among philosophers in medieval or Renaissance Western Europe (15). Nevertheless, we can piece together some prescriptions of
gender and deduce that the concept of masculinity was by no means monolithic or unitary. *Tsar* captures this state of affairs. Writes Kollman

> Masculinity in Russian sources up to the middle of the seventeenth century was grounded on the twin bulwarks of Christianity and patriarchy. Strictly speaking, the ideal of masculinity was the ascetic saint, who disdained the pleasures of the flesh, abstained from contact with society, and pursued otherworldliness through hesychast devotions. Expectations for men who lived in the world paralleled this paradigm of saintliness. Secular men were to be humble, pious and charitable, orderly and sober; their goal in life was to earn heavenly salvation. Traits that today are culturally considered ‘masculine,’ such as assertiveness, worldly achievement or physical prowess, were not particularly associated with men in Muscovy, nor particularly esteemed for men or for women. (16)

Lungin’s Ivan perverts this model, not only in his sadism, but in his misappropriation and misinterpretation of traditional principles of Russian Orthodoxy. The *Domostroi*, according to Kollman, also prescribes that, “for rulers, as evidenced in the many formulaic eulogies to ruling princes in Muscovite and earlier chronicles, masculinity meant being a just judge, a generous giver to the poor and a valiant warrior in defense of one’s realm and Christianity. For men in the political elite, masculinity meant valiantly fighting for the sake of God’s Christian people and loyally serving one’s prince” (17). Ivan, then, in *Tsar*, is responsible for derailing the national ruler’s restrained masculinity. In the film, he is also guilty of killing off (and
subjugating in real life) the kenotic instantiation of masculinity in Metropolitan Filipp.

Figure 38. Tsar. The cupola burns.

It bears mentioning that Tsar is considered a failure both financially and critically. Yet its release was a phenomenon, as Vadim Nestorov notes for Gazeta.ru, “Against a backdrop of complete ‘fishlessness,’ Tsar is more than even a crayfish; it is some kind of lobster” (n. pag.).27 Distributers released the film nationally on November 4, 2009, or Den’ narodnogo edinstvo (Day of National Unity), a recently commissioned holiday that coincidently commemorates Moscow’s liberation in 1612 from Polish-Lithuanian occupation. All irony was obviously lost on whoever selected the date, as in Tsar Ivan intensifies his murderous campaign when Russian forces surrender the town of Polotsk to the Polish army; the Russians lost this battle to the Poles. Tsar cost a staggering fifteen million dollars to produce, a hefty price tag for the Russian film market, where only the most popular films generate that

27 “на фоне тотального безрыбья российского кино, «Царь» — это не рак даже, а лобстер какой-то” (n. pag.).
amount in ticket sales. The film recouped less than three million dollars in domestic revenue, prompting Vesta Borovikova of the entertainment journal *Vash dosug* to declare the film “a bomb” (n. pag.).

Perhaps critics and audiences did not hear what Lungin was trying to say or did not want to hear it, as Lungin tells Borovikova:

> It is completely the case that if there had not been an Ivan the Terrible, then Russia would have become a different country. In fact, there was great potential for democracy within the Russian kingdom: there was a Duma, debates, and discussions held by the boyars. Ivan, with the pathological complexity of his personality and his pathological cruelty, in many ways determined our history. His personality, like Stalin’s, ‘left its mark’ on our mentality for many years and muddled the concepts of good and evil. It is a great misfortune that the ruling of Russia ‘fell’ to Ivan Vasil’evich.” (n. pag.)

Lungin’s *Tsar* likewise illustrates what a misfortune it was that Ivan the Terrible set a terrible example of masculinity for Russian rulers.

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28 In her October 29, 2009 review of *Tsar* for *Vash dosug*, Borovikova writes: “Фильму прочат статус «бомбы» отечественного проката” (n. pag.).

29 Lungin’s comments to Borovikova on Ivan the Terrible’s impact on the Russian national psyche: “Но совершенно точно — если бы не Грозный, Россия сегодня была бы другой страной. Ведь был большой потенциал демократии внутри московского царства: Дума, споры, дискуссии, которые проводили бояре. Грозный патологическим богатством своей личности и патологической своей жестокостью во многом определил нашу историю. Его личность, как и личность Сталина, на долгие годы «опечатала» собою менталитет страны, сместила понятия добра и зла. То, что царствование «выпало» на Ивана Васильевича, — неудача для России. Поэтому меня, конечно, удивляет, что находятся люди, которые говорят: «Дайте нам нового Грозного» (n. pag.).
6. *The Conductor*. The release of Lungin’s latest film to date, *The Conductor* (*Dirizher* 2012), which indicates a conductor of music rather than one of electricity or a train—a distinction the Russian title makes clear—caught me by surprise. I had been tracking Lungin’s production company webpage for over a year, and I had not come across any mention that a new film was in the works. Then *The Conductor* dropped into Russian theaters in March 2012. It seems to have come and gone without much fanfare, though, igniting discussion primarily among Russian film critics and art-house aficionados. To date, it has earned a miniscule amount of money in ticket sales, and Lungin’s production company decided not to enter it into any international film festivals (Orlov n. pag.). The actors have garnered generally positive reviews, although many critics have expressed bewilderment at the film’s message. Svetlana Stepnova, writing for *Ruskino.com*, conveyed her confusion about many of the film’s elements – its religious music, its setting in Jerusalem, and its underdeveloped relationship between father and son (n. pag.). Writing for *Kommersant.ru*, Mikhail Trofimenkov criticized several illogical plot choices and character motivations, as well.\(^{31}\)

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\(^{30}\) *The Conductor* grossed approximately 400 thousand rubles (less than 15 thousand dollars at the then exchange rate), according to the website Kinopoisk.ru.\(^{31}\) Among other lapses in plot logic, Mikhail Trofimenkov in his review wonders why Sasha is the only member of the bohemian commune to commit suicide due to poverty: “Самоубийство нелогично: парень живет с друзьями и любящей девушкой в коммуне, где никто не страдает от излишка шекелей, но не вешается.” Further, Trofimenkov writes, "*The Conductor* is not so much a mysterious opus as it is a black cat in a dark room which you cannot catch because it is not there”. “"Дирижер" — не столько загадочный опус, сколько черная кошка, которую не поймать в темной комнате, поскольку ее там нет” (n. pag.)
Thus, *The Conductor* will likely prove a minor effort in Lungin’s oeuvre—neither an enduring success like *Taxi Blues* or *Tycoon*, nor a breathtaking disaster like *Tsar*. First of all, it is Lungin’s shortest film, clocking it at just over a scant 80 minutes, despite incorporating three subplots into the main narrative about a hardnosed professional father and his bohemian prodigal son. Although the film takes place on two continents, it does not aim for the sweeping scope of *The Island* or *Tsar*. Despite opening and closing with extreme long shots of the Holy Land, the film does not utilize vast landscapes to the degree of *The Island* or *Tsar*. It has a small cast of characters and a fairly straightforward, if illogical plot. Its religious overtones, however, unite it with *The Island* and *Tsar*, two previous films that also integrate motifs of Russian Orthodoxy and, in particular, the premium placed on bodily suffering in masculinity.

A renowned musical ensemble conductor, Viacheslav Petrov (played by Lithuanian theater actor Vladas Bagdonas), is slated to direct a performance of a Christian oratorio in Jerusalem. The piece of music, titled *St. Matthew’s Passion* (Strasti po Matfeiu) and composed by contemporary Russian composer Metropolitan Ilarion Alfeev, conveys the contents of chapters 26 and 27 of The Gospel according to St. Matthew, which documents the last week of Jesus’ life, his crucifixion, and resurrection. The oratorio is woven into the film’s plot, as the biblical narrative parallels the development of events in the film. Ramping up the dramatic effect of certain key scenes, the music straddles the boundary between diegesis and non-diegesis in the film.
One morning Viacheslav Iur’evich, whom only his assistant Pushenkov (Sergei Barkovskii) refers to by the familiar Slava, wakes to an incoming fax that informs him of his son Sasha’s death. He accepts the news with a great degree of difficulty, but successfully represses his grief, or at least any outward appearance of despondency. He decides to fly immediately to Jerusalem, where his son had been living with a collective of bohemian artists and junkies, and where his concert is scheduled to take place anyway. With him depart his three soloists, each of whom is experiencing his or her own personal crisis. The tenor Nadezhdin (Evgenii Koltakov) finds it difficult to sing as well as he had before suffering an accident, the nature of which is never disclosed. The baritone Nikodimov (Karen Badalov) comes dangerously close to betraying his wife with a pilgrimess named Ol’ga (Dar’ia Moroz), seated next to him on the flight to Jerusalem. Nikodimov’s wife, Alla (Inga Oboldina), an extremely pious and jealous soprano, warns Ol’ga to stay away from her husband.

While in Jerusalem before the concert, Viacheslav Iur’evich confronts Sasha’s friends in their dilapidated flat, where everyone is drinking cheap beer and smoking marijuana out of plastic-bottle bongs. One young woman informs him that Sasha hanged himself because he owed too many people too much money. The group asks the conductor to pay for Sasha’s funeral, to which he reluctantly agrees. Before he leaves, another member of the commune shows Viacheslav Iur’evich a painting that Sasha had been planning to give him as a present at his imminent concert. It is a portrait based on Hans Holbein’s masterpiece, *The Body of the Dead Christ in the
Tomb, but with the conductor’s face. The painting clearly upsets Viacheslav Iu’revich, but he snatches it up anyway, only to hurl it off a cliff later that evening. After attending his son’s funeral, the conductor goes on to lead a stirring performance of Alfeev’s oratorio, which is cross-cut with a catastrophic scene of a suicide bombing in an outdoor market. Since Alla had asked Ol’ga to stay away from her husband, the pilgrimess takes her two sons to browse the wares. Tragically, Ol’ga dies in the blast, leaving her two sons orphaned. The film ends with Viacheslav Iur’evich pacing through the winding streets, tunnels, and stairways of Old Jerusalem, pausing to cry at a wall, and contemplating his son’s death.

Figure 39. The Conductor. Rooftops and religious edifices in a bleached-out Jerusalem.

Although the film seems to be a rather lightweight entry in Lungin’s body of work, it does function as an important bookend to Taxi Blues and serves as a fitting coda to Lungin’s films to date. Putting aside the film’s abstruse story, one can say that The Conductor makes a compelling cinematic statement about the relationship

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32 Dostevsky showed acute interest in this very painting in his novel The Idiot.
between artistic masculinity and the male body. It does so by weaving together themes of religion and spirituality, so central to Lungin’s later films, with the tussle between hard work and artistic inspiration, so vital to the director’s first three films. The film explores different ways artists and spiritualists relate to their bodies vis-à-vis their creative praxis.

Inasmuch as the audience never sees Sasha alive in the film, even in flashback, the estrangement between father and son comes to light through dialogue, in which viewers learn that before Sasha ran away from home, he and Viacheslav Iur’evich had quarreled over Sasha’s refusal to work hard. Despite Sasha’s obvious talent and his declared desire to be an artist, his father suspected that he simply did not want to apply himself. Eventually, Viacheslav Iur’evich refuses to support Sasha financially. In this intergenerational conflict, Lungin sets up a dynamic of sentiment identical to the one between Shlykov and Lesha in Taxi Blues. Specifically, a talented artist who relies on inspiration rather than hard work to create (Lesha) is dependent for monetary support and access to alcohol upon a paragon of masculinity (Shlykov), who demands that the “slacker” earn his keep if he expects material sustenance. The Conductor, however, reconfigures hard work as a state of mind, not a component of bodily discipline. In fact, unlike Shlykov, who trains his body vigorously, Viacheslav Iur’evich, who is extraordinarily successful in his profession and universally feared by his musicians, suppresses his body, drives, and emotions. The other men in the film – his son, the soloists who sing for him, and the suicide bomber – all give or tap into their physicality and bodily passions as they dedicate themselves to the art and/or spirituality they embrace. Thus the film sets
up a confrontation between a bodily masculinity and a cerebral masculinity in the production of and self-dedication to art, as well as in the securing of financial stability.

The film’s opening montage immediately prompts viewers to consider the role of the male body in the creation of inspired (religious) art, as Viacheslav Iur’evich’s body is juxtaposed with breathtaking panoramic shots. Reverent music, cinema, and shots of the male body come together in this introductory sequence. Extreme long shots of parched, barren landscapes and scraggly trees in the Negev Desert dissolve on and off the screen to the stringed accompaniment of Alfeev’s oratorio. These opening shots have been filmed in extremely high-key lighting and soft focus, a technique that obtains for the duration of the film and that lends an aura of lyricism to the narrative. Shots of Jerusalem and, in particular, shots of religious structures, replace the landscape shots that open the film. The montage then includes an upward-tilting shot of a building with the word ‘birthplace’ in English, as well as some Arabic script. The progression of Holy Land images is then intercut by dimly lit profile shots of the sleeping Viacheslav Iur’evich, swaddled in burgundy sheets. The shot of his slumber, reminiscent of Holbein’s *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb*, prompts audiences to consider proactive passive suffering of a savior-figure as instantiated by Father Anatolii in *The Island* and Metropolitan Filipp in *Tsar*. The montage sequence, however, fragments the conductor’s body, shadowing most of it in darkness. Illuminated are only the man’s arm and hand in one close-up shot, and then his grizzled beard in a subsequent lingering extreme
close-up—somatic symbols of work and masculinity. Enough of the body is shown to signify masculinity, but the majority of it remains concealed.

The screech of a fax machine, which blares cacophonously over the soundtrack, rouses the sleeping conductor. The news it relays – that his son Sasha is dead – clearly affects the man. He perfunctorily attempts to gulp a glass of water to allay his shock at the news, but ultimately opts for the anti-anxiety substances of choice for Russian men – cigarettes and alcohol. Given a few moments, however, Viacheslav Iur’evich is able to collect his emotions and react to the situation with poise and dignity. As soon as his assistant Pushenkov arrives, the conductor instructs him to arrange flights to Jerusalem for the primary musicians in the ensemble. He then dresses in black and prepares to take charge at rehearsal.

For the remainder of the film, Viacheslav Iur’evich is clad entirely in black when in public, and the only shots of his exposed body occur when he is in the privacy of his hotel room in Jerusalem. Even when he changes clothes for Sasha’s funeral in the presence of Nadezhdin, the latter turns around so as not to see the conductor’s exposed torso. The conductor’s bald head and gray whiskers stand out in sharp contrast to his black clothing. Filmed against a dark background, his presence is reduced to a single head floating through black space. The face on this head never smiles, registering an unremitting scowl. Thus, in concert with Viacheslav Iur’evich’s attempts to deny his body throughout the film, the cinematography and mise en scène frequently obscure his body to highlight his mental/intellectual assiduousness in, and dedication to, his work. These choices of shot suggest that the conductor’s commitment to his craft originates strictly in his
mind. The conductor makes a continuous, conscientious effort to stifle his male body, along with the exertion it can muster, the pain it can experience, and the inspiration it may provide. His art is purely cerebral and stems entirely from mental exertion.

After arriving in Jerusalem, Viacheslav Iur’evich departs straightaway for the artist commune where Sasha had been staying. Shots of his taxi ride are filmed primarily in close-up, with streetlights blurring and fading around his head against a backdrop of night. Again, he is a mind traveling through black space. He appears to be collecting himself mentally, denying his body and passions before he is to look upon his son’s corpse. Upon arrival, he announces himself as Sasha's father (Sashin otets) and immediately agitates Sasha’s friends by claiming that his son simply did not want to work. His harangue is met with a disgusted retort from Sasha’s girlfriend, “He worked. He was an artist.”

It is clear that Viacheslav Iur’evich and

33 “Он работал. Он был художником.”
Sasha’s colleagues will not agree on what constitutes a productive lifestyle for an artist – that of a hard worker or that of a hedonist. Before he leaves, though, the conductor asks to see Sasha’s corpse: the only parts of the dead body that ever appear on camera are an arm and a hand through the diaphanous sheet that covers Sasha’s body, providing a visual echo of the film’s first glimpse of the sleeping conductor. Only here, the immobile body’s arm is covered and lifeless, not merely resting. This is the first of several confrontations with death that cause the conductor to face the mortality of bodies, including his own. He is torn between grief over his son’s death and his own philosophy of (masculine) artistic praxis.

**Figure 41. The Conductor. Viacheslav Iur’evich as Holbein’s *Dead Christ*.**

Before Viacheslav Iur’evich returns to his hotel, he reluctantly agrees to pay for Sasha’s funeral. In gratitude, or in an attempt to extract even more money from the conductor, one of Sasha’s colleagues drags a painting from a back room as a gift for the conductor. Since it is a copy of the Holbein painting alluded to by the sleeping conductor at the film’s outset, but with the conductor’s head, the painting intensely
disturbs Viacheslav Iur’evich. His distress intensifies when one woman comments that Sasha wanted to present the painting to his father at the upcoming concert. The conductor wryly replies, “You all just wanted to blow up my concert.” The painting reminds the conductor of his bodily weaknesses. First, his figure is nearly naked in the painting; only his loins are girded with a small cloth. Second, the body displays gaping wounds, bespeaking its vulnerability and permeability. Finally, the body in the painting is dead. And this is the characteristic that most overwhelms the conductor. Death is the one bodily process that he cannot continue to disavow. Even St. Matthew’s purportedly perfect Christ, who withstood sundry temptations and bodily torment, succumbed to death. Similarly, while Viacheslav Iur’evich can hide his aging body behind black clothing and silently endure the emotions provoked by his son’s death, he cannot stave off death. Death exposes the fiction of the conductor’s brand of devoted masculinity, which rejects the influence of the body, equating successful creativity with sheer willpower. Viacheslav Iur’evich sets off into the night carrying Sasha’s painting under his arm. At this point, a baritone chants the text of the non-diegetic oratorio, describing Jesus’ ascent up Golgotha, in harmony with the conductor’s climb up a residential street in Jerusalem. The conductor’s march up a hill in Jerusalem marks an undeniable confrontation with the inevitability of death for the conductor, just as Jesus’ march up Golgotha signified his submission to mortality. All the conductor can do is to fling the painting off a cliff at the top of the hill in desperation.

34 “Вы хотели взорвать мой концерт.”
Viacheslav Iur’evich’s ongoing confrontation with mortality reaches its peak at Sasha’s funeral. While walking arm-in-arm with Pushenkov from the taxi to Sasha’s grave, the conductor divulges to Pushenkov his mortal fear of death, and how the only funeral he had ever attended was that of his father. He stops beneath overhanging palm fronds, looks Pushenkov in the eye and declares: “And it’s not because I am afraid of death, you see, I simply hate the dead!” This confession is met with a consoling “Slavochka” from Pushenkov. That the conductor is afraid of the dead because they remind him of his weakness before death is paradoxical, as everyone else in the film is afraid of him, his dedication to work, his success, and ultimately, his status as accomplished alpha male of the ensemble. But those who fear the conductor do not fear their own bodies. In fact, they draw upon them in the production of their work.

The conductor's comments on death are the only verbalized indication in the film of chinks in his otherwise robust mental armor. To keep Sasha’s friends at a distance from his person in this state of imperiled masculinity, Viacheslav Iur’evich utters a perversion of Jesus’ post-resurrection pronouncement to Mary in the garden: “Tell them not to approach me.” Oddly enough, Jesus utters something similar to Mary Magdalene in John 20:17, where he pronounces, “Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father.” Only here, the father commands the wanton bohemians not to approach him, since he has not laid eyes on his dead son yet.

35 “Я никогда не был на похоронах, только у своего отца. И всё, больше никогда”...“и не потому, что я смерти боюсь, я мёртвых, понимешь, просто ненавижу...просто ненавижу, понимаешь!”
36 “Скажите им, чтобы ко мне не подходили.”
37 KJV John 20:17.
Before Sasha’s body is lowered into the ground, Viacheslav Iur’evich changes his mind and demands to see it. Although the camera never reveals Sasha’s face, the conductor grimaces, recoiling: “That’s not him. That’s not him! What have you done with him?”38 His reaction to Sasha’s body, as well as to a recent photo of his son with long hair, reveals the connection in his mind between hard work, bodies, and masculinity. In the conductor’s thinking, submission to corporeal appetites and adding to the male body (with long hair) mortifies the body and stultifies its productive potential.

The film’s climax cross-cuts shots from three different episodes. Following Sasha’s burial, Viacheslav Iur’evich collects himself enough to conduct the ensemble in a truly inspired performance, in which each of the soloists sings about Jesus’ resurrection, after which a perfected body will be restored to him. As noted earlier, Ol’ga, honoring her word not to attend the concert, takes her boys to a market for some casual browsing. While the two sons are choosing candies from a seller’s stall, a third narrative thread is woven into the montage. A Palestinian suicide bomber is preparing his body for detonation with the help of an older man. The jihadist undergoes a meticulous ritual in which he has his hair clipped, his beard shaven, and entire body scrubbed and rinsed. The camera almost erotically documents this man’s penultimate act in life with close-ups of the processes and a slow, leftward pan along his facedown body as water sloshes across his back. The jihadist lies on his stomach on a stone slab, feet extended and arms at his side. His face, though, is

38 “Это не он! Почему он так выглядит? Это не он! Что вы сделали с моим сыном?”
not visible. The image is a reverse of the Holbein painting that has been alluded to so often in the film. The inversion perhaps signals a new use, or a perverted use, of the male body. The suicide bomber’s act does not redeem; it annihilates. The young Palestinian then dons Orthodox Jewish clothing, including a yarmulke, and hugs the man who had been helping him cleanse his body for death. It is an embrace between (surrogate) father and son, the older confident that the younger man is making use of his body in a way that supports his beliefs. Perversely, the suicide bomber’s relationship to his body mirrors that between Lesha in *Taxi Blues* and Sasha in *The Conductor*. His body means less to him than his beliefs. He is willing to destroy his body in service of his ideology, whereas Viacheslav Iur’evich makes great efforts to disavow/disacknowledge his body. The body is ultimately a vehicle to accomplish artistic output, or, in the bomber’s case, a political action. According to this thinking, the male body is to be sacrificed to the cause, whether that be killing innocent people in the name of religious ideology or entering a state where artistic inspiration can flow through the body. For the other men in the film, the body is an instrument to be used, not an obstacle to be overcome. The mention of Christ’s resurrection hints that there are better bodies to be had, anyway, after the completion of earthly works. Still, for Viacheslav Iur’evich, the body, its feelings and emotions, are simply a hindrance.
After the concert and before roaming Jerusalem’s streets in search of
catharsis, Viacheslav Iur’evich sits alone in his dark hotel room to read a final letter
from his son. This letter explains Sasha’s relationship to his body and the way he
thinks it should figure in his life experience, and thus, his artistic production.
Beginning with a close-up of the letter, in a slowly zooming out shot that eventually
takes in the whole room, the sequence has a voiceover read the content of the letter.
Sasha relays an episode from his life when he asked a shopkeeper whether there
was any bread being sold in the shop. When the shopkeeper replied that there was,
Sasha asked for gum instead. The shopkeeper was perplexed by the interaction.
Sasha’s letter then states that his father and he simply do not understand each other,
either. He asks for forgiveness for his death and promises never to do it again.
Sasha’s purpose for his body is to subject it to substances that provide no
nourishment, only pleasure. The sensations allow him to enjoy life, and perhaps
channel inspiration for artistic output. This approach to the body is anathema to
Viacheslav Iur’evich, whose masculinity resolutely remains a state of mind.
The film ends on an ambiguous note. Viacheslav Iur’evich leaves his hotel room to stroll Jerusalem’s old streets again. He walks through a tunnel, along walls, and through narrow city streets, until an echo shot of the edifice with the inscription of “birthplace” comes into view. He then steps into an Orthodox church to pray and meditate on his son’s death. The camera provides a close-up of his face in profile, highlighting his candlelit hirsute chin, a recurring symbol of his masculinity. The conductor then returns to the cemetery where Sasha is buried, kneels at the graveside, opens the letter, and reads it one last time. The father writes some last words on the paper in response, then plunges it into a hole he digs in the mounded soil on top of the grave. Viewers are never privy to what he writes as a farewell to his son. The film never resolves proper masculine conduct for artists in life. It does hint, though, at an approval of tapping into the body, even sacrificing it to work, as there may be a resurrection to come in which the body is either restored or obviated.

In *The Conductor*, Lungin revisits themes from his first film, *Taxi Blues*, in which Shlykov, a cynical New Soviet Man marooned in a socioeconomic era that no longer values his masculinity, attempts to instill the value of hard work in Lesha, an indolent artist who destroys his body in order to create art. In Lungin’s latest film, a Russian father and son with different philosophies regarding the role of male bodies and hard work in relationship to art and self-sufficiency square off. On this occasion, however, both men are artists. The difference between them is the way in which the somatic and emotional sides of their selves should play a role in their work. The film also continues Lungin’s use of religious themes, inasmuch as father and son both
engage in the production of art based on Christian tropes concerning Jesus’ body as an example for emulation. The Conductor, therefore, problematizes the role of the male body in the artist/spiritualist’s craft. The film concedes that art requires sacrifice and discipline, but never takes a firm stand as to the boundary between those two phenomena. The question of masculinity in art posed by Lungin is: should the male body be sacrificed in pleasure or torment, or else disavowed in discipline?

Lungin’s three post-religious-turn films clearly advocate a version of masculinity tied to the revered Russian Orthodox paradigm ushered in by St. Theodosius, which was gradually subjugated to secular power under a succession of autocratic tsars. Submission to power and the endurance of bodily suffering is at a premium in this version of masculinity. In The Island, Father Anatolii’s example surpasses the other Soviet standards he comes up against. Although he is a traitor to secular power, he becomes a model of emulation and paternity through his asceticism and his invitation to everyone to make sacrifices. In Tsar, Metropolitan Filipp’s death signals the demise of the hegemony of this type, spelling doom for the country beginning in the time of Ivan the Terrible. Finally, in The Conductor, Lungin warns that religiously-themed masculinities must be sincere – not simply acquisitive of religious themes. He reengages with ideas he visited in Taxi Blues, in which spiritual/artistic masculinities might tap into their bodies for inspiration and creative strength – even if that recourse results in destruction of the body. Lungin’s Orthodox masculinities favor a masculinity of corporeal suffering, whereby a pro-
active passivity combats the ‘problem of power’ Lungin sees as still present in today's seemingly stable Russia.
Conclusion
The Merits of Multiplicity

1. Summation. My study provides the first analytical survey in any language of Lungin’s entire cinematic corpus. In so doing it contributes to Russian cultural studies, inasmuch as Lungin, even if not one of the most discursively treasured Russian directors,¹ has been a dynamic, multifaceted, and award-winning figure on the Russian film scene for nearly forty years, of which approximately twenty-five have been spent in the director’s chair. One of the factors behind the robust longevity of Lungin’s career is undoubtedly his success in continuing to court a range of international and domestic financiers—sources that have allowed him to work not only through rough economic patches in post-Soviet Russia, but also have lent him the relative liberty to craft films in accordance with his own designs, and

¹ Lungin did not receive even one mention in the comprehensive tome from 24 Frames, *The Cinema of Russia and the Former Soviet Union* (2007). More telling, however, is that Lungin did not appear in the list of dozens of the best Russian directors between 1958-2000, as nominated by The Guild of Russian Film Experts and Film Critics (*Gil’diia kinovedov i kinokritikov*) http://www.kinopressa.ru/references/null1.html. Some of the directors listed released far fewer films in their careers than Lungin had before the year 2000, such as Aleksandr Askol’dov, who only ever released one film: *The Commissar* (*Komissar* 1966, 1987). Additionally, in 2008, the Russian film journal *Seans* polled 100 leading Russian film-industry luminaries as to their opinion of the ten best Russian films. Lungin was among those surveyed. As to nominations, however, he received only three votes on the list of one thousand entries, twice for *The Island*, and once for *Taxi Blues*.  http://seance.ru/blog/100
not necessarily in response to public appetites, as some critics have sniped. This artistic freedom has redounded to another significant quality that may account for the director’s lengthy career: the diversity of his output. Lungin has released comedies and tragedies, blockbusters and art-house films, original screenplays and adaptations, genre films, and genre-bending films. He has directed films that the Western film-festival circuit has eaten up, but also crafted specifically Russian-oriented films that did not get official distribution on the international market. He has produced staunchly secular works, yet has incorporated conservative religious themes into his more recent outings. He has also dabbled in a multitude of media formats, such as documentary film and television. His storied career most certainly has warranted a monograph-length scholarly examination.

In spite of Lungin’s wide-ranging output, a unifying, if not unique, thread running through all of his works is their exclusive showcasing of male protagonists—not only of traditionally heroic or ideally masculine male figures, which generally attract and inspire large audiences, but of a wide range of masculine types that challenge viewers to reconsider notions of acceptable Russian

2 See Footnote 2 of Chapter 3.

3 Mark Moss issues a caution against conflating heroic and ideal, yet subordinated masculinities. Moss writes, “It is important to distinguish between the hero and the role model or celebrity. The hero embodies the essence of a glorious past and contains within him or is invested with all the markings of a near mythological god. The hero straddles the mortal world, resting at the upper echelons. The role model or the celebrity is someone to whom we can much more easily relate. Heroes seem to stand high above celebrities and are less likely to be toppled by the capriciousness of fame. Role models also have a built in (sic) whimsical nature and can rise and fall as scandals become public and past misdeeds are revealed” (38). Nevertheless, role models are passable instantiations of masculinity that generally would be condoned by any, and particularly Russian, society.
heteromasculinity. Lungin’s assortment of male characters emerged onto cinema screens during waves of intense national crisis touched off by the demise of the Soviet Union, and the director has continued to put out films with alternative masculine protagonists in the era of revived Russian blockbusters, which, according to Stephen Norris, are steeped in patriotic bathos and historical heroes (300-304). Just as in the case of many of Lungin’s celluloid protagonists, average real-life Russian men have not fared particularly well during this period. Apropos of the 1990s, when Russia’s crises reached their apex, Rebecca Kay, a scholar of the sociology of Russian men, notes, “[A]n overwhelmingly negative portrayal of Russian men has become almost commonplace. It is as if the degeneration of a nation can best be typified by the image of the self-pitying drunk, defeated by circumstance, spiraling into an early grave” (1). Russian political and cultural leaders consequently issued challenges to reimagine men in a more positive light. This proactive search for stalwart masculinities in post-Soviet Russia cannot be seen as distinct, however, even given the country’s grim social circumstances. Kevin Alexander Boon observes in regard to analogous moments of social crisis wherever they occur: “The greater the perceived risk of human mortality, the greater a culture’s need to reassure itself of potential survival; thus the greater its need to seek embodiment of the hero figure” (303). In Russia, the hero figure, as before, is categorically manly. In other words, to replace in the public discourse the perpetually inebriated men with a life expectancy of fewer than sixty years, mainstream films generally began to feature heroes who were by and large
disciplined, responsible, and/or inspirational, and who provided a supporting push in the obsessive drive to reestablish “respectable” Russian manhood.

My study has maintained that Lungin’s films have participated actively, albeit unconventionally, in this conversation. In all his films, Lungin consistently has foregrounded alternative, even previously marginalized, models of Russian masculinity, championing such traits as the intellectual ingenuity, proactive passivity, and physical longsuffering of artists, holy fools, and religious leaders in contrast to the brute force, competitive drive, and blind compliance stereotypically attributed to the soldiers, businessmen, and romantic leads of recent record-breaking Russian blockbusters. In other words, while mainstream Russian filmmakers were toiling to reinvigorate their imperiled industry on the backs of palliative masculinities—or in Boon’s words, to reconstruct a national cinematic “metanarrative” based on nigh-mythical masculine figures (302)—Lungin was offering up critical take after critical take on traditionally ideal, politically sanctioned, as well as topically jeopardized, masculine figures. Having stepped back from the externally macho and compliant, he has concentrated on the introspective and abjectly submissive in various pairing and triangulation strategies. Lungin’s films highlight sympathetic, neutral, and unsympathetic lead men, necessitating the consideration of many masculine typologies.

Perhaps most significantly, my study has directed specific attention to the phenomenon of multiple masculinities in Russian film, utilizing Lungin’s oeuvre as possibly the most consistent purveyor of a rich array of celluloid “manly” typologies, not just heroes such as Danila Bagrov in both Brother films. An appreciation of the
concept of manifold masculine subjectivities is facilitated by taking into account Paul Willemen’s, Wheeler Winston Dixon’s, and Todd McGowan’s progressive conceptualizations of the cinematic gaze, which align viewers’ perception with the diverse cultural instantiations on screen, as well as with the entire cinematic apparatus, rather than with just one hero who accomplishes death-defying feats and successfully woos beautiful women.

Granted, the realization of manifold masculinities is not new to Anglo-American film studies. Focusing specifically on masculine avatars grounded in the culturally myth-building years of the 1950s (107-22), Mark Moss notes that this state of affairs has been more than apparent in American mass media, including film, since its inception. And as noted in the dissertation’s introduction, Andrew Spicer has expounded on the social resonance of the dizzying catalogue of culturally recognizable masculine typologies in British film. Even some Russian scholars have explored, however tangentially or indirectly, multiple masculinities in Soviet and post-Soviet film. For instance, Lilya Kaganovsky takes into account the mutating

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4 Moss elegantly notes in regard to multiple masculinities in American films, “[T]here are a variety of competing masculinities, all jockeying for legitimacy in the pantheon of masculine templates offered up by the media. Many of these can and do coexist with variations on hegemonic masculinity, which gives them both a sense of legitimacy as well as a form of substance. Men can and do embody many of these ‘avatars’ which fluctuate depending on the dictates of media, culture, and society. They select portions or whole chunks within the vast spectrums of masculinity and sort and choose what they want, what they aspire toward, and how they wish to be thought. There are many contradictions and numerous inconsistencies, but rather than posing obstacles, they seem to serve as markers. To some extent, this makes the selection offered up by the media rife with dissonance. Yet, it also provides safety and cohesive platforms on which to stand. The desire to comport oneself as supremely masculine is a common ingredient in many media portrayals” (xviii).

5 Spicer lists a welter of masculine types in films that would be recognizable to the viewing British public. See the introduction of this dissertation.
guises of the New Soviet Man in film between the age of Stalinism and the end of the Soviet Union. Helena Goscilo and Yana Hashamova’s collection *Cinepaternity* (2009) considers male characters in Russian film on the level of brothers, fathers, and surrogate fathers—categories that convey the concept of multiplicity. Finally, Svetlana Kobets has implicitly noted this phenomenon in Lungin’s films, pointing to the holy fool in *Taxi Blues* and *The Island*, and by extension to characters belonging to different paradigms. Where my dissertation treads new ground in examining masculinity in Russian film is in its detailed analysis of a broad spectrum of cinematic Russian masculine types. Consequently, my study expands the number of cinematic masculine subjectivities addressed in the literature by referring to culturally fungible and incompatible typologies that hail from real life and from fictions of Russian tradition. It accomplishes this goal via diachronic examination of Lungin’s ever-evolving representations of male characters across the tumultuous two and half decades he has been directing, in which the director has featured various types, as well as modes of comparing them.

2. Lungin, Masculinity, and Freedom. If any single characteristic is emblematic of Lunginian masculinity, it is *freedom*, although Lungin’s conceptualization of freedom has continued to evolve along with his work. He, of course, does not envisage freedom according to the fraught connotations of current American political discourse. Early in his career, Lungin hewed to the notion of freedom as *freedom from*. Characters like Liosha, Naum, and Philippe all seek freedom *from* the overarching social structure, as well as from the oppressive expectations of socially sanctioned masculinities, which shackle their creativity and
artistic self-realization. Later, however, Lungin modified his version of freedom, abandoning advocacy of freedom from for freedom to, which, for him, has become a more realistic and mature way of imagining it. Starting with Tycoon, his heroes, such as Platon, Edik, Father Anatolii, and even Viacheslav Iur’evich want not so much freedom from society’s strictures, as freedom to pursue their creative drives and life philosophies. Indeed, in The Director, Viacheslav Iur’evich upbraids his drifting artist son for the latter’s refusal to work in order to earn/guarantee the material means that could support his artistic endeavors.

Lungin has exhibited a similarly evolving philosophy in regard to the nexus between his praxis and what he calls freedom. Evidence of this evolution is the consolidated snippets of interviews with Lungin that were conducted at two watershed moments in his career and published in 2008 on Film.ru in an article titled “Lungin versus Lungin” (“Lungin protiv Lungina”). Ol’ga Budoshevskaia led the first interview on the eve of Taxi Blues’ debut at Cannes in May of 1990. During their exchange, Lungin expressed mixed feelings about shifting his career from screenwriting to directing and about the increased demands accompanying this promotion/lateral move in the Russian film industry. In a reply that was emblematic of Lungin’s frequently cryptic and always nonplussing responses to interviewers’ queries, the director mused: “Sure, sure. Of course, freedom was always a double-edged sword. Cowboy Joe was galloping across the prairie, not because he was uncatchable or because no one could catch him, but because no one had any damn
use for him” (“Lungin protiv Lungina” n. pag).\footnote{Да-да, конечно. Разумеется, свобода была о двух концах. Сказал по прерии неуловимый ковбой Джо — не потому неуловимый, что его никому не поймать, а потому, что кому он на фиг нужен.} Originally for Lungin, freedom meant being left alone and subjected to no pressure to excel. But such freedom also meant not being desired.

Lungin’s relationship to his professional prerogative shifted as he built up clout, controversy, and critique from Russian and international reviewers, and changed even after he stepped away from his generous Gallic patrons. Upon the release of *The Island* in 2006, older, perhaps wiser, and always buffeted by the vagaries of the now profit-driven Russian film industry, Lungin reflected in an interview to Konstantin Shavlovskii:

> I no longer live by the category of freedom. You know, as you age, life contracts; it shrinks in on itself. All that remains is one circle of light, and that circle becomes focused on something entirely different [than it was in your youth]. Now, freedom and bondage, and happiness, and everything else, are found in work. There is simply no other kind of freedom, and this freedom is becoming more and more a conscious necessity” (“Lungin protiv Lungina” n. pag).\footnote{Я сейчас не живу категорией свободы. Знаешь, с возрастом жизнь суживается, сужается. Остается один круг света, и он фокусируется на чем-то одном. Сейчас и свобода, и несвобода, и радость, и все остальное — внутри работы. А никакой другой свободы нет, она все больше становится осознанной необходимостью.}

The shift in Lungin’s attitude shines through in the performances of his protagonists in *Taxi Blues* and *The Island*, both of whom are played by Petr Mamonov. In *Taxi
Blues, the single thing Liosha desires is for the Soviet system to leave him in peace so that he can play inspired music on his saxophone and get drunk. By the time Mamonov turns in his performance of Father Anatolii in *The Island*, his character desires nothing more than to work as atonement for his sin. Father Anatolii realizes that one must work *now* in order to secure freedom *later*. Lungin concludes his interview with Shavlovskii by stating that he really just wanted to create films, and that to do so, he realized he must work hard in the present to vouchsafe this luxury in the future. He confessed:

But in reality only one thing is important to me: [to ensure] that each work [film] provides me with the freedom to make another. This is imperative especially now, when success has become the means by which everything is measured. And we all, our generation, we’re just as marginal as we used to be. We got accustomed to living on the margins. It was simply that early we were operating according to the wonderful illusion that marginality was the ideal. Today the box office puts everything in its place.” (“Lungin protiv Lungina n. pag.)

Lungin’s candid commentary on his work as a director perhaps offers a telling analogy to his unspoken regard for masculinity, whatever its physical and social instantiation. For Lungin, something about enacting personal masculinity affords

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8 Но по-настоящему для меня важно только одно: чтобы одна работа давала бы свободу сделать следующую. Это важно особенно сейчас, когда успех стал мерой всему. А мы все, наше поколение, как были маргиналами, так и остались. Мы привыкли жить на полях. Просто раньше у нас была прекрасная иллюзия того, что маргинальность — это идеал. Сегодня бокс-офис расставляет все по своим местам.
satisfaction. But to preserve that personal fulfillment, one must adapt one’s approach to the constantly changing social milieu that surrounds one.

3. Lungin’s Next Move. Indeed, the tempo of Lungin’s work shows no signs of abatement in the near future; in fact, he is currently wrapping up the shooting of his eleventh feature film, which looks to be more grandiose and global in scope than anything he has released to date, even Tsar. Of particular interest is the fact that David Seidler, who penned the script for Tom Hooper’s Oscar-winning The King’s Speech (2011), has been identified as the film’s screenwriter and, moreover, the language of the film’s dialogue has been reported to be English (Tuula n. pag.).

Perhaps Lungin will finally make the truly international hit that his French-language Lifeline never panned out to be in the 1990s. Slated for release in 2014, Lungin’s forthcoming The Queen of Spades (Dama pik) is set to trace the method-acting experiment of the star tenor in a contemporary production of Petr Chaikovskii’s opera The Queen of Spades (Pikovaia dama 1890), which is based on Aleksandr Pushkin’s gothic short story of the same title (1825). The Russian nesting doll of

9 One Russian teaser article about Lungin’s upcoming film [Dama pik] is entitled “Lungin Will Start Speaking in English” (“Dama pik Pavla Lungina zagovorit po-angliiskii”).
10 Perhaps Lungin is following in the footsteps of Timur Bekmambetov, who has directed and produced films of varying success in Hollywood.
11 In an interview published online by Filmpro.ru, Lungin commented that The Queen of Spades would be “a modern psychological thriller, which revolves around the staging of the opera The Queen of Spades and is based on its vocalists; it replicates to a degree the original plot of Pushkin’s work. It’s the story of a young singer, a tenor, who, in an attempt to prove that he is worthy of playing the role of Herman, lives like Herman in real life. He seduces and ingratiates himself with an opera diva, who symbolically fulfills the role of the old countess. Her niece is there too. He also starts to play roulette, loses, and destroys himself” (Sulim n. pag.).
embedded masculine hypostases implied by the premise of this film is almost enough to make one’s head spin. If teasers prove true, Lungin will be placing a modern-day English-speaking opera singer in the performative framework of a Russian operatic protagonist, who is, in turn, based on the fictional gullible Teutonic gambler Herman from Pushkin’s tale. Therefore, the film will potentially consider modern, traditional, fantastical, and foreign masculinities in the Russian (and potentially global) context. These types will inevitably enter into dialogue with other Russian typologies that have been discussed in this dissertation. Thus, as Lungin’s body of work continues to expand, it doubtless will continue to consider sundry masculine types in a Russian Federation still struggling with the way men should adapt to the accelerating phenomenon of globalization, a film industry that is becoming increasingly internationalized, and the specter of a revived, persistent, and oppressive hegemonic masculinity at home with the entrenchment of the executive authority of President Putin.

постановки оперы «Пиковая дама» между певцами и повторяет некоторым образом оригинальный сюжет произведения Пушкина. Это история молодого певца, тенора, который, пытаясь доказать, что он достоин играть Германа, сам идет по пути Герmana. Соблазняет, приближается к оперной диве, которая символически выполняет роль старой графини. Там есть и племянница. Он тоже начинает играть в рулетку, проигрывает, губит себя.)
Works Cited


Beumers, Birgit. "Cinemarket, or the Russian Film Industry in 'Mission Possible.'”


Appendix
Lungin’s Films


The Queen of Spades (Dama pik). Dir. Pavel Lungin. Pavel Lungin Studios, 2014. Film.


Note: All film stills have been taken from my private collection of Lungin’s films.