

RUSSIA IN THE PRISM OF POPULAR CULTURE:
RUSSIAN AND AMERICAN DETECTIVE FICTION AND THRILLERS OF THE 1990s

by

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ABSTRACT

The subject matter of my study is representations of Russia in Anglo-American and Russian spy novels, mysteries, and action thrillers of the 1990s. Especially suitable for representing the world split between good and evil, these genres played a prominent role in constructing the image of the other during the Cold War. Crime fiction then is an important source for grasping the changes in representing Russia after the Cold War. My hypothesis is that despite the changes in the political roles of Russia and the United States, the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union continued to have a significant impact on popular fiction about Russia in the 1990s. A comparative perspective on depictions of Russia in the 1990s is particularly suitable in regard to American and Russian popular cultures because during the Cold War, Soviet and American identities were formed in view of the other. A comparative approach to the study of Russian popular fiction is additionally justified by the role that the idea of the West had played in Russian cultural history starting from the early eighteenth century.

Reflection on depictions of Russia in crime fiction by writers coming from the two formerly antagonistic cultures poses the problem of representation in its relationship to time, history, politics, popular culture, and genre. The methods used in this dissertation derive from the field of cultural studies, history, and structuralist poetics. A combination of structuralist readings and social theory allows me to uncover the ways in which popular detective genres changed in response to the sentiments of nostalgia and anxiety about repressed or lost identities, the sentiments that were typical of the 1990s. My study of Anglo-American and Russian spy novels, mysteries, and action thrillers contributes to our understanding of the ways American and Russian cultures invent and reinvent themselves after a significant historical rupture, how they mobilize the past for making sense of the present. Drawing on readings of literature and culture by such scholars as Mikhail Bakhtin, Tzvetan Todorov, Siegfried Kracauer, Andreas Huyssen, Fredric Jameson, and Svetlana Boym, I show that differences in Anglo-American and Russian representations of Russia are a result of cultural asymmetries and cultural chronotopes in the United States and in Russia. I argue that Russian and American crime fiction of the 1990s re-writes Russia in the light of cultural memory, nostalgia, and historical sensibilities after the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union. Memories of the Cold War and coming to terms with the end of the Cold War played a defining role in depicting Russia by Anglo-American detective authors of the 1990s; this role is clear from the genre changes in Anglo-American thrillers about Russia. Similarly, reconsideration of Russian history became an essential characteristic in the development of the new Russian *detektiv*.

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To my family

Human experiences are infinitely varied. What is surprising about this is not that untranslatable feelings and uncommunicable specificities remain, but, on the contrary, that – provided one is willing to pay the price – we can manage to communicate and understand one another, from one being to another, one culture to another. That there is misunderstanding goes without saying; but understanding does exist, and it is this understanding that needs explaining. Things are not universal, but concepts can be: one must simply not confuse the two so that the road to a shared meaning may remain open.

– Tzvetan Todorov (*The Morals of History*)

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Introduction

THE SHADOWS OF THE PAST

1. AFTER 1991

It is now more than ten years since Russia and the United States entered a new historical period.¹ The Cold War is an event of the past. In the book *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (1997), John Lewis Gaddis describes the Cold War as an ideological contest between capitalism and communism, democracy and authoritarianism; a division of the world into two hostile camps; a competition for influence over the Third World (21-22). The Cold War, Gaddis explains, was also an arms race that held out the possibility of destroying the whole world. It was a rivalry that extended into space, shaped culture, the social and natural sciences, and the writing of history (22). No matter which date is cited as the date of the end of the Cold War,² the rapid decline of the USSR at the end of the 1980s and its disintegration as a state in 1991 are interpreted in the West as unequivocal signs of the Soviet defeat in the Cold War.

¹ According to Eric Hobsbawm, the demise of the Soviet Union marked the end of the twentieth century. See Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994).

² In the article "Beyond Bipolarity in Space and Time," David Reynolds shows that different scholars give different dates for the end of the Cold War. Some believe that the Cold War ended with the signing of the Intermediate Range Forces Treaty on 8 December 1987 in Washington, D.C. For many, the symbol of the end of the Cold War was the destruction of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. Throughout the years 1989 and 1990, Mikhail Gorbachev declared the end of the Cold War on different occasions. George Bush proclaimed the Cold War over in December 1990 during the signing of the Paris Charter for a New Europe (Reynolds 245). Another date commonly quoted as the date of the end of the Cold War is December 1991 when the Soviet Union ceased to exist (LaFeber 13).

The demise of Russia is understood to lead to the disappearance of the Russian threat. The United States and Russia cut much of their nuclear arsenals. The world is no longer polarized between capitalism and communism. Communists lost power in Russia and in the countries of the former socialist bloc. Russia no longer has a significant military presence in the Third World, and its international influence has diminished. All these changes play a role in re-thinking "Russia" in Russia and in the United States.

The fall of the USSR was celebrated as the end of the Cold War in the United States. America in the 1990s became the only superpower. In his 1989 essay "The End of History?" and later in the book *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), Francis Fukuyama expressed an optimistic view of the American triumph over communism. As a result of this triumph, the world, according to Fukuyama, was to become a better place. American media in the 1990s popularized George Bush's vision of the "new world order," which, in simple terms, asserted an American victory, Russian defeat, and a better world for everyone.

More pessimistic views of the end of the Cold War appeared at the beginning of the 1990s and gained authority by the end of the decade. Some scholars question the thesis that "Russia's defeat is America's victory" and that "communism's collapse leaves capitalism triumphant" (Hogan 7). Originally, Gorbachev argued that both the Soviet Union and the United States *lost* the Cold War (Powaski 306). In 1990, Bogdan Denitch predicted the economic decline of both the United States and the Soviet Union (ix) and the loss of the "imperial role" of the United States (6-17). In the book *We All Lost the Cold War* (1994), Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein argued that "the Cold War had no winners, only losers"; the Soviet Union is an obvious loser of course,

but the United States also “paid a heavy economic, diplomatic, and moral price for the long and bitter Cold War” (3). Other scholars expressed similar ideas.³ In 1996, Samuel P. Huntington offered a critique of Fukuyama’s thesis of “one harmonious world” after the Cold War (32). Instead of celebrating the new world order and globalization, Huntington proposes to focus on “culture and cultural identities” because they shape “the patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post-Cold War world” (20). Huntington’s analysis points to an identity crisis in the United States in the 1990s: “The survival of the West depends on Americans reaffirming their Western identity and Westerners accepting their civilization as unique, not universal, and uniting to renew and preserve it against challenges from non-Western societies” (20-21). Huntington reveals anxiety about the international position of the United States in the 1990s, the position that has not been defined in certain terms. Indeed, after the “old patterns of stability” broke up and new ones “have not yet emerged,” it is not yet apparent how “the upheavals of 1989-1991” have changed the world (Gaddis 22).

The complex perceptions of victory and defeat in the Cold War contribute to a sense of ambiguity about individual and collective identities for many in the contemporary world. National identities and national history are once again questioned. Who are we? Where are we going? Where do we come from? Re-thinking and re-writing Russia after the end of the Cold War and after the break-up of the Soviet Union have

³ See, e.g., the discussion of the end of the Cold War by Gar Alperovitz and Kai Bird in: Gar Alperovitz and Kai Bird, “Demystification of Twentieth-Century Issues,” *The End of the Cold War*, ed. Michael J. Hogan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 207-217. Similarly, Ronald Powaski argues that although the Soviet Union disappeared and the United States “emerged triumphant,” “both nations lost much in waging” the Cold War (306). Ronald Steel explains that the demise of the Cold War system led to “a sharp reduction of the influence of the two major adversaries.” In his opinion, American political influence “has rested significantly on the Cold War” (111).

become pertinent both in the United States and in Russia. In a sense, Russia in the 1990s became a foreign culture – the other – to those both inside and outside Russia.

The subject matter of my study is representations of Russia in Anglo-American and Russian spy novels, mysteries, and action thrillers of the 1990s. By providing a comparative analysis of depictions of Russia in such vibrant part of Russian and American⁴ popular cultures, this dissertation contributes to our understanding of the way ‘the upheavals of 1989-1991’ have changed the world. Indeed, popular culture was an important area in which the rivalry between the two formerly antagonistic nations was displayed. Especially suitable for representing adversaries, for reflecting the world split in two and contrasting good and evil, the genres of detective fiction and thrillers played a prominent role in constructing the image of the other during the Cold War. Unlike some cultural forms that used to be important in that era, but have lost their significance,⁵ detective fiction has been always popular. Crime fiction then is an important source for grasping the changes in representing Russia. Have popular representations of Russia changed upon the end of the global conflict? Have they become more “objective” and less distorted ideologically both in Russia and the United States? Do they have more in common than they did before? Even if the answer to all these questions is “yes,” attempts to find new ways of understanding Russia are inherently linked to reconsideration of the past. Depictions of post-Soviet Russia necessarily emerge as a

⁴ American popular culture of the Cold War period also includes books and films produced in Britain. The novels by American and British authors that I analyze in this thesis may be described as forming part of Anglo-American popular culture. For the sake of consistency, however, I will speak of American popular culture while making it clear that this also includes popular thrillers and spy novels about Russia by British authors.

⁵ Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, e.g., were extremely important for propagating the American way of life in the USSR and in the socialist countries in Eastern Europe; they lost their significance in the 1990s although their transmission was no longer jammed after the fall of socialism.

result of questioning the past in view of the new developments. As argued by the political scientist Walter LaFeber, the end of the Cold War does not mean a complete break with the past: international competition, Russian-American differences and ideological conflicts still exist (13). My hypothesis is that despite the changes in the political roles of Russia and the United States, memories of the Cold War history, the end of the Cold War, and the demise of the Soviet Union continued to have a significant impact on re-thinking and re-writing Russia in the 1990s. The goal of my dissertation is to explore the effects of the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union on Anglo-American and Russian detective fiction and thrillers. To re-phrase, the aim of my study is to find out how Russian and American crime fiction of the 1990s re-writes Russia in the light of cultural memory, nostalgia, and historical sensibilities after the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union.

I propose to look at representations of Russia in crime fiction of the 1990s from a comparative perspective. The common ground for comparing British, American, and Russian novels about Russia is their re-evaluation of the past, their relation to the Cold War history and history of Russia. As the title of this thesis suggests, I view popular culture as a prism whose multiple sides reflect and refract images of Russia. By nature, a comparison is a hermeneutic act that involves not simply a perception of similarities and differences between compared components but also reconsideration of what the compared parts are. Tzvetan Todorov's *The Morals of History*, a work in which a renowned structuralist directly addresses topics of social and political importance, begins his essay "Postscript: Knowledge of Others" with an outline of four successive phases in a hermeneutic act of understanding a foreign culture. Todorov's thought on the relations

between the self and the other helps explain advantages of a comparative approach in a study of popular representations of Russia in the 1990s. In the first stage, “understanding consists of assimilating the other to oneself” and results in reproducing “only one identity: my own” (1995: 14). In the second phase, understanding results in “effacing the self for the other’s benefit” and reproducing only the identity of the other (ibid.). In the third phase, a more enlightened knowledge of both the self and the other emerges from a dialogue between them. Learning about the other as much as possible, becoming more attuned with the self’s temporal, spatial, and cultural specificity, while at the same time perceiving one’s own categories “as being just as relative” as those of the other, results in a mutually enriching experience (1995: 14-15). The essence of this phase in understanding a foreign culture, as described by Todorov, is relevant for developing the method of comparing images of Russia in Anglo-American and Russian popular fiction. As in the advanced phase of understanding the other described by Todorov, there is no room for a belief in an “unprejudiced” position of viewing the other; in a comparison, differences and similarities of different representations of Russia cannot be perceived as a result of an insufficiently ‘objective’ reading. The images of Russia reflected in the prism of popular fiction are never ‘objective.’ They, as well as all other literary representations of the world,⁶ are constructs of reality rather than its imitation. Recognition of this constructed nature of depictions of Russia by different authors and within different genres of crime fiction urges us to account for similarities and

⁶ This argument has been persuasively made in structuralist and post-structuralist poetics. There is a large literature on a work of fiction as “construction.” Of the theories that inform my study of representations, such works as Tzvetan Todorov’s “Reading as Construction” (1988), Iurii Lotman’s *The Structure of the Artistic Text* (1977), Mikhail Bakhtin’s works on the novel, and Fredric Jameson’s *Marxism and Form* (1971) involve the analysis of literature as artistic transformation of reality.

differences in representing Russia from a perspective other than the “objective” truth. It compels us to look for an explanation of these similarities and differences in the cultural baggage of particular representations, in historical and cultural positions that have informed these representations.

Todorov’s description of the fourth phase of understanding the other, reminds one of dialectics that comes out as a natural solution to a problem of reconsideration the self and the other in a comparison. According to Todorov, the fourth stage brings a new level of understanding the other and a new level of self-identification:

I no longer desire, nor am I able, to identify with the other; nor can I, however, identify with myself. The process can be described in these terms: knowledge of others depends on my own identity. But this knowledge of the other in turn determines my knowledge of myself. Since knowledge of oneself transforms the identity of this self, the entire process begins again: new knowledge of the other, new knowledge of the self, and so on to infinity. But is this infinity indescribable? Even if the movement can never reach an end, it has a specific direction, it leads toward an ideal. Let us imagine the following: for a long time I have lived within a foreign culture and this has made me conscious of my identity; at the same time, it sets this identity in motion. I can no longer subscribe to my “prejudices” as I did before, even if I do not attempt to rid myself of all “prejudice.” My identity is maintained, but it is as if it is neutralized; I read myself in quotation marks. The very opposition between inside and outside is no longer relevant; nor does the simulacrum of the other that my description produces remain unchanged: it has become a space of possible understanding between the other and myself. By interacting with the other, my categories have become transformed in such a way that they speak for both of us and – why not? – for third parties also. Universality, which I thought I had lost, is rediscovered elsewhere: not in the object, but in the project. (1995: 15)

This description suggests a dialectical connectedness of the identities of the self and the other. Identities are set in motion by constant interaction with each other. The

development of identities that results from this interaction is viewed as essentially positive, as “qualitative” rather than quantitative knowledge (Todorov 1995: 15).

In the case of American and Russian popular cultures within which the notions of the self used to be established in view of the other perceived as the enemy, a comparative approach to discussing depictions of post-Soviet Russia is especially appropriate. American identity was solidified during the Cold War thanks to the presence of the Soviet threat. Similarly, national identity within the Soviet Union was defined in view of its opposition to the imperialist West, primarily represented by the United States. The end of the Cold War challenged both cultures with the need to move into a different way of identifying the other and identifying themselves in view of the other. What inspires then depictions of Russia in the new historical phase, when the need to see the other as the enemy no longer exists? How much is the process of rethinking Russia, both as the self and as the other, still enmeshed in the memories of the past? These are the questions I will consider in my analysis. In the case of Russia, a comparative approach to the study of popular representations is additionally justified by the role that the idea of the West had played in Russian history and culture starting from the Petrine reforms in the early eighteenth century.⁷ Defining “Russianness” against Western ideas and culture has certainly been pertinent for Russia’s transition from socialism to capitalism. Ever since Mikhail Gorbachev decided to “bring” Russia into the civilized world and until the present questioning of the West’s moral and cultural

⁷ It would be impossible to mention an enormous critical literature on the subject available in the fields of history, political science, cultural studies, and literature. One of the works on the subject quoted in this thesis is *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals and the End of the Cold War* by Robert D. English (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

foundations, Russia's search for a new national identity has included an on-going comparison with the West. The genesis of the new Russian *detektiv* provides an engaging example of Russia's falling under influences of the West and resisting these influences, of Russia's mimicry of Western literary models and of transformations of these models within the Russian context. In a comparison, the complex, unstable, and perhaps even illusory nature of Russia comes to a foreground. To paraphrase Todorov, a comparison of popular depictions of Russia leads to a rediscovery of Russia not as an object, but as a project.

The subject matter, the goal, and the comparative perspective of my study define my choice of the methods of analysis. There is no single theoretical framework that I follow in this dissertation. Reflection on depictions of Russia in crime fiction by writers coming from the two formerly antagonistic cultures poses the problem of representation in its relationship to time, history, politics, popular culture, and genre. The methods used in this dissertation derive from the field of cultural studies, history, and structuralist poetics. My research is informed by the semiotic-structural approach to the study of literary genres and by methods of cultural history. In their reading of genres, Mikhail Bakhtin and Tzvetan Todorov go beyond a purely formalist analysis and question cultural history, society, and the ideological component of cultural forms. In developing my method of analysis, I link the socio-political implications of research by Bakhtin and Todorov with theories and readings of culture by such scholars as Siegfried Kracauer, Andreas Huyssen, Fredric Jameson, and Svetlana Boym whose works have been associated with or influenced by the ideas of the Frankfurt School of Social Research. A combination of structuralist readings and social theory allows me to uncover the ways in

which popular detective genres changed in response to the sentiments of nostalgia and anxiety about repressed or lost identities, the sentiments that were typical of the 1990s. Popular depictions of Russia are important in understanding the ways American and Russian cultures invent and reinvent themselves after a significant historical rupture, in understanding how they mobilize the past for making sense of the present. The concepts of changing popular cultures, cultural asymmetry, the asymmetrically developing genres, and the chronotope of culture help substantiate the argument about the defining role of the Cold War memory in depicting Russia by British and American detective authors of the 1990s, on the one hand, and the crucial role played by reconsideration of Russian history in shaping the Russian *detektiv* of the 1990s, on the other hand. The sections that follow explain the methods used in this dissertation in more detail.

2. CHANGING POPULAR CULTURES

Defined broadly, popular culture consists of traditions, texts and practices of everyday life (Storey 2), “contemporary forms of pleasure, leisure, style and identity” (Rowe 8); it is the basis of everyday conversation including jokes, idioms, and forms of dress (Heath and Skirrow 5; Williams 17). Popular culture is shared by the majority of a group (Brummett 21). Historicity of popular culture, its change over time, allows us to speak of popular cultures of the period of the Cold War and after, before and after *perestroika*. Moreover, texts of popular culture do not simply reflect history, but are an active historical force (Hall 1981: 128; Brummett 68). The relationship between popular culture and history is not a simple mimesis. Representations of Russia in detective fiction may be far from reality. Yet, they constitute a separate reality themselves. On the

one hand, they reflect history and express certain individual and collective values in response to a concrete ideological and political situation. On the other hand, they, in turn, may have an impact on the public opinion and politics.

In my analysis of detective fiction of the 1990s I rely on diverse theories of popular culture. Beside the term “popular culture,” I also use the term “mass culture.”⁸ This term implies the culture of the period of rapid technological process, or, in Walter Benjamin’s words, of the “age of the mechanical reproduction” (48). In the term “popular culture,” the emphasis is on *people*’s response to the production and distribution of cultural goods rather than on the mode of production. The term “mass culture” is imbued with economic overtones; it implies consumerism and regulation by the free market. Since the fall of the USSR is linked to Russia’s transition from communist to capitalist economy, and since the free market plays a crucial role in shaping cultural production in contemporary Russia, the term “mass culture” is relevant for my discussion. Moreover, as argued by the Frankfurt School, mass culture may be understood as propaganda, a means of manipulating public opinion. During the Cold

⁸ In view of Frankfurt School theorists, mass culture provides addictive pleasures to the public and thus helped generate conformism and complacency among people. For Theodor Adorno, mass culture is not “something like a culture that arises spontaneously from the masses themselves, the contemporary form of popular art” (Adorno 1991: 1; Adorno, Horkheimer 1944). Adorno’s view is shared by the followers of Frankfurt school (see, e.g., T. Modleski, ed. *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986). Other contemporary theorists, however, accuse Adorno of the inability to recognize “unpredictable, contradictory and subversive” elements in culture, elements that “can hold material and ideological oppression at bay” (Rowe 8). The differences between the Frankfurt School and scholars who mostly represent the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies include the distinction between mass culture and popular culture and the opposition of popular culture to hegemonic culture. Since the term “mass culture” is historically important in my research and since I focus on the transition decade following the Cold War, the decade whose essence is in the disruption of the hegemonic understanding of Russia both in the United States and in Russia, the theoretical differences between the Frankfurt School and the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies will not be my concern in this dissertation. At the same time, my research on popular representations of Russia in the 1990s may illuminate some points of convergence between the two schools.

War, mass culture was certainly used as propaganda, for disseminating the belief systems and creating consent in the public. Given that this project deals with the cultural memory of the past in the texts of the present period, recognizing the propagandistic element in mass culture is important. When pursuing a comparison of Anglo-American and Russian detective fiction of the 1990s, the question to ask is “What happens to the ideological baggage of the past within the context of popular entertainment seemingly alleviated from explicitly political agenda?” Do traces of old Cold War/Soviet beliefs reappear in depictions of post-Soviet Russia?

Both theorists of the Frankfurt School of Social Research and those whose work has been associated with the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies define popular culture politically and socially.⁹ The politicization of popular cultures in the United States and in Russia is particularly important for understanding the development of such genres as spy thrillers that flourished with the coming of the Cold War and whose structure reflected political antagonisms of the past. In my study, I view texts of popular culture not simply as entertainment but also as “a terrain of conflict and contestation” where the social relations of everyday life are “produced and reproduced” (Hall 1992: 278). My research is an investigation of the image of Russia that is contested in American and Russian crime fiction of the 1990s. Different genres of crime fiction serve as the ground for the interaction of diverse cultural values and American and Russian ideologies, for the interaction between the values of the past and those of the emerging cultures as well as between various subcultures that co-exist within a larger

⁹ See, e.g., a discussion of the relations between politics and popular culture in Tony Bennett, *Popular Culture: Themes and Issues* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1981), and in Tony Bennett, Colin Mercer, and Janet Woollacott, eds., *Popular Culture and Social Relations* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).

culture at any given historical period. In comparing representations of Russia in detective novels and thrillers by different authors, we need to find out what exactly is contested in these versions of Russia, what informs the work of an author who writes about Russia in the 1990s.

Communist Russia was a hot topic in the American entertainment industry for several decades before 1991. Recent studies show that American politics during the Cold War were in part informed by images from popular culture. According to Suzanne Clark, American politicians “relied on the figurative representation of un-American enemies” in their work (22). In *Many Are the Crimes*, Ellen Schrecker shows that Joseph McCarthy and some representatives of the FBI knowingly presented invented evidence as “fact.” As a counterpoint to Russian propaganda, a large part of American Cold War culture promoted the role of the United States as a defender of democracy and savior to the world. In second-hand bookstores in North America, the shelves containing mysteries and thrillers are full of books with a red star or a hammer and sickle on the cover; their titles often have the word “red” in them. Beside literature of and about the Cold War, there were also TV shows and feature films serving the purposes of American propaganda. In *Cold War Culture*, Richard A. Schwartz studies such Cold War TV shows as CBS’s documentary series *See It Now* (1951-1957); the CBS/NBC family show *Father Knows Best* (1954-1963); the CBS shows *Pentagon U.S.A.* (1953) and *I Led Three Lives* (1953-1956) based on experiences of Herbert A. Philbrick, an FBI agent who infiltrated the American Communist Party; the NBC *Jack Paar Tonight Show* (1957-1962), which included interviews with major American politicians, a discussion of the Bay of Pigs invasion and of The Berlin crisis; *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1965) that

dealt with such events as the U-2 incident, the Cuban Missile Crisis and John F. Kennedy's assassination; and the NBC's *Star Trek* (1966-1969). These shows presented Russians in a rather unfavorable light. Some shows of the era did not even use the word "Russia" or "Russian." *The Bullwinkle Show* (1961-1973), the NBC/ABC popular cartoon series about the flying squirrel Rocky and the moose Bullwinkle featured two villains from the mythical land of Pottsylvania: Boris Badenov and Natasha Fatale. The villains' "Russian" names and accent left little doubt as to which country Pottsylvania stood for. Similarly, *The Day After*, a 1983 ABC film about a nuclear attack on a town in Kansas, did not even mention Russia leaving the source of the nuclear bombs that destroyed Lawrence unnamed. Such shows and films fit into a larger context of the American Cold War culture with its fear of "the bomb," public discussions of nuclear winter, and disarmament vigils of the détente era.

In 1964, William K. Everson, in his study of the images of villains on American movie screen, commented briefly on different ways Russian and American moviemakers represented the enemy during the Cold War:

[N]o nation *in peacetime* has been so maligned by the movies of another nation, as have the Russians. True, Russian movies offered distortions and lies about America (and her allies), but it was done within the standard framework of orthodox propaganda, and, in theory at least, could make little real headway since the true facts were too well known.

Hollywood, on the other hand, in some truly irresponsible moviemaking, seized on Russia and communism as a convenient scapegoat and *staple* villain, along with cattle rustlers, gangsters, and outer-space monsters. In the field of science fiction, the Russian became as much of a caricatured "enemy" as the Hun of old. ... And *Red Planet Mars* really hits below the belt by having their propagandist messages re-routed through space, as though coming directly from God. In the film's incredibly tasteless climax, God Himself comes out on the side of the democracies, and brings

about a religious revival, and a corresponding destruction of communism within the Iron Curtain! However, the *individual* villains in these films have been negligible. It is communism itself that has been the heavy, rather than its agents. (137-139)

It is clear from Everson's comment that American and Russian depictions of the adversary differed in strategies and were permeated with a sense of history that was tailored to the demands of the moment.¹⁰

Hollywood released more than fifty anti-communist films in the period 1947-1954. Yet, one must also recognize that Hollywood's involvement in American anti-communist propaganda was not simply a wholehearted support of anti-Soviet policies. In *Running Time: Films of the Cold War* (1978), Nora Sayre argues that the films of the 1950s were "part of Hollywood's ritual of atonement and appeasement, and were aimed at an uninformed audience in a decade when almost anything in that middle America could be related to Communism" (80). In other words, Hollywood's lip service to McCarthy's anti-communist campaign was not necessarily genuine.¹¹

Other scholars also explore the complexities of social life and culture in the 1950s-1960s.¹² Among these complexities are patriotic education in America during

¹⁰ Everson compares the depiction of Russians by Hollywood to depictions of the Huns. The association of communists and the Huns was re-enacted in the opening of John Milius' *Red Dawn* (1984). In this film, a high school teacher is telling his students about ferocious Huns when the combined forces of the Cubans and the Russians start a brutal attack on a peaceful provincial American town. The parallel intended by the director is transparent: Russians are as ferocious and barbarous as the Huns were.

¹¹ The drama of the American entertainment industry in the early 1950s is reflected in Martin Ritt's film *The Front* (1976), which tells a story of a modest cashier Howard Prince (Woody Allen) who agrees to work as "the front" for several blacklisted television writers out of financial interest but gradually himself protests against the government's violation of such American principles as freedom of belief and individualism.

¹² Mary Kaldor, *The Imaginary War: Understanding East and West Conflict* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1990); Guy Oakes, *The Imaginary War: Civil Defense and American Cold War Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998) and Ellen Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism* (Boston: Bedford Books of

McCarthy's era, the moral damage that the McCarthy era did to American society, the crisis of masculinity in Cold War America, and the bomb fear. These studies re-create the American 1950-1960s anew and contribute to our sense of history today. The scholarly emphasis, however, is on more dramatic decades of the East-West conflict, the first decades of the Cold War. The study of the relationship between American popular culture and the Cold War of the détente period and of the end of the Cold War is still incomplete. Little has been done on the images of Russians in American popular fiction and film.

In *Narrative Innovation and Cultural Rewriting in the Cold War and After* (2001), Marcel Cornis-Pope argues that "since the end of the Cold War, the 'meaning' of the world is no longer located in the imperial rivalry between superpowers. Instead, 'meaning' emanates from that vast middle ground between West and East, dominant and peripheral, released by the collapse of our polarized world-view" (xiii). This argument of the increased sense of a nation within post-Cold War narratives is based on the material of "high culture." The question of how the end of the Cold War has influenced the American representation of Russia in such genres as mysteries, espionage novels, and thrillers has not been posed with the persistence accorded to questions regarding changes in American international politics. Moreover, while agreeing that the 'meaning' of the

St. Martin's Press, 1994); Margot A. Henriksen, *Dr. Strangelove's America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Richard M. Fried, *The Russians are Coming! The Russians are Coming! Pageantry and Patriotism in Cold-War America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Elaine McClarnand McKinnon and Steve Goodson, eds., *The Impact of the Cold War on American Popular Culture* (Carrollton, Ga.: The State University of West Georgia, 1999); Suzanne Clark, *Cold Warriors: Manliness on Trial in the Rhetoric of the West* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000); Deborah Nelson, *Pursuing Privacy in Cold War America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); M. Keith Booker, *The Post-Utopian Imagination: American Culture in the Long 1950s* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002).

world is no longer “located” in the “rivalry” between East and West, one has yet to answer the questions such as “What constitutes the “middle ground” between East and West in the 1990s?”; “Are the notions of East and West still relevant?”; “What role do the cultural memories of the former rivalry play in shaping the new ‘middle ground’ between the United States and Russia?” My hypothesis is that even if the end of the Cold War had liberated Russians in American popular literature from the role of being an ultimate villain (this needs to be proven yet), images and symbols associated with the Cold War continued to play a role in thrillers and mysteries about Russia in the 1990s. In the first part of my thesis, “The Cold War in Twilight,” I discuss the changes in the spy novel genre brought by the end of the Cold War; the use of Cold War imagery and historical details in post-Cold War thrillers about Russia; and American mysteries from the 1990s that have Russian protagonists.

In Russia, so much has altered since *perestroika* that the mere description and cataloguing of the changes in the 1990s present a serious scholarly task. Studies in history, political science, economics, social science, international relations, and anthropology cover a variety of topics: the changes in Russian politics and society; the rise of Russian nationalism and xenophobia; Russia and modernity; the fate of the *intelligentsia* after communism; the Russian “national character” and the identity crisis in the 1990s; Russian-style capitalism;¹³ and the rise of the Russian Mafia.¹⁴ The

¹³ Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 2nd edition (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (New York, Oxford: OUP, 1998); Wayne Allensworth, *The Russian Question: Nationalism, Modernization, and Post-communist Russia* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998); Tim McDaniel, *The Agony of the Russian Idea* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996); Masha Gessen, *Dead Again: The Russian Intelligentsia After Communism* (London, New York: Verso, 1997); Dmitry Mikheyev, *Russia Transformed* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hudson Institute, 1996); Thane Gustafson, *Capitalism Russian-Style* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

significance of culture in Russia's political, historical, and social "resurrection"¹⁵ can hardly be overestimated. In *Russia and the Idea of the West*, Robert D. English argues that culture was the major agent of political change in the late Soviet Union. English traces Gorbachev's "new thinking" to editorial boards, "the Party *intelligentsia*," apparatchiks, and artistic *intelligentsia* many dating from the Khrushchev era. Recent studies by Nancy Ries, Svetlana Boym, Adele Marie Barker, Lois Fisher-Rouge, Susan Richards, John Bushnell, and other authors have opened the discussion of the transformations of Russian popular culture after the collapse of communism.¹⁶ Scholars show that, with censorship lifted, ideological components left behind and the dissident component marginalized, new Russian mass culture has started to resemble mass culture in the West;¹⁷ it is now regulated by the market economy. The previously significant distinction between official and unofficial culture has become irrelevant in shaping forms of popular culture; on the contrary, the opposition between low and high culture

¹⁴ Stephen Handelman, *Comrade Criminal: The Theft of the Second Russian Revolution* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994); Matthew Brzezinski, *Casino Moscow: A Tale of Greed and Adventure on Capitalism's Wildest Frontier* (New York: Free Press, 2001); Chrystia Freeland, *Sale of the Century: Russia's Wild Ride from Communism to Capitalism* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2000); Federico Varese, *The Russian Mafia: Private Protection in a New Market Economy* (Oxford, England; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ As described by David Remnick in: David Remnick, *Resurrection: The Struggle for a New Russia* (New York: Random House, 1997).

¹⁶ Nancy Ries, *Russian Talk* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997); Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994); Adele Marie Barker, ed., *Consuming Russia: Popular Culture, Sex, and Society Since Gorbachev* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Lois Fisher-Rouge, *Survival in Russia: Chaos and Hope in Everyday Life* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1993); Susan Richards, *Epics of Everyday Life* (London: Viking, 1990); John Bushnell, *Moscow Graffiti: Language and Subculture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990).

¹⁷ See the discussion of the changes in Russian culture in Adele Marie Barker, "The Culture Factory," *Consuming Russia*, 3-49.

(as discussed by the Frankfurt School, for instance¹⁸) has become more noticeable in Russia than before. Culture now is meant to entertain rather than enlighten. David Remnick quotes the words of the Russian critic Andrei Zorin who maintains that in the 1990s, only art that can “make its way into the market” attracts people and the only thing anyone wanted to read or publish was “trash” (1997: 226). The decline in the role of “serious” art, and the crisis of Soviet educational institutions caused by the collapse of Communist ideology, have resulted in a situation in which popular culture has gained authority as a powerful means of disseminating new values and meanings that are being formed in Russia.

By the end of the 1980s, Soviet Russia used to impress the world with unbelievably high runs of world classics. According to Soviet statistics, the Soviet reader “received four million books per year,” and every seventh copy of the books published in the world was published in Russia (Arnoldov 44). The USSR was repeatedly called “the most well-read country in the world.” The statistics, however, did not give an accurate picture of what was the social reality. The publishing activities in the USSR followed the central plan and were subsidized by the government. Describing the situation of book sales in Soviet Russia, Konstantin Sukhorukov observes that for decades, “there was a contradiction between what was published and what people wanted to buy. With no interest in profit, both publisher and booksellers strove primarily to fulfill “the plan.” They were not worried about large remainders because nobody had personal responsibility for the unsold books or an economic interest in them” (78). The

¹⁸ See, e.g., T.W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by T.W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer (New York: Continuum, 1944) 120-168.

situation was paradoxical, for literature that was popular (translated classics, classics of domestic and translated science fiction, semi-official lyrics by Yesenin or Pasternak, etc.) did not have sufficient print-runs, whereas millions of copies of works by Marx, Engels, and Lenin kept piling up in stores.¹⁹ However, released from the grasp of censorship during *perestroika*, the field of literary production in Russia changed significantly; it incorporated mass culture genres that were either non-existent or heavily censored during the Soviet period. Even a brief look at the stands of a Russian *knizhnyi rynok*, an improvised marketplace where books are sold open-air, reveals the absolute domination of “trash” fiction. These book markets appeared in Russia during *perestroika* and have been successfully competing with bookstores in prices, selection of books, genres, authors, and editions, and most of all, in flexibility. The word *rynok* primarily used to denote a food market, echoes Adorno’s idea of literature becoming a commodity (1944: 120-121). Regulated by consumer demand, book markets quickly respond to changes in the public taste.

In today’s Russia, detective fiction attracts the majority of readers.²⁰ The dramatic change in the reading taste of Russians may be explained by the novelty of pulp

¹⁹ In an interview at the Moscow book fair 2000, the LDPR leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy said that even when he finishes the hundredth volume of his works, the print-runs of his books will be below the print-runs of Lenin’s works – more than 10 million copies. Publishing Lenin was, of course, subsidized by the state. See Alexander Shchuplov, “Stanet li Van’ka Zhukov Ivanom Fedorovym” [Is Van’ka Zhukov Going to Turn into Ivan Fedorov?], *Subbotnik* No. 25 (72) 30 June 2001: <http://saturday.ng.ru/things/2000-09-16/1_vanka.html> last accessed 25 July 2003.

²⁰ It is not always easy to establish accurate print-runs and the readership of detective novels. In Russia, in order to avoid paying full taxes on sold books, publishers would conceal the actual print-runs or make additional (and unaccounted-for) black market print-runs. The evidence I possess may not be the most reliable. However, the sheer number of sources that claim that detective fiction is the most popular literary genre in today’s Russia testifies to its actual significance. In 2001, the journalist Yevgeniia Pishchikova wrote that detective novels in Russia (it is unclear whether she meant detective fiction by Russian authors only or both, domestic and translated detective fiction) have the overall print-run of 97 million copies. See Yevgeniia Pishchikova, “Zavtrak aristokrata” [A Nobelman’s Breakfast], *Kariera*

fiction in Russia: it was in abeyance during the Soviet period and had the taste of forbidden fruit. The absence of an educative function in such literature and its entertaining nature are further reasons for its popularity in a country where all culture was meant to be a means of creating “a new Soviet man” and everyone was expected to labour consciously on bettering one’s own inner world. The “*detektiv boom*” in Russia started during the last years of *perestroika* with translations of Western authors previously unavailable in Russia (Olcott 7). Very soon, however, the domestic *detektiv* became more popular than translations from other languages.²¹

Detective fiction, TV serials, and movies of the 1990s have been discussed in articles by Catharine Nepomnyashchy, Boris Dubin, Lev Gudkov, Lynne Attwood, Elena Prokhorova, and Jeremy Dwyer, and in a number of conference presentations.²² A

October (2001): <<http://www.kariera.orc.ru/10-01/Busla126.html>> last accessed 25 July 2003. Complaining about the pitiful state of academic publishing in Russia, A. Polianin quotes the following statistics: the overall print-run of all academic books published in Russia from 1994 to 2000 was below 1.5 million copies whereas the overall print-run of Alexandra Marinina’s mysteries during the same years was more than 15 million copies. See A. Polianin, “Nauchnaia literatura v Rossii i za rubezhom” [Academic Publications in Russia and Abroad], *Priroda* No. 2 (2001): <http://vivovoco.rsl.ru/VV/JOURNAL/NATURE/02_01/SCILIT.HTM> last accessed 25 July 2003. The official web site of Alexandra Marinina posted her overall print-run as 26 million copies: <<http://www.marinina.ru/rus/books/index.xml>> accessed 13 April 2003. Viktor Dotsenko’s thrillers about Beshenyi have record print-runs and occupy the top of the rating list of Vagrius Publishers, one of the leading publishing houses in Russia today. The overall print-run of Dotsenko’s thrillers is 15 million copies. See Vagrius’ web site: <<http://www.vagrius.com/books/records!.shtml>> last accessed 25 July 2003.

²¹ In the early 1990s, foreign works comprised some 70-80% of all detective fiction being published in Russia. By 1998, however, translated detective novels accounted only 20-30%. See O. Vronskaia, “Na podstupakh k ‘Zolotomu pistoletu’” [Grabbing a ‘Golden Gun’], *Literaturnaia gazeta* 22 July 1998: 13.

²² See, e.g., Jeremy Dwyer, “Telling the Real Story: Interpretation of Contemporary Events in Viktor Dotsenko’s *Superboeviki*,” *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 29. No. 3 (2002): 221-240. Catharine Nepomnyashchy, “Markets, Mirrors, and Mayhem: Alexandra Marinina and the Rise of the New Russian *Detektiv*,” *Consuming Russia*, 161-191; Elena Prokhorova, “Can the Meeting Place Be Changed? Crime and Identity Discourse in Russian Television Series of the 1990s,” *Slavic Review* Vol. 62 No.3 (Fall 2003): 512-525; Eliot Borenstein delivered a paper on Russian thrillers of the 1990s “Mad Dogs and Businessmen: Masculinity and the National Idea in the Contemporary Boevik” at AAASS, Denver, Colorado, 2000; Catharine Nepomnyashchy, Elena Prokhorova, and Susan Larsen discussed Russian detective TV series at an AAASS roundtable, Washington, D.C., 2001; the conference on Alexandra

collection of articles on Alexandra Marinina's mysteries covers such topics as gender aspects of Marinina's fiction, translation of her novels into other languages, and comparison of Marinina to contemporary detective authors in Europe.²³ In his monograph *Russian Pulp*, Anthony Olcott uncovers the continuity between the new Russian *detektiv* and its Soviet predecessor and compares the Russian *detektiv* to its Western counterpart.

Many sources used in this dissertation may be termed as "popular." Not only the primary material of this dissertation comes from the sphere of popular culture; many critical appraisals of this material also circulate in the popular culture contexts: readers' and editorial book reviews posted on-line, newspaper and magazine articles, interviews with authors of detective fiction and film makers, TV programs, and web sites devoted to popular detective TV series, writers, and literary heroes. Such choice of critical sources is hardly surprising considering that works I analyze come from a very recent past and because they belong to the sphere of popular culture. Before these works lend themselves to a more academic analysis, they are discussed in non-academic venues. Moreover, attention to "popular sources" is also justified by tighter links between memory, history, and popular culture typical of contemporary societies. In *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (2003), Huyssen notes a shift in cultural forms used to preserve Western societies' historical memory:

Marinina, *Alexandra Marinina's Fiction as a Reflection of Contemporary Russian Mentality*, was held in Sorbonne (Paris) in October 2001.

²³ E. Trofimova, ed., *Tvorchestvo Alexandry Marininoi kak otrazhenie sovremennoi rossiiskoi mentalnosti* [Alexandra Marinina Works as a Reflection of Contemporary Russian Mentality] (Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences, 2002).

Historical memory today is not what it used to be. It used to mark the relation of a community or a nation to its past, but the boundary between past and present used to be stronger and more stable than it appears to be today. Untold recent and not so recent pasts impinge upon the present through modern media of reproduction like photography, film, recorded music, and the Internet, as well as through the explosion of historical scholarship and the development of museums. The past has become part of the present in ways simply unimaginable in earlier centuries. (1)

Indeed, one of the most fascinating cultural phenomena of the 1990s is the way in which popular culture has used memory to grapple with the present. Historical memory has energized old and new popular genres, the forms that have not been traditionally conceived of as particularly suitable for critical reassessment of the past and present.

Although the existing perspectives on the Russian detective fiction formulated both within academic and “popular” venues do inform my analysis, a comparative approach to representations of Russia in Anglo-American and Russian crime fiction of the 1990s allows me to provide a new angle for reading the *detektiv*. Much has been said about gender politics in Marinina’s detective fiction, about the nascent Russia nationalism as expressed in the Russian hard-boiled detective fiction, about Akunin’s postmodern tinkering with classics.²⁴ In my analysis, I look at how three types of detective fiction – *krutoi detektiv*, mysteries, and the historical *detektiv* – bring out different themes in post-Soviet culture in response to the end of the Soviet period. I focus on the role that the Soviet past and the demise of the Soviet Union play in forming a new understanding of Russia as expressed in different types of detective novels.

²⁴ Of the British and American authors whose work I discuss in this dissertation, only spy novels by le Carré have been thoroughly investigated from a number of theoretical perspectives; le Carré’s post-Cold War novels have not been discussed sufficiently.

Neither works on American nor on Russian popular cultures say much about the connections of contemporary culture and the end of the Cold War. American popular culture of the 1990s is not studied as post-Cold War culture. While discussing the differences between the new Russian popular culture and the culture of the Soviet period, scholars do not sufficiently consider the ways in which the new Russian popular culture is a response to and a reflection of the fall of the USSR. My contention is that the changes in perceptions of Russia, its national identity and its history after the Cold War and the fall of the USSR are reflected in the genre changes in Russian and American detective fiction. A comparative history of the depictions of Russia in such representative genres as mysteries, spy novels, and thrillers forms an integral part of the history of popular cultures in the 1990s. While writing a comparative history of the depictions of Russia in the 1990s, we need to uncover the cultural logic of American and Russian representations of Russia, the values they express, and historical and cultural factors that underlie them.

3. CULTURAL ASYMMETRY

What historical factors account for differences and similarities in depictions of Russia in Anglo-American and Russian crime fiction of the 1990s? Even if in the 1990s detective fiction takes advantage of the identity and cultural crises of the post-Cold War period, the intensity and forms of the crisis in the two formerly antagonistic cultures are not quite the same. The link between the end of the Cold War and the break-up of the Soviet Union should be re-considered in view of the asymmetry that existed during the conflict between West and East. Both sides described the American-Russian relations as

the “conflict” between two political and economic systems, a deadly antagonism between communism and imperialism, or, as it was more often described in the West, between democracy and totalitarianism. Both parties were fighting, and both defined themselves in relationship to the other. Yet, a comparison of popular cultures of the United States and Russia reveals cultural asymmetry, different responses to the same historical events. Understanding this asymmetry is important for understanding the continuities and discontinuities in the development of the genre in the 1990s.

In his article “The Cold War as a Struggle for Peace,” the Russian poet Viktor Krivulin writes:

Try to ask any Russian from older generations what he thinks about the confrontation of the USSR and the West during the Cold War. You will find out that he thinks nothing on this issue. The Cold War? Such era does not exist in Russian history. Till now more than half of the current population of the Russian Federation is convinced that the USSR has never waged the Cold War. It was started and waged by Americans. What did the Soviet people do then? The most frequent answer is: “We were fighting for peace.” While Americans were waging the Cold War, their strategic adversary, the empire of Stalin-Khrushchev-Brezhnev, as if following the description in 1984 by George Orwell, was straining every nerve in its struggle for peace. “The struggle for peace” is a Russian asymmetric response to “the Cold War.” (60)

Krivulin refers to the cultural asymmetry in the Russian-American perceptions of the Cold War, to the political concepts of “the Cold War” and “the struggle for peace” that defined the American-Russian relations in the 1950s-1980s and the perceptions of the adversary in Russia and the United States. These concepts were also important for shaping cultural histories on both sides of the Atlantic.

The term "Cold War" was coined by Herbert Bayard Swope in 1946 but was given currency after Bernard Baruch (1870-1965), the financier and the adviser of the four American presidents, used the term publicly in June 1947 during the period of a discussion of the Truman Doctrine of 12 March 1947.²⁵ In the West, over several decades, the term "Cold War" was used to describe 1) the policy of the Soviet Union; 2) a consequence of Soviet policy; 3) a bi-polar scheme of which both major parties were guilty; 4) the opposition to the Soviet policy of peaceful co-existence. The political leadership of the United States relied on the first two meanings of the Cold War; it blamed the Cold War on the Soviet Union²⁶ while presenting its own role in the world as the defender of freedom²⁷ from communism and "Soviet aggression" and a force capable of ensuring maintenance of peace.²⁸ In 1948, Truman proclaimed the need to "save free people from Communist slavery" ("Communism" 240). Truman's containment policy

²⁵ See a discussion of the origin of the term, its meaning, and a brief analysis of the Cold War in Hans Lades, Joseph H. Pfister, and Claus D. Kernig, "Cold War," *Marxism, Communism and Western Society: A Comparative Encyclopedia*, ed. Claus D. Kernig, vol. 2 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) 27-47.

²⁶ In "Soviet Russia," a speech of June 1948 delivered in Berkeley (California), Truman described "the refusal of the Soviet Union to work with its wartime allies for world recovery and world peace" as "the most bitter disappointment of our time" (61). In his address "The Khrushchev-Eisenhower Visits" delivered on 1 October 1959 at the University of Rochester (New York), J. F. Kennedy reminded the audience: "We in this country did not invent the Cold War" (11).

²⁷ Kennedy regularly dubbed the relations between the Soviet Union and the United States as the conflict between the "free world and communism" implying that the latter was the opposite of the "free world," the world of "captive nations." In the words of Richard Nixon, freedom that the United States defended included liberty, freedom of conscience, democracy, justice, and human dignity ("Freedom" 160).

²⁸ In the words of Truman, "a strong United States is absolutely essential if the world is to remain at peace. Peace is the most important question in the world today... For peace, I took it upon myself to make one of the most terrible decisions that any man in the history of the world had to make... I had to order the dropping of the atomic bomb" ("National Defense" 59). In the same address, Truman stated: "I am working for peace, and everybody knows it. Everybody knows that I am doing everything I possibly can as President of the United States to get a just and lasting peace – and that, my friends, is the most important thing in the world. I would much rather have that peace than to be President of the United States" (60).

was followed by Eisenhower's attempts at "smiling at Russians" and the attempts of the State Department at "frowning" at Russians (Kennedy 1960: n. pag.),²⁹ by the American-Soviet negotiations that were to become an "instrument for the translation of [American] strength into survival and peace" (ibid.), and, finally, by détente. Of course, the change in the American rhetoric on the Cold War was significant over the period from 1947 to 1989.³⁰ However, the core of it remained essentially the same even during the détente period. The United States continued to carry "the burden of keeping the peace" and "world stability" (Nixon, "Our National Security" 167-168), with NATO as "the bastion" and "a bulwark" of peace (Nixon, "A Bastion of Peace" 266). It was such rhetoric and such an understanding of the Cold War that had influence on Anglo-American popular cultures and specifically, on such popular genres as thrillers and spy novels and films about Russia. Elaine McClarnand and Steve Goodson explain the significance of the concept of the Cold War in the United States in the following way:

There is a sense that, from its inception, the ideology of the Cold War was imposed upon the American people from above by an American government seeking to legitimize its foreign policy through appeals to loyalty, duty, and patriotism. It was largely to sever lingering pro-Soviet allegiances held over from World War II that President Truman in 1947 went before Congress to depict a world engulfed by a titanic struggle between totalitarianism and democracy. For the next four decades the government worked tirelessly to assure devotion of its citizens to the cause, exhorting them, as in President Kennedy's ringing words, to "pay any price,

²⁹ John F. Kennedy's address "A New Approach on Foreign Policy. A Twelve-Point Agenda" is published in a 1960 collection of Kennedy's speeches *The Strategy of Peace* edited by Allan Nevins (New York: Harper and Row, 1960). "A New Approach on Foreign Policy" appears at the beginning of the volume and has no page numbers. The quoted passage is on page four of this address.

³⁰ Truman declared his hatred of Communism in plain terms: "I hate Communism. I deplore what it does to the dignity and freedom of the individual. I detest the godless creed it teaches. I have fought it at home. I have fought it abroad. I shall continue to fight it with all my strength. I shall never surrender" ("Communism" 240).

bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to insure the survival and success of liberty.” (vi)

That the “price” might include nuclear annihilation was a regrettable but inevitable consequence to be borne by a people proudly called to the task of “defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger.” With the global conflict “posed in such stark, apocalyptic terms,” it is little wonder that the Cold War “so powerfully molded American culture and society” (McClarnand and Goodson vi).

The interpretation of the Cold War in Russia was both similar and different from the American one. In the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, the Cold War is described as “an aggressive line of policy” of reactionary circles “in the imperialist powers under the leadership of the USA and England” after World War II; this policy is “directed against the USSR and the people’s democracies” and its aim is “to prevent peaceful co-existence between states with different social systems, to increase international tension and to create the conditions for the unleashing of a new world war.”³¹ This definition was followed by an enumeration of manifestations of the West’s hostility to the Soviet Union. The Cold War manifested itself:

[i]n the formation of aggressive military and political blocs, in the arms race, in the establishment of numerous military bases on the territory of other states, in war hysteria, in the intimidation of the peace-loving nations through the threat of unleashing a nuclear war..., in the disruption of economic relations, and in attempts to replace the generally recognized norms of diplomatic relations between states by violence and dictatorship. (qtd. in Lades 29)

³¹ This translation is quoted in Lades et al., 29.

In this article, Russia's striving for peaceful co-existence is presented as an opposition to the hostile policy of the Cold War waged by the West against the "peace-loving nations." There is a striking similarity in rhetoric used in this article on the Cold War and the language in which American politicians described their concerns about preventing war and maintaining world peace. Years after the end of the Cold War, it may appear that the United States and Russia actually competed with each other over the issue of whose peace-keeping strategy was better.

The Soviets claimed the struggle for peace as the Soviet initiative by formulating their official international policy doctrine as the doctrine of "peaceful co-existence." The term "struggle for peace" described the Soviet policy as resulting from the doctrine of "peaceful co-existence" with imperialist nations. Dating back to Lenin's ideas of peaceful co-existence, this doctrine became an official course in the Soviet foreign policy after World War II, a response to what the Soviets understood as the Cold War doctrine and the NATO build-up. The ideology of "peaceful co-existence" and the doctrine of preventing wars in the contemporary era were articulated by Khrushchev during the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in February 1956. From that time onward, Khrushchev, Soviet foreign ministers, and other Soviet diplomats repeated many times the notions of "peaceful co-existence" and the "struggle for peace," assuring their audiences that the Soviet Union would "never take up arms to force the ideas of communism upon anybody," that using arms would not be needed, as "the ideas of communism expressing the vital interests of the popular masses" would inevitably

“capture the minds of mankind.”³² The politicians would remind the Soviet people and the rest of the world that the USSR possessed “the armed forces necessary to defend” socialism and “protect the peaceful labour” of Soviet people but was nonetheless ready to disarm “on mutually reasonable principles.”³³ Instead of aiming at an open military confrontation with the West, the Soviets planned to “catch up and overtake” the West in economic development, to prove the superiority of the Soviet system “by peaceful means.”³⁴ In Russia, then, as was aptly explained by Krivulin, the Cold War was associated with the United States, the “aggressors”³⁵ until the late 1980s, whereas Russia itself “strained every nerve” in its struggle for peace.³⁶

³² See, e.g., the report of the Foreign Minister D.T. Shepilov to the Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR: D.T. Shepilov, “Voprosy mezhdunarodnogo polozheniia i vneshnei politiki Sovetskogo Soiuzna” [The International Role and Foreign Policy of the USSR: A Report to the Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR], *Pravda* 13 February 1957: 3-5.

³³ There was a large literature on peaceful co-existence and Soviet struggle for peace in the Soviet Union. Dozens of publications by Khrushchev on these topics appeared almost simultaneously in Russian and in the English translations. Khrushchev was by far more prolific in his writing on peace than his Western counterparts, Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, and John Kennedy. This proliferation may, of course, be explained by Khrushchev’s use of ghost writers. Nevertheless, in the 1960s, the Soviet advances in disseminating communist views all over the world were a source of worries for the United States government as is clear from the speeches of Kennedy. See, e.g., John F. Kennedy, “Communist Publishing and the Book ‘Gap,’” *The Kennedy Presidential Press Conferences* (New York: Earl M. Coleman Enterprises, 1978) 74. It would be impossible to mention all relevant works on the Soviet struggle for peace here. I will limit myself to naming just a few translations of Khrushchev’s works. Most of these publications in English were financed by the Soviet Union. Among them are: Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, *World without Arms, World without Wars* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), also reprinted in 1960; *For Victory in Peaceful Competition with Capitalism*. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), reprinted in 1960 by Hutchinson, London and by Dutton, New York; *Disarmament: the Way to Secure Peace and Friendship between Nations* (London: Soviet Booklets, 1960); *Communism – Peace, and Happiness for the Peoples* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1963).

³⁴ See Khrushchev’s speech to the Supreme Soviet on 31 October 1959 published in *Pravda* on 1 November 1959.

³⁵ Already during the détente, after the Soviet Union signed the treaty with the United States about the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons on 12 June 1968, *Pravda* (mostly on page 5) published articles criticising the aggressive politics of the United States every day. Most of them in 1968 were the Soviet critique of the American campaign in Southeast Asia: “Polozhit’ konets agressii” [To Put an End to Aggression], *Pravda* 3 July 1968; L Smirnov, “Pravoe delo Vietnamskoi pobediti” [The Righteous Cause of Vietnam Will Prevail] *Pravda* 3 July 1968; “Za razgovorami o mire – prodolzhenie ekspansii” [Continuing Expansion Concealed by the Talks about Peace], *Pravda* 5 July 1968; “Soedinennnye Shtaty

In 1958, Khrushchev himself authorized the publication of Andrei Sakharov's articles on peaceful co-existence, disarmament, and a halt to nuclear testing (Sakharov 203-204). Whenever Soviet nuclear testing was halted unilaterally (as in 1958, for instance), the initiative would be hailed in Soviet press as evidence of the USSR's commitment to peace. In contrast, the fact that during spring and summer 1958, the USA conducted more than fifty tests was dubbed in Soviet media as the United States' "aggression," a sign of the Cold War.³⁷ That the USSR resumed tests in the fall was once again justified as a necessary step in the Soviet "struggle for peace." The USSR's role in the World Peace Movement, its support of decolonization in Africa and Asia, of the Movement of Noninvolvement,³⁸ and anti-racism movement in the United States,³⁹ were

prodolzhauiu politiku agressii" [The United States Continue the Policy of Aggression], *Pravda* 7 July 1968; I. Shchedrov, "Tikhie amerikantsy v dzhungliakh Laosa" [The Quiet Americans in the Jungles of Laos], *Pravda* 9 July 1968. Next to these articles, *Pravda* published materials testifying to peaceful intentions of the USSR in relations to other countries: see, e.g., "Vneshniaia politika SSSR – politika mira i druzhby narodov" [The Foreign Policy of the USSR is the Policy of Peace and Friendship among Nations], *Pravda* 6 July 1968.

³⁶ One of the reasons for the appearance of well-formulated, consistent rhetoric of the struggle for peace in Russia may be the fact that Soviet leaders stayed in office for much longer than American leaders; for years, the government's policy was expressed in less diversified terms than in the United States.

³⁷ Sakharov quotes Igor Kurchatov's speech at the Twenty-First Congress of the Communist Party in 1959 (Sakharov 205).

³⁸ Official Soviet sources linked the themes of decolonization, independence movement and the Soviet struggle for peace. See, e.g., Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, *Disarmament and Colonial Freedom; Speeches and Interviews at the United Nations General Assembly, September-October 1960* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1961); *Freedom and Independence for All Colonial Peoples: Solve the Problem of General Disarmament* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1962); *General and Complete Disarmament is a Guarantee of Peace and Security for All Nations; Speech at the World Congress for General Disarmament and Peace, Delivered July 10, 1962* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1962).

³⁹ According to Leonid Parfenov, the Russian-American polemics of the 1960s included a Soviet tradition to respond to any criticism from the United States with the ultimate: "And you beat the Blacks." Articles with such titles as "Shame on America" were typical of the 1960s when the anti-racist movement in the United States was at its peak (*Namedni* 1963).

all part of the Soviet struggle for peace and were contrasted in Soviet media with American “war-mongering” and capitalism’s reactionary, anti-progressive nature.⁴⁰

Every little bit mattered in the Soviet “struggle for peace.” Apart from official pronouncements, the latter included support of artists who promoted the ideas of peace in their songs, paintings, posters, movies, and cartoons.⁴¹ In 1961, Yevgenii Yevtushenko wrote a poem “Do the Russians Want it, War?” and dedicated it to a popular Soviet singer and actor Mark Bernes. In the same year, Edward Kolmanovsky set it to music and Bernes became the first to perform the song. The song was supported by the USSR authorities because of its polemical stance against Americans. The original text was slightly changed in the song in order to sharpen the point about the former cooperation of Russians and Americans. The original text of the poem reads:

Do the Russians want it, war?
Just ask the silent spaces o'er
The breadth of plough land and of leas,
Just ask the birch and poplar trees.

⁴⁰ *Universitet druzhby narodov*, The University of the Friendship of Peoples, that opened in Moscow in 1962 and was named after Patrice Lumumba, the first Premier of independent Congo, was to educate pro-Soviet cadres from Africa, South-East Asia, and Central and Latin America who would return to their homelands to work and disseminate ideas of socialism among their peoples. The Soviet ideological expansion in the Third World was a serious incentive for Kennedy’s program of Peace Corps, the American counterpart of Soviet “help” to African, Latin American, and Asian countries. See more on this in John F. Kennedy, “Remarks to a Group of Peace Corps Trainees. 9 August 1962,” *The Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President. January 1 to December 31, 1962* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1963) 608-609; John F. Kennedy, “The Global Challenge. Washington, D.C. 1 January 1960,” *The Strategy of Peace* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960) 3-8; John F. Kennedy, “A New Approach on Foreign Policy,” *The Strategy of Peace*.

⁴¹ In 1962, for instance, one of the Soviet patriotic hits was “Bukhental’ dskii Nabat” [The Buchenwald Bell], the song calling the “people of the world/peace” to remember the horrors of the past war. Performed by such popular artists as Muslim Magomaev, patriotic songs helped disseminate official Soviet values among the population. Throughout the end of the 1940s-1980s, thematic posters about USSR’s commitment to peace and fear of war were released regularly. Some art historians consider the themes of peace and friendship among nations to be the main ones after 1945. The effect was all the more powerful because the posters were created by first-rate artists such as V. Govorkov, N. Treshchenko, Yu. Savostiuk, and B. Uspensky (<<http://davno.ru/posters/>> last accessed 10 June 2003).

Just ask the soldiers lying there
 Under the birches, unaware.
 Their sons will tell you, evermore--
 Do the Russians want it, war?

It wasn't just for patriot pride
 That soldiers in that battle died,
 But for all earth's people, that they
 Might sleep in peace the night away.

While leaves and posters rustle round,
 New York and Paris, you sleep sound.
 And may your dreams have answers for
 Do the Russians want it, war?

Yes, we know all of war's domain,
 But we've no wish that, once again,
 Soldiers should in battle fall
 On ground as bitter as the gall.

Just ask mothers of those that fell,
 And you can ask my wife as well,
 Then must you grasp as ne'er before--
 Do the Russians want it, war?

The fourth quatrain was changed in the following way:

Ask those who saw the fighting through,
 And those at Elbe embracing you
 (That memory's safe in our hearts' core)-
 Do the Russians want,
 Do the Russians want,
 Do the Russians want it, war?

The poet referred to an historical meeting of American forces of the 1st Army and Russian forces of the 5th Guard army in Torgau along the banks of the Elbe River on 25 April 1945. In addition to this change in the original text, Yevtushenko wrote one more quatrain for the song:

Workers, dockers, will understand,
 And those who fish, or till the land,
 All nations' peoples know the score
 <...>
 Do the Russians want it, war?⁴²

The last words of the song emphasized class solidarity of the proletariat all over the world. The song was used as Soviet propaganda for the policy of peaceful co-existence at the time.⁴³

After the Cuban Missile Crisis, Krivulin writes, the Soviet government participated in the Cold War “secretly,” carefully protecting its methods from the population. While filling in the population with the peace rhetoric,⁴⁴ a preparation for the possible military confrontation with the West was going on (65).⁴⁵ In Russia, the “Iron Curtain” helped maintain the myth of the USSR as a nation strictly interested in fighting against the Cold War. Perhaps, Russians worried about the bomb less than Americans because of their limited awareness about the USSR’s participation in the Cold War. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, after Kennedy’s address to the nation on 22 October 1962, evacuation of population from major American cities started. In Moscow, only the elite were aware of the nuclear war danger and their action was limited to a discussion of

⁴² I am thankful to David Thatcher who has translated this poem on my request. The original text is published in: Yevgenii Yevtushenko, *Sobranie sochinenii* [Collected Works], vol. 1 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1983) 135.

⁴³ As the author of this verse, Yevtushenko was mentioned in literature textbooks and was forgiven for his other, more liberal poems.

⁴⁴ In Russian, representative of this rhetoric were publications such as: Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, *Predotvrashchenie voiny – pervostepennaia zadacha; iz vystuplenii 1956-1963 gg.* [War Prevention is the Priority] (Moskva, Izd-vo lit-ry na inostrannykh iazykakh, 1963); *Predotvratit' voynu, otstoiat' mir!* [To Prevent War, to Defend Peace!] (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo polit. lit.-ry, 1963); *K pobede razuma nad silami voiny!* [To the Victory of Reason over the Forces of War!] (Moskva: Izd-vo polit. lit-ry, 1964).

⁴⁵ This double standard, in Krivulin’s opinion, led to the collapse of socialist ideology and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

whether they should leave for their dachas.⁴⁶ The Soviet press of the time described the actions of the USSR as the protection of “brotherly Cuba” and hailed the American actions as “inadequate,” as “war psychosis,” “war hysteria,” and “hysteria about the imagined Soviet threat,” initiated by “Pentagon hawks” and “American soldiery.”⁴⁷ Sergei Mikhalkov wrote the following poem at that time: “The generals in Pentagon/ talk about the defense. /Defense from whom?/ Are they afraid of us?/ But we are not attacking them,/ we have enough of our own.”⁴⁸ The Soviet press maintained the image of the USSR as a peace-loving nation that helped save a small independent state – Cuba – from American aggressors.

The cultural asymmetry of the 1950s-1980s that I have outlined here is an important factor in the study of popular literary genres both during and after the Cold War. In political history, the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union are perceived as closely related events. For popular cultures in Russia and in the United States, the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the USSR are distinct events. In the United States, depictions of Russians in popular thrillers, detective and spy novels since 1991 are in relationship to the end of the Cold War. The rise of Russian detective fiction in the 1990s was a reflection of and a response to the end of the Soviet Union. In the United States, the end of the Cold War was both a political and cultural event. In

⁴⁶ My source of this information is the episode *Namedni 1962* from Leonid Parfenov’s documentary series *Namedni. Nasha Era: 1961-2000*. In addition, many would remember the following Soviet joke that expresses Russian playful cynicism about the government measures for saving the populace in case of a nuclear attack: “What to do in case of a nuclear attack? – To cover oneself with a white sheet and crawl slowly towards a cemetery. – Why slowly? – In order not to cause panic.”

⁴⁷ Every issue of *Pravda* between 20 October and 31 October 1962 devoted articles and even pages to the Cuban crisis and featured these or similar expressions to describe the United States.

⁴⁸ The poem is quoted in *Namedni 1962*. The Russian original reads as follows: “Генералы в Пентагоне/ Говорят об обороне/ Оборона – от кого?/ Если нас они боятся/ Мы не лезем с ними драться/ Нам хватает своего.

Russia, on the contrary, the end of the Cold War, as expressed in popular culture, is not as significant as the disintegration of the Soviet Union, perceived as a crucial political, social, historical, and cultural event in the 1990s.

4. THE CHRONOTOPE OF CULTURE

In my study of the culturally-bound images of Russia in American and Russian detective fiction of the 1990s, I rely on theoretical works by Mikhail Bakhtin, Andreas Huyssen, and scholars of the Frankfurt School of Social Research. I have used the concepts of cultural asymmetry, the chronotope, and cultural memory to explain representations of Russia in the genres of detective novels in the 1990s.

In the essay "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," Mikhail Bakhtin formulates the concept of chronotope as "the process of assimilating real historical time and space in literature" (84). Chronotope is "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature"; it is "the articulation of actual historical persons" in literary time and space (*ibid.*).⁴⁹ Bakhtin views the chronotope as genre-centered. According to him, "corresponding *generic* techniques have been devised for reflecting and artistically processing such appropriated aspects of reality" (*ibid.*; my italics). He illustrates the connection between genre and representation of time and space in literature in the example of several genres of the novel from late antiquity to the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Bakhtin views genres as

⁴⁹ The chronotope is part of a larger process of mimesis, which, according to Eric Auerbach, is the reconstruction and interpretation of reality in literature of different historical periods. According to Auerbach, works of literature aim at reproducing and at the same time interpreting the outer world: nature, society, and human character, relations that are typical of a particular era. See Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis: the Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).

methods of reflecting on and making aesthetic transformations of aspects of reality. According to him, the chronotope in literature has “an intrinsic *generic* significance,” the chronotope “defines genre and generic distinctions” and, furthermore, “determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature;” “the image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic” (“Forms” 85). According to Bakhtin, genre “finalizes” reality: “Every genre represents a special way of constructing and finalizing a whole, finalizing it essentially and thematically, and not just conditionally and compositionally” (1985: 130). John Snyder relies on Bakhtin’s argument to explain a dialectical involvement of the literary text with ideology, to present genre as the transition between history, ideology, and literature (209).

The historical periods Bakhtin deals with are “epochs,” defined broadly. The stretch of time that I deal with is much shorter. It is primarily the decade of the 1990s, although I also refer to a few works published in 2000-2002. In Russia, it was the decade of democratic reforms and of coming to terms with the loss of the country’s imperial status. It largely coincides with the period of Boris Yeltsin’s presidency. In the United States, it was a transition period as well and its end came in 2001 with the 9/11 terrorist attack upon which date America sharpened its goals in the contemporary world anew. I intend to show through my analysis that this period of transition from the bi-polar world to the world dominated by one superpower is of interest to historical poetics, as it is “explored” aesthetically and transformed into a chronotope in Anglo-American and Russian crime fiction. In order to demonstrate this significance, I consider the development of the detective genre in the 1990s. If genres and depictions of characters are defined by the chronotope, then the periods of changes in perception and

representation of history must show genre alterations and new ways of portraying characters. In Russia, since the fall of the USSR, new genres of popular culture have flourished: commercials, advice columns, personal ads, romance novels, and soap operas. The development of these genres may be viewed as evidence of the chronotopic significance of the 1990s, a meaningful stretch of "real historical time" that affects chronotopes in literary genres. Unlike these new genres in Russian popular culture, detective fiction is not new. Similarly, American genres of crime fiction used to depict Russia are not new either. But the transformations of these genres reflect the chronotopic significance of the 1990s.

Detective genres have been the focus of structuralist research that investigated the synchronic dimension of detective fiction. Often, they are called formulaic because the basic structural elements in mysteries, thrillers, and spy novels remain the same over decades. Since I am interested in meanings expressed in crime fiction from a particular decade and, moreover, in meanings that are responses to certain historical events, my study of crime fiction in American and Russian popular cultures is inspired by a diachronic approach. Instead of describing "the objective, unchanging, formal literary conventions that remain inert or "fixed" through historical movements" (Kent 27), I explore the detective genres' evolution and their reflection of social change after the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union. In the words of Thomas Kent, critics who "describe the diachronic dimension of the literary text as part of a larger system of cultural change and development," tend to describe "the development or evolution of a literary genre... in terms of a theory of history, psychology, or economics, or sometimes a combination of all three" (27). Of the three disciplines mentioned by Kent, history is

central to my analysis. For a “historian of literary taste,” writes Kent, the task is “to describe the boundaries of a text, in what genre it participates, and how it deforms or conforms to the conventions of that genre. She would describe the contours of meaning within a text and how these contours have changed from time to time” (ibid.). The diachronic approach invites one to ask questions regarding relations of genres, history, and literary history and interpret literary genres as dialectical phenomena, as “open categories” (Cohen 204); and even as ideological forces that are “themselves incursions by texts into history” (Snyder 205). Michel Serres argues that “since literature is generically constituted and is itself a historical action, genre study is to become a method of studying history” (207).

Scholars have long viewed detective fiction as symptomatic of social changes. Despite the rigid elements in its structure, it is flexible enough to respond to the changing historical reality while remaining a genre of popular entertainment. In historical poetics, there are several prominent examples of the genre’s change in response to the changes in social, economic, and political life of different nations. In his study of the British mystery of the early 20th century, Jon Thompson argues that the capacity of crime fiction “to evaluate different historical moments” is a “convention of the genre” (2). According to Thompson, the detective fiction of the late 19th and in the first half of the 20th centuries was a means of evaluating “historical moments in the experience of modernity” (ibid.). In *The Whodunit*, Stefano Benvenuti and Gianni Rizzoni argue that the hard-boiled detective novel, “a distinctly American style” of writing detective fiction, emerged in response to the realities of the Great Depression. Joseph Shaw, the editor of *Black Mask* in the 1920s decided that it was necessary to

“create a new type of detective novel” breaking with the British tradition of the detective story as a “crossword puzzle,” and “the cold, reserved English style” that avoided human emotional values (100). A new crime novel was expected to take account of gangsters, political corruption, “economic cannibalism, and financial piracy.” It should also “involve that spirit of individualism and adventure that typify the American frontier tradition” (ibid.). Dashiell Hammett, William R. Burnett and Damon Runyon founded the realistic school of criminal fiction. It was crime fiction that appealed to the taste of Americans in the 1930s.

The genre of the detective novel changed dramatically in the 1990s in Russia, when it became the most popular form of literature.⁵⁰ The complexity of the links between economic, political, cultural, and social aspects of the decade and their artistic representation in narratives of detection is reflected in that only since 1990 the genre of detective novel has developed several subtypes: *boevik* (a Russian equivalent of an action thriller), mysteries, the ironic detective novel, and the historical detective novel. Such diversity suggests that the detective novel is highly responsive to societal changes. Different subgenres of the detective novel capture the traits of the new historical period and offer new perspectives on Russia, its society and history.

According to Bakhtin,

no artistic genre can organize itself around suspense alone,⁵¹ for the very good reason that to be suspenseful, there must be a matter of substance to engage. And only a human life, or, at least something directly touching it, is capable of evoking such suspense. This

⁵⁰ See footnote 20 in this chapter.

⁵¹ In the original: “as pure entertainment.” Further on in this quotation, the original text reads “entertainment” and “entertaining,” which is somewhat different from “suspense” and “suspenseful.”

human factor must be revealed in some substantial aspect... that is, it must possess some degree of living *reality*. (107)

I will test Bakhtin's hypothesis on the example of the detective genre in Russia and the United States. In order to comprehend the social reasons for the *detektiv* boom in Russia and the changes in detective fiction dealing with Russia in the United States, one needs to look into the issue of the relations between literary genres and reality. It is more than mere entertainment; it is also an important response to the reality of the 1990s in Russia and America. I propose to regard the detective fiction not simply as a new form of entertainment but also as a means of providing a new look at Russia, an expression of values that are being formed or re-considered within Russian and American popular cultures.

Bakhtin touches upon the problem of the varying mimetic abilities of different types of texts when he analyzes autobiography in antiquity. He describes the classical forms of autobiography and biography not as works of a literary nature, "kept aloof from the concrete social and political act of noisily making themselves public,"⁵² but as forms that are "completely determined by events: either verbal praise of civic and political acts, or real human beings giving a public account of themselves." Therefore, their internal chronotope (that is, the time-space of their represented life) is not as important as "that exterior real-life chronotope in which the representation of one's own or someone else's life is realized either as verbal praise of a civic-political act or as an account of the self"; "the limits of a human image ... are illuminated in all their specificity under the conditions of this real-life chronotope, in which one's own or another's life is ... made

⁵² In the original: "of their publication."

public” (Bakhtin 131). Here, while analyzing classical autobiographies, Bakhtin comes to the issue of the interrelatedness of the internal and external chronotopes.⁵³

The genres that explicitly establish their links with the “real-life chronotope” produce the illusion of a veridical discourse. Political thrillers and spy novels typically offer themselves to the public as “true” or, at any rate, plausible accounts of reality. Amazon.com reviews of popular fiction reveal what some part of the American public values in mass paperbacks: a plausible story, likable main characters, something that “makes one’s palms sweat,” clarity of description, frantic chases, gun fights and emotions, an unpredictable plot, probable conspiracies, hot action and convincing dialogue. Joseph Finder’s *Moscow Club*, for instance, is praised by readers for predicting the August 1991 Communist coup months before it actually happened. The impression of plausibility is created either via references to real historical events or figures (e.g., in Tom Clancy’s *Politika*, Yeltsin is the president of Russia), to concrete landscapes and cultures, technologies, furniture, and fashions as well as to gestures and language of a certain period of time. In other words, the backdrop of the actions in such narratives is linked to a particular historical time and space.

According to the German social and cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer, works of “low culture” reflect “the face of de-realized society more purely than any other means by which one can catch a glimpse of it” (116). Kracauer argues that in the formal organization of the detective novel, “thoroughly rationalized” contemporary culture can recognize itself as in a distorted mirror. Even though mass culture disfigures the actual

⁵³ As Jerry Zaslove has pointed out to me, “Bakhtin opens up the genre-making quality of art to discussion of the social and political contexts.” Zaslove believes that this turn in Bakhtin’s argument “removes him from the pure formalist schools.”

social and political situation, the narrative's ideological reconfiguration of the world is itself a socially symptomatic – and thus in an important sense “real” – political, aesthetic, and literary fact that presents the surface of things, the more correct they become and the more clearly they mirror the secret mechanism of society. The selection of details that are meaningfully organized in a work of mass culture provides an important object for analysis. Works that belong to the same period and culture tend to capture similar details in their representation of reality; the selection of images, characters, and details in one work resonates with similar details in a different work.⁵⁴ These works deserve to be analyzed not to establish what “really” happened but because they re-enact what happened in culture and thus form part of cultural history.

Turning from Kracauer to Bakhtin, we can see that Bakhtin's analysis of the relationship between memory, art, and reality concerns works of high culture primarily. In “Epic and Novel,” Bakhtin argues that artistic language must be used to memorialize “only that which is worthy of being remembered” and “preserved in the memory of descendents” (18). In contrast, “a contemporaneity that makes no claim on future memory is molded in clay; contemporaneity for the future (for descendents) is molded in marble or bronze” (19). Implicit in this passage are demands posterity makes on an

⁵⁴ Kracauer develops these ideas in such essays as “The Hotel Lobby,” “The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies,” “The Mass Ornament,” and “On Bestsellers and Their Audience.” All four essays are published in Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995). I am grateful to Jerry Zaslove who has pointed out to me some affinities between my research on crime novels from the post-Cold War era with Kracauer's research on popular culture in Germany after WW I. In Zaslove's words, when Kracauer “looked at the detective fiction of the twenties he was interested in showing the way group mentalities and architectural ornamentation of buildings and interiors were important in the aestheticization of fear and terror and how this alleviated somewhat the trauma of the First World War. In the depression era the detective fiction could capitalize on the social crisis of unemployment, sterility, mass mindedness, and the fear of crime.” In the period following the end of the Cold War and the fall of the USSR, there is also a “looming or tacit” cultural crisis. This similarity invites one to draw parallels between mass culture concerned with Russia at the end of the twentieth century and earlier eras.

artist. However, in an age of printed words and technologies that disseminate information, knowledge, “high” art often finds itself marginalized by works that are “molded in clay.” It does not matter much whether an artist intends to “memorialize with artistic language only that which is worthy of being remembered.” Mass culture offers up for recollection its own “truths” and images such as The Beatles in the 1960s or *Star Wars* in the 1980s. It captures the traits that are also recognized as true and, although “molded in clay,” make noticeable claims on our cultural memory, on how we imagine history. It may give an inaccurate picture of reality but despite inaccuracies, images of mass culture acquire their “true” status by forming a field of reference in culture, by making an impact on our cultural memory.

The concept of cultural memory is also discussed by Andreas Huyssen in *Twilight Memories*. He provides an explanation of the complexities of popular cultures:

Human memory may be an anthropological given, but closely tied as it is to the ways a culture constructs and lives its temporality, the forms memory will take are invariably contingent and subject to change. all representation – whether in language, narrative, image, or recorded sound – is based on memory. *Re*-presentation always comes after, even though some media will try to provide us with the delusion of pure presence. But rather than leading us to some authentic origin or giving us veritable access to the real, memory, even and especially in its belatedness, is itself based on representation. The past is not simply there in memory, but it must be articulated to become memory. The fissure that opens up between experiencing an event and remembering it in representation is unavoidable. Rather than lamenting or ignoring it, this split should be understood as a powerful stimulant for cultural and artistic creativity. (2-3)

In this passage, Huyssen touches upon the core problem in the link between history and culture. What Huyssen describes as re-presentation that comes *after* memory is the

dialectics of representations, historical, cultural memories and events that are remembered, represented, forgotten but also shaped by memories and representations that have preceded them. Huyssen argues that a particular work of art, or representation, is involved in a flow of already existing articulations of the remembered experience. A popular narrative as a form of memory influences re-presentation of historical reality. Cultural development, then, is not an epiphenomenon of political and social development, as was argued in Marxism-Leninism. Works of popular culture have their own logic, and they are “real” in their mediating function, in separating and linking cultures.

I propose to use the term “chronotope of culture,” for denoting a culturally specific perception of a particular historical period, of time that is different from what was before and what comes after. An artistic image is a dynamic, chronotopic entity. It is a result of multiple interactions and is a constituent of multiple further interactions. In this sense, popular representations of Russians in the 1990s are not “random” pictures, but can be understood as embedded with certain cultural meanings that generate distinct social response. The aesthetic transformations and appropriations of time and space in popular crime novels that I analyze are culturally specific. They are mediated by the history and structure of popular culture in which they appear.

How popular culture portrays leaders, mobilizes fantasies, and becomes part of the cultural invention and portrayal of enemies can be illustrated by the way the Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev has been presented and promoted by the popular media. An example of the re-interpretations of history in American and Russian chronotopes is the incident of Khrushchev’s shoe-banging in the UN on 12 October 1960. That day

Khrushchev protested against the speech of a Philippine delegate, Senator Lorenzo Sumulong by taking off his shoe and brandishing it against his desk in the Assembly. When Khrushchev was formally given the floor, he called the Philippine ambassador *inter alia* a “kholui amerikanskogo imperializma.”⁵⁵ The following day, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* featured a picture of Khrushchev with a shoe in his hand and reported that Khrushchev called the Philippine Ambassador a “jerk” and “stooge” and “a lackey of American imperialism.” Although it is not even certain that Khrushchev did bang his shoe in the UN Assembly,⁵⁶ the incident gave birth to important cultural myths in the West and in Russia. These myths started to live their own life and became an integral part of Cold War history. American popular culture reenacted the UN scene many times; the image of Khrushchev banging his shoe on his desk or on a podium in the UN Assembly was reinforced by linking it with Khrushchev’s phrase: “We will bury you. Your ... grandchildren will live under communism.” The phrase was taken out of its original context (Khrushchev’s speech at the Polish Embassy in Moscow on 18 November 1956) and used as a proof of the Soviet Union’s aggressive intentions in regard to capitalist nations. Linked to the incident of the shoe banging in the United Nations, the phrase “We will bury you” became a powerful symbol in the Cold War, part of American cultural history.

In Russian popular culture, however, the incident of Khrushchev’s shoe-banging transformed into a completely different myth. Many believe that while banging his shoe

⁵⁵ The original phrase is recorded and translated as a “toady of American imperialism” in Paragraph 157 of the UN records for 12 October 1960.

⁵⁶ William Taubman in his biography of Khrushchev, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era*, discusses the incident in the UN Assembly on 12 October 1960 while basing his argument on several testimonies of eyewitnesses of the incident. Taubman’s research allows us to believe that Khrushchev did not bang his shoe on his desk, but “certainly meant to do so” (657).

on a podium (while it was actually from his seat) in the UN, Khrushchev used the phrase “Ia vam pokazhu kuz’kinu mat” that may be rendered in English as “I’ll give you a knuckle sandwich”; “I will fix your wagon”; “I will make it hot for you”; “I will show you who’s boss.” In fact, Khrushchev used this phrase during the so-called “kitchen debate” with Vice-President Nixon at the opening of the American National Exhibition in Sokolniki (Moscow) on 24 July 1959 but never in the UN in October 1960.⁵⁷ As Stephen Pearl pointed out to me, the source of “the apocryphal notion that it was on that occasion at the 1960 UN General Assembly that Khrushchev used the expression “Ia vam pokazhu kuz’kinu mat’,” may have been his own memoirs where he writes that he took a Philippine delegate severely to task, telling him, ‘You’d better watch out, or we’ll show you Kuzma’s mother!’ (Khrushchev 472). His memories of what he said and did on various occasions have not always proved entirely reliable” (Pearl, SEELANGS discussion, May 2003). In the recent Russian press accounts, Khrushchev’s threat to show the West who is the boss and his behavior in the UN are recollected with nostalgia as exemplifying the former toughness of Russia.⁵⁸

The Khrushchev example of how popular culture “remembers” history gives us valuable material for the study of cultural chronotopes; it shows how intricately cultural and political histories are intertwined. Such cultural transformations of history as those

⁵⁷ See the interview of Viktor Sukhodrev, Khrushchev’s translator, to *Komsomolskaya Pravda* on 12 October 1999. The expression “Ia vam pokazhu kuz’kinu mat” actually appeared in the text of the “kitchen debate” published in *Pravda* 25 July 1959. The phrase never received much scrutiny in the West, for the translator opted for the literal “We will show you Kuzma’s mother.” It sounded cryptic in English, and, according to Sukhodrev, Americans thought Khrushchev meant some kind of new Soviet strategic weapons (<<http://www.trworkshop.net/faces/sukhodrev.htm>> last accessed 25 June 2003).

⁵⁸ I am thankful to Richard Robin, Peter Scotto, Anna Izraeli, William Taubman, Stephen Pearl, and many other colleagues, who responded to my query about Khrushchev in the SEELANGS discussion in April-May 2003. Cultural transformations of the image of the Soviet leader are the subject matter of another research project I am involved in and I will refrain from discussing more details from this project.

described above became part of the Cold War chronotope of culture. Individual and collective memory's records are full of gaps. Different aspects and details about the Soviet Premier were "remembered" by audiences and individuals in the West and in Russia. Memory selects what traits to remember, depending on many factors: purposes, traditions, format, medium, history of memorialization of a particular subject. Ultimately, it was the chronotope of the Cold War that played a role in the way American and Russian popular cultures "remembered" Khrushchev's behavior in the UN in 1960.

The subject matter of my thesis is Russia; it is popular images of Russia from the 1990s, after the Cold War and the demise of the USSR. I intend to show that the images of Russia recorded in crime fiction by British, American, and Russian authors are defined by the respective chronotopes of these cultures. The decade of the 1990s is reinvented in detective fiction in ways that are culturally bound. They are bound to the Soviet and American past respectively, to the history of the Cold War. Because of their cultural contingency, Russian and Western novels of Russia are at odds with each other. Images that appear in narratives about Russia are fragments of reality that respond to different political, social, economic, and cultural circumstances. The representation of Russians in American popular culture in the 1990s is a response to the end of the Cold War. At the same time, as was discussed in the section "Cultural Asymmetry," the Cold War is a less active cultural concept in Russia. The dramatic changes in representing Russia and Russians in Russian popular culture are influenced by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its proclaimed "lack" of a national idea, its ethnic conflicts, and economic collapse. American crime fiction is an attempt to come to terms with its new

single superpower status after the end of the Cold War. In comparing American and Russian popular narratives of the 1990s, one of the tasks is to see how common themes such as the rise of the Russian Mafia, the increase in crime, corruption, prostitution, nuclear arms trade, drugs, xenophobia, terrorism and nationalism, are incorporated into the plots of detective novels. The task is to uncover the values that are attributed to Russian characters, a mechanism of creating different depictions of the same “historical reality.”

5. GENRES: ASYMMETRY AND PARALLELS

Of American authors, I examine works by Martin Cruz Smith, Stuart Kaminsky, Tom Clancy, Robin Moore, and Joseph Finder. Some of these writers – Cruz Smith, Kaminsky and Clancy, – are well known as “specialists” on Russia. Others began to write on the Russian topics only in the 1990s. Apart from works by American authors, I also analyze spy novels and thrillers about Russia written by British authors. The fact that I describe my project as American and Russian and yet include British authors, poses a question of whether British authors can be subsumed into part of U.S. culture. Rather than encouraging a perception of dualism between East and West in black and white terms, the incorporation of British novels about Russia into my analysis refers to the historical and cultural significance of the notions of East and West. The significance of British novels about Russia in American popular culture reflects, among other things, the actual cooperation of Britain and the United States in their fight against communism.

It is an established fact that the British Foreign Office closely cooperated with the CIA during the Cold War.⁵⁹

Works by such British writers as Jack Higgins, John le Carré, Frederick Forsyth, Robert Harris, and Len Deighton differ from American pulp fiction in the way they negotiate the role of British protagonists in American and Russian relations, and, generally, in addressing the psychological complexity of the Cold War and post-Cold War characters.⁶⁰ At the same time, novels by these authors have always been an important part of American popular culture. Ian Fleming's famous hero, James Bond, is a good example of a character that has transcended the national borders of Britain and become as much an American hero as he is a British one.⁶¹ The British authors seem to be well aware of their place in American popular culture. Le Carré, one of the masters of the Cold War spy novels, makes his popular protagonist Smiley say:

The Cold War produced in us a kind of *vicarious* colonialism. On the one hand we abandoned practically every article of our national identity to American foreign policy. On the other we bought ourselves a stay of execution for our vision of our colonial selves. Worse still, we encouraged the Americans to behave in the same

⁵⁹ Cooperation of the CIA and British Foreign Office is described, e.g., in: Edward Jay Epstein, *Deception: The Invisible War Between the KGB and the CIA*, New York (London: Simon and Schuster, 1989); Mark Riebling, *Wedge: The Secret War Between the FBI and CIA* (New York: Knopf, 1994). A prominent example of the CIA and MI6 cooperation includes the Oleg Penkovsky affair; at the time when this spy was disclosed in 1962, his cover included twelve British and American diplomats stationed in Moscow (*Namedni 1962*). Such Cold War spies as Donald MacLean, Kim Philby, and Guy Burgess, were British subjects but they provided the Soviet Union with the information that concerned the United States' policy as much as the British one. In 1951, at the time when the CIA decided to make a move to arrest Donald MacLean and Guy Burgess, they had just left the United States where they stayed at Kim Philby's; Philby, who was among the first to learn about the CIA's plan to arrest MacLean and Burgess, warned his colleagues and they escaped to Moscow. See details in Riebling, *Wedge* 104-106.

⁶⁰ Edward D. Hoch argues that British authors write better espionage novels than American authors (182).

⁶¹ See the discussion of Bond's supra-fictional qualities and his status of an archetypal hero in Tony Bennett and Jane Woollacott, *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero* (London: Macmillan, 1987).

way. Not that they needed our encouragement, but they were pleased to have it, naturally. (*Secret Pilgrim* 217)

Indeed, although selecting their protagonists from among the British, British authors have always had to negotiate the role of Britain as an ally of the United States but not a superpower itself.

Despite the bitter tone of Smiley's remark, he is still a hero of the Cold War, a defender of the common values shared by Western democracies. Although occasionally le Carré would put an ironic observation about the United States into the mouth of his character, he himself as well as the majority of his protagonists had been thinking about Russia in terms of West and East. In his article "To Russia, with Greetings: An Open Letter to the Moscow *Literary Gazette*" (1966), le Carré admits that V. Voinov, the Soviet critic who reviewed *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* in 1965, is right in observing that le Carré has "little good to say of the British power structure, or of the morals of British intelligence" (3). At the same time, le Carré structures his polemics with the Soviet critic around the concepts of "the Communist bloc," "East and West," "ours" and "yours" in which "ours" means "West's" and "yours" stands for "East's" or the Soviet Union. For example, le Carré describes the spy scandals of the 1950s-1960s in terms of dualism:

Traitors from both sides were too loud to be ignored: Gouzenko, Petrov, Penkovsky and a string of others from the East; Martin and Mitchell, Burgess and MacLean, Philby and Blake from the West. (Why do ours always seem to run in pairs?) One fiasco after another reverberated on either side of the Iron Curtain. There was nothing either bloc could effectively do to check public knowledge of the scope, and often folly, of contemporary Intelligence Agencies. At the diplomatic level, of course, nothing was said. Each side met the protests of the other with glacial denial. There

were odd lapses, like Mr. Khrushchev's observation to Mr. Allen Dulles that they were running "the same spies." But in the main, statesmen acted out to one another a lie they had long ceased to pass off on the people. (4)

The significance of thinking about the world in terms of the conflict between "East" and "West" during the Cold War, the popularity of British thrillers about Russia in the United States, and the actual history of cooperation between American and British intelligence agencies justifies the inclusion of fiction by British authors into the analysis of post-Cold War depictions of Russia. In fact, one of the outcomes of the end of the Cold War may be a decline in relevance of the formerly important notions of "East" and "West" and a more distinct sensation of the differences between the British and the American representations of Russia. Moreover, both Cold War allies have simply stopped paying as much attention to Russia since the end of the global East-West controversy. Whether such perceptions are accurate may be tested in the example of the crime fiction of the 1990s.

The number of Russian detective novels set in Russia is greater than the number of such novels about Russia written by American and British authors. I will focus on the novels by only three representative Russian authors since 1991: Andrei Konstantinov, Alexandra Marinina, and Boris Akunin. Novels by these authors were made into films and TV serials; they belong to different subgenres of crime fiction and, therefore, express diverse perspectives on today's Russia. Andrei Konstantinov works in the genre of *boevik*, an action thriller with elements of detection. The action thriller, now known in Russia as "*boevik*" or "*krutoi detektiv*," is the genre that previously led a marginal existence in the Soviet Union. It developed and became popular at the beginning and the

first half of the 1990s with novels by such authors as Viktor Dotsenko, Andrei Konstantinov, and Friedrikh Neznanskii. Alexandra Marinina's mysteries were the most popular books in Russia in the 1990s.⁶² Her novels are related to the tradition of the Soviet detective fiction and classical mysteries. In the end of the 1990s, Boris Akunin's historical detective novels became popular. Described as detective novels "for intellectuals," they introduce postmodern techniques into the Russian *detektiv*.

Popular novels about Russia that I analyze belong to related but different genres. In addition to spy novels, action thrillers, private eye mysteries and police procedurals, there are also historical detective novels and action thrillers with elements of detection. All of these types of the novel may be described as crime fiction, for even spy novels and thrillers of the Cold War period clearly depict the adversary as guilty of criminal activity, of preparing crimes against humanity. Spy novels, political thrillers, and mysteries are especially suitable for depicting Russia during and after the American-Russian conflict because these genres are structured around the contrast between the right and wrong in a given situation. Including a variety of genres of popular fiction into this study allows us to see the relevance of different genres for constructing a representative view of Russia. A comparison of representations of Russia in related but different genres influenced by cultural chronotopes, highlights the issues of the genre life, development, change and decline.

Many spy novels I study have elements of several types of thrillers; often they include elements of the mystery form. The critic Edward D. Hoch argues that novels of

⁶² The overall print-run of Konstantinov's novels is more than 13 million copies. Marinina sold more than 26 million copies of her novels. The popularity of Marinina and Akunin is mentioned in *Namedni 1998* and *Namedni 2000*.

espionage are related to mysteries: "Spy novels sometimes *are* whodunits, with the identity of the spy or traitor revealed only at the very end" (182). Examples of such novels are, for instance, Len Deighton's *The Ipcress File* (1961) and John le Carré's *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (1974). According to Hoch, Frederick Forsyth's books are "more thrillers than mysteries" but they contain elements of detection in their plots (182). Le Carré and Jack Higgins specialize in spy thrillers. Martin Cruz Smith and Stuart Kaminsky write mysteries. Cruz Smith, however, introduces elements of political thrillers into his older novels; his main Russian protagonist, Arkady Renko, although an employee of the state police, acts as a private eye. Kaminsky's mysteries are police procedurals. Tom Clancy writes political thrillers with much emphasis on military action. Robert Harris' *Archangel* or *Moscow Club* and *Extraordinary Powers* by Joseph Finder are thrillers with elements of a detective story, spy novel, and a conspiracy novel.

Many scholars agree that spy novels, detective novels, suspense thrillers, adventure stories can be described as thrillers.⁶³ A thriller is related to a detective novel.

In "The Typology of Detective Fiction," Tzvetan Todorov writes:

The classical detective novel tended to have two stories – the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. In a classical mystery a much greater emphasis is on the investigation, but as detective literature evolved, "hard-boiled detective novels began emphasising the crime as much as the investigation. Other evolving categories of detective fiction ... fused the two stories to the point where the story of the crime became the central story" in a narrative. (1977: 43)

⁶³ See, e.g., Ralph Harper, *The World of the Thriller* (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1969) viii-ix. See also Ayn Rand, *The Romantic Manifesto: A Philosophy of Literature* (New York: New American Library, 1971) 97. For Symons, the term "thriller" is not precise enough, although he notices that spy stories and adventure stories are often described as "thrillers" (221).

According to Bill Hogarth, the term “thriller” allows us to discuss similar “conventions and techniques of the detective story, the spy story, the story of escape, all stories of crime and intrigue, the underworld, and stories of thrilling adventures” (v).

Cultural asymmetry and the chronotopes of culture have defined the life of these genres in Russia and in the United States. Although both Russian and American popular cultures have known such genres as the thriller, mystery, and spy novel for many years, their structure and their role in popular culture have been different.

This dissertation consists of seven chapters. Following the introduction, there are two parts: three chapters about American images of Russia and three about Russian representations of Russia in the 1990s. The chapters are organized according to the genres of crime fiction discussed. In the “American” part of the thesis, the first chapter is an exploration of the changes in the spy novel about Russia after the Cold War; the second chapter deals with genre transformations in post-Cold War Anglo-American thrillers about Russia; the third is about American mysteries from the 1990s that have Russian protagonists. The “Russian” part of the thesis is also organized according to the genres of the Russian *detektiv*. I discuss the hard-boiled *detektivy* from the 1990s, mysteries by Alexandra Marinina, and historical detective novels by Boris Akunin that have become popular since 1998. The differences and similarities between representations of Russia in American and Russian narratives are summarized in the concluding chapter of the dissertation.

Part 1

THE COLD WAR IN TWILIGHT

In 1987, Mikhail Gorbachev said that *perestroika* would be “tantamount to an ideological catastrophe” for the West because it would “frustrate the chances of using the ‘Soviet threat’ bugbear, of shadowing the real image” of Russia “with a grotesque and ugly ‘enemy image’” (qtd. in Riebling 410). Georgi Arbatov, who was one of Gorbachev’s political advisers, told American journalists in the same year:

We are going to do something terrible to you. We are going to take away your enemy. The ‘image of the enemy’ that is being eroded has been absolutely vital for the foreign and military policy of the United States and its allies. The destruction of this stereotype is Gorbachev’s secret weapon. (qtd. in Riebling 410)

How are we to understand these warnings Gorbachev and Arbatov, made half seriously and half jokingly, in relation to the development of Anglo-American popular fiction about Russia in the 1990s? In *The Clash of Civilizations*, Samuel Huntington argues that the United States has always been “a missionary nation.” The United States, Huntington writes, “believes that the non-Western peoples should commit themselves to the Western values of democracy, free markets, limited government, human rights, individualism, the rule of law, and should embody these values in their institutions” (184). American popular culture of the Cold War era was inspired by the belief in the goodness of Americans, the universal value of democracy and liberalism. In Cold War crime fiction, Russia as America’s enemy had played the role of evil that disrupted the “normal” political and moral order in the world; Russia threatened the world with

nuclear annihilation and moral degradation. Thanks to Western heroes – brave, youthful, and mostly victorious, – these threats had never been realized; the world had always been saved. What happens then to Cold War heroes and their noble mission when Russia and communism no longer pose a threat to the world? Has the disappearance of Russia as America's enemy involved "terrible" consequences for American popular culture about Russia? Has it compelled authors who work in the genres of the spy novel, political thriller, and mystery to seek new means of depicting Russia? What happened to the old familiar patterns of portraying Russia in these genres? How are these patterns reconciled with news coming from Russia in the 1990s? The end of the Cold War raises a question of reconsidering some utopian visions of the world. In the three chapters in this part of the thesis, I attempt to find some answers to these questions in the example of spy novels by John le Carré, Joseph Finder, mysteries by Martin Cruz Smith and Stuart M. Kaminsky, and political thrillers by Robin Moore, Tom Clancy, Frederick Forsyth, and Robert Harris.

Chapter 1

A FAREWELL TO ARMS: SPY NOVELS ABOUT RUSSIA AFTER THE COLD WAR

“Do we leave the Bear to rot? – encourage him to become resentful, backward, an over-armed nation outside our camp? Or make a partner of him in a world that’s changing its shape every day?”

(*Secret Pilgrim* 338)

1. DEALING WITH THE END OF THE COLD WAR

Jay Roach’s *Austin Powers* films (1997-2002) are a popular parody of the Bond series in which Austin stands for Bond, and Dr. Evil represents both SMERSH and the SPECTER.⁶⁴ In the third film of the Austin Powers series, *Austin Powers in Goldmember* (2002), Austin and Dr. Evil turn out to be brothers. They are both played by Mike Myers. An aesthetic complication from such a development is that Dr. Evil cannot be as evil as he used to be. Rather, he is a victim of terrible circumstances: his parents lost him and unlike more fortunate Austin, Dr. Evil was brought up in a family of “evil Belgians.” He no longer represents an ultimate adversary of Austin. Consequently, Austin has no gargantuan tasks to accomplish, such as saving the world. On the contrary, while Dr. Evil now enjoys their father’s parental unconditional love,

⁶⁴ The titles of the films – *Austin Powers – International Man of Mystery* (1997), *Austin Powers – The Spy Who Shagged Me* (1999), and *Austin Powers in Goldmember* (2002), are parodies of Ian Fleming’s series about James Bond.

Austin has to prove – perhaps even more than before – that he is worthy of being his father’s son. Austin is undergoing an identity crisis. In order to heal his hurt filial feelings, he uses a time machine and goes back to enjoy the party scene of the 1970s. In other words, Austin escapes from the current complexities in his life by being nostalgic for the past, for the attributes that accompanied his former battles with evil. Emblematic of an old superhero, Austin is reduced to a sexually-obsessed Bohemian persona who looks outdated in his kitschy, Cold War styles.

Austin Powers in Goldmember may be read as an allegory of the change in the political climate upon the end of the Cold War: Russia and the West became partners or, at least, ceased to be enemies. Being a parody of such a vibrant genre of popular literature as the Cold War spy novel, the *Austin Powers* series is also indicative of the spy novel crisis after the Cold War. The superhero’s very existence depends on the presence of an anti-hero. The fact that the former Soviet people suddenly turn out to be good and communism is no longer a major ideology takes away the foundation of the spy thriller that has been predicated upon presenting the conflict between West and East as Armageddon.

The Cold War played an important role in the development of the spy novel. Edward D. Hoch argues that the spy novel developed from the detective novel in the early twentieth century (182).⁶⁵ But before the Cold War, spies were despised as

⁶⁵ Hoch argues that such authors as Conan Doyle, Maurice Leblanc, and Agatha Christie explored the spy plots in their fiction. The espionage novel has its roots in Joseph Conrad’s *The Secret Agent* (1906), John Buchan’s *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), E. Phillips Oppenheim’s *The Great Impression* (1920), and W. Somerset Maugham’s 1928 novel *Ashenden* (182).

unappealing characters, motivated by a desire for revenge or greed.⁶⁶ Keith Jeffrey and Eunan O'Halpin maintain that "spy fiction first found a mass audience in Edwardian Britain through exploiting fear of Germany" (93). The Second World War, however, was "a major turning point in the history of espionage" (Booth 143) and a turning point in the development of the spy novel and film. Alan R. Booth writes further:

The post-war Soviet Communist threat appeared to be far more of clear and present danger to America's shores than even wartime Germany or Japan had been. Stalinist Russia had transformed itself apparently overnight from ally into brutal and fearsome world adversary. Then, beginning in 1946, came the sensational revelations about Soviet espionage activities in North America. President Truman in that year signaled both the onset and the character of the Cold War by demanding a loyalty oath from all government employees. (147)

Indeed, only with the coming of the Cold War did spy novels become an important genre, the genre that could reflect Cold War realities better than the detective novel. In a world divided between two hostile camps, in a situation in which "conventional warfare could only lead to world destruction," the work of intelligence agencies gained significance and the "spy became a true hero" (Hoch 171).

It is symbolic that Ian Fleming, the author who is most readily associated with the Cold War spy novel, was also the British Secret Service officer who had helped Americans set up the CIA in 1941 and establish a close cooperation between MI-5 and

⁶⁶ Eric Homberger explains in his article "English Spy Thrillers in the Age of Appeasement," why the spy novel was not a successful genre before WWII. He argues that "it was not the *form* of the thriller which was incapable of capturing the threat of Nazism. It was the age itself to which we must look for conjunctural explanations of the failure of the espionage thriller in the age of appeasement" (89).

the CIA for years to come.⁶⁷ James Bond stepped into the world of popular culture as a heroic spy, a revival of an epic hero, the last romantic of an unromantic age. James Bond became a “favorite mythical hero” in British and American societies (Cawelti and Rosenberg 2); “an icon to at least three generations” (Lane and Simpson 1); a symbol of the Cold War era, who personified “the virtues of western capitalism triumphing over the evils of Eastern communism” (Bennett and Woolacott 25). Bond novels about Russia “served as effective political propaganda during the Cold War Era” (Hoppenstand 15).

A new turn in the development of the spy novel was John le Carré’s novels (followed by Len Deighton’s novels) about unglamorous spies, spies who doubted whether their mission was right, who were intellectuals rather than hit men like Bond. In the words of Alan R. Booth, le Carré’s novel *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963) is “as gothic in tone and message as the Bond films had been romantic” (151). In *Ian Fleming. The Spy Who Came in with the Gold*, Henry Zeiger quotes le Carré’s description of Bond; le Carré calls Bond “the ultimate prostitute” who “replaces love with technique,” and who would side with Moscow if the Russians offered him better money, freer booze and easier women. Bond never asks “why you kill people but how,” he never asks if “you seduce people but when” (123). In contrast to the Bondian superhero popular in the 1950s and 1960s, le Carré creates his Leamas and Smiley in the 1960s and 1970s as anti-heroes. In the 1980s, the spy becomes a “nostalgic figure or victim” (Booth 157). In other words, during the détente period in which the Cold War was increasingly perceived as “long peace,” the spy novel incorporated more elements of

⁶⁷ Ian Fleming’s role in coordinating United States intelligence organizations is discussed Mark Riebling. See Mark Riebling, *Wedge: The Secret War Between the FBI and CIA* (New York: Knopf, 1994) 3-16.

the psychological novel, with characters questioning the ethics of espionage and the fate of the individual who became a hostage to the conflicts between institutions. The end of the Cold War is certainly an important event to be reflected in the development of the spy novel. How are Cold War heroes transformed into heroes of the post-Cold War period? What happens to the pantheon of famous heroes of Cold War spy literature such as James Bond (Ian Fleming), George Smiley (John le Carré), Bernard Simpson (Len Deighton) in the 1990s when the reality they have stood for is unequivocally the past? In the same way Bond novels and then *The Spy Who Came from the Cold* by le Carré were hallmarks in the development of the spy novel, spy thrillers of the post-Cold War period about Russia add a new dimension to espionage fiction. Their characters recollect the Cold War with nostalgia and fight an identity crisis in the post-Cold War context. I test this hypothesis on *The Secret Pilgrim* (1990) and *Our Game* (1995) by John le Carré and *The Moscow Club* (1991) and *Extraordinary Powers* (1993) by Joseph Finder. In addition to these novels, I also refer to *The Year of the Tiger* (1996), a remake of Jack Higgins's 1963 novel, and the trilogy *Faith* (1994), *Hope* (1996), and *Charity* (1996) by Len Deighton.

2. REMEMBERING THE COLD WAR

John le Carré's novel *The Secret Pilgrim* (1990) is a popular expression of the changes in relations between politics and culture in the post-Cold War environment. In this novel, the famous author of *The Spy Who Came from the Cold* (1963), *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (1974), *A Perfect Spy* (1986), and other Cold War thrillers reflects on the changes in the spying game brought on by the end of the Cold War. Ned, the

narrator of *The Secret Pilgrim*, invites his friend and mentor, George Smiley, to come to speak to a graduating class of spies “on the closing evening of their entry course” (9). Since Ned’s students are to operate in the post-Cold War world, one might expect that the book would be about defining the new tasks for spies working in the post-Cold War environment. But the new generation of spies figures in the novel only as a mass, an audience whom Ned and Smiley “enthrall” with memories (9) of their experience as Cold War spies. In the absence of present action, each chapter tells a separate episode of the old spies’ adventures and can be read independently. The book reads like a memoir rather than a spy novel.⁶⁸ Ned views the process of remembering the past as a tribute to “silent heroes of the Cold War who, having made their contribution, modestly went to earth in the society they had protected.” Ned describes these heroes as the West’s “good men in bad countries who risked their lives for us” (*Secret Pilgrim* 9).⁶⁹ A spy novel can

⁶⁸ Another example of the spy novel as a memoir is Higgins’ 1996 remake of his old Cold War novel *Year of the Tiger* (1963). The unofficial web site devoted to Jack Higgins has the following information on the novel: “This book was first published in 1963 and rewritten in 1996 and published again under the same title. ... *Year of the Tiger* was first published by Abeland Shulman in 1963” under the pseudonym Martin Fallon; it went out of print “shortly after its first publication, was never reprinted and never appeared in paperback. ... In 1994, it seemed to the author and his publishers that it was a pity to leave such a good story languishing on his shelves,” so Higgins created a new framework to the book and introduced some changes throughout (<<http://www.scintilla.utwente.nl/users/gert/higgins/html/year.of.the.tiger.html>> last accessed 1 July 2003). The novel is set in 1962. In the 1996 version of this story, it is presented as a memoir. The novel’s main hero is Paul Chavasse, a British spy, and his adversaries are the Chinese soldiers and Russian intelligence agents. In the 1990s, Chavasse is approaching retirement. A Tibetan monk, who writes a history of Tibet, comes to see Paul and requests information on an operation Chavasse had carried out in 1962, smuggling an old brilliant scientist Karl Hoffner out of Tibet occupied by China. Hoffner’s concept of space travel was to ensure that the West develop a serious alternative to the Russian space program. Higgins supplied his 1963 novel with the introduction that simply frames the old narrative, turning it from an action story into a memoir. It is possible that the reason for doing so was to make the most out of an interest in the Cold War in the 1990s when the era was clearly departing. On a different level though, by repeating his 1963 narrative in 1996, Higgins makes a statement about the relevance of the Cold War popular entertainment. It is now a relevant historical source about the past that may be instructive in the present. By repeating the old narrative rather than creating a new tale about the adventures of a spy, the writer shows his nostalgia for the past. He is looking back instead of looking forward; there is little sense of change in the world, no sense that the past is being integrated into the present.

⁶⁹ Further in references, the title is abbreviated as *SP*.

be set in the past, but the action still must happen in the book's present, of which the reader is a witness. *The Secret Pilgrim*, conversely, has little suspense to offer; it is *narrated* from the present as a story of the past. The novel consists of flashbacks of Ned and Smiley that add melancholy to the book's atmosphere. It is, however, a new type of melancholy in le Carré's fiction.

The themes of nostalgia and melancholy are typical of le Carré's earlier novels. In the words of Tony Barley, the characters of *The Looking-Glass War* (1965), for instance, "bury their heads" in "fantasies of nostalgia," "in dreams and myths of the past and participate in games designed pathetically to revive it" (48). In le Carré's earlier works, heroes were nostalgic about WW II, "for wartime experiences" (Rutherford 19), for the "power, resources, prestige, and glory" that military intelligence had during the Second World War (Aronoff 64).⁷⁰ According to Wesley K. Wark, George Smiley is a "somewhat unlikely-looking hero" who is "dogged to an unusual degree by his past" (7). In his open letter to *Literaturnaia gazeta*, "To Russia, with Greetings," le Carré presents the problem of the Cold War in pessimistic terms: "There is no victory and no virtue in the Cold War, only a condition of human illness and a political misery" (1966: 5). Le Carré here expresses his sadness for the humanity that was lost with the coming of the Cold War. Since his protagonists see no virtue in this conflict, they are not really heroes.

⁷⁰ In *Call for the Dead* (1961), le Carré expresses his nostalgia for the pre-war type of espionage:

The NATO alliance, and the desperate measures contemplated by the Americans, altered the whole nature of Smiley's Service. Gone for ever were the days of Steed-Asprey, when as like as not you took your orders over a glass of port in his rooms at Magdalen; the *inspired amateurism* of a handful of highly qualified, under-paid men had given way to the efficiency, *bureaucracy*, and *intrigue* of a large Government department – effectively at the mercy of Maston, ... a man who could reduce any colour to grey, who knew his masters and could walk among them. And he did it so well. (12-13)

In *The Secret Pilgrim*, le Carré's characters are once again nostalgic. But now they are nostalgic for the Cold War. The melancholy aspect of the narrative is enhanced by the choice of main characters. Neither Ned nor Smiley is any longer an acting hero of British Intelligence. Ned is approaching retirement and Smiley is already retired. From brave patriotic field agents "ready to save the world [even] if [they] had to spy on it from end to end" (*SP* 20), they turn into old men who have nothing better to do than to recollect their past adventures with nostalgia. When Ned says, for instance, that he and his colleagues "were fine fellows in those days" (*ibid.*), it is clear that the Cold War made them superior to the younger generation of spies. Ned recognizes that professionally, he and his colleagues were probably "no finer" than his students today, but the old spies' "patriotic vision was less clouded" (*ibid.*). Unlike "future spies," they "had everything" they needed: "a righteous cause, an evil enemy, an indulgent ally, a seething world, women to cheer [them], ... and best of all the Great Tradition to inherit." In those days of glory, all Ned's colleagues "agreed that when it came to protecting mankind against its own excesses, world Communism was an even darker menace than the Hun" (*ibid.*).⁷¹ Ned's re-evaluation of the old spies' role in the struggle for good over evil shows nostalgia for the feeling of importance of their mission, for the feeling of power over the great evil.

The end of the Cold War casts a shadow over the old spies' achievements. Both Smiley and Ned question the usefulness of their work in the past: "Did it do any good?" They also wonder what will become of them now that their mission is over (*SP* 16). Neither of these concerns is fully answered in the book. Smiley begins his lecture with

⁷¹ See more on comparison of Russians with the Huns in footnote 10.

the issue of the relation between an individual and his time. He says that there are people who, “when their past is threatened, get frightened of losing everything they thought they had, and perhaps everything they thought they were as well” (SP 19). Smiley himself is not afraid of his past. Yet, he also expresses doubt about West’s victory in the Cold War: “Perhaps we didn’t win anyway. Perhaps they just lost. Or perhaps, without the bonds of ideological conflict to restrain us any more, our troubles are just beginning” (ibid.). Le Carré’s hero here articulates the same doubt that was expressed by some political scientists in the 1990s. Bogdan Denitch argued in 1990: “It is not *capitalism* that has won the Cold War... rather it is authoritarian state socialism that has *lost* the cold war. But it has lost it to Western European welfare state capitalism, ... to a form of neocorporatism” (19). However, the difference between Denitch’s analysis and le Carré’s novel is great. The scholar’s account aims at assessing the facts in order to move on. Le Carré’s characters wallow in doubt and reminiscences and show no impulse to move forward.

The story in *The Secret Pilgrim* never looks into the present and never explains what kind of “troubles” may be awaiting the West in its new historical role. In order to feel worthwhile, Western spies need a powerful adversary who is not easily defeated. The inability of heroes to see clearly, who the new enemy is, what they must fight against, and what they must defend explains the lack of action in the novel. No new conflicts are outlined and nothing is said of the fact that no new conflict is actually depicted in the book. Declaring that the knowledge of the history of the Cold War would be helpful for the students in spy schools is a weak excuse for the protagonists’ recollecting experience of the Cold War. No concrete detail is given on how this

knowledge may be useful for future spies; the “future spies” exist in the novel as a group, an audience, a faceless collective with no character of their own. Ironically, with the disappearance of collectivism as one of essential moral components in the communist ideology of Russia, with the fall of communism as the ultimate opposite of the West, individualism receives no new boost in the West. To the “wretchedness” of the Soviet system, Smiley and his colleagues used to oppose such “virtues” as “respect for the individual,” “love of variety and argument,” and a “belief that you can only govern fairly with the consent of the governed” (SP 123). Paradoxically, the struggle for the victory of liberal values and philosophy of individualism ends with obliteration of individual traits in those for whose sake this struggle had been undertaken. No new spy-hero of the younger generation emerges from the mass of Ned’s students; there is no one who could substitute Ned and Smiley. It is ironic that the writer, whose previous work exposed the Cold War as a dehumanizing force, creates a novel that expresses nostalgia for the Cold War. The condemnation of the Cold War and nostalgia for it are both important for the protagonists of *The Secret Pilgrim*.

In the post-Cold War environment, Smiley questions the means they used in their pursuit of the “righteous” goal. Smiley thinks that the West became involved in unattractive deeds such as “exploiting” some countries “almost to death”:

In our supposed ideological rectitude, we sacrificed our compassion to the great god of indifference. We protected the strong against the weak, and we preferred the art of the public lie. We made enemies of decent reformers and friends of the most disgusting potentates. And we scarcely paused to ask ourselves how much longer we could defend our society by these means and remain a society worth defending. (SP 123)

Here, instead of feeling triumph Smiley expresses doubt over whether he and his colleagues had the moral right to use ugly means to achieve supposedly noble ends. In *The Spy Novels of John le Carré: Balancing Ethics and Politics*, Myron J. Aronoff persuasively argues that such questioning of the means used by their intelligence agencies – “secrecy, deception, manipulation, and willingness to sacrifice the lives of innocent people, in the name of protecting democratic freedoms,” – is a key dilemma that “runs throughout all of [le Carré’s] work” (89). Aronoff writes further:

Whereas one must be resolute (single-minded) in defending democracy against totalitarian challenges, le Carré makes clear we risk losing sight of the ends. To the extent that we do so, we tend to blur the differences and destroy the ends – the protection of democracy – through the use of means that undermine the very freedoms we sought to protect. (110)

In this passage, Aronoff in fact re-formulates the position articulated earlier by le Carré himself. In the article “To Russia, with Greetings,” le Carré’s response to criticism by the Russian critic V. Voinov, the British author stated:

I sought to remove espionage from the sterile arguments of the Cold War and concentrate the reader’s eye on the cost to the West, in moral terms, of fighting the legitimized weapons of Communism.... I have posed this question: for how long can we defend ourselves ... by methods of this kind, and still remain the kind of society that is worth defending? ... In espionage as I have depicted it, Western man sacrifices the individual to defend the individual’s right against the collective. That is Western hypocrisy, and I condemned it because I felt it took us too far into the Communist evaluation of the individual’s place in society. (5)

It is clear from this passage that le Carré is worried about the lack of differentiation between communist methods and those used in the free world. He is particularly sensitive to the danger that Britain and the West at large will resemble Russia. This

sensitivity is the inspiration for le Carré's questioning of the righteousness of Western beliefs. Nonetheless, I would argue that although such doubt is indeed not new for le Carré's protagonists, *The Secret Pilgrim* adds a new knot to the questioning of the ethics of Western intelligence's actions. Namely, Russia is no longer an ultimate enemy. Therefore, the analysis as to whether Western intelligence runs the risk of resembling the KGB somewhat loses its ground.

In *The Secret Pilgrim*, the feeling of victory in the Cold War is mixed with uncertainty over who are the real heroes. On the one hand, the protagonists of *The Secret Pilgrim* feel that they had won the war over the worst evil. On the other hand, the questioning of their own values undermines this contribution. As Smiley reminds his listeners, it was not their ideology that brought victory and ended the war, "it was *man* who ended the Cold War... Not even western man either," but the West's "sworn enemy," who "went into the streets, faced the bullets and the batons and said: we've had enough" (SP 336). It is hence no longer clear whose contribution was greater: "*theirs*" or "*ours*." Such ambiguity and uncertainty are new elements in the spy novel about Russia, part of the post-Cold War cultural chronotope. In the end of *perestroika*, when the novel was written, understanding of the past and present could not be complete. Smiley senses the uncertainty of the post-War age: "One day, history may tell us who really won. If a democratic Russia emerges – ... Russia will have been the winner. And if the West chokes on its own materialism, then the West may still turn out to have been the loser" (ibid.). There is now even less motivation to act with the conviction that he is doing the right thing than before. In this sense, le Carré's heroes in *The Secret Pilgrim* are typically post-Cold War characters.

The fact that these characters are unable to provide a new perspective on Russia is certainly a new addition to the spy novel. Indeed, neither Ned nor Smiley knows how to act in the changed situation, when “a Russian is no longer an enemy” (*SP* 311). The West, Smiley says, may be “amused” but also “unseated” by the notion that Russians are “human beings” that can share the same interests as the West (*SP* 336). Smiley’s assessment of the new situation reflects the ambiguity and complexity of the post-Cold War world in which joy about the disappearance of the former adversary is mixed with feelings of uncertainty about both the past and the present. Can there be a true superhero who is uncertain about his adversary? Smiley outlines possible versions of thinking about Russia in the 1990s. He derogatorily refers to Russia as “the Bear.” On the one hand, the West “can never trust the Bear” (*SP* 336) because “the Bear does not trust himself” and is “threatened,” “frightened,” “falling apart,” “disgusted with his past, sick of his present and scared stiff of his future” (*SP* 336-337). He is “broke, lazy, volatile, incompetent, slippery, dangerously proud, dangerously armed, sometimes brilliant, often ignorant” (*ibid.*). The Russian army (“the Bear’s claws”), which is beyond the control of the government, is one more reason for the West to be alert (*ibid.*). On the other hand, Smiley also gives reasons why the West should “trust the Bear.” It is a time when the Bear “is begging to be part” of the civilized world, “to submerge his problems” in the West, to have his own bank account, and to shop in the West. The West can help the Bear, whose society and economy “are in tatters” and whose “natural resources are pillaged” and managers “incompetent” (*SP* 338). These are contradictory responses to Russia. Ambiguity about trust, mistrust, support, and opposition to Russia becomes a motif in post-Cold War spy novels in the 1990s.

The absence of action in the novel along with the characteristic of the protagonists as retired or retiring creates the impression of espionage as a dying occupation, a profession without a future. A melancholy atmosphere of *The Secret Pilgrim* signals a new twist for a Cold War spy novel. At the core of it is identity crisis, the crisis of the heroes' beliefs, symbolic of the identity crisis in the West after the end of the Cold War. They are "small men" caught by the unfortunate dehumanizing circumstances of the ignoble invisible Cold War. In his 1965 review of *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*, V. Voinov, although conforming to general guidelines of Soviet criticism of 'bourgeois' literature, captured an important characteristic in le Carré's writing. Informed by the Russian literary tradition, Voinov called le Carré's heroes "small men," ordinary, sacrificial, torn by doubts, and weak (4). In comparison to works by Fleming, le Carré's writing is "deeper," "more subtle and more 'human'" (ibid.). Characteristics of a "small man" come to the foreground in le Carré's post-Cold War heroes. These characteristics contribute to transformations of the spy novel from a novel of plot to a novel of character. In the example of *Secret Pilgrim* it is clear that the end of the Cold War means more than a simple thematic adjustment for the genre of the thriller; it concerns the foundations of the genre: depictions of the conflict between good and evil. The identity crises of the spy as a literary hero and the changes in the genre of detective fiction stem from the inability to deal with the transformation of evil, as we knew it during the Cold War – institutionalized evil as exemplified by the Soviet Union – to the evil found in man. Ned comes to understand this when he says: "The evil is not in the system, but in the man" (334), yet he himself is unable to adjust to the new situation and perceives himself as a failure: "I still looked to the world to provide me

with the chance to make my contribution – and I blamed it for not knowing how to use me” (176). He defines his life as “a search, or nothing! But it was the fear that it was nothing that drove me forward” (178). The post-Cold War quest of old spies may be described as an existential crisis. With the death of the institutions with which he used to identify himself and the disappearance of the institutions that used to identify his enemies, a Cold War spy is disoriented; he feels himself a small man, a toy in a game whose rules he does not quite understand. It seems that old Cold War spies have nothing better to do than retire. Yet, the questioning of the role of old spies in a changed political context continues throughout the 1990s and brings additional dimensions to the spy novel genre.

3. DISENCHANTED SPIES

The Secret Pilgrim (1990) was written during *perestroika* when the outcome of the reforms started by Gorbachev was still unclear. In 1995, le Carré returned to the Russian topic in *Our Game*, the novel capturing the atmosphere of Russia after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In *Our Game*, le Carré’s spies undergo ideological and psychological crises. The protagonist is Tim Cranmer, who, like the spies in *The Secret Pilgrim*, is retired. Tim is only forty-seven years old, but with the Cold War over, he moves to the country with his girlfriend Emma. Suddenly Emma disappears together with Larry Pettifer, Tim’s former partner; Tim goes off to the Caucasus looking for her and finds himself among Ingush rebels waging a separatist war against Russia. Tim does not understand their patriotism. He finds out that Larry was a double agent who along with his KGB handler Checheyev, an Ingush by birth, joined this nationalist cause and

helped embezzle millions of dollars from Russia to fund an anti-Russian revolt. Larry dies for the cause before Tim arrives in the Caucasus. The end of the novel is ambiguous. Tim is left alone: "For a moment longer I stood alone, converted to nothing, believing in nothing. A Kalashnikov lay beside me" (302). The front flap of the dust jacket of the hardcover Viking edition of *Our Game* describes Tim Cranmer as "deprived of both past and future." He "must grapple with his own leftover humanity, as the values he fought to preserve fall away, and the specter of the reinvented Russian empire begins to haunt the ruins of the Soviet dream." Although the novel's structure certainly supports the first half of this description of Tim – an individual who has been "deprived of both past and future," – the second part of the statement appears to be less persuasive. Tim's inability to believe in anything and convert to anything characterizes him as a passive observer of the perceived re-emerging evil in the former Soviet empire.

Characteristically, *Our Game* is not a story about a new kind of espionage, set during the breakup of the Soviet Union. It is a story about the end of old spies and symbolizes the end of old-style of spy stories. Like other spies of le Carré, Tim is torn by doubts about his profession, is disenchanted by espionage, friendship, and love. The difference between protagonists in earlier novels by le Carré and Tim Cranmer is that the former were committed to fighting totalitarianism, but there is no higher cause for Tim Cranmer. Unable to adjust to the post-Cold War world professionally, he commits to Emma, the woman who is a substitute for everything for him in the present. Although the novel depicts such new background settings and characters as the Russian mafia, money launderers, smugglers, and revolutionary armies of different ethnic groups, all this passes the protagonist by. Whereas a hero of a Cold War thriller takes sides and acts

accordingly, Tim is unclear whether the Chechens and the Ingush are right in their protest against Russians. He clings to his past; he is a pitiful “small man” prone to longing and melancholy. *Our Game* includes many flashbacks so that some characters (e.g., Emma and Larry) are portrayed in a flashback, which makes their presence ghostlike and unappealing.

The novel may be read as an allegory of the West’s inability to adjust to its new situation. In the words of Louis Menand, “Tim represents the post-Communist West, its head, now that the threat of sudden annihilation is past, buried in its own backyard vineyard while the little people of the earth get trampled on” (4). Menand implies that the West, like Tim, should take a more active position with regard to Russia’s policies in the Caucasus. According to Myron J. Aronoff, the novel condemns the British and American governments’ inaction in “allowing a stronger imperial power to suppress a weaker national minority” (102). Aronoff argues,

Le Carré sympathizes with the Ingush in their struggle against an excessively brutal Russia. ...[and] indicates that the means – i.e., in this case, inaction – are not justified in terms of the end, which is to support, at all costs, the fragile authority of the current Russian leadership. (103)

This reading of *Our Game* uncovers stylistic and philosophical continuity between this novel by le Carré and his earlier work. In Aronoff’s opinion, *Our Game* is one more example of the espionage novel centered on the old problem of the moral incongruity of the ends and means. That is why Aronoff interprets the ending of *Our Game* as the ending of Tim’s “spiritual journey” and his choosing of action over restraint, as his “reluctant commitment to the cause of the underdog Ingush” (84-5).

Although such interpretation of the novel is certainly possible, it is not the only one. There is no evidence in the novel that Tim “has finally made a commitment to act” (Aronoff 103) and will stay in the Caucasus and help the Ingush in their struggle against Russia. The whole Ingush-Russian conflict is in the background of the novel’s story that focuses on Tim’s moral transformation, on the hero’s existential crisis. In this sense, *Our Game* is a combination of the spy novel and the psychological novel.⁷² Tim realizes that he was remarkably ignorant about Larry and Emma; he realizes that he does not understand the nature of the Ingush conflict and he “believes in nothing” (*Our Game* 302). If he indeed stays in the Caucasus to fight for the Ingush, Tim’s lack of commitment to the cause will make any participation amoral. It would be one more attempt (the first one was a retirement and the second was his commitment to a relationship with Emma) to escape from the harsh realities of the post-Cold War world, a world he does not understand.⁷³ It is noteworthy that the feeling of disorientation and

⁷² Michael Barber maintains that le Carré’s novels are influenced by the German Bildungsroman in which a character is morally transformed (Barber 44) as a result of a variety of quests.

⁷³ Another example of spy novels that focus on the ideological and psychological crisis of aging Cold War spies is Len Deighton’s trilogy *Faith* (1994), *Hope* (1996), and *Charity* (1996), the third of the trilogies about Bernard Samson, a spy working for the British Intelligence Service. Unlike Higgins with his *Year of the Tiger* (1996), Deighton writes a new narrative, but it is entirely set in the past during the détente era and when Russia was undergoing *perestroika*. Like le Carré’s spies in *The Secret Pilgrim* (1990) and in *Our Game* (1996), Deighton’s protagonist is old; he is close to retirement. While le Carré at least tries to furnish his spies with new tasks to accomplish after the Cold War, Deighton ignores the news about the end of hostilities between East and West. His protagonist deals with unexplained events in his family history. Russia, the “cheerless country,” and Europe, which Samson finds depressing figures in the novel as geographical names, fairly abstract backdrops for Samson’s family saga rather than symbols of political wars, of the wars of ideologies. The narration does not focus on problems that confront a professional spy. Instead Bernard, like le Carré’s heroes in *The Secret Pilgrim* and *Our Game*, muses on growing old, losing friends and family. Bernard is disenchanted by espionage. His family life is practically ruined. His wife Fiona was a double-agent and her sister, Tessa was practically sacrificed by Fiona’s bosses at the Department who needed to provide a corpse that would convince the DDR authorities that Fiona had died when attempting to return to the West. Neither West nor East is glorified in the story. *Charity* lacks the strong focus typical of the genre of a thriller. Rather it is a combination of the spy novel with the family saga which allows re-focusing from the Cold War to describing how a person’s family life is ruined by his own or his family members’ involvement with Cold War institutions. *Charity* manipulates

helplessness, typical of Russia in the transition decade of the 1990s, become important for characters depicted by Western authors.

My analysis of *Our Game* would be incomplete without discussing one more character, Larry Pettifer, a representative of a younger generation of spies who still work in the field after the end of the Cold War. According to Tim, Larry is,

[T]he world-dreamer and Sunday sermonizer, one moment raging against the shameful Western inertia, the next painting ... visions of altruistic wars conducted by the United Nations strike force empowered to put on its Batman uniform and head off tyranny, pestilence, and famine at a moment's notice. (*Our Game* 39)

Tim does not hide his ironic take on America here. He himself regards "such fantasies as dangerous hogwash" and prefers the role of the "family skeptic" (*ibid.*). But the complexity of the novel's narrative perspectives undermines both Tim's characterization of Larry and his irony about America. While Tim thinks of himself as ironic and looks at Larry with ironic detachment, the narrator in the novel is ironic about Tim's sensitivity. It is ironic that Tim who thinks of Larry as "a directionless English middle-class revolutionary, a permanent dissident, a dabbler, a dreamer, a habitual rejecter, a ruthless, shiftless, philandering, wasted, semi-creative failure" (24), completely misinterprets Larry. Tim's opinion of Larry is self-deception that turns against Tim. In his review of the novel, Michael Scammell describes Larry as "a quixotic, Byronic figure with a heart of gold and a complete disregard for material comforts... a political romantic and a lover of hopeless causes" (Scammell 13). The striking part in this description is that a post-

the cultural memory of the Cold War. Exhausted in terms of suspense, the story offers a discussion of Bernard's doubts and insecurities, typical of the post-Cold War era.

Cold War spy is admired for committing to a “hopeless” cause. Larry’s ability to commit to hopeless causes and Tim’s physical presence among the Ingush while he is unable to believe in anything, suggest a rupture between romanticism of the Cold War period and a strangely unappealing disconcerting romanticism of the post-Cold War era. Moreover, Larry Pettifer’s futile death is symbolic of the death of espionage as a heroic context or as a context suitable for depicting tensions between a justified goal and dubious methods of achieving that goal. The old romantic involvement with right and wrong no longer works as it used to in a Cold War thriller.

Larry’s romanticism is certainly questionable in view of the fact that his motives in helping Checheyev are never made clear. He is not on a mission from British Intelligence or the KGB. The reader is to believe that Larry became devoted to the Ingush cause, but there is no convincing explanation as to why he chose to support their fight for independence. Perhaps, for Larry, as it is for Tim in the end, helping the Ingush is a form of escape from the present with its ambiguities and its existential angst. Seen as chronotopic, the depiction of Larry and Tim in *Our Game* points to a certain crisis of the spy novel. Lack of motivation in le Carré’s characters may be a reflection of the West’s uncertainty about causes of espionage in the 1990s.

Le Carré’s heroes in *The Secret Pilgrim* and *Our Game* largely avoid the challenge of defining their present tasks. Le Carré’s protagonists view the present as being bleaker, more wretched, ugly, deprived, and unfulfilling than the past. Such a perception of reality is the feeling of nostalgia, that “subjective state which harbors the ... belief that things were better ... *then* than *now*” (Davis 18). For the old Cold War spies, history seems to have ended in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall. Now there

are only pieces of what once stood for the old spies' former courage, dignity, and fulfillment. The spies' yearning to reinstate that past prevents them from dealing with the present. Their nostalgia for the Cold War and for clarity of cause leads to a tighter integration of the elements typical to the psychological novel within the spy novel genre. In comparison to the 1990s, the Cold War seems a time of clear values and heroic possibilities. To live by Cold War standards and values in the 1990s is impossible, however. The outcome for those who continue to adhere to Cold War values is death, retirement, or nostalgia.

4. RETHINKING THE CIA IN THRILLERS ABOUT RUSSIA

In his 1978 interview with Michael Barber, le Carré said:

We have learnt in recent years to translate almost all of political life in terms of conspiracy. And the spy novel, as never before really, has come into its own. There is such cynicism about the orthodox forms of government as they are offered to the public that we believe almost nothing at its face value. Now, somehow or other the politicians try to convey to us that this suspicion is misplaced. But we know better than that. And until we have a better relationship between private performance and the public truth, as was demonstrated with Watergate, we as the public are absolutely right to remain suspicious and contemptuous, even, of the secrecy and the misinformation which is the digest of our news. So I think that the spy novel encapsulates this public wariness about political behavior and about the set-up, the fix of society. And I think also, in entertainment terms, it makes a kind of fable about forces we do believe in the West are stacked against us. (22)

There are several key concepts in le Carré's description of the kind of the spy novel that crystallized in the 1970s: conspiracy, suspicion that the government may not act in the best interest of the citizens of the country, and public wariness about politics. Conspiracy

theories in the United States surrounded the assassination of Kennedy; they were also important after Watergate and they played a role in the popular attempts to explain the terrorist acts of the 1980s-1990s and the most horrible one – the destruction of the World Trade Center in 2001. Scandals in the US government and intelligence services also contribute to the popularity of various conspiracy theories and to the spread of paranoia about a handful of individuals running the world.

According to Alan Booth,

While *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* had not queried the basic need for intelligence agencies, the late Cold War films began to cast doubt on their rationale. Whom did the services really serve: governments or themselves? What were their actual functions: to provide objective intelligence or to further their own bureaucratic interests? Whom did they kill: state enemies or threats to themselves? And whom did they protect? *Three Days of the Condor* (1975) asked all those questions and ... provided answers masked in ambiguity. Turner (Robert Redford), a bookish functionary employed by a CIA front, ... assist[s] in filing the conspiracy. It was that murderous conspiracy which provided the novel departure: a CIA within the CIA, with its own version of 'The Enemy Out There' and with its own foreign policy, the furtherance of which necessitated the killing of its own people. (155-156)

Beside Sydney Pollack's *Three Days of the Condor* (1975), there are other examples of narratives focusing on the problems within Western intelligences. Andrew Davis' movie *The Package* (1989) is about a plot to assassinate a world leader during an American-Soviet nuclear disarmament summit in Chicago. In Tony Scott's *Spy Game* (2001), a field agent Tom Bishop (Brad Pitt) is to be executed in a Chinese prison. CIA bureaucrats decide to sacrifice Bishop in order to facilitate US trade negotiations with China. Bishop's old CIA mentor (Robert Redford) saves him despite the CIA betrayal. Roger Donaldson's *The Recruit* (2003) is the story of a young CIA operative who

discovers that his mentor (Al Pacino) is a disillusioned old spy who has betrayed the agency out of greed. The old spy in this movie is an unattractive cynic. Although he is not a heartless bureaucrat as those depicted in *Spy Game*, his lack of principles contributes to the audiences' impression that moral bankruptcy is typical of the CIA.

The spy thriller that explored the public interest in conspiracy theories focuses on the spy as a victim of a conspiracy. The plot could be based around a conflict between the good spy, normally a field agent or analyst who comes to possess relevant information incidentally, and bureaucrats who have forgotten their responsibilities to the government, society, and humanity. The protagonist's enemy may not be a representative of another country's intelligence or hostile ideology; rather, the hero's own intelligence agency has grown corrupt and started to misuse the name of freedom, turning "a blind eye to violations of law and human decency for the sake of ... political and economic interests" (Aronoff 100).

Characteristically, conspiracy thrillers created during the Cold War era (specifically, in the *détente* period) do not make the Cold War conflict their focus. The reason for this, perhaps, is questioning the morals of Western intelligence services would seem inappropriate in spy novels depicting the antagonism with the Soviet Union. In other words, it was inappropriate and aesthetically unjustifiable to depict American or British agents as morally blemished in a context when they were expected to be superheroes in their struggle against communism: you cannot have two enemies – us *and* them. Yet, it is exactly this type of espionage novel that serves as a ground for the spy thriller post-Cold War transformation. With the end of the Cold War, it is easier to see that government officials and intelligence operatives may be motivated by greed and

pursuit of power. The United States' loss of mission at the end of the Cold War played a role in the new development in the spy novel and political thriller. In the article "The CIA's Most Important Mission: Itself" (1995), Tim Weiner discusses the problems within the CIA in the 1990s. In support of his critique of the agency, Weiner quotes Milt Bearden, the last chief of the CIA Soviet division, who explains that the CIA's mission was "a crusade" against communism. After the fall of communism, Bearden maintains, "there wasn't anything else": the agency lost its historical significance and its heroes (Weiner 67). Aronoff argues that since the United States "remains the dominant military and economic power in the world," its "loss of direction has particularly serious implications" (187). In his opinion, "the CIA may be an apt metaphor for contemporary America" (ibid.). The disappearance of communism as the ideology of adversary and the lack of certainty about the tasks of the intelligence after the Cold War opens up possibilities of exploring the ethics of American intelligence in conjunction with the changes in Russia in the 1990s. While before, thrillers condemning amoral bureaucrats in CIA and the FBI were mostly set in countries outside communist bloc and did not focus on relations between the United States and Russia, in the 1990s, this type of the conspiracy thriller may be combined with spy thrillers about Russia. In other words, post-Soviet Russia may be read through the prism of a conspiracy novel.

Examples of such espionage thrillers are *The Moscow Club* (1991) and *Extraordinary Powers* (1993) both by Joseph Finder. In *The Moscow Club*,⁷⁴ a group of conspirators in Russia is preparing a coup d'état. Their aim is to block the reforms started by Gorbachev and restore communism in Russia. They want to prevent "the

⁷⁴ In references – MC.

decline of the Russian empire,” stop “the chaos introduced into Russia by Mikhail Gorbachev, that man who is destroying our nation from within” (*MC 28*). The CIA fears that the coup may result in a regime that will “be worse than a return of Stalinism” and may be “the beginning of a world war” (*MC 250*). Because of this concern, a group of conspirators inside the CIA prepares to make a CIA mole the next president of Russia after the coup. A CIA analyst, Charlie Stone, unravels the CIA-KGB conspiracy and saves Gorbachev and the American delegation to Russia by dismantling the bomb inside Lenin’s Mausoleum that was to go off during a Revolution Day demonstration in Red Square (*MC 536*).

With Charlie Stone defending democracy both in America and in Russia, the Russian-American antagonism typical of Cold War thrillers is no longer defined clearly. No longer is the whole of Russia villainous. There are good Russians, the majority, and then a small group of renegades, hence bad Russians. Evil has shrunk from being the “evil empire,” as Reagan described it on 8 March 1985, to the Moscow Club, a group of twelve who occupy high posts in the government, “the Central Committee,” “the Red Army,” and “the military-intelligence agency GRU” (*MC 27*). In the 1990s, communism is still villainous. The members of the Moscow Club regret the disappearance of the symbols of socialism such as the Berlin Wall and the Warsaw Pact:

East Germany was gone. One by one, like a house of cards upset by a puff of breath, the Soviet-ruled, pro-Communist governments of the Soviet-bloc nations were toppling. ... Citizens were marching, demanding the abolition of Communism. Lenin and Stalin were no doubt spinning in their graves as they witnessed how Mikhail Gorbachev had given away the shop. (*MC 28*)

In essence, Stone's Russian adversaries in *The Moscow Club* are not very different from the old Soviet villains ideologically. Yet, now the villains – communists – are on the defensive. They do not plan any advance against the capitalist system. They plan to turn Russia back to communism but they no longer intend to bring communism to the rest of the world. So Charlie Stone saves the world, but he saves it from a small group of old-timers, clearly outnumbered by the forces of good.

The downsizing of evil coming from Russia poses a problem for a thriller whose protagonist should be a superhero. Superhero's adversaries must match his caliber. However, the Moscow Club conspirators are not as dangerous as the Cold War enemies in American thrillers about Russia. From an aesthetic point of view, the senile group of Kremlin conspirators is too weak to play the role of a great adversary. Yet, Charlie's tasks become more challenging when he finds out that in addition to dealing with the conspiracy in the Kremlin, he has to fight corrupt representatives of the CIA and prevent the CIA from making their mole the next president in Russia. The Director of the CIA speaks of Russia as if it were the CIA property: "Gorbachev has had it. It's time to put *our* man in. If *we* wait any longer, history will pass *us* by. And then *we're* back to the Cold War" (MC 431; italics are mine). The unscrupulous spy plans an illegal action in the name of defending democracy. Such depiction of illegal practices in the CIA is not surprising considering that the novel was written at the end of the 1980s when the Iran-Contra scandals of 1986-1987 were still fresh memories in the United States.⁷⁵ In *The*

⁷⁵ In 1983-1984, pressed by public protests over the aid to the Nicaraguan Contras, the Congress passed two amendments to the United States Constitution prohibiting the CIA from supplying financial and military support to the Contras. Then the CIA and the National Security Council organized the funding of covert operations in Nicaragua secretly. They solicited funds for Contras from third world countries, specifically from the sale of arms to Iran. The scandal broke out in 1986, undermining the

Spy Novels of John le Carré (1999), Myron J. Aronoff refers to convincing evidence about the corruption in the CIA in the 1980s. When William Casey became the director of this organization in 1982, corrupting the intelligence process undermined the CIA's professional integrity (188-189). Finder's unfavorable depiction of top CIA officials might be inspired by the scandals surrounding William Casey and other CIA officials in the 1980s. The protagonist in *The Moscow Club* fights against CIA violations of democracy, its use of methods such as blackmail, staged murders, ruining people's careers, and planting drugs in their apartments. Such methods used to be ascribed to the KGB but, as it turns out, are also used by the CIA.

As in le Carré's novels, evil depicted in *The Moscow Club* is no longer defined along ethnic lines or as based on ideology. It is not only communism, a relic of the Cold War era, that presents a problem for the good, it is also lack of principles and corruption in the CIA that the hero must oppose. Stone defends democracy both in Russia and in the United States. Such plot development in a spy thriller about Russia is definitely the outcome of the genre's transformation in response to the end of the Cold War. The conspiracy novel and the spy novel blend to create a post-Cold War thriller about Russia.

Unlike in Cold War novels, the hero of *The Moscow Club* is no longer fighting Russians. On the contrary, he is making it his responsibility to save Russia's yet weak democracy: "seven decades of hard-line Soviet elements will be just waiting in the wings to reclaim what they believe is rightly theirs. They'll not give up their power without a

credibility of the Reagan administration. With top officials lying to Congress and to the American public about the covert operations and arms sales in third world countries, distrust of the US administration and paranoia about secrecy became part of the atmosphere in the end of the 1980s in the United States. See more details about the Iran-Contra affair in: Bill Moyers, *The Secret Government: The Constitution in Crisis* (Cabin John, MD: Seven Locks Press, 1988); Peter Kornbluh and Malcolm Byrne, *The Iran-Contra Scandal: The Declassified History* (New York: The New Press, 1993).

fight" (MC 150). Gorbachev is "a man with enemies" (MC 25) and Russia is too weak by itself to cope with its evil past. The motif of a weak Russia in the post-Cold War novels is definitely part of the cultural chronotope of the 1990s. The Soviet empire is "on the verge of collapse, spinning out of control"; with republics "seceding" and the economy "crumbling" (MC 151). Still, American veterans of the Cold War warn younger colleagues against the spreading belief that "the Russians have overnight turned into teddy bears": "Even if a snake sheds its skin, it's still a snake" (MC 150). As in le Carré's *Secret Pilgrim*, it seems that there are contradictory impulses in descriptions of Russia. Notwithstanding changes in Russia's political course and its role in the world, the narrator of *The Moscow Club* still focuses on details that have been long familiar to the readers of Cold War thrillers. In 1990-1991, it is still a "recognizable" Russia in which inmates are tortured⁷⁶ and their diet consists of the porridge that reminds one "of burnt mucus" (MC 111). There are still *psikhushkas*, Soviet psychiatric "hospital-prisons, ...from which few ever emerged with their minds intact" (MC 122). Despite *glasnost*' and *perestroika*, old Soviet laws are still used to send people to jail for "anti-Soviet agitation." Instead of improving, life in Russia gets "even more terrible" with food stores "even emptier" (MC 121). And so while Russia is now a friend, or at least in need of help, its new stature comes from qualities which were firmly established in the Cold War past. The theme of saving Russia from its own past becomes a promising motif in post-Cold War thrillers. However, in both spy thrillers by Joseph Finder

⁷⁶ "One of his campmates, who'd been arrested for unspecified "anti-Soviet agitation," refused to sign a confession, and so the authorities had inflicted on him one of the most famous cruelties. They had removed his pants and under shorts and seated him on the floor, while two sergeants sat on his legs, and the interrogator had placed the toe of his boot atop the poor man's penis and testicles and had begun to press, slowly" (MC 173).

analyzed here, depictions of problems inside the CIA counterbalance the motif of the Russian past representing a new threat in the post-Cold War world.

In Finder's thriller *Extraordinary Powers*⁷⁷ (1993), readers see examples of how the end of the Cold War brought a crisis to the CIA and a re-evaluation of the CIA image in American popular culture. In this novel, the heroes cooperate with the Russians in their fight against corruption in American Intelligence. The protagonist of *Extraordinary Powers* is Ben Ellison, an attorney and former CIA agent. The conspirators in the CIA intend to use Ben to recover the money that Ben's father-in-law, the former director of the CIA, had hidden in a European bank. Ben outwits the corrupt officers of the CIA and saves Russia's gold reserve from falling into the hands of the CIA embezzlers.

Even more so than in *The Moscow Club*, Finder's second thriller portrays a major conflict between the good and bad members of the CIA, rather than good Americans and bad Russians. In *Extraordinary Powers*, the good agents are keen on helping Russia, whereas CIA conspirators plot with former Stasi agents in order to ruin Russia. Ben Ellison's father-in-law, Harrison Sinclair, is one of the central positive characters in the novel. As the director of the CIA, he was a "vociferous supporter of helping out Russia" (*EP* 48), an advocate of a strong, democratic Russia; "obsessed" with preventing reactionary forces in Russia from coming to power. The Cold War would be "a sweet memory" should Russia become a right-wing dictatorship (*EP* 55). Sinclair helps the Head of the KGB, Vladimir Orlov (*EP* 275), to remove from Russia most of its gold reserves, which might be used by the hard-liners to restore communism. In exchange for this help, Sinclair wants a KGB file that incriminates all the corrupt elements in the CIA.

⁷⁷ In references – *EP*.

Such cooperation between the Russian and American secret services in Finder's novel is an expression of a changed attitude to the KGB after the Cold War.

In novels from the Cold War period such as, for instance, *Solo* (1980) and *The Confessional* (1985) by Jack Higgins, the KGB stands for the ultimate evil.⁷⁸ In *Extraordinary Powers*, however, the depiction of the KGB is not so one-dimensional. Characteristically, when Hal's murder is reported in the opening of the novel (later it turns out that the murder was faked), the narrator comments that in the old days, the murder would be quickly blamed on the KGB or "some other dark, mysterious arm of the Evil Empire" (EP 8). But with the Soviet Union no longer existing, it is unclear who would want to kill the Director of the CIA. In a Cold War spy thriller, it would be impossible for the Director of the CIA to admit that when he was station chief in various world capitals, some of his best friends were his counterparts in the KGB stations. In *Extraordinary Powers*, Sinclair maintains that Americans and Russians are "far more alike than different" (EP 231). A post-Cold War thriller no longer stresses the differences between the KGB and the CIA. The distinction is now made between the morally upright and corrupt, regardless of whether they are Americans or Russians.

Vladimir Orlov, the last chairman of the KGB, is presented as essentially honest. He did "his job to the best of his ability" (EP 40). Orlov is still disliked by the novel's protagonist, but not because of his ideology: Ben did not much like Orlov for reasons "having nothing to do with ideology or the bitter rivalry people used to imagine existed between the KGB and the CIA" (EP 231). In Ben's opinion, Orlov's "smugness" is

⁷⁸The KGB was demonized in Cold-War novels. For instance, Rosa Klebb, a villainous character in Ian Fleming's *From Russia With Love*, "represents the degenerate Soviet soul" and is "a monster who, like Dracula, inspires a supernatural dread in others" (Hoppenstand 20).

“repellent” (*EP* 224). Orlov’s teeth were bad: gapped, uneven, and stained (*EP* 228). “Furled and small,” he struck Ben as a man, whose “power seemed to have been drained out of him” (*EP* 224). The narrator compares Orlov to Gorbachev, who looked like “a small, very mortal, very ordinary person” and who elicited “a pang of sympathy” (*EP* 228), rather than fear or hatred. This description of Orlov is symbolic. He, “stiff and unsmiling” (*EP* 224), stands for Russia in the early 1990s: unattractive, having many problems, but strangely appealing in its weakness. It calls for help and gets help from a more powerful state, its former enemy. In the new situation, positive characters perceive the Cold War is a “self-delusion on both sides” (*EP* 235). Orlov says that “realistically” the Soviet Union was never a threat to the United States. There were Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, Berlin, Prague but to the *United States* it was no threat. The Soviets were as afraid to use the bomb as Americans were. And the Americans were the only ones that ever used it, not the Soviets (*EP* 234). Such an alternative vision of American participation in the Cold War could hardly be found in American popular fiction during the Cold War. Vice versa, in the most difficult years of the Russo-American conflict, even the nuclear bombing of Japan was presented as a measure that was necessary in order to maintain world peace. In the words of Truman,

A strong United States is absolutely essential if the world is to remain at peace. Peace is the most important question in the world today... For peace, I took it upon myself to make one of the most terrible decisions that any man in the history of the world had to make... I had to order the dropping of the atomic bomb. (“National Defense” 59)

After the end of the Cold War, espionage writers discover that human vices are the same or very similar on both sides of the Atlantic. One shared vice is corruption,

which, in the context of *Extraordinary Powers*, is widely spread in Russia. Communist Party officials have hidden billions dollars in Western banks and “a whole array of offshore banks” such as the Cayman Islands (*EP* 232). But corruption is not unique to Russia. For years, there had also been “rampant” corruption (*EP* 61) at the CIA. It includes gathering and using top-secret economic intelligence from around the world to manipulate stock markets, and thus nations. The corrupt members within the CIA “siphoned off tens of millions of dollars from various Agency accounts” (*EP* 79). Money flows out of CIA accounts at the Federal Reserve in New York to the various CIA stations around the world; this money supposedly is used to “fund covert operations for democracy” (*EP* 235). In fact, the money is being stolen; it is transferred to private accounts. The corrupt CIA members organized the stock market “crash” of 1987, made huge profits on it, and plan another stock market crash again. Such stories in Finder’s novel might be inspired by the Iran-Contra scandal that took place at the end of the 1980s. A significant episode in the affair was that a large part of the funds solicited for the Contras was directed to personal bank accounts of private individuals executing the sales. At the same time, the development of the theme of corrupt intelligence agents in the post-Cold War thriller may be a reflection of the changes in US espionage agencies after the Cold War. Aronoff argues that “a major activity of espionage in the post-Cold War era is economic” and that “the economic turn in espionage, particularly against political allies, has led to unprecedented tensions” (194).⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Aronoff gives an important example of the tensions between Germany and the United States created as a result of economic espionage in the 1990s: “For the first time since the American occupation of Germany in 1945, an American agent was ordered out of the country for attempting to recruit a government official in order to obtain inside information on German economic policy toward Iran. The US National Security Agency runs a giant eavesdropping station in Bavaria... *Der Spiegel* claimed that this

It is not accidental that Ben Ellison is not a CIA agent at the beginning of the novel. He is a *former* agent who quit the office after his first wife was murdered in Paris under mysterious circumstances. Corrupt CIA officials force him to return to the agency but at the end of the novel, he is once again a civilian, and he chooses to live the life of a regular family man. The detail of the protagonist's leaving the CIA is significant both as a reflection of the actual crisis within the CIA after the Cold War, as well as an expression of the changes in the spy novel. Spying as profession is questioned in the novels and films of the 1990s. Beside disenchanted spies in the novels by le Carré's and Finder, one can also recollect the exposure of the CIA in Tony Scott's film *Spy Game* in which both positive characters are no longer spies. Tom Bishop (Brad Pitt) quit the service because he found it appallingly amoral; his mentor (Robert Redford) is shown during the last day of his career as a CIA employee. He is retiring; in his last day at work, his colleagues disgust him as amoral heartless individuals willing to sacrifice their former recruit without attempting anything to save his life. With the end of the Cold War, spying, it seems, ceased to be a noble profession; the agencies suffered a "disproportionate number of resignations" (Pincus 7). The agencies even started recruiting new agents through newspaper ads, the practice that is captured in Roger Donaldson's *The Recruit* (2003). In the article "Crisis at CIA: Why Are its Young Officers Resigning?" (1996), William Pincus quotes a retired senior CIA officer who maintains, young agents left the intelligence services during the 1990s because of "a crisis in morale" at the CIA, "a vacuum of leadership, mission and objectives" (7). After

facility 'was instrumental in winning the US \$6 billion in aerospace contracts from Saudi Arabia against European competition'" (194).

the Cold War, “service [was] not as psychologically rewarding” and “the new targets” do not appeal to intelligence agents enough (ibid.). Because the intelligence tasks of the 1990s, such as fighting the drug trade or economic espionage, did not have the same relevance as fighting communism used to have, another spy quoted by Traynor is nostalgic for the Cold War. He says that after the Cold War, espionage is just about “backstabbing and competition between and within agencies” and that spies “either have to wait for another war or change [their] outlook” (qtd. in Traynor 3). The dissatisfaction expressed by this source with espionage as a profession is once again material that may be used in the post-Cold War spy novel. In the article “Why Spy?” Edward Jay Epstein addresses the same problem:

Peace is not the best of times for espionage. First, there is the problem of recruitment. When a nation’s survival is at stake, the individuals who join an intelligence service tend to be motivated by patriotic zeal, which makes them difficult targets for enemy recruiters. Things change as the threat fades. The motive for enlisting in government service tends to be more opportunistic – pay, foreign travel, retirement benefits – and those who join for such reasons can be expected to be more open to competitive offers from foreign intelligence services. (44)

The spy, as at the beginning of the twentieth century, may become an unappealing character. No longer a superhero, he may become an anti-hero (the example of such a spy is Burke (Al Pacino) in *The Recruit*, a film I have mentioned earlier).

In reality, the biggest espionage scandal of the last two decades was Aldrich Ames’ exposure as a double agent in the 1990s. Ames sold secrets to the Russians from 1986 until 1994. Outraged by revelations of the CIA’s corrupt practices, Senator Moynihan said at Ames’ trial that “the CIA’s analytical functions should be given to the

State Department, its paramilitary capabilities transferred to the Pentagon, spycatching left to the FBI and the agency itself given a decent burial” (Weiner 1994: 4E). Characteristically, at the trial, Ames said that in peacetime, espionage had become “a self-serving sham, carried out by careerist bureaucrats who have managed to deceive several generations of American policy makers and the public about both the necessity and the value of their work” (Epstein 1994: 43). In addition to quoting exactly the same passage in his article on Ames’ trial, Tim Weiner quotes the following words of Ames:

There is no rational need for thousands of case officers and tens of thousands of agents working around the world, primarily in and against friendly countries ... Now that the Cold War is over and the Communist tyrannies largely done for, our country still awaits a real national debate on the means and ends – and costs – of our national security policies. (1994: 4E)

In the words of John Deutch, director of the Central Intelligence Agency after the Ames affair, the Ames’ treason undermined “the fundamentals” of espionage (Weiner 104).⁸⁰ “Behavior of the agency that suggests that it is beyond the law” (Aronoff 196) may be one more reason for the lost prestige of the espionage profession. Because of the Ames’ treason, “senior CIA officials delivered the information to the Pentagon and the White House without revealing that they knew or suspected that the information came from double-agents” (Weiner 1995: 5).⁸¹

⁸⁰ Ames’s trial took place only in 1994; it is possible that discussions of the CIA post-Cold War “identity crisis” in the early 1990s served as an additional incentive for Funder to develop the theme of corruption among the CIA.

⁸¹ Although American popular culture has known instances when events that were to take place in reality were earlier depicted either in films or novels, I do not possess evidence that it was this affair that inspired *Extraordinary Powers*. Besides the situation with Ames that cost the CIA much of its reputation, memories of the Iran-Contra scandals were still fresh if not in the reading public in the United States, then at least among the CIA employees of which Funder was one.

In light of the CIA conspiracy described in *Extraordinary Powers*, the Russian threat, which had been a central motif in Cold War spy novels about Russia, receives a new twist. Corrupt members of the CIA formulate the new “doctrine” with regard to Russia. They insist that, although the world has changed, it is “just as dangerous a place,” because “the Russian threat” still exists. Russia, they say, is, like Weimar Germany in the 1920s, “lying in wait for ‘a Hitler’ to restore its ruined empire” (*EP* 186). In reality, however, the corrupt group in the CIA does not defend democracy in and from Russia. Although the CIA had advance information that the anti-Gorbachev coup was being planned, it did nothing to forestall the plan (*EP* 238). The conspirators in the CIA feared disclosure, for the KGB possessed a file that incriminated the highest-ranking corrupt officials in the CIA (*EP* 238). As partners with a criminal German cartel, the CIA also does not want to see a revived, strengthened Russia, for “a weak Russia ensures a strong Germany” (*EP* 55). The next “market crash” planned by the CIA conspirators in *Extraordinary Powers* is to happen right before an election in Germany (*EP* 326). It is meant to bring to power a new German leader, a person controlled by a powerful German cartel that, in turn, is interested in the complete destruction of Russia. Corruption in the CIA then is not simply the result of greed, but rather part of a large-scale conspiracy that threatens the very values of democracy in the world. The Cold War rhetoric is now used by negative characters in order to achieve their criminal ends, thus signaling a change in the genre of the spy novel.

The narrative strategy used in both novels by Joseph Finder, *The Moscow Club* and in *Extraordinary Powers*, is refocusing the thriller’s conflict from the Russian-American antagonism to the confrontation between good and bad Russians and

Americans. Not each Russian is a bad man and not each American is a good man. The borders between good and evil shift. In *Extraordinary Powers*, corrupt CIA members profit from the continuation of the Cold War antagonism. In *The Moscow Club*, Cold War rhetoric is used by conspirators in Russia and in the United States. The protagonists in both novels successfully fight corruption to protect democracy; the main conflict appears to be between those who would like to see a continuation of the Moscow-Washington hostilities, and those who promote partnership between the former enemies. From the uncertainty about strategies on representing Russia and Western old heroes in the post-Cold War thrillers that was typical of le Carré's *Secret Pilgrim*, there is a change to a more differentiated approach in depicting Western and Russian characters. The Cold War is associated with evil characters more than with heroes from either side. Moreover, Joseph Finder's thrillers develop the motif of the East-West partnership that le Carré's protagonists only outlined as one of the possibilities in *Secret Pilgrim* but presented it as an uncomfortable notion.

5. FALLING OUT OF THE PICTURE

With the end of hostilities between Russia and America, the spy novel about Russia undergoes significant changes to provide a more complex view of post-Soviet Russia. Le Carré's novel *The Secret Pilgrim* (1990) maps out the problematic that was to become significant in other novels about Russia from the 1990s. Aging spies becomes a discernible motif in post-Cold War espionage fiction. Of the British spies created by Fleming, le Carré, and Deighton, only Bond is spared aging, although by the end of the 1990s, Bond must logically be in his seventies. Despite changes in politics and society,

Bond appears in the movies again “ageless, incorruptible, indefatigable” (Lane and Simpson 1). The other famous British spies who were youthful before the end of the Cold War are now suddenly old. The heroes of the Cold War retire or are left jobless. They are no longer sure of the right attitude to have towards Russia; they also question the validity of their past work during the Cold War. This motif of the aging Cold War spy symbolizes the decline of utopian vision of the world. The post-Cold War spy novel is more pessimistic than novels of the Cold War period. Le Carré’s spy novels incorporate more and more elements of the psychological novel. His spies increasingly resemble the little man who does not have a good grasp of a broader political and social context, and who struggles to find his place in the contemporary world.

Unlike le Carré’s heroes, the protagonists of Joseph Finder’s spy thrillers do not perceive good and evil as ambiguous categories or question the validity of the work undertaken by Western intelligence services in order to bring communism to its end. In the post-Cold War world described by Finder, the categories of good and evil still count. Finder’s heroes do not indulge in nostalgia for the Cold War, with its polarized binary notions of the good West and the evil East. Instead, they recognize the complexity of the new historical situation in which corruption in the CIA and attempts to restore the old regime in Russia both present serious threats to democracy. The distinction between good and evil are no longer made along national lines. Both the Kremlin and the CIA have trouble in adjusting to the new situation. The conspiracy thriller questioning the ethics of American intelligence and American administration is combined with the spy novel about Russia; as a result, a post-Cold War spy thriller is created.

Chapter 2

A COLD YOU JUST CAN'T SHAKE: THE RETURN OF THE COLD WAR IN THRILLERS OF THE 1990s

1. WILL WE EVER HAVE ENOUGH OF THE COLD WAR?

If you visited Berlin in the 1990s, you would have noticed souvenir street-stands with Cold War memorabilia all over the place. Tiny pieces of the Berlin Wall clattering inside of a small plastic pane in Berlin postcards sold for 5-10 DM on every corner. Just as much as they were reminders of the Cold War, symbols of the West's victory in the Cold War, perhaps, they were also signs of nostalgia for the conflict. Cold War symbols such as these postcards, but also badges, and Soviet military caps appealed to the historical sentiments of the populace, this consumerism exploiting the very process of remembering and forgetting the past.

History and the re-reading of history became an important part of post-Cold War popular culture. By re-writing the popular history of the Cold War, those who work with the suspense thriller were able to add a new dimension to this genre. Evidence of the lasting significance of the Cold War in contemporary popular culture includes two recent Hollywood productions: Roger Donaldson's *Thirteen Days* (2001), the film about the Cuban crisis in 1962, and Kathryn Bigelow's *K-19 the Widowmaker* (2002), a story about a Soviet nuclear submarine, which sank after a nuclear accident on board. Both

films provide a new viewpoint on the Cold War. From the post-Cold War perspective, the Cold War suddenly looks like a period of clear value judgments, resolute action, and a dramatic context for the responsible, brave, and loyal. As Fred Davis reminds us, nostalgia tends to eliminate from memory the “unpleasant, the unhappy, the abrasive, and, most of all, those lurking shadows of former selves about which we feel shame, guilt, or humiliation” (37). Forgetting the unpleasant is characteristic of both *Thirteen Days* and *K-19 the Widowmaker*; they each depict the time of the 1960s much more favorably than it used to be depicted and provide a more sympathetic portrayal of Cold War Russians than over before present. In the 1990s, besides new thrillers depicting the Cold War, many old Cold War thrillers were re-printed. Judging from Amazon.com reviews, these Cold War thrillers were often more popular than new thrillers about Russia. The popularity of old books about the Cold War may be explained by nostalgia for that period’s clear values, by the yearning for heroic characters and the thrill of defending the world against a greater evil than could be found in the 1990s.

In addition to Cold War reprint thrillers and the release of thrillers that re-write the Cold War past, a number of new thrillers focused on the post-Soviet Russia. The plots of the novels I analyze below reflect the United States’ real fears of Russia. “The collapsed economies; the troubling diaspora of twenty-five million Russians in “foreign” lands; the threat of nuclear accidents and ecological ruin; the rise of a hard-line Russian nationalist and the astounding persistence of various Communist parties” (Remnick, 234) – all these become new material for organizing the plots of the post-Cold War thriller about Russia. The past also characteristically plays an important role in this type of thriller. Whereas *Thirteen Days* and *K-19 the Widowmaker* read the Cold War from

the perspective of the 1990s, thrillers that focus on the 1990s put Russia's present in the Cold War perspective seeing this present as a direct consequence of the Soviet past. The present is given historical depth as never before in the Western thriller about Russia. This new element in the structure of the post-Cold War thriller about Russia suggests that the Cold War did not quite end with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the demise of the Soviet Union. It continued to play a role in American popular culture in the 1990s, at least when writers wanted to explain the present in Russia.

In his 1993 book *Cold War Criticism and Politics of Skepticism*, Tobin Siebers argues that the "history of the Cold War is in part a history of false endings" (29). As a result of the uncertainty about the end of the conflict, skepticism and paranoia take root in society. Siebers writes:

We are afraid that the Cold War will never end, and so the history of the Cold War is the story of our skepticism about endings, intentions, interpretations, and calculations concerning numbers, troop movements, weapons, negotiations, and claims to truth and falsehood. We are forever watchful and on our guard. Our fear contributes an essential part to the Cold War mentality. It determines the distrust, suspicion, paranoia, and skepticism that have always characterized the Cold War era. We have seen the Cold War come and go so many times that we must recognize that one defining feature of the Cold War era is not knowing where we stand in relation to our enemies or friends, whichever the case may be at the moment. It is a state that requires skepticism, and this skepticism in turn preserves the state. This is the Cold War effect. (30)

Siebers' observation appears insightful if applied to the post-Cold War thriller. Representations of Russia that express such Cold War sentiments as distrust, suspicion, paranoia, and skepticism are found in a number of Western thrillers about Russia in the 1990s. The political thriller about Russia was predicated on the global conflict between

communism and capitalism, the free world and totalitarianism. Underlying post-Cold War thrillers about Russia are anxieties about the end of this antagonism: Has Russia really changed? Is the empire of Stalin gone forever? Has “the Bear” turned into a cuddly teddy bear? What are the new threats or thrills associated with Russia? Are they linked to old Cold War fears or are they new? On the one hand, Russia turned from a “troubled superpower” into “a pitiful, disintegrating, anachronistic giant that could pose no threat to the great powers save the aftershock of its own collapse” (Wolforth 290). On the other hand, the danger of an aftershock in collapsing Russia is frequently perceived as a potential threat to the world. Some political scientists in the 1990s argued that Russia, “whether it continues to decline or somehow manages to recover and grow strong again, is destined to be trouble for the West and the United States” (Horelick and Karaganov 22). The United States then should ensure protection of those states “that would be most directly threatened by the chaos of a failed Russia or the imperialism of a resurgent Russia” (ibid.).

In the sections to follow, I explore representations of the 1990s in Russia in *The Moscow Connection* (1994) by Robin Moore, *Politika* (1997) by Tom Clancy, *Icon* (1996) by Frederick Forsyth, and *Archangel* (1997) by Robert Harris. Although in Forsyth’s *Icon*, the hero who re-instates order in Russia is a former CIA spy (though he is not on an official mission), these thrillers differ from espionage novels discussed in the previous chapter in that they do not center on spying or on spies as their main characters. The themes of these thrillers are more diverse than the material of the spy thriller about Russia.

According to Charles Derry, the suspense thriller is “a crime work” based on “a violent and generally murderous antagonism in which the protagonist becomes either an innocent victim or a nonprofessional criminal”; although thrillers deal with crime, they do not focus on a traditional figure of detection; the suspense thriller “can be recognized by the multiple presence of various elements such as murderous passions, conspiracies, assassinations; an innocent protagonist on the run; overt confrontations between good and evil” and many other elements (62). The narrative structures in the Cold War thriller about Russia defined themselves in terms of the good versus evil antinomy. The Cold War thriller about Russia may most appropriately be described as the political thriller, which, according to Derry, is “organized around a plot to assassinate a political figure or a revelation of the essential conspiratorial nature of governments and their crimes against their people” (65). Political thrillers “generally document and dramatize the acts of assassins, conspirators, or criminal governments, as well as the oppositional acts of victim-societies, countercultures, or martyrs;” an “investigatory force” in the political thriller is “often represented by a reporter” who “narrates the revelations” (ibid.). *The Moscow Connection* by Moore, *Politika* by Clancy, *Icon* by Forsyth, and *Archangel* by Harris all fit this definition of a suspense thriller. Their narratives are mediated by non-professional, or minimally professional figures who conduct the investigation of crimes described in these thrillers. They do have common features with the post-Cold War espionage novels by le Carré and Funder. Yet, they also differ from them in the fact they re-visit the Cold War in their structure.

2. THE LEGACY OF THE SOVIET UNION: CORRUPTION AND CRIME

One of the biggest anxieties of the Cold War era was the fear over impending world nuclear annihilation.⁸² According to Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, nuclear weapons had become the source of “insecurity and tension” between Moscow and Washington by the 1970s. The United States and the Soviet Union “no longer argued about the status quo in Europe but about the new weapons systems each deployed to threaten the other” (367). After the Cold War, the threat that the Russian government will ever use nuclear weapons against another nation disappeared. Nonetheless, post-Cold War thrillers about Russia explore the theme of the Russian nuclear threat further predicating the thriller’s story on the fear that corrupt officials and criminals may misuse the Russian nuclear arsenal. Indeed, stories of Russian military commanders selling arms illegally to third world countries and to rebels in the republics of the former Soviet Union make front-page articles in Russian and Western press. In 1994, David Remnick claimed that Russian mobsters were better armed than the police, that some mafia gangs might even use a tank “to settle an especially stubborn account” (1994: 538), and that “army officers and recruits, desperate for cash, [were] only too glad to sell guns, rocket launchers, and grenades to the highest bidder” (ibid.). The public fear that unscrupulous military commanders might as well trade in arms, including nuclear weapons, on a large scale became widely spread in the West. Such thrillers as Greg Dinallo’s *Red Ink* (1994), Reggie Nadelson’s *Hot Red Blues* (1995), and Robin Moore’s *The Moscow Connection* (1994) concern the illegal nuclear weapons trade in the post-Soviet Russia.

⁸² Such thrillers of cultural anxiety as John Badham’s *War Games* (1983) and Joseph Ruben’s *Dreamscape* (1984) are organized around the fear of the world’s nuclear destruction (Derry 322). Stanley Kubrick’s political satire *Dr. Strangelove* (1963) also explores American anxiety about the bomb and the Soviet Union.

In *The Moscow Connection*,⁸³ a Russian-speaking investigator, Peter Nikhilov, investigates several murders in Brighton Beach, New York; his investigation takes him to Russia. The man he is after is Vyacheslav Yakovlev nicknamed the “Jap,” probably “the most feared crime figure in all Russia” (*MCo* 251). The prototype of this character is Vyacheslav Ivanov nicknamed in Russian “Yaponchik” (the “Jap”), a famous Mafioso of the late Soviet and the *perestroika* period. The writer’s decision to keep the real first name and the nickname of his character’s prototype adds documentary quality to the novel’s story. Just before the August 1991 coup, the “Jap” is released from a labor camp in Siberia; he produces counterfeit dollars in order to buy plutonium and nuclear weapons from one of Russia’s secret nuclear cities; he intends to sell these plutonium and nuclear weapons to terrorists in Iraq and North Korea. This operation would harm the Soviet economy, which is “a self-perpetuating joke anyway” (*MCo* 10) and create a threat to world peace. The latter circumstance is even more important for an American post-Cold War thriller that must depict serious exotic threats to provide “thrills” for the reader. Nikhilov’s task is to keep Russia’s nuclear weapons “from getting into the hands of terrorist states” (*MCo* 383). When the “Jap” comes to take the radioactive goods from a secret city in Siberia, Nikhilov blows up the plant, destroying the “Jap’s” counterfeit currency as well as the contraband nuclear weapons.

Because of the plant’s destruction, “over a thousand people” working in the plant die. When Oksana, Nikhilov’s girlfriend, expresses her concern that so many people were “roasted alive” (*MCo* 475) because of Peter’s “preventive” bombing, he says that if he had not acted, many more people could have been “nuked by terrorists” (*MCo* 494).

⁸³ In referecens – *MCo*.

The fact that the protagonist of *The Moscow Connection* so justifies his actions, is important in showing the difference between the post-Cold War spy novel with its repeated questioning of the ethics of espionage, and the post-Cold War suspense thriller, which has a morality of “unequivocal self-assertion tempered only by an entirely personal sense of decency” (Palmer 5). Nikhilov’s sense of decency conforms to the rule that the ends justify the means.

The narrator describes nuclear terrorism as “a growing global threat” (*MCo* 21). In the post-Cold War thriller, nuclear terrorism substitutes for the communist threat that was the focus of Cold War political thrillers about Russia. Despite the fact that the Cold War is over, the former “evil empire” is still a problem. As before, the source of the new “global threat” is Russia. However, it is no longer the communist ideology that endangers the world; the new threat is the legacy of the seventy-year rule of communists in Russia, who produced a “criminal system.” *The Moscow Connection* depicts the new threats coming from Russia as a legacy of the Soviet Union, a result of the unfortunate combination of Russia’s nuclear might, powerful criminal organizations, and massive corruption among the elite. Combined, these factors allow the Russian mob to organize nuclear trade that may lead to the world’s destruction.

Although technically Nikhilov’s adversary in the novel is the “Jap,” *The Moscow Connection* explores the theme of the former Soviet state as a source of evil. One character says, “The Soviet Union was more apt to crush the life out of its citizens than to help them fight State-induced injustice” (*MCo* 74). It would not be uncommon for American readers to consider this perspective to reflect the real state of affairs in Russia. In the words of Remnick, for instance,

In the West, the mob historically moves in where there is no legal economy – in drugs, gambling, prostitution – and creates a shadow economy. Sometimes, when it can buy the affections of a politician or two, the mafia meddles in government contracts and runs protection schemes. But in the Soviet Union, no economic transaction was untainted. It was as if the entire Soviet Union were ruled by a gigantic mob family; virtually all economic relations were, in some form, mafia relations. ... That was one of the most degrading facts of Soviet life: it was impossible to be honest. And all the baksheesh, eventually, ended up enriching the Communist Party. (1994: 185)

It does not matter for our discussion if Remnick's analysis is based in reality or not.⁸⁴ It is the mere belief that Soviet Russia was a criminal state that is important, because this influences the depiction of Russia in the 1990s. It is expressed in the very structure of Robin Moore's thriller.

Unlike in many other thrillers about Russia, the chief villain of *The Moscow Connection* is romanticized. He is presented as both victim and victimizer of the Soviet system. His criminal associates are also depicted as victims of the Soviet system. The Soviet system is blamed for their evil nature. In a camp, a female convict saves the "Jap's" life at the price of her own. The sentimental "Jap" asks the commandant of the camp to build a nice gravestone for this woman. He wants it to be "a monument to a woman whose life was maimed by the bloody system" (*MCo* 224). According to the "Jap," it was the Soviet system that "turned her into a slut, but could never wipe out her humanity" (*ibid.*). Although the crimes they commit have no direct relation to politics, murderers, prostitutes, and embezzlers are presented in *The Moscow Connection* as victims of the unfair Soviet regime, as products of the oppressive undemocratic state. In

⁸⁴ Although it is indeed a crude generalization to assert Russians were all dishonest in the Soviet period.

contrast to the lawlessness of communists and state officials, the criminal world is described as abiding by a rigorous code – the thieves’ “law.” Criminals help and support each other and are exceptionally honest in dealing with each other. In addition to being sentimental – a loyal friend, a good husband and a caring father – the Jap is depicted as well-read (*MCo* 150) with impeccable manners. The “Jap’s” association with prominent people in Russia enhances his intellectualism and charisma. Members of the Brezhnev family, the famous singer Josef Kobzon, and eye surgeon Sviatoslav Fedorov are all indebted to the “Jap.”

The “Jap’s” criminal activity acquires a romantic aura because it is shown as a form of rebellion to the state, as an activity aimed at ending the criminal state and its heirs – the *nomenklatura*. The novel depicts only those of “the Jap’s” crimes that are directed against the KGB and against corrupt party officials and the military. Since his victims do not evoke compassion, the “Jap’s” crimes look like acts of goodness and he himself – as a Robin Hood of sorts, protecting those in need and robbing the powerful. He avenges Oksana, who was gang-raped by the KGB; he makes “these state-licensed rapists, torturers, and murderers” “pay dearly for their excesses” (*MCo* 123). Moore portrays the KGB in a very unfavorable light. In his novel, the KGB has no state function whatsoever; its agents drink, abuse people, and breed xenophobia, mistrust and suspicion among Russians (*MCo* 52). The fact that criminals protect the girl, whom Soviet law could not protect, highlights the unworthiness of the Soviet social system.

Another episode highlighting the “Jap’s” goodness is his support of democratic forces by Yeltsin during the coup in August 1991. His “underground army of several hundred criminals” supplied “food, coffee, vodka, cigarettes, and any other comforts

they could find” to the demonstrators (*MCo* 281). By bringing free food and drinks to the barricades, the “Jap’s” people help to build the morale of the demonstrators opposing the coup. After the coup, Russia, overnight, becomes “a free trade country” (*MCo* 379) with factory managers acting like “greedy pigs” (*MCo* 484) ready to “sell” state property to the Mafia and with military commanders “selling” army property. The “Jap” appears to be less interested in amassing funds for himself than in ruining the corrupt *nomenklatura*.

Moore depicts corruption in the 1990s as a legacy of the Soviet system. Numerous flashbacks are used to show that not only old-timers like the Brezhnev family,⁸⁵ but also the main figures of *perestroika* are corrupt through and through. For instance, Gorbachev’s “lust for bribes earned him the nickname ‘purse’ in Stavropol” (*MCo* 46). The “Jap” knows that Gorbachev and his supporters on the Politburo sold three thousand unregistered SK-14 missiles and launchers, to Saddam Hussein (*MCo* 234). The novel also suggests that Gorbachev received bribes for selling weapons to Iraq illegally. In addition, Gorbachev’s Foreign Minister, Shevardnadze, is reported to have “bought” the title of the First Secretary of Georgia from Brezhnev by bringing him a case of diamonds.

The “Jap” manipulates corrupt officials on the lower levels to achieve his own ends. He serves his 15-year term in luxury quarters in a labor camp in Siberia, with a private sauna and a small pool (*MCo* 5). In his suite, there is always cognac, “lavish snacks of food,” and a video machine. His clothes are “well-ironed” and “fresh

⁸⁵ The novel includes an episode in which Brezhnev’s daughter, Galina, has sex in the presence of other people with two Georgian KGB officers for money (*MCo* 43-44).

...everyday" (*MCo* 8). For money, the corrupt jail commandant "did his best to make the 'Jap's' incarceration comfortable" (*MCo* 5), so the "Jap" also enjoys an occasional "twist with girls brought from the nearby women's camp" (*MCo* 5). Although the protagonist has to fight the "Jap," the gangster is still depicted as a glamorous person. Ideology aside, the residue of the Soviet system is the main adversary for a modern 1990s hero.

3. IDENTIFYING RUSSIANNES: RETRO-COMMUNISM AND NATIONALISM

Some British and American political thrillers about Russia offer scenarios of Russia's future. Speculations about Russia's possible political development, not unknown in Cold War thrillers,⁸⁶ come into focus in *Icon* (1996) by Frederick Forsyth and *Politika* (1997) by Tom Clancy. During *perestroika* and, even more, after the collapse of communism and demise of the Soviet Union, Russia became unpredictable. Its unpredictability is a source of anxiety explored in the post-Cold War thriller. Who is going to take power in Russia after Yeltsin? Which parties will gain the support of the people? What are the political programs emerging on the Russian political scene? Which political forces should the West support? Both Forsyth and Clancy portray a take-over of power by nationalists as a plausible scenario of Russia's political development at the turn of the millennium. Should nationalists come to power, communism or another totalitarian regime will be (re)established in Russia and present a threat to the world. The

⁸⁶John Milius' film *Red Dawn* (1984) portrays Soviet invasion of America and the young Americans' fight against the occupants. In February 1987, ABC released its fourteen-hour miniseries, *Amerika*. In it, Americans had to deal with the situation in which the Soviets won the cold war and America is under Soviet occupation (Rodnitzky 25).

world will then be back to the Cold War. The Cold War problematic looms in the background of the stories told by Forsyth and Clancy. Furthermore, the Cold War serves as a historical filter through which both novels assess Russia's present. In other words, here, as in *The Moscow Connection*, Russia's 1990s are viewed through the prism of Soviet political history.

Icon (1996) by Forsyth and *Politika* (1997) by Clancy are both set in 1999-2000. Both novels start with the sudden death of Russia's president in 1999. In *Politika*, the president is Yeltsin portrayed as a man with "irresistible lust for vodka" (2). This detail is meant to emphasize that Clancy's story is based on real facts. Although Forsyth does not mention Yeltsin, it is clear as well that Yeltsin was also the prototype for the president described in *Icon*. Both novels were undoubtedly inspired by the news coming out of Russia in the mid-1990s. Yeltsin's reforms were stumbling, the IMF was pumping Russia with more and more funds, and yet the economic situation in Russia continued to worsen. As more and more Russians found themselves living below subsistence level, the oligarchs accumulated more power in the Kremlin. The constitutional crises, the infamous war in Chechnya, the threat of the president's impeachment, the growing popularity of Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democrats, and notorious scandals over corruption at the highest echelons of power – all contributed to the perception of Russia as the land in crisis. The novels by Forsyth and Clancy only sharpened this image of Russia as unstable, chaotic and unpredictable. These novels reflected the real anxieties of the West about a possible outcome of the Russian crisis.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ In both novels, Russia is described as the country "in chaos"; in *Politika*, we read that in Russia, "unemployment is huge; bread is all most people can afford" (*Politika* 16).

In the novels by Forsyth and Clancy, Russians' nostalgia for the past, which appeared to be more stable, is a factor in Russia's political development. It is the source from which a potential threat for the world emerges. The first chapter of *Icon* reads,

After seventy years of Communists' tyranny, five years of Gorbachev reforms, and five years of Yeltsin, the Russian people began to look back with nostalgia for the old days. The Communists, under their leader Gennadi Zyuganov, painted a rosy picture of the way things used to be: guaranteed jobs, assured salaries, affordable food, and law and order. (*Icon* 4-5)

This passage may have been taken from a newspaper of the 1990s. In *Lenin's Tomb*, Remnick describes Russian nostalgia for the past in similar terms:

Much of the opposition to Yeltsin is rooted in one form or another of mythic nostalgia: the Communist nostalgia for the order of Stalin and the supposedly dependable standard of living under Brezhnev; the military nostalgia for the fear the Soviet arsenal once struck in the heart of the Western enemy; the nationalist nostalgia for empire and higher spiritual purpose. It is natural – all too human – that nostalgia should be such a powerful force of politics now in Russia, just as it was for the Ottomans and the British as they lost their hold on the earth. (1994: 534-535)

The difference between the analysis presented in Remnick and the description in Forsyth's novel is that the former views Russians' nostalgia for the past as something benign. By contrast, nostalgia in *Icon* and in *Politika* is not simply an innocent sentiment; it is directly linked with a nationalism that is a potential threat for the international community.

In both novels, Russian nationalist leaders (Komarov in *Icon* and Pedachenko in *Politika*) skillfully manipulate Russians' nostalgia for the Soviet past in their struggle for power. They use this sentiment to sabotage democratic reforms in the country, to

generate public mistrust of democratic parties so that a new nationalist leadership would be the only force capable of saving the nation from ruin.

In *Politika*, after the president dies, Vladimir Starinov becomes the acting President. With two other politicians, Pedachenko and Korsikov, being nationalist and anti-West, the West fears a coup and supports Starinov, who is the guarantee that Russia will remain a democratic country. In order to come to power, nationalists need a rift with America. Relying on the help of terrorist organizations and the Russian mob in the United States, they organize a bombing at Times Square on New Year's Eve, "the worst terrorist attack ever on American soil" (*Politika* 133) during which thousands Americans die. American millionaire Roger Gordian finds those responsible for the attack and saves the life of acting president Starinov who was arrested at his dacha on the Black Sea by nationalists (*Politika* 347-348).⁸⁸ The protagonist saves good Russia from evil Russians.

A possible Communist (or Fascist) restoration in Russia is also material for Forsyth's *Icon*. In 1999, the Russian President suddenly dies and the nation is wracked by famine and inflation, crime, corruption, unemployment, prostitution, and poverty. Igor Komarov, the right-wing leader of the Union of Patriotic Forces (UPF), prepares to take power in Russia. He is very popular; he is an icon of success and he delivers a promise of a better life for Russians. He promises to restore the lost greatness of Russia. In reality, Komarov plans to turn Russia into a fascist state. His political program is explained in a secret document, the Black Manifesto, in which he describes the plans of military aggression against neighboring nations and genocide against ethnic minorities

⁸⁸ The detail of Starinov in the novel being arrested in his dacha on the Black Sea refers, of course, to the episode of the August 1991 coup, when Gorbachev was kept under home arrest in his summer residence in the Crimea.

such as Chechens and Jews. He plans “the final and complete extermination of every last Chechen on the face of Russia”; “the surrounding Ossetians, Dagomans, and Ingush will watch the process and learn due and proper respect and fear of their new Russian masters” (*Icon* 262). The Black Manifesto accidentally falls into the hands of Western intelligence and Jason Monk, a former CIA officer, goes to Russia to prevent Komarov from coming to power. As in *Icon*, an American saves turn-of-the-century Russia from its own worst self.

The description of the nationalists’ program in *Icon* (and in *Politika*) may be inspired by accounts about real Russian nationalist organizations such as Pamyat’, The National Salvation Front, and stories about the notorious nationalist leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. Indeed, Zhirinovskiy suggested that Jews, Central Asians, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis be “driven from positions of power”; in his opinion, “only people with ‘kind Russian faces’ should appear on Russian television. He declared himself willing ‘to blow up a few Kuwaiti ports and aircraft plus a few American ships’ to defend the old Soviet ally Iraq. And should the Japanese press the demands for the Kurile Islands, ‘I would bomb the Japanese. ...I would nuke them’” (Remnick 1997: 535-536). Remnick, however, looks beyond these scandalous statements. He maintains that the December 1993 elections during which nearly 25 percent voted for “the ultra-nationalist” Zhirinovskiy “confirmed the despair among Russians”; Remnick explains that many voted for Zhirinovskiy “more as a protest against the squalid status quo than as an endorsement of his mad program of aggression abroad and the iron fist at home” (1997: 534-535). Remnick also mentions, “Nearly half the electorate did not bother voting” (1997: 535), thus suggesting an increasing political

apathy among Russians. That the new millennium started and Russia had not elected a nationalist government proves that Remnick's analysis of the election situation in Russia was probably accurate. Still, many analysts took Zhirinovskiy very seriously in the 1990s and warned the world of a possible take-over by Russian nationalists.⁸⁹ The thrillers by Clancy and Forsyth depict the worst-case scenarios of what awaits the world should "Zhirinovskiy" seize power in Russia. Cyril Hare reminds us that "the business of the thriller is to excite, and it does this by a series of tense episodes, well or ill-strung together on the thread of some sort of plot" (57). Clancy's *Politika* and Forsyth's *Icon* both succeed in "thrilling" their readers with stories about Russian nationalism. They dramatize the information about Russia in the 1990s and use it in order to organize the thriller plot in their novels that come from people's expectations of real events.

One of the means of dramatization of the Russian present in thrillers of the 1990s is to put current threats associated with Russia in perspective of the Cold War history. One episode in Clancy's *Politika*, is especially relevant for understanding the significance of this device in the post-Cold War thriller. In *Politika*, before the

⁸⁹ One of social scientists who argued that Zhirinovskiy must be taken very seriously and that many Russians support him, is Wayne Allensworth, the author of *The Russian Question: Nationalism, Modernization, and Post-communist Russia*. Allensworth argues, "No politician has exploited *ressentiment* regarding the West as effectively as Zhirinovskiy, and no other politician has managed to tap the Russian vice of neglecting personal responsibility and wallowing in envy of one's neighbor more skillfully than Zhirinovskiy. His weapons in the political battle are human frailty, chauvinism, envy, and self-pity, disguised as moral superiority and a seeking after justice and packaged as liberalism" (191). Allensworth claims further, "The West is attacked by Zhirinovskiy as an agent of Russia's continuing humiliation, a jealous body of ungrateful plotters who desire to turn Russia into an exploited colony, an appendage of the new world order designed by Russia's enemies to remove the only power capable of opposing the West's plan for global hegemony from the world stage forever" (197). Allensworth, as many other political and social scientists who wrote about Russia of the 1990s, overplays the argument of Russian nationalism as a threat to the world. Although he accurately presents Zhirinovskiy's views, he does not analyze other political players in Russia of the 1990s, the parties and leaders who counterbalanced nationalists and ultimately ensured that Russia remained on track of democratic reforms.

nationalists' plot was put to an end, the Americans' perception of Russia changes from positive to negative. At a gathering of American politicians, Senator Delacroix shows a stuffed black bear wearing red satin shorts decorated with the USSR emblem and he tells a parable about Boris the Bear, uncivilized, ungrateful, rude, and cunning. This parable evokes some of the Cold War attitudes to Russia and prepares the reader for the constant comparisons between Russia in the present and Russia in the past. Once again, the underlying question is, "Can we trust that Russia has really changed?" In Delacroix's parable, Boris the Bear once "had an appetite so big he thought he could eat the whole world"; out of greed "he ate and he ate and he ate until he got so heavy he collapsed from his own weight" (*Politika* 264). Then "kindly" Uncle Sam helped Boris, "put him on the Dr. Freemarket diet, taught him manners, taught him how to be civilized, and tried convincing him to give up his gluttonous ways." In a few years, thanks to this generous help, Boris could even "squeeze himself into a pair of trunks that were the same red, white, and blue colors as Uncle Sam's clothes" but "with the stripes in a different pattern, ... so nobody calls him a copycat!" Unfortunately, you cannot teach an old dog new tricks: "Boris fell back on his old, bad habits" and "got hungry again" with the only difference that now "he'd become used to begging for handouts from Uncle Sam, sort of like those grizzlies in Yosemite that'll come right up to your tent for food." Since "decent" and "generous" Uncle Sam believed "that by keeping Boris close to his tent, by letting him watch Uncle Sam conduct his daily business through the flaps, Boris would learn how to stand on his own two feet," he continued to help the Bear by giving him "hundreds of thousands of tons of food" and "tens of millions of dollars." But "you can take the bear out of the hammer and sickle, but you can never take the hammer and

sickle out of the bear!” One night, “a night when [Uncle Sam] was celebrating, a night that was supposed to be about hope and peace and prayers for a glowing new century,” the treacherous Boris “crept into Sam’s tent” and “sank his teeth deep into his flesh,” “he ripped at him, tore a chunk of him, wounded him so badly, scarred him so grievously, that the pain will last forever” (*Politika* 265-266). In this passage, Russia is an uncivilized, barbaric country that cannot be rehabilitated and, therefore, must not be helped. Although the further development in the novel’s plot proves that a more hopeful attitude to Russia is possible, the parable about Boris the Bear is important for understanding the post-Cold War thriller. Dealing with Russia’s present and incorporating many details that refer to the actual developments in Russian politics, economics, and social life, the post-Cold War thriller reveals some old anxieties of the Cold War period.

In both Clancy’s *Politika* and in Forsyth’s *Icon*, flashbacks and direct comparisons of new Russia to such ideologies from the past as Stalinism and fascism ensure the link between the past and the present, the reading of the present through the lenses of Cold War history. An important structural difference between a Cold War thriller and a post-Cold War thriller – the characteristic that manifests the development in the thriller genre – consists in that the historical perspective allows for interpretations of present Russia, which have a depth the Cold War thriller did not attempt. History is used in the post-Cold War thriller in a way that definitely sets it apart from thrillers about Russia during the Cold War period. The consistency with which the images referring to Stalinism, the purges, anti-Semitism, and Soviet oppression recur in different

post-Cold War thrillers about Russia, suggesting an increased role of the past in depicting the present in the thriller genre.

Both negative and positive characters in Clancy's *Politika* and in Forsyth's *Icon* refer to history in order to explain and justify their position in the present. Pedachenko (*Politika*) refers to the glorious pages of the Russian past in order to enhance the popular sentiment of nostalgia and prepare the public for his right wing policies aimed at restoring "order" in the country. During the famine and chaos in Russia in the end of 1999, Pedachenko addresses the nation on TV: "As we strive toward a greater future, let us allow ourselves to feel a noble rage at the slackness of authority that has damaged our national will, and caused so many of the problems that we – every one of us – must face" (83). He then reminds the nation of the two Patriotic wars (the first against "Napoleon's Grand Army" and the second against Nazi Germany) in which Russians "mustered [their] courage" and "determination." He calls the nation to "commit to the final Patriotic War," "a sacred war that will be fought on ... a moral battleground;" a war in which Russians "are threatened not by guns and bombs, but by cultural stagnation and decadence." In order to win this war, Russians must "stand by [their] cherished traditions, and fight temptation with iron discipline." He warns Russians that this war "cannot be won by scampering after American dollars, or standing with [their] hands out for American bread crumbs like hopeless beggars, or letting [the] younger generation be corrupted by American fashion and music" (*Politika* 83-84).

Remnick maintains that Vladimir Zhirinovsky, in his campaign for parliament, "played on the feelings of humiliation in the post-Great Power era and spoke in a rhetoric of stark simplicity and darkest comedy" (1997: 535). The rhetoric used by

Clancy's characters certainly reminds one of the rhetoric used by real Russian nationalists. Clancy's villain relies heavily on such phrases as "sacred war" and "noble rage," language that was typical of the Soviet period. He repacks his nationalist agenda as a call for patriotism and the defense of Russianness against American influence; he implicitly likens Americans to the foreign invaders of the past. He implies that the American style of living is decadent, stating explicitly that American fashion and music spoil young people in Russia and therefore are unsuitable for the nation. These are also ideas typical of Soviet Cold War rhetoric and Russia's communist leaders.⁹⁰ Projected into the 1990s, these ideas set the stage for a conflict between Russia and the West. Russia in Clancy's novel is not friendlier than Soviet Russia as it was depicted in Cold War thrillers. Unlike in spy novels from the 1990s, Russian positive characters in Clancy's and Forsyth's novels are in the background and hardly play a role in defeating the novels' adversaries.

In *Icon*, stories from the past serve the purpose of showing what the future will look like in Russia if the nationalists succeed. It may again become "a foul regime" in which people perish in "stinking, excrement-smearred" cells with "the weeping walls and the endless chill" (*Icon* 222). To highlight how evil Russia will be under nationalists,

⁹⁰ In *Resurrection: The Struggle for a New Russia* (1997), Remnick quotes Zyuganov, the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation: "Today all that was glorious is eliminated. In our schools today textbooks practically do not mention Pushkin and Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Nekrasov ... instead we have literary and political pornography. And these textbooks are written with the sponsorship of the Soros Fund.... This is done to kill our memory.... Today one hears terrible lies, that the October revolution was a plot, a coup. We hear it said that the revolution was the product of several people, a limited number of people. No. The revolution was a social earthquake which decided the most burning contradictions" (11). Zyuganov's speech certainly resembles the speech of Clancy's character; it expresses distress of communists about decadence introduced as they believe with the come-back of capitalism in Russia. It also expresses the readiness to defend the Russians' memory of the history of Russia. The battle is on for the Russian past.

Forsyth compares it to the ultimate evil – Nazism. In *Icon*, the rise of the Russian mob and the collapse of the economy remind the narrator of the Weimar Republic. As in the Weimar Germany, Russia of the 1990s is filled with “unemployment queues, the street crime, the ruined life savings, the soup kitchens, the quarreling midgets in the [parliament] yelling their heads off while the country went bankrupt” (*Icon* 152). Besides assessing the economic and political situation in Russia, this comparison implies that the country is heading toward fascism, like Germany 60-70 years before it.

Another comparison frequently evoked to enhance the image of contemporary Russia as a threat to the world is its comparison to Stalinist Russia. In *Icon*, the story of Pavlik Morozov is mentioned. During the time of Stalin’s rule, the infamous boy “had been officially declared a hero for betraying his parents to the NKVD for anti-party remarks. Both parents had died in the camps, but the son had been made a role model for Soviet youth” (*Icon* 297). This episode intimates that the evil characters in *Icon* would like to re-establish the order that promoted such heroes as Pavlik Morozov. Typically, thrillers about Russia in the 1990s no longer introduce characters that openly support Stalinist policies. Such characters as the Head of Personnel of the Soviet MGB (KGB) in Fleming’s *From Russia with Love* would be unthinkable in the post-Cold War thriller. Fleming’s character says,

A great deal of killing has to be done in the USSR, not because the average Russian is a cruel man... but as an instrument of policy. People who act against the State are enemies of the State, and the State has no room for enemies. There is too much to do for precious time to be allotted to them, and, if they are a persistent nuisance, they get killed. In a country with a population of 200,000,000, you can kill many thousands a year without missing them. If, as happened in the two biggest purges, a million people have to be

killed in one year, this is also not a grave loss. (*From Russia with Love* 21-22)

Analyzing Fleming's novel, Hoppenstand argues that the "monstrous brutality" of this character's logic reflects "Western society's fear of Stalinist Russia. Fleming wants his reader to feel a strong sense of revulsion for the MGB officer's attitude, which... is so alien to British and American sensitivities" (Hoppenstand 19). Neither *Icon* nor *Politika* have characters that are like the MGB officer in Fleming's novel. For instance, one of the people Remnick interviewed for *Lenin's Tomb* said:

The number of people who openly defend Stalin, really admire him, is limited... But if you talk about people whose first instinct is a passion for order, then I think you are talking about not less than half the people in the Soviet Union. ... we use fashionable words like 'democracy' and 'pluralism' now, but so few people can really live without the security of complete order and control. (1994: 126)

Even if the authors of *Icon* and *Politika* differentiate between Stalinist Russia and Russia of the 1990s, they still use historical references to Stalin, Stalinism, and Stalinist policies to give depth to their narratives and, perhaps, to add thrill to them. The impression of a character's wickedness is increased by his/her association with Stalinism, through the character's wishful thinking or flashbacks. The main villains in the 1990s narratives are certainly ready to act with Stalinist brutality if need be. In *Icon*, the main villain's role model is Stalin. Komarov, like Stalin before him, compares himself to Ivan the Terrible: "Now some demented priest has started a new hare running, calling for the return of the tsar. There will be no tsar in this land other than me, and when I rule they will learn the meaning of discipline such that Ivan the Terrible will seem like a choirboy" (*Icon* 327). Such a depiction suggests Russia has changed little from its past. The thrill, as I

mentioned earlier in this chapter, is organized around the dilemma: Is today's Russia really new or is it the same old trickster, ready to turn on its neighbors in a heartbeat? Has Russia changed? Clearly, Western society's fear of Stalinism is still present in the post-Cold War thriller.

4. THE HEIRS OF STALIN

Russia's present is also viewed through its past in Robert Harris' *Archangel* (1997), a thriller about Dr. Fluke Kelso, a British historian of Russia who is told there exists an unknown notebook by Stalin. The historian attempts to find this book, goes to the north of Russia in search of the people mentioned in this notebook, and comes to meet Stalin's son who was raised secretly in the Archangelsk region. Considering that "fluke" means "a lucky thing that happens by accident," the protagonist's name may be important to interpreting the novel. To find Stalin's notebook, "a piece of history that would explain why things had happened as they did" (*Archangel* 193), would indeed be a great piece of luck for a historian. Fluke is also lucky to stay alive after his meeting with Stalin's son. With a historian as its protagonist, *Archangel* alternates passages of narration with passages presented as archival materials, transcripts from interrogations, documents, or news. The documents inserted within the novel also provide evidence to support Kelso's claim that Stalin, not Hitler, was the most alarming figure of the twentieth century. The details about Stalin's life that Kelso mentions in a talk he delivers at the History Symposium in Moscow serve to increase the anxiety upon which the thriller is built, the anxiety about a possible comeback or a horrible dictator who can ruin lives of millions of people. Kelso gives evidence that people, who knew Stalin, testified

that he never loved a human being, never cried, and was incapable of feeling pity for man or beast (*Archangel* 366). He used to make the Politburo and members of his family dance (*Archangel* 67), as if they were circus animals. Many members of his family were executed or committed suicide (*Archangel* 68). Stalin used terror instinctively. His role model was Ivan the Terrible.⁹¹ Stalin edited the speeches of Ivan in A. M. Tolstoy's 1942 play, *Ivan Grozny* "so that they sounded more like himself." One thing he did not like about the real Ivan, was that the tsar would repent and pray after executing someone, which, in Stalin's view was a "weakness" (*Archangel* 155-156). These descriptions of Stalin show a complete absence of humanity in the Soviet dictator. In the thriller's structure, these details suggest that a possible comeback of Stalinism would also mean the return of the inhuman regime, the horrors of suppressing or even obliterating humanity in society. From the point of view of the genre of the novel, the use of "authentic" documentary sources suggests the story's truthfulness and the accuracy of its political analysis.

"Documentary" material highlights the link between Russia's past and the present. In Harris' novel, as in the thrillers by Clancy and Forsyth, Russia's present is appalling. Residential districts in Moscow are unsafe: the stacked balconies are "crammed with junk"; "hypodermic syringes, stained newsprint, limp condoms, and dead leaves in the halls"; "the stairwells reeking of piss and vomit" (*Archangel* 149). Newspapers report that the President is ill again, or drunk again, or both (178). There are reports about inflation and the economic crisis, about ethnic conflicts and anti-Semitism; there are reports about a serial cannibal in the Kemerovo region, about 60,000 homeless

⁹¹ This detail was also mentioned in Forsyth's *Icon*.

children in Moscow, about a bomb planted at a metro station by nationalists, about teenagers who burnt a five year-old boy alive in one province (179). Marxists, nationalists, and anti-Semites manipulate popular despair to encourage people to support nationalism. Mamantov, the leader of a pro-Stalinist group, argues that Russians do not like democracy and “want a strong line, *any* line” (127). He also argues that chaos would not befall Russia if Stalin were still alive, for Stalin was a great man who had lifted Russia from a nation with “wooden ploughs” to “an empire armed with atomic weapons” (77). In the novel, the nationalists seem to succeed in spreading their Stalinist views as, according to statistics quoted in the novel, “one third of Russians said they thought Stalin was a great war leader”; “one in six thought he was the greatest ruler the country had ever had. Stalin was seven times more popular than Boris Yeltsin, while poor old Gorbachev hadn’t even scored enough votes to register” (ibid.).

Typically, Harris links Russians’ despair over economic and social collapse and Russians’ nostalgia for the past with the rise of nationalism in Russia. In other words, the dynamics of social and political life in Russia described in *Archangel* are hardly different from the one depicted in Forsyth’s *Icon* and Clancy’s *Politika*. Furthermore, like Forsyth does in *Icon*, Harris compares Russia of the 1990s to the Weimar Republic. Like Germany, Russia is a big, proud country, which had lost its empire, “lost a war, but can’t figure out *how* – figures it must’ve been stabbed in the back, so there’s a lot of resentment” (*Archangel* 77). Characteristically, the threat to the world depicted in Harris’ thriller is a possible return of the horrible past, be it Stalinism or fascism. As in *Icon* and *Politika*, despite the fact that the Cold War is over, its history and anxieties continue to influence the structure of the post-Cold War thriller. Russia may once again

present a serious threat to the world because it is still Stalinist, because Russians are nostalgic for the Stalinist past, and they act like the heirs of Stalin.

In order to build up anxiety about a possible restoration of Stalinism, the narrator of *Archangel* emphasizes Russians' fascination with Stalin. What can better prove that post-Soviet Russia is Stalinist through and through than depict people, who had suffered from Stalinism, as still devoted to Stalinist ideas? Harris introduces into his narrative the character of Papu Rapava, a former NKVD guard who kept the secret of Stalin's notebook for several decades before he conveyed it to Kelso. Such a character as Rapava embodies the idea of Russians' deep affection for Stalin. Rapava remains a true Stalinist despite tortures he had endured during interrogations by the secret police, despite "fifteen years' hard labor in the Kolyma territory" (*Archangel* 29) and despite the fact that because of Soviet foreign policy, Rapava's son died in Afghanistan. Not only he is not indignant that his son was killed in the unjust war, Rapava feels ashamed that Russia lost the Afghan campaign and believes that Stalin would not have let "the country be humiliated" like this (*Archangel* 33). This episode suggests an important difference between Russian secondary characters in *Icon* and *Politika* and in Harris' *Archangel*. In the novels by Forsyth and Clancy, common Russians are deceived by fanatics, and generally would be made happy with the restoration of Brezhnev-style communism. In *Archangel*, such individuals as Rapava would not be satisfied with a return to Brezhnev. They crave the return of "order" as it was under Stalin. When Rapava returned to Moscow in 1969, he thought that without Stalin "the country was already halfway in the shit" (30). Unlike common Russians described by Clancy and Forsyth, Russians depicted by Harris do not simply want a more prosperous society; they want the return of a

society of superior ethics than those today. Rapava admires Stalin's modesty; unlike other leaders of the Soviet State, Stalin "lived like a worker," slept on a "sofa" and covered himself with a "coarse brown army blanket" (10). His message is clear: Stalin stands for moral virtue and political genius. When compared with characters in *Icon* and *Politika*, a greater role that secondary characters play in the plot of *Archangel* creates the impression that Russia today indeed consists of the heirs of Stalin.

The link between the Russian past and present is personified by Stalin's son, a madman who lives all alone in the woods in the north of Russia. He looks like Stalin and acts like him. From time to time, he would even execute people: either those who used to live with him in a village, or tourists who had lost their way in the woods. From all he extorted a 'confession' about their betrayal of the communist course or about spying on Russia (*Archangel* 360). In Kelso's words, Stalin's son had never done a day's work in his life, had no skills, no profession, yet he "gave the impression that he was waiting for something to happen" (345). Given such a characterization of the man, it is significant that Kelso calls Stalin's son "*Homo sovieticus*" (ibid.) thus extending the characteristics he perceives in Stalin's son to many other Russians. In addition, the narrator calls Stalin's son "the Russian" (337). Kelso perceives Stalin's son as a typical Russian, at the same time suggesting that Russians in the 1990s are the heirs of Stalin. The detail that in his whole life, Stalin's son had read only the thirteen volumes of Stalin's collected works is meant to show that Russians are brainwashed, that they are indoctrinated. All of the volumes were signed in the same way – 'To the future, J. V. Stalin' (333). This dedication gives the impression that the horrible dictator continues to "define the course of Russian history from his grave" (ibid.). There is a touch of fatalism in this detail. The

fear, paranoia, and barbarism that the Russian people learned in the 1930s have survived through to the 1990s. At the end of the novel, Russians celebrate the “miracle” of Stalin's son joining the nation (*Archangel* 399). Nationalists led by Mamantov bring Stalin's son to Moscow, where he is greeted by people carrying flags – the tsarist eagle, the hammer and sickle, the Aurora emblem (416). The detail that people carrying different flags and therefore representing different political parties all welcome Stalin's son, once more highlights the idea that Stalinism is common to Russia, that Russians' belief in Stalin is capable of uniting the nation. The ending of *Archangel* is thus much more pessimistic than the endings in *Icon* and *Politika*.

As examples of *Archangel*, *Icon*, and *Politika* show, the theme of Stalinism has been significant in Western popular representations of Russia. In contrast, the genres such as detective novels and thrillers almost never touch upon this theme in Russia.⁹² Instead, the theme of Stalinism is developed in memoirs, documentaries, melodrama, poetry, and psychological novels.⁹³ “Nasledniki Stalina” [The Heirs of Stalin] is a poem by Yevgenii Yevtushenko originally published in *Pravda* on 21 October 1962. The poem condemned Stalinism and warned the reader about a threat of Stalin coming back to life, virtually “rising from his grave” at the Kremlin wall, through the “heirs of Stalin,” those who had not “buried” Stalinism in themselves, those who continued to believe in the ideas of Stalin. Two other poems by other poets on the same theme were published along with Yevtushenko's poem. Almost a year had passed since the Twenty-Second Congress

⁹² I will discuss the development of the theme of Stalinism in Russian hard-boiled detective novels from the 1990s in Chapter 4, “Tough Guys in Rough Times: Literature of the *Bespredel*.”

⁹³ On the treatment of this theme in post-Soviet Cinema, see Anna Lawton, “The Ghost That Does Return: Exorcising Stalin,” *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema* ed. Richard Taylor and Derek Spring (London: Routledge, 1993) 186-200; Susan Larsen, “Melodramatic Masculinity, National Identity, and the Stalinist Past in Postsoviet Cinema,” *Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature* 24, No. 1 (Winter 2000): 85-120.

of the CPSU approved the resolution to remove the body of Stalin from the mausoleum at the Red Square. Stalin was buried during the night of 30-31 October 1961; on the façade of the mausoleum, the marble plates that read “Lenin” replaced the plates reading “Lenin. Stalin.” Officially, Stalin’s burial was not filmed and no photographs were taken. In 1962, as de-Stalinization continued, new materials about Stalin’s cult of personality were published. In less than a fortnight after the publication of “The Heirs of Stalin,” the eleventh volume of *Novyi Mir* came out with Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and shortly afterwards, the novella was republished in *Roman-Gazeta*, another Russian thick journal.⁹⁴ The discussion of the unheroic hero of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and his tremendous will to life swept the country. The treatment of the Stalinism theme in documentaries or psychological novel based on memoirs set the canon for exploring the theme during the second de-Stalinization of Russia under Gorbachev and throughout the 1990s. The second de-Stalinization started with the 1985 release of Tengiz Abuladze’s film *Repentance*, a philosophical tale with elements typical of magic realism. Abuladze says that the film was based on a true story of a man “who had been sent unjustly to prison” and upon his release came back to his village in Georgia. He “found the grave of the man who had sent him to jail,” and in revenge, he dug up the coffin, opened it, “took out the corpse, and leaned it up against the wall. ... He wouldn’t let the dead man rest” (qtd. in Remnick

⁹⁴ The increased attention to de-Stalinization and the repeated calls to end the cult of Stalin’s personality in October and November 1962 may indicate an intra-party struggle during that period. At this time, I do not possess enough evidence to explain why while the Soviet government was clearly preoccupied with the Cuban crisis. On 24 October 1962, *Pravda* published Khrushchev’s open letter with his response to Kennedy’s famous speech on 22 October 1962 and from that day on practically all *Pravda* issues were devoted to the Cuban missile crisis for much of October) issue 21 October 1962 published the whole page of poems and a story on Stalinism.

1994: 42). The tragic tone of Abuladze's film is matched by hundreds other stories about the horrors of Stalinism that swept Russia since 1985. However, the theme of Stalinism has hardly developed in such escapist genres as thrillers, detective fiction, or romance novel. As in 1962, there is still a fear of the heirs of Stalin living in the Russian society today, there is still an anxiety about coming to power of a tyrant in Russia, but Russian authors do not view this anxiety as a suitable basis for popular entertainment. The Russian history "remembered" in Russian detective fiction of the 1990s simply does not include periods dealing with the purges.

There is a difference in the way Anglo-American crime fiction about Russia and Russian crime fiction (I mean here espionage novels, thrillers, and mysteries) treat the past. The asymmetries between corresponding genres of crime fiction point out a significant cultural asymmetry between American and Russian cultures in the 1990s. Although the past also plays a tremendous role in Russian detective fiction in the 1990s,⁹⁵ Stalinism almost never figures as a theme in detective novels by Russian authors. This seeming indifference of Russian popular culture to the theme of Stalinism does not prove that Russia is Stalinist; a comparative history of culture must grasp these differences as part of the American and Russian cultural chronotopes of the 1990s.

5. A FAREWELL TO RUSSIA

In conclusion to his book *Russian Pulp*, Anthony Olcott maintains:

Early western euphoria, when the USSR broke up, over the prospect that Russia would now become an "ordinary country" has, over the past decade, been transformed into a growing exasperation,

⁹⁵ I will discuss this role in Chapters 4-6 of this dissertation.

as Russia continues to frustrate western hopes and expectations. Western businessmen have been frightened by the bloody directness with which ownership battles have been fought, mystified by the intricacies of shareholder laws, license granting, and insider trading, and scared away by the insouciance with which the government repudiated its own short-term debts, in the economic meltdown of August 1998. ...To sympathetic western eyes, the course of Russian politics, economic reform, and the general tenor of Russian life all seem incompetent, chaotic, and naïve, while unsympathetic westerners prefer to view actions of the state and its leaders as proof that Russia remains a cruel and Byzantine place, where the only currency of value is raw power, and no price – financial, political, or human – is too high to pay in its pursuit. Both camps tend to see Russia as unpredictable and illogical, lurching drunkenly from one lunacy to the next. (182-183)

The analysis of Moore's *The Moscow Connection*, Harris' *Archangel*, Forsyth's *Icon* and Clancy's *Politika* that I have presented above certainly reveals the "unsympathetic" attitude to Russia as described by Olcott. The use of historical details in thrillers from the 1990s indeed serves the purpose of proving that Russia in the 1990s is the same "cruel and Byzantine place" it used to be during the Soviet regime. Olcott concludes his study by saying that depiction of Russians in recent American thrillers suggests that much "of what western thrillers used to make the hairs on the backs of their readers' necks stand up was not communism, but rather was Russia itself" (178). However, while some details in thrillers by Clancy, Harris, and Forsyth make it seem that Russia is condemned not for being communist but simply for being Russian, other details in the same thrillers suggest that the primary anxieties are still old Cold War anxieties. These writers simply apply old cultural codes to reading new Russia. Use of familiar patterns when attempting to define one's position toward a new phenomenon is not a new strategy. The thrillers by Clancy, Harris, Forsyth, and Moore show how old Cold War

perceptions prevent or at least hinder experiencing Russia of the 1990s in a new way. Instead, these thrillers use strategies of the Cold War thriller to exhaustion. As Arnold Hauser reminds us in his *Philosophy of Art History*,

We have no idea how an artist might portray reality in the absence of any previous attempts to portray it;... all artistic representation known to us must have been based upon earlier endeavors, for they all employ a number of means of expression which, taken by themselves, could not have been intelligible to anybody. (370)

Hauser argues that conventions are the foundation of art. American thrillers experience the weight of conventions in their depiction of Russia.

The 1990s have ended and none of the threats depicted in American and British popular thrillers have been realized: Zhirinovskiy did not come to power, nuclear bombs were not sold to terrorists, Russia did not turn on America, and Stalin's heirs were not found alive in the Russian woods. By the end of the 1990s, and especially after 9 September 2001, the theme of Russian evil has lost its grip on American popular culture. With other nations now vying the role of America's antagonists, these novels express a new attitude to Russia.

A new perception of Russia is manifested, for instance, in Tom Clancy's *The Bear and the Dragon* (2000).⁹⁶ Unlike many post-Cold War thrillers, *The Bear and the Dragon* depicts a global conflict. In this novel, the Russians (the Bear) have found the largest gold mine and oilfield in the world in East Siberia. Neighboring China (the Dragon) decides to solve its economic problems by invading Russia and taking the gold mine and oilfield. If China succeeds, it will emerge as the new superpower to rival the

⁹⁶ In references – *BD*.

United States. The US president proposes that Russia join NATO in order to halt Chinese aggression (*BD*, 661). Together, Russia and the United States destroy the Chinese army. Although the war is between Russia and China, the real conflict is between the United States and China. The Chinese in *The Bear and the Dragon* have taken the place of the other that used to belong to Russia in the Cold War thrillers. Typically in the novel the Chinese swear and bemoan that the *Americans* “deliberately crippled” the Chinese ability to supply their field armies and killed the Chinese’ “commanding general” (*BD*, 995). Russians, by contrast, are depicted as a weak nation in need of American “expertise and advice about how to enter the capitalist world with both feet, and open eyes” (*BD*, 628).

Clancy depicts Russia as a nation that has learned its historical lessons. A number of episodes manifest patronizing attitude to Russia. The American military help to Russia is like “a gift fit for the world’s largest Christmas tree” (*BD*, 651). Clancy depicts Russia as America’s baby brother, who needs support and appreciates Christmas gifts from its big brother. Celebrating their country’s victory over China, “Russia felt like a great power again, and that was good for the morale of the people. ... in another few years they’d start reaping the harvest of their resources ... and maybe, Russia would turn the corner, finally, and begin a new century well, after wasting most of the previous one” (*BD*, 1027-1028). According to Americans, if Russia prospers, “it [will be] a better world for both” America and Russia. Russians, in turn, say that “Russia is a great nation” and that Americans “are great people” and “fit partners” for Russia (*BD*, 628).

Russian patriotism is no longer viewed as an expression of malevolent nationalism. On the contrary, Russian patriots, who are ready to defend “*their* land”

from “Chinks” (*BD*, 862) in the same way they defended it from the Nazi, are glorified. The soldiers, although “angry at having been called away from their homes,” “figured that their country had a need” and went to protect it as summoned (*BD*, 741). The army is no longer a bunch of demoralized drunkards.⁹⁷ Russian generals no longer steal, destroy, or sell ammunition. Russian military equipment is not as good as the American one, but it is functional. Russian tanks turn out to be “in surprisingly good shape” (*BD*, 741). Once again, the tone of this remark is patronizing. The role Russia plays in the plot of Clancy’s *The Bear and the Dragon* indicates a certain closure in the development of thrillers about Russia. In the new millennium with its new global concerns, it is to play the role of the United States’ partner or a victim in the conflict of the new major players in international politics.

⁹⁷ *Flames of Heaven* (1993) by Ralph Peters depicted the Soviet military very unfavorably.

Chapter 3

RUSSIAN PROTAGONISTS IN AMERICAN MYSTERIES

1. THE GOOD RUSSIAN: THE CULTURAL EVOLUTION OF THE IMAGE

There are a number of American mysteries about Russia of the 1990s that have Russian protagonists. These mysteries differ from Western-protagonist spy novels and thrillers about Russia in the way they present Russia. In particular, the distinction between good and evil is made from the “insider’s” perspective; the narrator draws a distinction between good and bad Russians, not between good Western protagonists and their Russian adversaries. Typically, in the mysteries that I study in this chapter, Russian protagonists and their friends and colleagues represent the good; the evil is represented by Russian criminals. This means that such mysteries cannot depict a deadly encounter of two antagonistic ideologies in the same way the Cold War thrillers did. Instead, the distinction between the West and Russia is revealed through comparing and contrasting protagonists, who project a Western look at Russia, and either negative characters or common Russians who embody typical Russian perceptions of life.

Of all the types of Anglo-American crime fiction about Russia that are studied in this dissertation, mysteries that have Russian protagonists have changed the least since the end of the Cold War. One explanation for their relatively small transformation may be derived from the genre’s genesis. The tradition of having Russian protagonists in American popular fiction and film goes back to the 1940s, the wartime of Alliance between Russia, the United States, and Britain. However, with the start of the Cold War,

positive portrayal of Russians in American popular culture was terminated for a few decades. William K. Everson writes about the dramatic shift in depicting Russians when the Cold War started:

Russia, as a former ally, had been lauded to the skies as a brave, honest, progressive nation in such films as *Song of Russia* and *Days of Glory*. Now, overnight, everything had to be reversed. One sincerely motivated tribute to wartime Russia – *North Star* – was even taken and so re-cut that the Nazis of the original were now presented as the Russian aggressors, and the original Russian peasantry changed to victims of communist oppression! (137)

Russia turned from good to evil in an instant. As a consequence, during the McCarthy period, film directors, screen playwrights, and actors who had glorified Russia during World War II, were blacklisted, even their whole careers destroyed.⁹⁸ Due to serious tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, it was impossible for a few decades to resume the tradition of popular fiction or film involving Russian heroes. On the contrary, not infrequent was the phrase “The only good Russian is a dead Russian.” Later, with the Cold War melting somewhat during the *détente* era, exploring the good Russian character in American popular culture became once again possible. Fascinated by the atmosphere of *perestroika* and the break-through in American-Soviet relations, several American authors made Russians in the early 1990s partners of American protagonists. A few novels about Russia written in the late 1980s and early 1990s depict cooperation of Russian and American heroes in fighting common evil. However, in such novels as *Red Ink* (1994) by Greg Dinallo, *Moscow Twilight* (1992) and *The Wheel of*

⁹⁸ See more on this in Larry May, “Movie Star Politics: The Screen Actors’ Guild, Cultural Conversion, and the Hollywood Red Scare,” *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989) 125-153. Another important source on policies of the Hollywood in the 1950s-1960s is Nora Sayre, *Running Time: Films of the Cold War* (New York: Dial Press, 1978).

Justice (1994) by William E. Holland, the evil still typically originated from Russia and was personified by Russian bureaucrats or criminals.

The tradition of introducing Russian protagonists in a popular crime novel was resumed in 1981 when two American mystery writers started their series of novels with Russian protagonists. Stuart K. Kaminsky, a prolific American writer of crime fiction, published his novel *The Death of a Dissident* (1981) in which he first introduced a Russian investigator Porfiry Rostnikov, the character who would become the protagonist in thirteen other mysteries by Kaminsky. But the best known and most memorable Russian protagonist in American crime fiction is Arkady Renko, from Martin Cruz Smith's *Gorky Park* (1981). Renko's popularity grew when Michael Apted released his screen version of the novel in 1983. Although Cruz Smith's series about Renko consists only of four novels, Renko is far better known than Kaminsky's protagonist.

Of the four novels in the Renko series, *Gorky Park* (1981) is the only one that is set during the Cold War period. In *Gorky Park*, Renko unravels an intricate mystery pertaining to the murder of three people in Moscow's Gorky Park. During this investigation, he has to fight enemies among Moscow police, the KGB, and the FBI. His investigation takes him to the United States, and although he has a chance to defect, he chooses to return to Russia, in order to allow his mistress, the dissident Irina Asanova, to remain in the West. *Gorky Park* was followed by three other novels, each centered on the character of Renko: *Polar Star* (1989), *Red Square* (1992), and *Havana Bay* (1999). *Polar Star* (1989) is set during the *perestroika* era when relations between the United States and Russia had warmed to the point where the two countries opened joint ventures, a commercial symbol indicating the end of a fifty-year war over economic sub-

structure. In *Polar Star*, Renko is punished by the brutal Soviet system for not being a loyal party member. He is at the bottom of the Soviet social ladder working as a labourer on a Russian factory ship, an American-Soviet fishing joint venture. On his captain's request, Renko unravels the mystery of his colleague's murder, a murder that might have repercussions for relations between Russia and America. In *Red Square*, thanks to changes in Russian politics brought by *perestroika*, Renko is once again an investigator with the Moscow Prosecutor's Office; he fights the Russian Mafia, which has set up criminal operations in Germany. The novel is probably set in the last year of the Soviet Union, but before the August coup of 1991. In the latest novel of the series, *Havana Bay*, Arkady Renko investigates the murder of his former enemy, Sergei Pribluda, a colonel of the Russian intelligence service.

Stuart Kaminsky published five novels about Rostnikov in the 1980s: *Death of a Dissident* (1981), *Black Knight in Red Square* (1983), *Red Chameleon* (1985), *A Fine Red Rain* (1987), *A Cold Red Sunrise* (1988). The repetition of the word "red" in the titles of four of these mysteries and the mention of a "dissident" in the first Rostnikov mystery suggest that Cold War polarities were defining for the plots and characterization methods in these novels. The next two books of the series, *The Man Who Walked Like a Bear* (1990), *Rostnikov's Vacation* (1991) are set during the *perestroika* period, the latter dealing with the events of August 1991. *Death of a Russian Priest* (1992), *Hard Currency* (1995), *Blood and Rubles* (1996), *Tarnished Icons* (1997), and *The Dog Who Bit a Policeman* (1998) deal with the new themes associated with post-Soviet Russia: economic collapse, political instability, crime, and the rise of nationalism. Kaminsky's police procedurals about Inspector Porfiry Rostnikov do not have as many thriller

elements as the Renko series. As Rostnikov is a veteran of the Great Fatherland War, by the 1990s, he must be at least sixty years old. Known to colleagues as “the Washtub,” Rostnikov is solid, compact, and heavy. He is “a man of average size but built like the German tank that had crippled his leg when he was a boy soldier. For almost half a century, Rostnikov had dragged the leg painfully” (*The Dog Who Bit a Policeman* 14)⁹⁹ and finally, had it amputated. Rostnikov, unlike Renko, is not a loner, he works in a collective, and values his younger associates for whom he is a father figure.

This brief overview of the Russia mysteries by Kaminsky and Cruz Smith shows that the tradition of making Russians the protagonists in American popular fiction has been fairly short. The tradition was resumed only in 1981 after a long period during which Russians in Anglo-American crime fiction were mostly depicted as the ultimate adversaries of British and American heroes. During the last decade of the conflict between the United State and Russia, fewer than ten mysteries with Russian protagonists appeared, and only one – Cruz Smith’s *Gorky Park* – enjoyed broad popular acclaim. The short genre history, the relatively small number of representative novels for this type of mystery, and a fairly low quality of most works by Kaminsky provide some explanation as to why the end of the Cold War may not be reflected in the structure of post-Cold War mysteries about Russia as prominently as it was reflected in the spy novel and in the thriller genres. Of all genres of crime fiction that we have been so far looking at, American mysteries with Russian protagonists represent the biggest challenge for authors and readers. Writing a mystery about Russia is comparable to process of

⁹⁹ Further on in the chapter, I will use *The Dog...* for *The Dog Who Bit a Policeman* and *Vacation for Rostnikov's Vacation*.

translation. In the case of thrillers that have Western protagonists, the “translation” happens from a foreign language into one’s native language. Russian culture is perceived as foreign and is explained from the cultural perspective of a Western hero. In the case of mysteries that have Russian protagonists, the “translation” is from one’s native language into a foreign language and back. As it is much more difficult to do translations from your native language into a foreign tongue, it is also difficult to depict Russia, a foreign culture, accurately, as if it were your own culture. Some details will inevitably be wrong. An attempt to capture Russia in its transition period multiplies a challenge to depict details of everyday life accurately.

Another reason for a less pronounced genre change in the post-Cold War mysteries about Russia is that the way in which the mystery constructed Russia’s otherness in the 1980s was still relevant in the 1990s. In looking at the dynamics of American mystery novels with Russian protagonists throughout the 1980s-1990s, it is important to bear in mind that during *détente*, propaganda about the Soviet lifestyle in the West and propaganda of the American lifestyle in Russia became an important means of “waging” the Cold War. American propaganda centered on the superiority of Western music, fashion, cars, and, generally, of everyday life in the West. The poet Viktor Krivulin, the author of “The Cold War as the Struggle for Peace” quoted in the introductory chapter of this dissertation cited a popular Soviet joke that, in Krivulin’s opinion, manifested the Soviet defeat in the Cold War: communism is the historical stage of Russian development in which all Soviet people will wear imported clothes (65). The joke shows that popularly, “degrading and rotting” capitalism appeared very attractive to Russians. Common Russians defined communism as that stage in the

development of Russia when every Russian would wear clothes manufactured abroad. Jokes like this showed that the Cold War as the conflict of two ideologies had been won by the West. Not only did the joke cited by Krivulin express a domestic contempt for inferior Soviet fashion industries, it demonstrated the people's sheer indifference to the rhetoric of official Soviet propaganda about high ideals that must inspire Soviet citizens to work for their country. During détente, the rhetoric of the Cold War was becoming generally less militant than previously. Accordingly, comparisons between the United States and the Soviet Union were increasingly made in such sphere as that of everyday life. In his address to the Twenty-Second Congress of the Communist Party in 1961, Khrushchev promised that by 1965 the Soviet economy would reach the size of the American economy. By 1980, however, the economic success of the United States in particular and of Western capitalist powers in general¹⁰⁰ became a concrete proof of the superiority of capitalist ideology over communism. Depictions of Russians, therefore, highlighted Russia's otherness by emphasizing the backwardness of Russian lifestyles. The cultural war of constantly comparing and contrasting Western success with Russian backwardness was a means of reinforcing the notion of which ideology was better. In the 1990s, when Russian characters no longer needed to be exposed as the bearers of communist ideology, with the conflict between good and evil no longer defined in the former ideological terms, the mysteries about Russia still compare and contrast Western and Russian lifestyles. Russia is still viewed through the lenses of American culture. The

¹⁰⁰ By 1980, the world was already impressed by the "economic miracle" in West Germany and by the tremendous rates of economic growth in Japan.

same cultural codes are used in drawing comparisons between Russia and the West as were used before.

Fredric Jameson's concept of the cultural code is useful in analyzing the American mysteries about Russia of the 1990s. In "The Ideology of the Text," Jameson argues:

The cultural code is something like a storehouse of proverbial wisdom or commonplace knowledge about acts, events, and life in general, and will be articulated whenever a given detail needs motivation. In a sense, therefore, this code is the locus of ideology, albeit of a relatively inactive, nonfunctional type; one is tempted, indeed, to see it, not so much as a system in its own right, as any living ideology might be supposed to be, but rather as a kind of storehouse of older ideological fragments that can be appealed to now and then for a digression or an acceptable justification for some necessary move in narrative strategy. The basic object of study here would therefore be the various forms of what the Russian Formalists called "motivation," that is to say, what has to be pressed into service to make a given detail pass unquestioned by the reader, or, to use what will presently become an ideologically charged term, to make it seem "natural" to him. Indeed, in an interesting article, Gerard Genette has suggested that verisimilitude ... is itself 'nothing but the degree zero of just such motivation, something like a cultural code that is able to dispense with its content.' (1988: 28-29)

In the sections that follow, I explore the development of the cultural code in the mysteries about Renko and Rostnikov by Cruz Smith and Kaminsky. While dealing with new themes of the 1990s in Russia, the narrators in each set of books still rely on the cultural code of the past in depicting the conflict between the good and bad Russians, between the projections of Western values and the values ascribed to Russians. Renko and Rostnikov are constructed as positive characters by means of their constant comparison with the "masses" in Russia. The superiority of the protagonists becomes

evident in their attitude to the hardships in Russia, in their treatment of Russian nationalism, anti-Semitism, and simply in how they perceive everyday life in Russia and abroad.

2. COPING WITH COLLAPSE

The sound of the Soviet Union falling apart echoes in the background of all British and American novels about Russia set in the 1990s. The thrillers by Moore, Forsyth, Clancy, and Harris depict the political, economic, and social collapse in Russia that lead to the appearance of new threats potentially endangering the rest of the world. Examples are the illegal nuclear arms trade, Russian nationalism, and the possible restoration of a totalitarian state. In the mysteries by Kaminsky and Cruz Smith, the protagonists are less concerned with preventing global threats. However, the theme of political, economic, and social collapse in Russia is also important. Economic and political collapse in Russia is not simply the backdrop against which the action takes place. The way in which characters respond to collapse is an important means of a hero's portrayal. Whereas common Russians are depressed by the economic and political upheavals in Russia of the 1990s, the Russian protagonists take the hardships stoically and perceive them as temporary.

Let us consider examples from the novels by Kaminsky and Cruz Smith.

In Russia, poverty and political instability generate crime. The Russian collapse in the 1990s described by Kaminsky and Cruz Smith is similar to the one described in post-Cold War thrillers. Nothing works properly; life has deteriorated in comparison to the time preceding the reforms: "There was not less crime but more since the reforms,

far more and far more violent" (*Vacation* 30).¹⁰¹ In the 1990s, "hit man" becomes an occupation. The Red Army, once proud and powerful, has ended up as "camps of beggars in Poland" (*Red Square* 270). Sports celebrities who were made redundant when the Soviet sport system stopped needing them, now join the mafia (*Red Square* 74-75). Because of instability, people must buy guns to protect themselves. Kaminsky provides statistics on the number of registered weapons in Moscow: the police estimate that there is "one gun for every three Moscow residents, including babies and *babushkas*" (*The Dog* 6). Alcoholism is on the rise. Before, Russians drank because it was "part of their heritage, and to escape the burdens of Communist rule" now they drink "to escape the chaos of unregulated freedom" with the result that "two hundred fifty thousand Russians die each year from alcohol-related causes" (*The Dog* 32).¹⁰² The medical system is pitiful. Doctors refuse to deliver babies, or do abortions, "because they're afraid of AIDS, and because they don't trust Soviet rubber gloves" (*Red Square* 69). Living standards in Russia are so low that having a private phone line is still "a privilege" (*Vacation* 69); in poorer neighborhoods, private phone lines are rare and there may be only one working payphone. That phone will work only "because the drug dealers use it and would kill anyone who breaks it" (*Blood* 123).

Negative characters in the novels by Kaminsky and Cruz Smith exploit the collapsing system through crime, illegal trade, and corruption. Common Russians are driven to pessimism, despair, alcoholism, or even crime. Many search for a scapegoat, turning to extreme behavior, such as anti-Semitism, racism, and nationalism. For

¹⁰¹ In references, I use "*Blood*" for *Blood and Rubles*, "*Priest*" for *Death of a Russian Priest*, and "*Vacation*" for *Rostnikov's Vacation*.

¹⁰² It is through details like these that popular literature reveals its links to journalism.

instance, pessimism laces the depiction of Father Merhum in *Death of a Russian Priest* (1992) by Kaminsky. Father Merhum¹⁰³ is a popular priest who is supposed to disseminate hope and be a spiritual pillar of the community, yet he has no illusions:

He did not believe the new ... Commonwealth of Independent States, would suddenly bring freedom. He did not believe that the men against whom he had fought for more than half a century would suddenly become tolerant because they wore new hats and waved a flag of red, white, and blue instead of a red flag with a hammer and sickle. Yeltsin had come to power without a party behind him. He and the leaders of the other new nations had no choice but to rely on the old bureaucrats. The people would continue to suffer, with starvation, with the gradual realization that different is not always better, and ultimately, with attacks on their faith. (*Priest 5*)

Father Merhum is no longer a fighter. He is said to have fought against Communist oppression but in the present, which, from his point of view, is not much better than the past, he is a passive pessimist. He complains about the new leaders of the country, but does nothing to amend the situation. Weaker individuals than Father Merhum are driven to despair simply by being unable to cope with basic everyday problems. One of the characters calls the new Russia “a democracy with no cheese” (*Priest 38*). Russia is a country in which waiting in line is “a way of life” (*Priest 33*) and queues are “longer than they had been since after the war” (*Vacation 30*). Galina Panishkoya, an old woman pushed to extreme action after her daughter died, leaves two little girls with no source of financial help. With her job gone, and her health failing, Galina could not afford even

¹⁰³ Father Alexander Mehn (1935-1990), a prominent spiritual leader in the Russian Orthodox Church, is a prototype for this priest. Father Alexander Mehn was brutally murdered on 9 September 1990; the case was widely discussed in Russian media and had a noticeable political resonance. See more on this at <http://www.lebed.com/art2277.htm>.

the morsels, for which people were queuing for hours (*Priest* 19). In despair, she shoots a store manager.

Positive characters in the novels also suffer from shortages, line-ups, poor housing, inefficient medicine, and bad food. Rostnikov and his associates live in cramped, poor dwellings, with modest furnishings. Rostnikov's colleague Elena, for instance, shares a tiny "one-room apartment" with her aunt Anna in an "old one-story plaster-and-wood" building "with a concrete courtyard of concrete benches" (*Priest* 102). It was "constructed as temporary shelter after the war against fascism" forty years ago but nobody has torn it down (*ibid.*). With their miserable salaries, younger police officers can hardly afford having children. Cruz Smith's protagonist, Arkady Renko, lives through hardships too. In *Red Square*, Renko views Moscow as "a cannibalized city, without food, petrol or basic goods" (74). In a dietary clinic that Renko visits, the recommended regime refers to papayas and mangos. Renko says that he "would be willing to queue for seven or eight years for a papaya," something he had never seen in his life. If they give him a potato, he would "probably be happy" (109). He wanders hungry because he has no time to stand in lines and no money to buy food at black market prices.

Everyday difficulties of the 1990s in Russia do not defeat Renko and Rostnikov. Undaunted by their potentially demoralizing circumstances, the protagonists set a moral standard for the rest of Russians. They do not complain about the hardships as "most Russians" do. Rostnikov and his wife adopt the granddaughters of Galina Panishkoya, the woman who shot the store manager in despair. This detail sets Rostnikov and his family apart from the Russian masses. Among other details used to contrast the

protagonists with common Russians is Rostnikov's hobby, plumbing. Plumbing serves as a metaphor for "fixing" the country. In *Blood and Rubles*, Rostnikov says:

The plumbing in this building, like most of the buildings in Moscow, is similar to our government, ... It is rusty and rotten. ... The system is falling apart. It has to be replaced, but the cost is great. Do the new plumbers simply make repairs with plastic tubing? ... Or do they completely replace the entire system as they have promised but which they cannot afford to do? (151)

Rostnikov realizes that the government cannot afford a complete restructuring of the system, yet he formulates expectations without offering a solution to the problem of "rotten" government. Although Rostnikov is unable to fix the problem of the "rotten" government and cannot be held responsible for all the "mess" in the country, he, nonetheless, is a fine example of the right approach to solving problems. Rostnikov justifies his passion for plumbing by claiming that it "always makes sense" because in it, "results are immediate" and "function follows form" (*Vacation* 125). In the context of the literary series, the goodness of this protagonist comes from his ability to refrain from "typically Russian" responses to collapse, such as despair and pessimism.

3. DEALING WITH NATIONALISM

The theme of Russian nationalism is another cultural code used in Anglo-American crime fiction of the 1990s to reveal Russia's otherness. In the novels by Frederick Forsyth, Tom Clancy, and Robert Harris, Russian nostalgia for the past is perceived as threatening restoration of communism or some other totalitarian regime and, therefore, serves as a potential threat for the world. The novels with Russian protagonists analyzed in this chapter also touch upon the themes of nationalism and

nostalgia. Nationalism and neo-fascism are mentioned in Kaminsky's novel *Blood and Rubles*. In the novel, a witness of a street massacre says: "Nazis ... Dozens. Black pants. Brown shirts. Armbands with swastikas. They shot everyone and shouted, 'Heil Zhirinovsky, Heil Hitler.' They put out their hands in a Nazi salute like this, and then they all climbed into their SS armored cars and drove away" (23). A similar scene is depicted in Robert Harris' novel *Archangel*: demonstrators protesting the opening of the archives consist of old communists and younger fascists led by a leader who closely resembles Zhirinovsky.

As in *Politika* by Clancy and *Icon* by Forsyth, common Russians' nostalgia for the Soviet past arises from a sense of insecurity heightened by the collapse in the novels by Cruz Smith and Kaminsky. In *Red Square*, Renko is shocked to see a colleague wearing a nationalist pin on his breast pocket. To Renko's colleague, the new Russia is a corrupt, unjust state; he says: "We stand for the defense of Russia, for the repeal of so-called laws that steal the people's wealth and give it to a narrow group of vultures and money-changers, for a cleansing of society and an end to chaos and anarchy" (74). Because of this desire to help Russia, he decides to participate in a "patriotic" movement to bring the Soviet system back. Renko does not support such patriotism, and is shocked by such manifestations of nationalism. *Red Square* does not depict any other confrontations with nationalism, and this omission creates the impression that Renko is an exception. Indeed, other narratives suggest the same pattern: good Russians are exceptions from the nationalistic masses.

Never supported by positive Russian characters, nationalism is ascribed to those characters that the protagonists distrust, often for reasons other than their nationalistic

beliefs. In *Blood and Rubles*, Sasha Tkach's mother expresses her support for Zhirinovsky, the right-wing leader who became the messiah for the new Russian nationalism. Lydia claims she does not necessarily "agree with Zhirinovsky," but whereas "Yeltsin is a drunk who doesn't know what he's doing" Zhirinovsky "has a point" (144). Lydia is an unsympathetic figure in the Rostnikov series, and her support of nationalist views only adds to the perception that she is a negative character. Furthermore, it is important to note that she is portrayed as an emotionally unbalanced individual and her political views give credence to this idea. As in many Western popular narratives, nationalism, which many Russians consider to be "patriotism," is linked to mental illness. Such a perspective is also typical of other post-Cold War novels. The most dramatic example of a mentally sick Russian nationalist is Stalin's son in the novel *Archangel* by Harris. In the novels with Russian protagonists, the same association is at work. In Cruz Smith's *Red Square*, Renko listens as a Georgian dissident complains about his mother's visit to Munich: "She never forgave me for defecting. ... She has a little letter of remorse for me to sign so I can go home with her. She's so gaga she'd take me right to jail. She's having her lungs looked at while she's here. They should look at her brains" (*Red Square* 205). Such associations, repeated in different Western novels, form part of the cultural memory for the 1990s. Considering that the protagonists in the mysteries by Kaminsky and Cruz Smith project Western view of Russia, such a depiction of Russian nationalism in the 1990s becomes an important means of constructing the image of Russia as the other.

4. ANTI-SEMITISM

Linked with racism is Russian anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism is a prominent topic in many thrillers about Russia. In Cruz Smith's *Red Square*, the black marketeer who gets killed in the opening chapter is Jewish. Jewish as well as overweight, the man became a clear target for sergeants during military service. One night his officers "got together and put him in a coffin filled with human waste and nailed him in for a night. Since then he had a fear of close physical contact with dirt or germs" (*Red Square* 51). In Kaminsky's *Rostnikov's Vacation*, Jews, even a relative of Rostnikov's wife, are "being singled out, beaten, and blamed for the economic change" (*Vacation* 30). Rostnikov's associates encounter rampant anti-Semitism in the course of their investigation, and are repulsed by the consequences of such ideology. Two Russian characters, a man and a woman, in *Rostnikov's Vacation* rob Jews and do not consider it a crime. According to the criminals, they "take" computers "only from Jews" because Jews "are responsible" for all troubles in Russia, for they "started the whole damn Revolution ... and now they're destroying the Revolution with their computers, their conspiracy with Israel" (*Vacation* 173). Such an episode is reminiscent of the "Black Manifesto" fragment, the document written by the ultranationalist leader Komarov in Forsyth's novel *Icon*. Komarov planned severe repressive measures against non-Slavic nations of the Russian Federation, first and foremost Jews and peoples of the Caucasus. The anti-Semites in Kaminsky's novel have similar motivation and sentiments regarding Jews. Similarities in the ways thrillers and mysteries develop the theme of Russian anti-Semitism points to a shared cultural code used by different authors and to the peculiarities of the cultural chronotopes in America and Russia. Nonetheless, while in

the novels by Forsyth and Harris Western heroes fight anti-Semitism embodied by bad Russians, by the heroes' adversaries, in mysteries with Russian protagonists, anti-Semitism is deeply rooted in common Russians. It is a feature of everyday life.

Unlike such characters, "good Russians" either sympathize with Jews or are Jewish themselves. Rostnikov is a Russian who is married to a Jewish woman, and who sincerely loves her and her family. Sarah is depicted compassionately and with sympathy. All her Jewish relatives are talented individuals, including her cousin, Leon Moseyevitch, who is a doctor, and Lev, who is "a successful carpenter" holding "an advanced degree in electrical engineering," and Dmitriova, who is "a medical lab technician at the hospital" (*The Dog* 124). Many of Sarah's relatives have musical talents attributable to their mutual background as "Jews without religion" (*The Dog* 124). That Sarah's Jewish relatives are talented becomes a significant element in creating a value judgment about Russia, for often, Russians in American popular narratives are depicted as drunks rather than as gifted individuals. Russian anti-Semites, whose ugliness is both physical and moral, repulse Rostnikov's colleagues. To Sasha Tkach, the anti-Semite Tamara smells of "cheap makeup, alcohol, and woman," as she holds him like "a prize she [has] captured in the park, her little Jew, the trophy" (*Vacation* 74). Her physical ugliness, her smell, her anti-Semitic ultranationalism, and her vulgarity are combined to construct a negative character that emphasizes her difference from the positive characters.

In interpreting the links between various images deployed by Kaminsky, Walter Benjamin's concept of an aura is useful. By aura Benjamin means the associations which, "at home in the *memoire involontaire*, tend to cluster around the object of a

perception” (Benjamin 188). His understanding of aura comes close to Huysen’s concept of cultural memory. The latter, in the case of American popular narratives of the 1990s about Russia, incorporates images that suggest a rather conservative perception of Russia. It is, perhaps, better to describe the associations that come across in many popular narratives on Russia as traditional, for their foundation is the old Cold-War conflict, a contrast between East and West. These characters are contrasted to Russians who lack professionalism, are pessimistic, nationalist, nostalgic about the old days, and anti-Semitic. They oppose the world, which is full of fragments of the Soviet mentality. In terms of projected values, mysteries that have Russian protagonists are similar to thrillers in which protagonists are British or American. Like the latter, novels about Rostnikov and Renko are remembrance of the Cold War.

5. SLICES OF PIZZA

In a novel from 1991, Rostnikov envies American police who investigate crimes “devoid of politics and ideology” (*Vacation* 161). In his opinion, in America it would be far easier than investigating crimes in Russia (*ibid.*). While investigating a murder of an old colleague in Yalta, he himself finds out that the communist coup was being prepared in Moscow and that Gorbachev’s life was in danger. The end of communism then is welcomed by Rostnikov. Unlike his colleagues, he does not have to go through an existential crisis when the communist system collapses, simply because he has always believed that an individual must rely on his own principles, and must value his family and friends, rather than devote his life to abstractions like Soviet power.

There is a certain crisis in depicting Russia in the post-Cold War novels by Martin Cruz Smith. The most successful novel in the Renko series remains *Gorky Park*, in which Renko lives through a personal drama that is intricately linked to the fundamental problematic of the Cold War. He encounters the brutality of the Soviet system, and his sympathy towards Soviet dissidents make Renko different from other Soviet policemen. He is critical of the Soviet regime in Russia, but at the same time, he remains loyal to his country in the sense that he disassociates Russia from Soviet power and is not tempted to stay in the West when he had a chance. Over the course of the 1990s, however, Renko seems to have lost a sense of what he is fighting for. In *Polar Star*, there is no longer the brutal Soviet system he had opposed in *Gorky Park*. In *Polar Star*, those who had placed Renko at the very bottom of social ladder still need his intelligence, professionalism, and honesty. In *Red Square*, Renko is disillusioned with the new “democratic” Russia; he feels himself an alien everywhere. In *Havana Bay*, Renko’s investigation is completely a personal affair. He flies from Moscow to Cuba to investigate Pribluda’s murder. He pays for his round-trip ticket to Cuba himself which, by Russian standards, is a huge sum of money taking up “half of his savings” (17); he does not send his reports to anyone in Moscow, and none of the Russian authorities in Havana are involved in his investigation.¹⁰⁴ His decision to investigate his former enemy’s death looks bizarre when we learn that Pribluda’s son refused to come to

¹⁰⁴ Renko’s initiative in *Havana Bay* is similar to the initiative of the young Russian woman in Martin Campbell’s *Golden Eye* (1995), a James Bond film. Natalya Fyodorovna Simonova willingly helps Bond find secret Russian weapons hidden in Cuba. The beautiful Russian programmer travels with Bond to Cuba, though, unlike Bond’s previous Russian lovers, she is not a KGB girl, and has no mission to fulfill for her government and country. Whereas Simonova’s actions may be justified by her sudden passion for Bond, Renko’s desire to investigate his former enemy’s death so far from Moscow looks strange. In addition, while the Bond girl in *Golden Eye* is a secondary character, Renko’s role in the plot must be crucial and clearly defined.

Havana on the pretext that he manages a pizzeria, "a major responsibility" (*Havana Bay* 10). Having arrived in Cuba to find out the truth about Pribluda's death, Renko, without doing much about the investigation, tries to commit suicide with an embalming syringe he had stolen from the morgue room. The lack of a clear motivation behind Renko's actions in the end of the 1990s is reminiscent of le Carre's post-Cold War novels in which tired, disillusioned spies cannot making sense of a new political situation.

In the Renko and Rostnikov novels, American values, which popular fiction promoted during the Cold War, are reduced to a kitschy version of the American Dream. The protagonists drift through Russia like tourists, comparing West and East from the point of view of a consumer. It is especially evident in the example of *Red Square* by Martin Cruz Smith.

The action of *Red Square* takes place in Moscow and in Munich. Moscow is shabby, whereas Munich is contrastingly clean. Moscow is in ruins while Germany is efficient. When the action of the novel is transferred to Germany, Renko becomes an agent of contrast. Rich, clean and business-like Munich is contrasted with the poverty and worthlessness of Moscow. Renko asks Irina how she likes Munich. It is a casual question, which, nevertheless, provokes further contrast between the civilized West and uncivilized Russia: "Compared to Moscow, rolling in broken glass is nice. Compared to New York or Paris? It's pleasant, but a little quiet" (183). Comparing Germany and Russia, Arkady notes the advantages of German service. In his hotel everything works: "The lights worked. The refrigerator light went on when Arkady opened the door and there were no cockroach eggs in the corners. Even the closet had a light, and he noticed

when they came into the building that the halls smelled of disinfectant instead of piss”¹⁰⁵ (*Red Square* 173). One immediately envisions a Soviet hotel with cockroach eggs in the fridge, broken lights, and littered, smelly corridors. Russian hotels are not mentioned in the episode but the narrative focus implies a comparison with Russia. Arkady Renko is stunned by the beauty and vigor of the West:

The world seemed to be spinning around him Streets were so clean that they looked plastic. Bikers in shorts and summer tans shared the road without being mangled under the wheels of every passing bus. Windows were glass instead of crusted dirt. There were no queues anywhere. Women in short skirts carried not string bags, but colorful carrier bags emblazoned with the names of shops; in full strides, legs and bags moved with purposeful, integrated rhythm. (*Red Square* 169)

The description of sexy, happy, proud German women carrying purchases in nice bags, is a contrast to the gloomy life Renko observed in Moscow, where women were reduced to creatures lining up endlessly for a blue chicken, “dead of malnutrition” (*Red Square* 9) and carried home in unattractive net bags. In the novels by Smith and Kaminsky, the exception to this rule are Russian women who have experienced the magic touch of the West. They look healthier and more attractive than regular Russian women. Life in the West has made Irina a real beauty; now she wears “cashmere and gold,” which are “a long way from the rags and scarves she used to sport in Moscow”; she even looks and walks differently (*Red Square* 227). She is an independent, gorgeous woman, whose self-made happiness results from her following Western ideology, fashion, diet, and disassociating from everything Russian. In similar fashion, Elena, Rostnikov’s colleague

¹⁰⁵ Kaminsky’s novels focus on the same things when comparing West and East. As a contrast to western efficiency, technology often does not work in Russia. In Kaminsky’s *Blood and Rubles*, Rostnikov, with his bad leg, has to go down six floors down the stairway because the elevator in the police headquarters “is broken again” (*Blood and Rubles* 90).

who was “lucky” enough to study in the United States, stands out among Russian characters, who have never experienced the beneficial impact of the West. Elena is described as “a bit hefty,” but her face is “pleasant, her skin clear, her eyes blue, and her teeth, though a bit large, remarkably even and cleaner looking than most Russians” (*Priest* 37). In *The Dog Who Bit a Policeman*, Elena is once again a privileged person, simply because she once lived in the United States, “had eaten lobster more than once” and can teach her less lucky colleague Sasha how to do it. Sasha patiently “watches Elena proceed” before he begins (148).

In post-Cold War mysteries about Russia, food is an important component of a Russian’s vision of the West. In *Red Square*, Arkady perceives even German buildings through food imagery: “Arkady was looking at walls of Bavarian yellow as smooth as butter, with balconies that had no weepy stains, stucco that was not cracked on bricklines, doors that did not wear graffiti and scars of abuse. In a pastry-shop window marzipan pigs gamboled around chocolate cakes” (169). In Munich, even ducks get plenty of food: Irina tells Renko that people come to the park to feed ducks and swans with pretzels “the size of wheels,” to which Renko replies that if Russian ducks heard about this “lake with pretzels, they [would] come [to it] by the million” (*Red Square*, 307-308). German prosperity is furthermore compared to Russian poverty through evoking the stereotype of Russian laziness. Arkady is told that Munich “was a rubble after the war, worse than Moscow” (171), yet the city became beautiful and rich again. A German, who recognized Arkady as Russian, tells how the Germans “worked forty years” to have their nice beer, food, and life (185). Arkady certainly enjoys German beer, taking “small, reverent sips” because it is “so different from sour, muddy Soviet

beer” (204). In Moscow, according to Russian émigrés in Germany, one gets only “a bad meal” and “bad beer” (222).

In the Rostnikov series, the reader learns that the Russian version of pizza is not comparable to the one sold in Pizza Hut (*Priest* 40), which, as the narrator apparently believes, sells the best pizza in the world: “though few could afford it, pizza had replaced McDonald’s burgers as the new rage in Moscow” (*Priest* 33). The superiority of American food over Russian is illustrated in a scene in which a grandson of a murdered priest, despite the tumult in the village and his own personal loss, asks Inspector Rostnikov (a Moscovite who is more familiar with civilized wonders than a Russian villager) if he has ever eaten “a hamburger at the McDonald’s” (*Priest* 89). Rostnikov replies that he “waited in line with his wife for four hours when it first opened,” but then the lines became shorter because no one but foreigners could afford it (*Priest* 90). Rostnikov himself, however, is among those lucky Russians who have American friends who can take them to such “exquisite” restaurants as Pizza Hut and McDonald’s. Such Russian fascination with American fast-food in Kaminsky’s novels is in contrast with the culinary preferences of Russians from Russian detective novels of the 1990s. Characteristically, the protagonist of Daria Dontsova’s detective series is an amateur detective who drives a Volvo, buys clothes in Paris boutiques and can afford to dine in any restaurant in Moscow she wants. Yet, Dontsova’s protagonist likes going to McDonald’s occasionally to “chew on a horrible hamburger” while thinking about a crime she is investigating. However, unlike Rostnikov and his team deeming Pizza Hut slices and hamburgers heavenly food, Daria is ashamed about her weakness for

McDonald's. Because of her liking American fast-food, her children accuse her of lack of class.

While in Alexandra Marinina's mysteries investigators prefer to celebrate their holidays in restaurants specializing in European cuisine, in *Blood and Rubles*, the good Russians celebrate the end of the investigation at a Pizza Hut. They eagerly anticipate getting a slice, as if it were manna from heaven. The description of how much they like pizza, and how quickly and passionately they consume it, goes on for several pages and may pass for a script of a somewhat cheesy commercial for Pizza Hut. The girls, whom Rostnikov and his wife look after, chew "on crusts and [nudge] each other. At the end of the table Elena and Iosef [consume] the last of their pizza and [talk] quietly. Sarah suggests saving a piece for Anna Timofeyeva, while Rostnikov [hopes] there [will] be enough to bring a free American pizza to Tkach's family" (*Blood* 252). Rostnikov buys two more pizzas and a Pepsi, using his coupons. Everyone is happy when Hamilton, an American detective and Rostnikov's friend, orders a pizza for Tkach's family, "compliments of the United States government" (*Blood* 252). Russians are glad to have a slice of happiness from "another planet" (*Blood* 253), as Rostnikov's wife Sarah describes America. The novel's end suggests that the way out of the crisis for Russia is to incorporate as much of Western living as possible. The protagonists of the 1990s are role models of how Russians may become more civilized and acceptable to the rest of the world.

Part 2

RE-WRITING RUSSIA: RUSSIAN CRIME FICTION OF THE 1990s

Crime fiction, in its traditional form, is based on the conflict between good and evil, on the conflict that arises when some sort of established order, whether moral, social, political, or a combination of all three, is violated or threatened; a crime novel then depicts the restoration of order thanks to the work of a hero who may be a private detective, a state-employed investigator, an intelligence officer, a journalist, etc. This dissertation is an exploration of Anglo-American and Russian crime fiction about Russia from the 1990s, the period during which the established notions of good and evil, the familiar treatment of Russia were challenged due to the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union. Both events are linked to the collapse of communist ideology, the collapse that led to the crisis of the Cold War vision of Russia in the West and to the identity crisis in Russia. In the first part of this thesis, “The Cold War in Twilight,” I showed how the genres of Anglo-American crime fiction – spy novels, thrillers, and mysteries about Russia – changed in the 1990s in response to the end of the Cold War.

Before proceeding further, it is worthwhile recollecting once again what Mikhail Gorbachev said in 1987 about *perestroika* and the Soviet-American relations. To repeat, *perestroika* was to be “an ideological catastrophe” for the West because it would “frustrate the chances of using the ‘Soviet threat’ bugbear, of shadowing the real image” of Russia “with a grotesque and ugly ‘enemy image’” (qtd. in Riebling 410). Georgi

Arbatov, Gorbachev's political adviser, sharpened this argument by promising American journalists,

We are going to do something terrible to you. We are going to take away your enemy. The 'image of the enemy' that is being eroded has been absolutely vital for the foreign and military policy of the United States and its allies. The destruction of this stereotype is Gorbachev's secret weapon. (qtd. in Riebling 410)

The warnings that Gorbachev and Arbatov made in 1987 are full of optimistic romanticism typical of early stages of *perestroika*. The Russians indeed took away America's enemy and, regardless of whether this act involved "terrible" consequences for American policy, the disappearance of the Soviet Union as the United States' adversary brought changes in the genres of popular fiction that had depicted Russia as America's chief enemy for several decades. Thinking about these words of Gorbachev and Arbatov in conjunction with the development of Russian crime fiction in the 1990s, I find that the most fascinating, if also hopelessly naïve and romantic part of the Soviet leaders' position is their certainty about the "real image" of Russia as opposed to its "grotesque" and "ugly" stereotype. The subsequent history of the Soviet Union also did something "terrible" to the "real image" of Russia. Sweeping out of control, *perestroika* destroyed not only the image of Russia as the United States' enemy, it blurred the "real" image of Russia while stirring up the images that had long been in the background or underneath that image in whose "reality" Gorbachev and Arbatov so sincerely believed.

Attempts to reconcile different images of Russia with each other, to establish or re-establish a canonical image of Russia, became the defining element of the Russian cultural life in the 1990s and influenced the development of Russian crime fiction. In

fact, due to its fundamental qualities such as its preoccupation with truth, order, and the violation of order, the detective genre turned out to provide suitable lenses for looking at Russia, at its past and present. The “real” image of Russia became a contested territory in Russian popular culture of the 1990s. The “true” image of Russia perceived as lost or violated, was restored in many different ways in Russian crime novels of the 1990s. In the three chapters of this part of the thesis, I explore responses to the demise of the Soviet Union and the Russian identity crisis in the example of the hard-boiled detective fiction, mysteries, and the historical detective novel. The first chapter in this part, “Tough Guys in Rough Times: Literature of the *Bespredel*” is a study of *krutye detektivy* by Andrei Konstantinov. The following chapter, “A Little Nostalgia” is a discussion of Alexandra Marinina’s mysteries, and the last chapter of the thesis, “The Country Resembling Russia” is about the use of Russian imperial history in detective novels by Boris Akunin.

Chapter 4

TOUGH GUYS IN ROUGH TIMES: LITERATURE OF THE *BESPREDEL*

1. RUSSIAN CRIME FICTION AND THE *BESPREDEL*

The post-Soviet detective boom began with the action thriller described in Russian by the word *boevik* and the hard-boiled detective novel referred to in Russian as *krutoi detektiv*. In this chapter, I explore some of the responses to Russia's past and present offered within the genre of *krutoi detektiv*.¹⁰⁶ The root of the Russian term *boevik* is "boi" – meaning battle or fight. *Boevik* is a story that depicts the hero's struggle against evil and includes numerous scenes of fighting.¹⁰⁷ The expression *krutoi detektiv* is the direct translation of the English term "hard-boiled" detective fiction. The term "hard-boiled" was applied to American detective stories of the 1930s that described behavior that was terse, unfeeling, unsentimental, practical, withholding, tough, and even callous. The term was associated with a hard-boiled egg, possibly via the term "yegg" used to describe members of the American underworld in the early twentieth

¹⁰⁶ I am deeply thankful to Jeremy Dwyer (Monash University) for his insightful comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

¹⁰⁷ The word *boevik* also means "a fighter," or "a soldier" employed by the army, as in the expression "chechenskie boeviki." Besides the meanings, *boevik* has also used to designate "a hit film," "a best-selling novel," a successful theatre production since, approximately, the 1930s. See: *Tolkovyi slovar' russkogo iazyka*, ed. D. N. Ushakov, vol. 1 (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1935) 163; Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) xvi. In "Plodotvornaia diskussiia: O plenumе Soveta Vserossiiskogo teatral'nogo obshchestva" [A Fruitful discussion: About a Meeting of the All-Russian Council of Theatre Society] published in *Teatr* (No. 3, 1957, 96), the term "*boevik*" "was applied to successful Western detective plays by Agatha Christie. According to Jeremy Dwyer, the association of the word *boevik* "with the *detektiv* sub-genre seems to have started in the 1970s, when Russian translations of Western writing rendered the English term "thriller" as "*boevik*" (Dwyer, personal correspondence).

century.¹⁰⁸ The American hard-boiled detective novel emerged in response to the realities of the Great Depression. Dashiell Hammett, Ross McDonald, and Raymond Chandler were among the most prominent writers of the genre. These authors broke with the British tradition of treating the detective story as a “crossword puzzle,” and instead took inspiration from the American frontier adventure novel (Benvenuti and Rizzoni 100).

Krutoi detektiv and *boevik* of the 1990s drew heavily on the Western tradition of the hard-boiled detective novel and action thriller. Because of the asymmetrical development of crime fiction in Russia and in the West, Soviet detective writers began producing hard-boiled detective novels and action thrillers during Gorbachev’s policy of *perestroika*, which first loosened then abolished censorship in 1989. In Dwyer’s opinion, the first Russian *krutoi detektiv* novels were Georgii Vainer and Leonid Slovin’s *Na temnoi storone Luny* [On the Dark Side of the Moon] (1988), or Leonid Slovin’s *Bronirovannye zhiletty* [Bullet-Proof Vests] (1991).¹⁰⁹ In his article “Crimes of Substitution: Detection in Late Soviet Society,” Serguei Oushakine explains that limiting the ways in which crime could be depicted in the USSR,¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ The American Heritage Dictionary defines “yegg” as a slang word for “a thief, especially a burglar or safecracker.” According to the OED, “yegg” is “said to be the surname of a certain American burglar and safe-breaker,” possibly “John Yegg.” The terms “yegg” and “yeggman” were cited in a 1903 issue of the *New York Evening Post* and in other newspapers of the beginning of the twentieth century (e.g., see an article from a 1918 newspaper: <http://dbs.ohiohistory.org/africanam/page1.cfm?ItemID=7913>).

¹⁰⁹ Personal correspondence. Some would describe Arkadii and Georgii Vainer’s *Era Miloserdiia* [The Era of Mercy] (1976) and Anatolii Bezuglov and Iurii Klarov’s *Pokushenie* [Assault] (1973) as hard-boiled novels.

¹¹⁰ Oushakine quotes T. Goriaeva, *Istoriia sovetskoi politicheskoi tsenzury: Dokumenty i kommentarii* [History of Soviet political censorship: Documents and commentaries] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1997) 206–207.

[W]as accompanied in the Soviet Union by an incredible success of pop[ular] science fiction. As recently disclosed archival materials show, the promotion of *fantastika* was conceived by Soviet authorities as a direct opposition to the (reality-oriented) *detektiv*. A classified decision of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, "About Publishing Foreign Detective Literature" (10 March 1975), along with the usual demands to 'increase the standards of publications' in order to exclude the 'appearance of ideologically alien and artistically poor (*malokhudozhestvennyh*) products,' recommended that 'the Union of Soviet Writers editorial boards of journals . . . pay special attention to the creation of literary works of Soviet adventure and science fiction genres able to demonstrate high ideological standards (*vysokoideinye*) and artistic maturity.' (2003: 433)

Soviet writers of detective fiction had to comply with the ideological and stylistic requirements imposed by a socialist society that aspired to eradicate crime altogether. Crime depicted in the Soviet *detektiv* genre was necessarily an exception from the rule, something that could not belong in the otherwise healthy community. Crime was perceived as a legacy of the unfair social system, and since the socialist system was "fair," it was expected crime would gradually diminish. Discussing espionage novels and mysteries by Yulian Semenov, Walter Laqueur argues that his books "are well written and yet psychologically unconvincing: the question of why there should be a criminal underground in Soviet society is never squarely answered" (215). Indeed, Soviet detective fiction that "was heavily dressed up in ideological clothing" (Oushakine 2003: 429) was not free to address why there were still criminals in the "developed socialist society."¹¹¹ Social norms, virtues, and violations of these norms described in detective novels had to be approved by censors. Instead, Soviet *detektiv* promoted socialist ideals,

¹¹¹ In March 1971 in his address to the Twenty-Fourth Congress of the CPSU, Leonid Brezhnev announced that the USSR had entered the stage of "developed socialism" and that the "developed socialist society" had been built in the Soviet Union. The term was used to describe the Soviet Union in official sources until approximately 1986-1987.

glorified Soviet militia and the KGB, and refrained from giving “bad examples” to Soviet people while describing crime. Violence was also largely banned from being shown on television and from being depicted in fiction. Given the priorities of the Soviet detective genre, it is not surprising that censorship played a role in defining the content of domestic detective fiction as well as what Western crime fiction to translate. The majority of espionage novels could not be translated for political reasons.¹¹² Translations of Western hard-boiled detective fiction generated debate among Soviet critics. Literary journals such as *Neman*, *Iunost'*, *Ural*, *Inostrannaia literatura*, *Don*, *Literaturnyi Azerbaidzhan*, *Nash sovremennik*, *Prostor*, *Podiem*, and *Zvezda Vostoka* published translated hard-boiled detective novels by Charles Snow, James Hedley Chase, Rex Stout, Charles Bailey, Cyril Hare, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, and other authors. In the 1960s and 1970s, journals often published a few *perevodnye detektivy* at the beginning of each year to draw subscriptions. The guards of Soviet ideology described this unhealthy tendency to publish Western detective fiction as “a mysterious epidemic that hit many ‘thick’ journals” (Kuznetsov 4). However, journal editors argued that the translation of Western detective fiction was necessary because it exposed the corrupt bourgeois society.

In 1975, a Soviet critic G. Andzhaparidze wrote with indignation,

¹¹² It is not accidental that in the act of committing suicide one of the characters in Alexandr Zeldovich's film *Moskva* (2002) takes with him on the trampoline a suitcase full of English Cold War spy novels. They are a symbol of the past in which the hero felt himself needed. The novels, which he secretly collected and read during the Soviet period as a form of protest against the regime, have lost their meaning in the new Russia. By taking them on his last “ride,” the hero indicates he too feels like a fragment of the past no longer needed in the new Russia. I first paid attention to this episode thanks to a talk by Yevgeny Pavlov “Puppets and Angels in Aleksandr Zel'dovich's *Moskva*” (AATSEEL Convention, New York, 29 December 2002).

Such detective novels¹¹³ do not criticize capitalist society (and it is precisely “the critique” that is used as the main argument by those who are in favor of publishing such literature). On the contrary, the majority of authors of such novels that guard the values of this society attempt to gloss over social contradictions by pretending to go beyond them onto a level of universal values. (1975: 5)

A. Kuznetsov calls the translation ‘epidemic’ a “cunning” practice: “When they [journal editors] do not have quality material, they resort to the detective genre... and a journal issue falls prey to this chase for success” (4). Although Andzhaparidze recognized the educational and social values of fiction by authors such as Rex Stout and Adam Hall, he called “average” novels often published in Soviet “thick” journals a propaganda of “the cult of power” (1975: 5), “dolce vita” (1971: 13), and individualism; he exposed heroes of such novels as “rascals” driven by greed (1975: 4-5). In the opinion of Kuznetsov and Andzhaparidze, much of Western detective fiction published in “thick” journals was ideologically unsuitable in Soviet society.

While Soviet critics of the 1960s and 1970s were outraged that some journals dared to publish as many as three detective novels in nine months or even half a year (Andzhaparidze 1971: 13), with *perestroika* and then the abolition of censorship, crime fiction soon accounted for the greatest percentage of translated Western popular literature flooding the Russian book market. Novels by Edward McBain, Rex Stout, Dashiell Hammett, Ross McDonald, Ian Fleming, and other authors covered *lotki*, stalls at makeshift outdoor book markets.¹¹⁴ The most popular detective author of the period was James Hedley Chase, a British writer who set most of his stories in the United

¹¹³ In particular, Andzhaparidze criticized detective stories by Boileau and Narcejac.

¹¹⁴ Many American action thrillers were shown in cinema theatres and on television. The Russian viewer was fascinated and soon appalled by the sheer novelty of violence portrayed in these films.

States. Ironically, Chase, who had visited the United States only twice and briefly, became for Russians an authority on America and a blueprint of the hard-boiled detective novel.¹¹⁵

During the translation boom of detective novels in the late 1980s and early 1990s, domestic authors began to explore the detective genre anew. Roman Arbitman argues that Russian authors began publishing their detective stories because the publishers ran out of detective novels they could safely translate into Russian (201). These novels were ones written before 1973 when Russia finally joined the copyright convention. Although this may have contributed to the genesis of Russian hard-boiled fiction, it is certainly not the only explanation for the Russian detective boom of the 1990s. Within a few years, domestic authors were writing most of the detective novels available on the Russian book market.¹¹⁶ The change was so dramatic that once passing a make-shift outdoor book market in the mid-1990s, I caught myself thinking that the surface of *lotki* was so clearly divided between detective novels that were mostly written by domestic authors and romance novels that were almost exclusively of American origin.¹¹⁷ It seemed that the Russian reader viewed his own country as a perfect setting for crime and preferred to read about romance happening in the dream-like United States.

¹¹⁵ Many of Chase's Russian readers were convinced the author was an American.

¹¹⁶ In the article "Na podstupakh k 'Zolotomu pistoletu'," O. Vronskaia quotes statistics of the *Assotsiatsiia massovoi literatury* (Mass Literature Association) according to which in the early 1990s foreign works comprised some 70-80% of all detective fiction being published in Russia. By 1998, however, translated detective novels accounted only 20-30%. See O. Vronskaia, "Na podstupakh k 'Zolotomu pistoletu'" [Grabbing a 'Golden Gun'], *Literaturnaia gazeta* 22 July 1998: 13.

¹¹⁷ Most romance novels currently available on the Russian book market are still translations from English or written by Russian authors who use English or French pen-names.

Russia's readiness to embrace the hard-boiled tradition may have occurred because Russian authors were as eager to confront the harsh conditions of Russian life in the early 1990s, as American authors of the late 1920s and 1930s felt compelled to tackle the gangsters, political corruption, and financial piracy of the Great Depression. In a Prefatory Note to *The Simple Art of Murder*, Raymond Chandler explains that hard-boiled detective novels generated "the smell of fear," describing "a world gone wrong" in which "the law was something to be manipulated for profit and power" and in which "the streets were dark with something more than night" (3). The general atmosphere of America's "mean streets" described in hard-boiled detective fiction resembled early 1990s Russia when, as Stephen Handelman wrote, reports of criminal violence in the media resembled "news from a war front" (3). Raymond Chandler explains that

[T]he realist in murder writes of a world in which gangsters can rule nations and almost rule cities, in which hotels and apartment houses and celebrated restaurants are owned by men who made their money out of brothels, in which a screen star can be the finger man for a mob, and the nice man down the hall is boss of the numbers racket. A world where a judge with a cellar full of bootleg liquor can send a man to jail for having a pint in his pocket. Where the mayor of your town may have condoned murder as an instrument of money making. Where no man can walk down a dark street in safety because law and order are things we talk about but refrain from practicing. It is not a fragrant world, but it is the world you live in. (19-20)

Chandler describes corrupt authorities, criminals holding power in the cities and in the country, a corrupt justice system, and hypocritical authority figures who would not enforce the law and could not guarantee the safety of regular citizens. This, too, was life in Russia in the early 1990s. From approximately 1990 to 1994-1995, chaos, gangsters, the rise of the Mafia, anarchy, corruption, and the state's inability to enforce law were all

perceived as facets of *bespredel*. The word means literally “without limits” and can be rendered in English as lawlessness or, as Anthony Olcott proposes to translate it – “absolute license” (4). In the media, news about democratic changes and economic reforms in Russia was mixed with reports about corruption, opportunism, and illegal trade in narcotics, arms, and nuclear material. The government was plagued by political scandal and helpless to stop corruption. There were even territorial battles between mobsters in the streets of Russian cities, much like the “Chicago-style gangland assassinations” of the 1920s (Handelman 3). The general impression was that Russia was in chaos. Pessimists suggested the Mafia and corrupt government officials were working “in league to create not so much a new market economy but actually a new criminal state” (Voronin 53).¹¹⁸ The situation was so alarming that in January 1993 Boris Yeltsin announced a “full head-on assault on crime, bribery, and corruption.”¹¹⁹ In the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, in response to growing crime select Soviet police and army divisions were transformed into the OMON (*Otriad militsii osobogo naznacheniiia*), also known as the Black Berets; the FSB (*Federal'naia sluzhba bezopasnosti*), a successor of the KGB; the SVR (*Sluzhba vneshnei razvedki*), which incorporated new *Spetsnaz* units

¹¹⁸ Most Western studies of Russian organized crime and corruption that project a gloomy picture of the changes in Russia were published in the second half of the 1990s or even more recently. Among these are: Stephen Handelman, *Comrade Criminal: The Theft of the Second Russian Revolution* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994); Matthew Brzezinski, *Casino Moscow: A Tale of Greed and Adventure on Capitalism's Wildest Frontier* (New York: Free Press, 2001); Chrystia Freeland, *Sale of the Century: Russia's Wild Ride from Communism to Capitalism* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2000); Federico Varese, *The Russian Mafia: Private Protection in a New Market Economy* (Oxford, England; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Ironically, in the early 1990s most Western studies on Russia were celebratory of democratic reforms and encouraged Russians to look at the difficulties as temporary. In the second half of the 1990s, when inside Russia *bespredel* was already on the decline, the Russian anxiety about the rise of corruption and the Mafia in the 1990s became the focus of popular and academic discussion in the West.

¹¹⁹ Yeltsin quoted by Reuters, 19 January 1993.

(Special purpose units) such as the anti-terrorist units *Al'fa* and *Vympel*. Russian anxiety about *bespredel* laid the groundwork for the development of *boevik* and *krutoi detektiv*.

Krutoi detektiv and *boevik* draw on the same or similar sources in Russian culture and popular culture abroad. They also share some common social background; they offer a panoramic picture of social life, often select their heroes from the same milieu, and promote similar perceptions of right and wrong. Despite these similarities, however, *krutoi detektiv* and *boevik* are not one genre of crime fiction. *Krutoi detektiv* focuses on a person or a group of people conducting criminal investigations; a *boevik* hero is more an assassin than an investigator. He may perform special missions assigned to him by state intelligence services or the army, or alternatively he may fight against corrupt army officials or traitors in the state secret services. In any case, his enemies are defined early in the story. The novel depicts the methods the hero uses to achieve his ultimate goal, and chronicles his adventures along the way. In the 1990s, the most popular author working in the *boevik* genre was Viktor Dotsenkō. In her article "Markets, Mirrors, and Mayhem: Alexandra Marinina and the Rise of the New Russian *Detektiv*," Catharine Nepomnyashchy writes that Viktor Dotsenko's *boeviki* were the most popular series until approximately 1993-1994 (188). By now, Dotsenko had sold more than fifteen million copies of his stories about the adventures of an Afghan veteran named Beshenyi.¹²⁰ Friedrich Neznanskii, Daniil Koretskii, Nikolai Leonov, Andrei Konstantinov, and Andrei Kivinov were the most prominent writers of the *krutoi detektiv* genre in the 1990s. Each sold several million copies.

¹²⁰ See statistics on the Vagrius publisher's web site:
<<http://www.vagrius.com/books/records!.shtml>> accessed 25 July 2003.

The supermen heroes of *krutoi detektiv* and *boevik* are a kind of protagonist previously unknown in Russia. Hard-boiled detective and thriller heroes are physically apt, charming, smart, brave, adventurous, and often solitary fighters, who resemble heroes of the American hard-boiled and action thriller tradition. In recent criticism, Beshenyi and some heroes of *krutye detektivy* have been compared to John Rambo, the hero of a 1980s American film series.¹²¹ Nepomnyashchy quotes an interview with Dotsenko in which he admits that at the beginning he “consciously supported” the comparison of Beshenyi with Rambo: “If you explain at length that he is a former ‘afganets,’ that he battles with the Mafia, with traitors – workers for the security forces and law officers, etc., it comes out long and monotonous,” he said, “but when you say the ‘Russian Rambo,’ it immediately becomes clear to everyone, moreover in all countries” (187). In her analysis of Vsevolod Plotkin’s film *Chtoby Perezhit* [In order to Survive] (1993), Lynne Attwood notes that one fight depicted in the film takes place “with a poster of Rambo in the background,” a detail that “serves not only to evoke a real war – Vietnam – but also to suggest that men are themselves fighting machines,” like Rambo (517). According to Arbitman, Russian Rambo is nothing more than a copy of John Rambo grown artificially in “a writer’s tube out of a regular restaurant knocker” (204). Eliot Borenstein characterizes Russian thriller heroes as a “shameless replica” of the American Rambo, for, like Rambo, Russian heroes “find their country’s refusal to pursue the war to a final victory a betrayal,” and like Rambo, they appeal to the reader

¹²¹ Ted Kotcheff based his movie *First Blood* (1982) on the 1972 novel by David Morrell. Goerge P. Cosmatos released *First Blood* (Part 2) in 1985. Finally, *Rambo III* directed by Peter MacDonald came out in 1988. The films were released in Russia during the last years of *perestroika*.

because of their “unbelievable endurance and overwhelming physical strength.”¹²² Indeed, Rambo movies were blockbusters in Russian movie theatres in the late 1980s and early 1990s. They, as well as other American action movies that began to appear on Russian television and in cinema theatres in abundance following *perestroika*, were a source of inspiration for authors of *boeviki* and *krutye detektivy*. Like Rambo, a Vietnam War veteran who feels disillusioned and lonely upon his return to America, Russian heroes are typically disillusioned veterans of either Afghan or Chechen wars, or former officers forced to leave the army during the cuts that followed the Russian-American bilateral agreements of 1988 to 1991.¹²³ Besides Dotsenko, other Russian authors emphasized the similarity between their own characters and the supermen of American action movies and novels. One novel by a lesser-known Russian *boevik* writer, Alexander Zviagintsev, is titled *Russian Rambo*, explicitly comparing John Rambo and his character, a Russian officer fighting in Afghanistan.

Although Western influences played an important role in the development of the *boevik* and *krutoi detektiv* genres, it would be wrong to view these genres only as mimicry of Western fiction. Recent *boeviki* and *krutye detektivy*, for instance, tend not to use a Rambo-type character. After Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000, some *boeviki* (e.g., Andrei Maliukov’s television series *Spetsnaz* (2002)) have begun to depict the war in Chechnya not from a viewpoint of a hurt, disillusioned soldier, but rather from the perspective of a Russian patriot fighting in a “war on terrorism.” Similarly, such *krutye*

¹²² Eliot Borenstein, “Mad Dogs and Businessmen: Masculinity and the National Idea in the Contemporary *Boevik*,” a presentation at 1999 AAASS Convention. Denver, Co., 19 November 1999.

¹²³ The Russian Army was reduced by approximately three million people in five to six years following agreements and treaties signed as part of SART I and START II initiatives and other unilateral and bilateral agreements signed in the late 1980s and during the 1990s.

detektivny series as Russkoe-Video's *Menty-3* and *Menty-4* (2000-2002) based on the novels of Andrei Kivinov are different from the original *Menty* (1997-1999); in their airbrushed portrayal of the Russian police, they have started to resemble Soviet *detektivny*. Such changes in *boeviki* and *krutye detektivny* suggest that their genesis must be seen in relation to the Russian cultural chronotope, the decline of certain genres, and the development of familiar themes in new genres of popular culture. To grasp the differences between Rambo and the Russian characters of *boeviki* and *krutye detektivny*, and to understand why the Rambo-type character was relevant in the 1990s in Russia, one must compare Russian imitations with their Western models in a wider historical context.

The Russian characters act in the post-Soviet environment of *bespredel* with its lack of social and, to a large extent, moral orientation. Unlike Rambo who could not fit into "normal" American life, heroes of Russian *boeviki* of the 1990s act in a situation where social, cultural, and ethical "norms" have been disrupted and one has yet to define what is good and what is evil, what is normal and what violates the norm. While Rambo says he wants his country to "love him" as much as he "loves it," there is no Russia for Russian protagonists of the 1990s to love. One has to re-create Russia from the remnants of the Soviet Union and old, pre-revolutionary, Russia and come to terms with a politically, economically, territorially, and culturally new country. The very concept of Motherland, to which leaders frequently appealed throughout Russia's Soviet and imperial history, was seriously questioned after the demise of the Soviet Union.¹²⁴ As I

¹²⁴ In the landscape of Russian literary and film genres, uncertainty about the concept of Motherland and patriotism was immediately reflected in the temporary decline in literature and films about the Great Fatherland War during *perestroika* and in the 1990s; the genres that had been traditionally used to explore

pointed out in the prefatory note to the second part of the dissertation, genres of crime fiction of the 1990s contest the meanings of good and evil in the new Russia, as well as Russia's past and present. The collapse of collectively shared understanding of what is good and evil shakes the fundamental assumptions of the detective genre.

In the sections to follow, I explore the genre of *krutoi detektiv* primarily by examining the novels of Andrei Konstantinov, a St. Petersburg author who combines journalism and writing fiction.¹²⁵ To date, he has sold more than ten million copies of his books.¹²⁶ His novels are translated into Finnish and Swedish. In May 2000, NTV ran Vladimir Bortko's television serial *Banditskii Peterburg* [Bandit Petersburg] based on Konstantinov's novels *Advokat* [The Defense Lawyer], *Sudia (Advokat-2)* [The Judge (The Defense Lawyer-2)], *Zhurnalist* [The Journalist], and *Zhurnalist-2* [The Journalist-2]. The show was later run on other channels in Russia and some other former Soviet republics.

Konstantinov's first book, *The Criminal World of Russia* (1992), co-authored by Malcolm Dickseilius was a documentary commissioned by Swedish publishers. In 1994 the book appeared in Russian translation, its Swedish reprint followed, and in 1998 a new version of the book called *Russian Mafioso* appeared in Sweden. In 1997 Konstantinov and Dickseilius published a new book, *Bandit Russia*. Konstantinov's other documentary projects include *Bandit Petersburg* (started in 1992), *Corrupt Petersburg*,

the theme of patriotism. Instead, the issues of Russian patriotism were avidly discussed by different political parties: patriotism like history became a contested "territory" in political struggle.

¹²⁵ Konstantinov's real name is Bakonin. Since his first wife, Marianna Bakonina, is a well-known journalist who also writes detective thrillers, he decided to use his mother's maiden name Konstantinov as his pen-name.

¹²⁶ Konstantinov's official web-site: <<http://www.akonstantinov.spb.ru/qa.htm>> last accessed 25 July 2003.

Corrupt Petersburg 2, and *Swindlers' Petersburg* (2000). Simultaneously, Konstantinov wrote fiction. *The Defense Lawyer*, *The Journalist*, and *The Writer* were published in 1995 and 1996 and form a trilogy about the life of a military translator and later journalist, Andrei Obnorskii, who fights the Mafia in St. Petersburg. The prototype for Obnorskii is Konstantinov himself, who after graduating from the Department of Oriental Languages in St. Petersburg University, spent some time in the Middle East as a military translator and worked as a journalist upon his return to Russia. In 1996, Konstantinov organized the first department of journalist investigations at the newspaper *Shans* [Chance] and, in 1998, became the director of an independent agency of Journalist Investigations, *Zolotaia pulia* [Golden Bullet]. His latest novels, several of which are co-authored by Alexander Novikov, are reportedly based on facts that Konstantinov obtained from the Agency of Journalist Investigations.

2. THE TRUTH ABOUT RUSSIA

In a preface to the novel *The Journalist*, Konstantinov claims he wants to “tell the truth” about the life of military translators in the Middle East in the late 1980s and early 1990s (3). In his preface to the 1995 edition of *The Defense Lawyer* and *The Judge*, Konstantinov says he took much of the material for the novel directly from life; however, he warns readers against making direct associations between the characters and real people. By insisting on the documentary nature of his depictions, Konstantinov aims not simply to entertain the reader but also to inform and help her “assess the situation correctly” and act accordingly (*Bandit Petersburg* 5). Konstantinov considers his novels

to be a search for truth that facilitates the struggle for order in post-Soviet Russia. The “truthful” depiction of Russia has become a motif in *krutye detektivy*.

In his article “Telling the Real Story: Interpretation of Contemporary Events in Viktor Dotsenko’s *Superboeviki*,” Jeremy Dwyer considers *dokumental’nost’* of *boeviki* and *krutye detektivy* as a camouflage for “the new Russian extremism and nationalist ideology” (224). Dwyer argues that Dotsenko “constructs a highly patriotic and anti-Western version of contemporary history” (ibid.). The argument about nationalism as underpinning ideology of many Russian thrillers in the 1990s has been recently made in a number of papers and conference presentations. The critics are right in looking beyond the Russian writers’ claims about *dokumental’nost’* of their depictions. Scholars such as Terry Eagleton, Tzvetan Todorov, Fredric Jameson, and Mikhail Bakhtin, whose work has provided a theoretical framework of this dissertation, argued that a text is a construct of reality, not its impartial imitation and reflection. Even if a text “maintains empirical historical accuracy,” its treatment of history is still “fictive” (Eagleton 70). Eagleton writes, “The ‘truth’ of the text is not an essence but a practice – the practice of its relation to ideology, and in terms of that to history” (98). According to Todorov, “novels do not imitate reality, they create it; ... only the perspective of construction allows us to understand thoroughly how the so-called representative text functions” (1988: 405).¹²⁷ Ideology of nationalism may be one aspect of social life that informs *boeviki* and *krutye detektivy*. However, since a literary text is a complex construct in which many factors are reflected, refracted, and transformed aesthetically, a look at *boeviki* and *krutye*

¹²⁷ In *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (1971), Jameson following theories of Georg Lukács, T.W. Adorno, and Ernst Bloch, considers, among other things, “a relationship between the artistic construct and the underlying realities of social life itself” (307).

detektivy from a comparative perspective may reveal additional aspects in emphasizing *dokumental'nost'* of contemporary Russian hard-boiled fiction. The Russian authors' preoccupation with telling the truth about the life of their characters is reminiscent of American authors of post-Cold War thrillers and mysteries about Russia, such as *Politika* by Tom Clancy and *Archangel* by Robert Harris, which also use "documentary" materials and statistics to describe Russia of the 1990s. It is noteworthy that Clancy, Harris, and Forsyth deploy verisimilitude to make an argument about Russian nationalism in the 1990s. Whether their own depictions of Russia express nationalist views typical of the United States and Britain is an open question. From a comparative perspective, the fact that 'truthfulness' is important for British, American, and Russian authors appears to point to a significant characteristic of the thriller genre and the hard-boiled detective genre. The use of documentary material stems from an author's desire to make present-day Russia more tangible and "real" for readers curious or even anxious about Russian identity. Without subscribing to and without discarding the argument about nationalism in *boeviki* and *krutye detektivy*, I intend to show in this section that Konstantinov's preoccupation with truthfulness is linked to the collapse of communist ideology, *glasnost'*, the reconsideration and decline of the Soviet detective genre, and anxiety about *bespredel*. At the beginning of the 1990s and in the mid-1990s, *bespredel* with its ideological vacuum and contested ideologies was probably more important in shaping the detective genre than nationalism.¹²⁸ I will show how these factors define the structure of Konstantinov's novels *The Defense Lawyer* and *The Judge*.

¹²⁸ I would argue that nationalism has become a more prominent ideology in recent Russian film and detective fiction. Moreover, nationalism has been more important with some detective writers and filmmakers (e.g., Viktor Dotsenko and Alexei Balabanov) than with others (e.g., Alexandr Rogozhkin).

The protagonist of *The Defense Lawyer* and *The Judge* is Sergei Chelishchev, an investigator in the prosecutor's office who gradually changes from a law-abiding citizen and defender of the state to a criminal. When he learns his colleagues will not investigate his parents' murder, Chelishchev decides to investigate on his own. He leaves the prosecutor's office and becomes a defense lawyer.¹²⁹ He soon runs into his old university friends Oleg Zvantsev and his wife Katya. While Oleg is in jail, Chelishchev agrees to take over his gang, which is part of the criminal empire of Viktor Pavlovich Govorov, the Godfather of St. Petersburg Mafia otherwise known as Antibiotik. Chelishchev learns that Antibiotik organized the murder of his parents. Realizing that St. Petersburg police and the city's prosecutor are agents of Antibiotik, Chelishchev sends materials capable of destroying the Mafia to Russia's chief prosecutor in Moscow. However, the package accidentally falls into the hands of corrupt police officers in St. Petersburg. Chelishchev and Oleg are killed, and although the investigation is completed, evil triumphs, and justice is never served. The reader is expected to sympathize with Konstantinov's tragic characters who are forced to violate the law by unfortunate circumstances and whose deaths bring no catharsis.

Konstantinov's critique of Soviet and post-Soviet Russia is meant to highlight the 'truthfulness' of *The Defense Lawyer* and *The Judge* upon which the author insists in the novels' preface. The 'truth' about Russia explains the characters' actions in the novel, and ultimately justifies its unhappy ending.

¹²⁹ In the TV series, Chelishchev resigns from the defense lawyer office when he finds out that his supervisor was involved in the illegal financial operations that led to the death of Chelishchev's parents.

Of all genres of crime fiction in Russia in the 1990s, *krutoi detektiv* stands out for its critique of Russia's Soviet past. This critique is comparable to that employed in British and American post-Cold War thrillers. While criticizing the Soviet past in Anglo-American post-Cold War crime novels is a re-working of Cold War strategies in depicting Russia, *krutoi detektiv* that exposes the Soviet past continues *glasnost*' policies. While old cultural codes are at work in American fiction, Konstantinov's critique of the Soviet legal system is a new cultural code, a protest against the Soviet *detektiv* with its idealized portrayal of Soviet reality. In *The Defense Lawyer*, *The Judge*, and the television series *Bandit Petersburg* based on these novels, each of the three main characters: Sergei Chelishchev, Oleg Zvantsev, and Katya Shmeleva, comes to re-assess the Soviet past. All three begin their adult lives in 1982 as law students at Leningrad State University. They all end up in Petersburg Mafia a decade later. During the *bespredel*, learning the 'truth' about Russia is a catalyst in the heroes' transformation from law-abiding citizens to noble criminals.

When Chelishchev leaves the corrupt office of the prosecutor, an old office cleaner suggests he is wise to leave his post before the "system" breaks him. The cleaner had worked as a top investigator in the same office during the Soviet period. She investigated the so-called "onions case" in the early 1980s, which was one of the "economic crimes" of the era: a whole harvest of onions disappeared before suddenly showing up on sale at the markets. The woman was forced to abandon the investigation because it had pointed to important members of the Soviet *nomenklatura*. To prevent further investigation, her car was sabotaged and she nearly died. While she was in the hospital, there were several more attempts to kill her. When her son was killed, she

finally quit her career as an investigator (*The Defense Lawyer* 81-83). Within the framework of Konstantinov's novel, this exposition of the Soviet system is structurally linked to the development of the novel's plot and the novel's interpretation of good and evil. After talking to the old woman, Chelishchev gets a somewhat different perspective on Russia's justice system. He realizes it had been corrupt before *perestroika*, and is simply continuing to go downhill. The critique of the Soviet legal system leads to the hero's disillusionment with legal ways of fighting evil, and helps justify his decision to conduct his independent investigation, even if it means violating the law.

In *Russian Pulp*, Anthony Olcott argues that the Russian detective genre does not know independent investigations in the way they are depicted in the West. The reason for that, Olcott writes, are the limited avenues available to private investigators in Russia, since the legal system prevents them from working properly. Olcott's observation is only partially accurate. It is true private detectives have limited responsibilities in Russia. Nevertheless, detective fiction of the 1990s includes many characters who conduct investigations independently of the police. Among independent investigators are Konstantinov's protagonists; the hero of Alexei Balabanov's films *Brother* (1997) and *Brother-2* (1998), Danila Bagrov; the journalist investigators in Marianna Bakonina's novel *A School for Doubles* (2000).¹³⁰

For the main characters in *The Defense Lawyer* and *The Judge*, as for the heroes of American post-Cold War espionage novels, good and evil are no longer institutionalized. The protagonist may find friends among former enemies, or discover

¹³⁰ Likewise, a state employed detective Alexander Turetskii, the protagonist of the series *The March of Turetskii* by Friedrikh Neznanskii, frequently conducts independent investigations. There are independent investigators in detective novels by Tatiana Poliakova, Daria Dontsova, and Viktoria Platova.

enemies among those who are supposed to fight on the “right” side of the law. For Konstantinov’s heroes (as for Joseph Finder’s protagonists), the line between good and evil is no longer clear; the hero must determine who is the real adversary and who is a true friend.

Oleg Zvantsev is Chelishchev’s best friend in *The Defense Lawyer*¹³¹ and *The Judge*. Oleg’s dissatisfaction with the Soviet system grew when he was a soldier in Afghanistan. There, he realized the Afghan war was nothing like the romantic picture drawn by the party in the Soviet media (*DL* 96). After Oleg killed his first Afghan soldier, he felt he had “cut himself from” his former friends and family (*DL* 97). Upon his return to St. Petersburg in 1984, he finds his country has betrayed him. He has no place to live, nowhere to go. He is unwanted. As a fellow soldier tells Oleg, “they don’t fucking need us here at all. We were fulfilling the Soviet ‘international obligations’ there but nobody wants to fulfill their obligations toward us here” (*DL* 121). Oleg becomes part of the Russian underworld. Together with other *afgantsy* Oleg forms a gang that “controls” (robs) small businessmen, “the thieves who had been stuffing themselves full and stealing” while the guys “were fighting” (*DL* 123).

Oleg’s story may be interpreted in light of Western influences on Russian detective fiction in the 1990s. Oleg and other Afghan veterans resemble Rambo in their bitterness towards their country’s indifference. At the same time, this portrayal of former *afgantsy* as gangsters is a response to the political changes in Russia. Konstantinov, for example, has said he wanted to tell the “truth” about people whose voices had been silenced and whose contributions to society had not been recognized (*DL* 3). By

¹³¹ In references – *DL*.

portraying former soldiers of the Afghan War as criminals and pardoning them for their choice of career, *krutye detektivy* expose the shortcomings of the Soviet system, and express anger towards the unjust Russian state. Upon his return from Afghanistan, Oleg's eyes express "a frightening wisdom of a person who has glimpsed beyond the border of life, beyond the border of good and evil" (DL 162). Like Chelishchev, Oleg's disenchantment with Soviet and post-Soviet Russia is tied to his reconsideration of what is good and what is evil. This reconsideration leads to significant genre shifts in detective fiction opening the door to romanticizing criminals.

Katya is the third of the main characters in *The Defense Lawyer* and *The Judge*. She learns the 'truth' about the Soviet Union from her first husband, Vadim Goncharov, a big party boss first in St. Petersburg and then in Moscow. Although he participates in serious economic crimes committed by Soviet leaders, Goncharov despises the corrupt system. Katya soon learns about this so-called "shadow economy" (DL 154): in many Soviet cities there were factories and plants working under cover; they were not mentioned in any official documentation, but their produce was needed in many parts of the country. According to Katya's husband, the party had been "raping the country and its people shamelessly since 1917" (ibid.) and everything in the Soviet state was "rotten" (DL 156). Goncharov summarizes the situation with a proverb: "Fish starts rotting from the head" (DL 157). Corruption in the highest echelons of power in the Soviet state during the stagnation period was only the beginning of the rot that gradually spread throughout the whole Soviet social and economic structure. It should not be surprising then that following her husband's death, Katya decides to join Oleg, a gangster, hardly questioning whether it is right or wrong.

No matter how hard their lives are in post-Soviet Russia, however, Konstantinov's heroes are not nostalgic for Soviet institutions. They feel some nostalgia for their youth when they felt protected by their families and could safely trust their friends, but they have no desire to return to the Soviet system. Exposing crimes never discussed in Soviet media may be viewed as the *detektiv* catching up with history, just as Russia caught up with its history during *glasnost*, when each day brought new revelations about the country's past. In this sense, 'truthfulness' differentiates *krutye detektivy* from Soviet *detektivy*.

Without regretting the end of the Soviet era, Konstantinov's characters are not euphoric about Russia's present. Unlike in American thrillers, hardships of the 1990s are not necessarily viewed as a legacy of the Soviet system. *Bespredel* that was limited to the leadership during the Soviet period is now evident on every level of Russian society. In 1993, Chelishchev realizes with sadness that only "seven years earlier an armed assault at a store would be considered an extraordinary incident in the whole city... Now even a local police station office would not lend his ear to this... How mean have people grown... Could it be that we, as a nation, are all going insane?" (*The Judge* 60). This passage suggests the present is even worse than the past. In the present, many old people who served the Soviet state honestly, some even fanatically, lead an impoverished existence. In *The Judge*, a former criminal and current "businessmen" states cynically that Russia is a strange country that "hurts most badly those who protect this state fanatically... Could it be the highest reward for fanaticism?" (*The Judge* 42). Those who abide by a past code of honor are marginalized in the new Russia. Those, like Chelishchev, Oleg and Katya, who feel disillusioned with Russia, become gangsters.

Chelishchev becomes a criminal, a *dushegub* as he calls himself after killing another gangster, hardly noticing how fast he has changed. *Bespredel* negates moral standards and blurs the line between good and evil. *Krutye detektivy* as literature of the *bespredel* express the heroes' anger at uncertainty about the past, present, and future. The feeling of helplessness in a changing Russia permeates Konstantinov's novels. This realism, although comparable to the realism of the American hard-boiled tradition, is deeply embedded in the Russian cultural chronotope.

3. A NOBLE CRIMINAL

The motif of an independent investigation in *krutye detektivy* is connected with the motif of a noble criminal. Having discovered the 'truth' about Russia, Konstantinov's characters lose their belief in the customary notions of good and evil. In their pursuit of truth and justice, Chelishchev and Zvantsev become gangsters and murderers. Zvantsev says that "everything is relative in life ... Not every good person is our friend and not every scum is our enemy" (*The Judge* 87). In *krutoi detektiv*, unlike Soviet detective fiction, a policeman is no longer automatically a good character and a criminal is not necessarily a bad one. Despite being gangsters, both Chelishchev and Zvantsev are meant to be positive characters. They do not consider themselves "bastards," and others recognize they "have conscience," which is "ultimately the only thing that matters" (*The Judge* 74).

Chelishchev and Zvantsev are “noble criminals.”¹³² Sympathy toward such characters constitutes a change from Soviet detective fiction. While sympathetic criminals are common in the Western tradition (Pavett 13),¹³³ this depiction of the criminal world was practically unknown in Soviet fiction.¹³⁴ Although romanticizing criminals in *krutoi detektiv* may appear to be mimicry of Western models, it must also be considered in the historical context of the *bespredel*. In the early 1990s, radio stations “broadcast songs from the criminal world... and popular films made rogues into heroes” (Handelman 26). One of the criminal types idealized in Russian popular culture of the 1990s was a thief-in-law, the highest-ranking criminal in the hierarchy of the Russian criminal world. Stephen Handelman explains that thieves-in-law were depicted in the early 1990s as “men of tradition, who put a premium on the values of loyalty to the group and on the preservation of order” (9) as well as the prevention of total *bespredel*. Handelman writes further,

[N]o Russian thief of the old school was interested in getting rich ... Russian bandits often saw themselves as defenders of the poor and oppressed. This Robin Hood quality made them particularly attractive during periods of political upheaval.... Many of the old thieves-in-law were philosophers, and well read. You can have a genuine conversation with them. They have deep authority in the same way as top military people, scientists, state leaders. (34-36)¹³⁵

¹³² The hero, Danila Bagrov, in Alexei Balabanov’s film *Brother* (1997) is another example of such a controversial character.

¹³³ Romanticizing of criminals in Quentin Tarantino’s *Pulp Fiction* (1995) is of course different from romantic robbers of the American movies of the 1930s; in different periods, the sympathetic depiction of the underworld may have distinct social reasons pertaining to that period.

¹³⁴ Ilf and Petrov, the authors of *Twelve Chairs* and *The Golden Calf*, romanticized semi-legal practices of Ostap Bender, a witty, charming, energetic, and inventive swindler. As Jeremy Dwyer pointed out to me, in Russia, the first “honest” thief was depicted by Georgii Vainer and Leonid Slovin in *Na temnoi storone Luny* [On the Dar Side of the Moon] (1988).

¹³⁵ A real-life example of a noble criminal is Konstantin Tsyganov. In the 1990s, Tsyganov, a former soccer star, was a new tsar in Yekaterinburg. Reportedly, Tsyganov’s crime organization controlled 60 per

These characteristics apply to Yurka Baron, an old thief-in-law from Konstantinov's novel *Journalist-2* and Bortko's television series *Bandit Petersburg*. The film depicts Baron as an intellectual. His affiliation with the *intelligentsia* is emphasized by the fact that his life-long partner is a respectable and gentle woman who is an art historian working in the Hermitage Museum. Baron himself has the air of a refined, educated person. He prefers to "work" with one or two reliable assistants rather than command a gang. He steals paintings from private collections that belong to people who steal by trainloads, who steal art pieces from state galleries. With a clean conscience, Baron burglarizes the apartment of a corrupt deputy on Petersburg City Council. When Baron discovers the deputy has stolen a Rembrandt from the Hermitage Museum, he decides to return it to the museum. Baron hides the painting at his girlfriend's, but he is caught. In jail, he asks to speak to journalist Andrei Obnorskii. When a corrupt police officer tells him a thief should be ashamed to speak publicly, Baron argues, "Profession is of no importance." In the context of the film, it is possible to be both a self-respecting, honest man and a professional thief. The viewer feels sorry for Baron, who dies in jail, as well as for his partner bombed by criminals who try to retrieve the painting.¹³⁶

Krutoi detektiv depicts younger men as readily seduced by gang-world glamour.

In *The Judge*, Chelishchev meets an old acquaintance named Sasha, who implores

cent of the highly industrial Yekaterinburg region, with branch operations in Moscow. The locals compare Tsyganov to Robin Hood (Voronin 60).

¹³⁶ Baron is played by Kirill Lavrov, a renowned Soviet film actor who used to play party officials. In the article "Crime and Identity Discourse," Elena Prokhorova writes that "in post-Soviet crime dramas, renowned older Soviet film actors are cast either as wise and experienced policemen or as equally wise and experienced mafia bosses.... In both cases, these characters express nostalgia for the real heroes of the Soviet period and lament the degeneration of Russians" (522).

Chelishchev to “hire” him because he feels there is no honest way for him to survive and support his old mother: “the poverty is stifling and I can’t look into Mother’s eyes” (19). Highlighting Sasha’s honesty emphasizes how compelled the character feels to join the criminal world. Chelishchev gives the young man 500 dollars to rent an apartment. However, Sasha finds one where Chelishchev can stay for free and wants to return the money. Chelishchev is surprised that Sasha did not just keep the money.

In the literature of the *bespredel*, as represented by Konstantinov, the adversary is stronger than the hero. In *The Defense Lawyer*, *The Judge*, *The Journalist-2*, and *The Writer*, the villain is Antibiotik, head of the Mafia in Petersburg. Antibiotik outlives several heroes – Baron, Chelishchev, and Zvantsev. After these heroes die, Katya and Obnorskii take it upon themselves to kill Antibiotik. To emphasize Antibiotik’s evil nature, Konstantinov makes him imitate Stalin. Khvanchkara, Antibiotik’s favorite wine, was also a favorite of Stalin’s. In the television series, a character notes that Antibiotik acts like Stalin; Antibiotik responds: “He is not the worst example to follow.” Konstantinov uses Antibiotik to show how under *bespredel* Stalinist methods of establishing order may appear acceptable. Unlike thrillers by Tom Clancy and Robert Harris that project Russians as the heirs of Stalin, Konstantinov’s novels condemn Stalinism by its association with the protagonist’s main adversary.¹³⁷

Antibiotik is not only more serious than adversaries depicted in Soviet detective novels, but also more cunning. He masks his evil nature with the rhetoric of fighting *bespredel* in Russia. In *The Defense Lawyer*, Antibiotik presents himself as the agent of

¹³⁷ Unlike British and American thrillers discussed in the chapter “A Cold You Just Can’t Shake: The Return of the Cold War in Thrillers of the 1990s,” Russian popular literature avoids the theme of Stalinism. I outlined some of the reasons for this asymmetry in popular fiction in the United States and in Russia.

good; he insists gangsters are not to blame for the disorder and mess (*bardak*) raging in Russia, but instead blames “that louse” (*gnida*) that sits on top, and “those fat fags” (*pidory*) who do not know what it means to live in need. In *The Writer*, Antibiotik says there is nothing scary about organized crime because it does not destabilize order. He says the opposite is true:

When people organize themselves, that is because they want to escape a terrible lawlessness (*bespredel*), unnecessary blood... Is it bad when authorities¹³⁸ look after the young? The young want more freedom, of course – to kick around, to fool, - how can we leave the young people without care? Who will rule them? We, the old men, are no longer numerous... And we are ready to help the police – in the matters in which they are helpless. It could be mutually profitable... There must be order, order... In the state and with us. And we’ll destroy those who will rebel against order... (*The Writer* 127)

The old Mafioso claims media hysteria about organized crime is silly since organization means order and stability. By this twist of logic, mobsters contribute to, rather than disrupt, societal order and stability. Antibiotik’s organization resembles an army, a model of orderly structure. It consists of several divisions, including an intelligence service, which “employ” former Afghan veterans and military, including former KGB officers. While society is in total *bespredel*, criminals are keeping their own world in order and appear capable of introducing order to the whole country.

Noble criminals of *krutoi detektiv* call for compassion because they try to be honest in a society in which honesty is underappreciated and the winners are corrupt. Chelishchev, Baron, and Zvantsev are portrayed as conscientious responsible individuals

¹³⁸ He uses the word “*avtoritety*,” which means the highest ranks in the elaborate hierarchy of the criminal world.

caught in the maelstrom of *bespredel*, forced to become criminals to survive or/and continue their fight against disorder. Most noble criminals end badly; Baron dies, Sasha is tortured to death, and Chelishchev and Zvantsev are killed. The message of Konstantinov's novels is pessimistic: good guys are too weak to combat *bespredel*. Even if they succeed in solving some problems, it is still impossible to exterminate evil altogether.

4. A POST-SOVIET LIFE OF SOVIET WARRIORS

The current analysis of *krutye detektivny* of the 1990s would be incomplete without addressing the issue of their relation to the cultural gap created due to changes in the role of the Soviet army during *perestroika*. In the opening section of this chapter, I mentioned that in the early 1990s, a number of new military and police structures appeared in Russia; their purpose was to fight *bespredel* and maintain order in the country. I also mentioned that it was not from these new structures that detective writers of the 1990s chose their protagonists. *Krutye detektivny* and *boeviki* are full of former military characters: veterans of the Afghan and Chechen wars, military translators, former soldiers, and former army, KGB, and police officers. There are so many Afghan or Chechen war veterans in *krutye detektivny* that, given the realist pathos of the *bespredel* literature, one might believe half of the Russian adult male population participated in these military campaigns.¹³⁹ If we look beyond the issue of the Russian emulation of

¹³⁹ From December 1979 to February 1989, 620,000 soldiers and officers served in Afghanistan. On average, 80,000 to 104,000 military and 5,000 to 7,000 civilian personnel were in Afghanistan in each year of the campaign. The casualties were 15,051 people (<<http://polk.ru/afgan.html>> last accessed 2 July 2003). I suspect the numbers for the Chechen campaigns may not be readily available for public review.

Rambo, the large number of former military characters depicted in *krutye detektivy* and *boeviki* is symptomatic of the Russian identity crisis. As in le Carré's post-Cold War spy novels that focus on former or retiring spies, *krutye detektivy* focus on characters who struggle to define their present position and have little understanding of the new Russia. Indeed, as Russian social scientist Boris Dubin points out, many heroes of *krutye detektivy* and *boeviki* are loners; they are often orphans, or do not have a family (221). This aloneness, emphasized by questions asked by Dotsenko's Beshenyi, such as "Who am I? Where do I come from? Why have I come to this world?" may be interpreted as a metaphor for Russia's loss of identity. It is not accidental then that such heroes are particularly sensitive to the disorder in their country. Dubin argues desire to restore a disrupted social order and fight for collective good motivates heroes of *boeviki*.

Krutye detektivy fascination with the former Soviet army, KGB, and police also suggests a challenge to the ideal of heroic masculinity promoted during the Soviet period. "Soviet culture," Handelman argues, was "militarized as a consequence of decades of martial propaganda and massive spending on arms; ...the post-Soviet armed forces basked in the admiration of the sort of uncritical constituency that would now be inconceivable in the West" (230). This culture, however, received a serious blow during *perestroika* and in the 1990s. The former military perceived cuts to the army and criticism of the Soviet military as social injustice. As a result of de-militarization, "the aggrieved Soviet officer – with neither a clear role nor a secure standard of living," became "a political time bomb" (ibid.).

Serguei Oushakine in his study of Russian men's magazines argues that in the 1990s, the cult of the heroes of the Civil War, the Great Fatherland War, and the Afghan war, disappeared; the relevance of the very concept of sacrifice in the name of social ideals was lost. In this situation, professionalism became a substitute for heroic masculinity in post-Soviet Russia (2002: 496). According to Oushakine, "the war in Chechnya was presented in mass media as a poorly organized, unprofessional military campaign," which did not produce the traditional image of "a man-at-war" (ibid.). While the "authority" of the military decreased, the social significance of the "security" service grew: "the heroism of a defender has been substituted for professionalism of a "security" guard" (ibid.). Although the war in Chechnya and the work of the new military units formed in the 1990s did not create the image of a hero, the conclusion that professionalism substituted for the image of "a man-at-war" does not apply to all post-Soviet culture. Though new magazines for men in Russia may indeed promote professionalism, crime fiction, which draws a much larger audience than men's magazines, proposes a different substitute for the lost ideal of the "warrior." Demilitarization perceived as social injustice damaged "the symbolic field" (Oushakine 2002: 496) that sustained the ideal of heroic masculinity and provided the ground for depicting an angry, hurt character whose contribution to society is not recognized and who ultimately finds himself at odds with society.

Changes in the genres of Russian popular culture accompanied the post-Soviet military crisis. The tradition of glorifying Soviet warriors was in decline in the 1990s.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ In the last few years, films that depict the police and the army more favorably as well as new films about the Great Fatherland War have started to appear. Since Putin came to power in 2000, the prestige of the military has been on the rise.

While old films glorifying the military were still broadcast, new films about the army exposed the shortcomings of the Soviet system. *Krutye detektivy* respond to a cultural gap formed during *perestroika*, when the tradition of glorifying Russian warriors began to fade. Soviet culture promoted heroic masculinity in fiction about the Civil War (*The Riot* by Aleksandr Fadeyev, *Chapaev* by Dmitrii Furmanov, *Red Cavalry* by Isaac Babel), Stalinist industrialization (*Muzhestvo* [Courage] by Vera Ketlinskaya, *How the Steel was Tempered* by Nikolai Ostrovsky), and in Soviet spy novels and mysteries. Most of all, the heroic ideals of masculinity were established in literature, film, and songs¹⁴¹ about the Great Fatherland War. The literary significance of the Great Fatherland War in the Soviet Union was also linked to Soviet foreign policy during the Cold War. As I showed in the introductory chapter, cultural asymmetries arose between the United States and Russia in the 1950s due to their divergent Cold War strategies. The genesis of Soviet war literature and films helps explain why, unlike in the United States, there was hardly any Cold War fiction in the Soviet Union and why the concept of the Cold War was much less prevalent in Soviet popular culture. In the Russian part of the thesis, I discuss hard-boiled detective novels and action thrillers, mysteries, and historic detective novels, but *not* spy novels precisely because the Cold War spy novel never developed in Russia into a significant genre.

¹⁴¹ Many songs by the popular bards Bulat Okudzhava and Vladimir Vysotskii glorified soldiers defending their Motherland, families, and friends during the war. The lyrics are usually published under the title "Songs About the War" (<<http://www.litera.ru/stixiya/authors/okudzhava/all.html>> and <<http://www.visotski.boom.ru/mp3/war/war.htm>> last accessed 11 May 2003).

Unlike the espionage genre in Britain and the United States that captured realities of the Cold War,¹⁴² the Soviet spy novel very seldom addressed the Cold War conflict directly, and in general, the development of the genre was difficult and at times tragic. According to Leonid Parfenov, it was not until 1964 that Russians learned the USSR also had spies and the spy boom swept the country. In 1964, Khrushchev watched Yves Ciampi's 1961 film *Who are You, Mr. Sorge?* The film was released in Russia as *Kto vy, doktor Zorge?*¹⁴³ Richard Sorge was a professor of sociology who began working in the German embassy in Tokyo in 1937. Khrushchev, although he was already a member of the Politburo during the war, apparently did not know that Sorge briefed Moscow about the exact date of the German invasion of 1941 and that Stalin disbelieved this information. Khrushchev expressed his admiration for the film character and was surprised to learn the story was based on real historical material. He then ordered Sorge materials be declassified and posthumously awarded Sorge the medal of the Hero of the Soviet Union, the highest military award in Soviet Russia. After 1964, Soviet writers and filmmakers began to explore the genre of the spy thriller more actively. However,

¹⁴² I discussed this in detail in the chapter "A Farewell to Arms: Spy Novels about Russia after the Cold War."

¹⁴³ Parfenov maintained that before the film about Richard Sorge, the only Soviet spy known in the USSR was Nikolai Kuznetsov, a member of Medvedev's guerrilla group fighting against the Nazis in Western Ukraine, whose intelligence activity was not controlled by the NKVD or GRU. See *Namedni 1964*. This lineage of the Soviet spy novel is not quite accurate. Already before World War II, a proletarian writer Lev Ovalov (1905—1997) set out to create fiction that would glorify the work of the Soviet intelligence. His first story about Soviet intelligence agents, "Sinie mechi" [Blue Swords], appeared in 1941 in the journal *Vokrug sveta*. In 1941, on the recommendation of Soviet Foreign Minister Viacheslav Molotov, *Rasskazy o maiore Pronine* [Stories of Major Pronin] were published in the thick journal *Znamia* and their sequel, "Goluboi Angel" [Blue Angel], appeared in the *Ogonek* magazine. In May 1941, stories about Major Pronin were published in a book format. But only a month after the book's release Ovalov was arrested and sentenced to fifteen years in labor camps. He returned to writing about Major Pronin only in 1956. Ovalov's fate discouraged other writers from developing the spy novel genre in Stalin's Russia. Al. Razumikhin, "Poslednee svidetel'stvo" [The Last Testimony]. *Sobranie sochinenii v 3-kh tomakh*, by L. Ovalov, vol. 1 (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1987): <http://kulichki.com/moshkow/RUSS_DETEKTIW/OWALOW/possvid.txt> last accessed 26 July 2003.

because the Soviet doctrine of peaceful co-existence and struggle for peace defined the Soviet cultural response to the Cold War, Soviet spy thrillers tended not to depict Americans or other hostile nations as adversaries. Instead, most novels became part of a large body of literature and films about the Great Fatherland War.

Most Soviet stories and films about spies were about agents acting against Germany during World War II. Vladimir Bogomolov's *Moment istiny* [The Moment of Truth],¹⁴⁴ Yulian Semenov's *Ekspansia* [Expansion], *Ispanskii variant* [Spanish Variant], and Yurii Dold-Mikhailik's *I odin v pole voim* [A Single Warrior] were among popular spy novels.¹⁴⁵ Successful movies¹⁴⁶ about spies acting against the Nazis during the war included the television series *Shchit i mech* [The Shield and the Sword]¹⁴⁷ released in 1967-1968, which was based on the eponymous novels by Vadim Kozhevnikov. The four episodes of Veniamin Dorman's series *Resident*, based on the novel by V. Vostokov and O. Shmelev, came out in 1968, 1970, 1982,¹⁴⁸ and 1986. Another popular film, based on Evgenii Vorobiev's novel about a real Soviet intelligence officer, Lev Manevich, is *Zemlia, do vostrebovaniia* [Earth: General

¹⁴⁴ The novel about Soviet counterintelligence in 1944 came out in 95 editions.

¹⁴⁵ Alexei Shvachko's film *Vdali ot rodiny* [Away from the Motherland] that had the largest audience in 1960 (42 million people) was based on this novel (<<http://spymania.narod.ru/books/doldmikhaylik/index.htm>> and <http://filmprofi.ru/movies/Vdali_ot_Rodiny> last accessed 29 June 2003).

¹⁴⁶ The first Soviet movie about counterintelligence during World War II was Boris Barnet's film *Podvig razvedchika* [The Spy's Game] released in 1947.

¹⁴⁷ The 344-minute series was among the first five most popular television films of 1968. Its four episodes (*Bez prava byt' soboi* [Without the Right to Be Yourself], *Prikazano vyzhit'* [The Order is to Stay Alive], *Obzhalovaniiu ne podlezhit* [No Appeal Accepted], *Poslednii rubezh* [The Last Border]) were seen – respectively, by 68.3 + 66.3 + 46.9 + 46.9 million people. The film's soundtrack featured one of the most successful patriotic hits in Russia, the song “S chego nachinaetsia rodina...” [The Motherland starts from...] by M. Matusovskii and V. Basner.

¹⁴⁸ The audience of the third film, *Vozvrashchenie rezidenta* [The Return of the Resident], was 23.9 million people. The popularity ratings on Soviet films mentioned in this section come from the web site <<http://filmprofi.ru/movies>> last accessed 30 June 2003.

Delivery] directed by Veniamin Dorman in 1972.¹⁴⁹ Antonis Voyazos' 1975 film *Variant "Omega"* based on the eponymous 1974 novel by Nikolai Leonov and Yurii Kostrov was one of the most popular series in this genre. A hit spy thriller¹⁵⁰ was Tatiana Lioznova's *Semnadtsat' mgnovenii vesny* [Seventeen Moments in Spring], a twelve-series television film released in 1973.¹⁵¹ The series was based on Yulian Semenov's novel about SD Standarterführer Stirlitz (Colonel Isaev), who infiltrated the highest military circles in Nazi Germany. Other films about intelligence agents based on Semenov's novels were *Maior Vikhr'* [Major Vikhr], and the 1984 Vladimir Fokin television series *TASS upolnomochen zaiavit'* [TASS is Authorized to Announce].

Throughout the Cold War, Soviet culture presented the Nazis, not the Americans, as the ultimate enemy. Spy thrillers set in more recent times often linked traitors and spies working against Russia with Nazism (*Mertvyi sezon*, *TASS upolnomochen zaiavit'*, and *Resident*).¹⁵² Savva Kulish's 1968 film *Mertvyi sezon* [Dead season],¹⁵³ for instance, tells about Soviet agents who expose a Western research institute's work on psychotropic weapons. The institute's head is Dr. Hass, a sadist who began his experiments in a Nazi concentration camp. A survivor of a concentration camp where

¹⁴⁹ The film's audience was 23.8 million people; it occupied the nineteenth position in the popularity ratings in 1972.

¹⁵⁰ For the sake of accuracy, it must be mentioned that Soviet spy thrillers were stylistically different from spy thrillers of the James Bond type. The genesis of the Soviet spy thriller may be traced to the classical British mystery.

¹⁵¹ In 1976, the film was awarded the State Award of the Russian Federation. In *Soviet Realities: Culture and Politics from Stalin to Gorbachev*, Walter Laqueur retells a story (probably apocryphal) of the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev canceling the meetings of the Politburo so that the Politburo members would not miss the next episode of *Seventeen Moments in Spring* (211-228).

¹⁵² *TASS upolnomochen zaiavit'* (1979) and *Press tsentr* (1986) by Semyonov are among very few Soviet thrillers in which Soviet intelligence officers confront CIA agents. Typically, in *TASS upolnomochen zaiavit'*, the villains are still former Nazis or Nazi sympathizers.

¹⁵³ The film was seen by 34.5 million viewers in 1969 and occupied the twelfth position in the popularity ratings.

Hass worked assists the Soviet agent. However, it is unclear which Western country is depicted in the film although the story about exchanging a Soviet spy for a Western spy is based on fact. Colonel Rudolf Abel, a Soviet intelligence agent, addresses the audience of *Mertvyi sezon* at the beginning of the film. In his address, he mentions that in such capitalist countries as England, Canada, and the United States, secret research laboratories develop mass destruction weapons. He says that it is “only natural” that the country depicted in the film is “not named” but ensures the audience that the story told in the film is based on life. Abel’s reference to the “natural” silencing the name of the country in which the action takes place means that the official line of the struggle for peace did not encourage depiction of Americans as enemies.¹⁵⁴ Instead of exposing the West as the Soviet enemy in the Cold War, the Soviet version of spy thrillers formed part of a larger culture of literature and films about the Great Fatherland War that promoted the cult of a Russian man as warrior. Films and novels about the war were the Soviet culture’s asymmetrical response to the Anglo-American Cold War thrillers and films. This cultural asymmetry explains why the end of the Cold War had little significance in post-Soviet Russian popular culture and why, in contrast, the disappearance of the Soviet type of heroic warriors during *perestroika* was perceived as a loss and created a cultural gap, which was being filled by the new Russian crime fiction.

¹⁵⁴ Moreover, demonizing any particular nation was impossible due to the ideology of class solidarity between workers of all nations. While world imperialists and the Nazis were indeed enemies of the Soviet people and other socialist nations, working classes in capitalist nations were not considered enemies. Even depictions of Germans during the war distinguish between the Nazis and simple Germans. One scene in *Semnadsat’ mgnovenii vesny* captures Stirlitz thinking about Germans as “us” and then analyzing why he felt that he belonged to this nation. A voiceover explains that Stirlitz “knew and loved Germans”; he saw the workers’ demonstrations led by Ernst Thälmann; he “believed in the future of the German people.”

The rupture in the symbolic field that sustained the Soviet ideal of heroic masculinity, the *bespredel* situation, and Russians' search for a new national identity allowed authors to portray a hurt character at odds with his past and present. *Krutoi detektiv*'s substitute for the hero of Soviet literature and films about the military and police is the noble criminal, a detective who is often at odds with the police and Russian legal system. When Oleg Zvantsev in Konstantinov's *The Defense Lawyer* and *The Judge* returns to St. Petersburg from Afghanistan, Russia is a completely different country from the one he left. By joining a group of gangsters, however, he can lead a life similar to the one he led in Afghanistan. *Krutoi detektiv* projects the criminal world as a new context for "real men," as a substitute for the army and the police.¹⁵⁵

In Konstantinov's novels, there are similarities between the army and the world of organized crime. For instance, the underworld is structured like an army; there are ranks, discipline, and unauthorized leaves (*samovolki*). There is even a uniform among criminals. In Konstantinov's *The Defense Lawyer*, a low-ranking member of the underworld derogatorily described as *byk* [an ox] is recognized by his "haircut like that of an American sergeant," his sport suit "Puma" "manufactured in Taiwan," and a no-brand cheap leather jacket (50). The dress code of a gang leader is different. When Chelishchev agrees to substitute for his friend as the gang leader, he has to change his style completely. In the novel, Chelishchev first refuses to change his clothes: "I am not a clown to put on costumes" (221). Katya angrily retorts, "As you know, we first judge a book by its cover... and only then by its content... When you served in the procurator

¹⁵⁵ Like Konstantinov's protagonist, the protagonist of Sergei Gurzo's film *Kakadu* [Cockatoo] (1993), is also an Afghan veteran who becomes the leader of a Mafia gang.

office, you did wear the uniform, didn't you? ... Although it was not a masterpiece of fashion design?... it's the same here – your uniform if you will. You can wear whatever you want in your free time... but at work you must oblige by corresponding to the work you do" (222). Chelishchev gets a haircut popular among high-ranking criminals and begins to wear a pair of thick black cotton slacks, a colorful silk shirt, a loosely fitting dark blue jacket, a pair of soft leather shoes, and a long black jacket of the finest leather (ibid.). In the novel, Chelishchev's appearance before joining the Mafia is described only briefly. The transformation of this defense lawyer into a gang leader is much more dramatic in the television series. Before joining the criminals, Chelishchev wears a grey wool turtleneck sweater, pants that are perhaps a bit too short, and a shapeless grey raincoat. From Katya's viewpoint, his moustache is the most unsuitable element of Chelishchev's appearance. In addition to his "uniform" described in the novel, the television series adds to his new persona a heavy gold chain with a cross, a cell-phone (a marker of "serious guys"), and the latest Mercedes model car with a chauffeur.

Having accepted his "appointment," the hero crosses over from the legal to the criminal world. From now on, talking to criminals and arranging *strelki* (meetings) with other gangsters simply become "work" for Chelishchev, just as the old thief-in-law Baron described his criminal "business" as a "profession." Much of this work involves fighting, chasing, and planning "operations" – work similar to that done by the military and the police. Being part of the Mafia is a job; at one point Chelishchev goes on a several-day drinking binge and Antibiotik threatens to "fire" him. However, Chelishchev feels little glory in his new profession, and his former colleagues from the police despise him. He is ashamed of his moral degradation. Unlike Soviet heroes, protagonists of

krutye detektivy in the 1990s are for the most part angry because they lose their fight against evil. They are often ashamed of the life they lead and the society they live in. *Krutye detektivy* are a pessimistic fantasy about heroic masculinity. While providing a new definition of what it means to be a man, they show few successful characters. The heroes of these stories are appreciated not because they succeed but because they try to remain tough and honest in a rough and unhappy time.

5. SEXUAL POLITICS IN *KRUTYE DETEKTIVY*

Thanks to the abolition of censorship in 1989, domestic authors were finally free to choose their subject matter, stories, and style. The lifting of censorship also increased interest in depicting sex in Russian popular culture. The first years of reforms witnessed a tremendous amount of previously unthinkable publications about sex.¹⁵⁶ The flood of pornography in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Russia, and a rapidly changing attitude towards the use of sex scenes in fiction, film, and on television were shocking to audiences unaccustomed to such scenes. In the 1990s, those who opposed the ban of pornographic publications in Russia argued that the abolition of censorship was a sign of freedom; pornography was proof that a long period of suppression and hypocrisy had ended. The liberalization of mores and the possibility of depicting sex affected the detective genre. Detective authors introduced sex scenes in *krutoi detektiv* and *boevik* because of their desire to write about something they could not depict under censorship (Gagarin 364). Far from creating amorous romantic protagonists who cherish their

¹⁵⁶ See the discussion of pornography in Russia in: Paul W. Goldschmidt, "Pornography in Russia," *Consuming Russia*, ed. Barker, 318-335; and also in: Eliot Borenstein, "Ah, Andriusha, nam li byt' v pechali... Natsionalizm sovremennykh muzhskikh zhurnalov" [Masculinity and Nationalism in Contemporary Russian "Men's Magazines"], *O muzhenstvennosti*, ed. Oushakine, 360-377.

beloved ones, authors of *boeviki* and *krutye detektivy* often portrayed scenes and attitudes that may be described as pornography of violence.¹⁵⁷

However, the lifting of censorship is only one reason for a changed depiction of gender relations in the Russian *detektiv*. Anthony Olcott argues the aggressive sexuality of detective fiction in Russia stems from masochism. Olcott quotes Daniel Rancour-Lafarriere's book *The Slave Soul of Russia* to support his argument about aggressive sexuality as the expression of the Russian national character:

Sex and love mean violence, but the direction of this semiosis can also be reversed, so that violence means sex and love. Thus, a Russian woman may even come to assume that a man who does not beat her does not love her, and that a man who does not have an underlying contempt for her (and all other women) is sexually impotent. (Rancour-Lafarriere 158)

Olcott's argument is superficial. It is based on Rancour-Lafarriere's over-generalization about the Russian national character and his debatable definitions of love, sex, and violence. It is not evident why sex and love should mean violence and why this "semiosis" should be reversed in Russia. Furthermore, arguments for the use of aggressive sexuality in *krutye detektivy* do not take into account the dramatic change in depicting women in Russian fiction. It does not explain why the ideal of a woman as mother and wife promoted in Soviet culture changed so swiftly to images of women as prostitutes, who can be despised, abused, raped, sold to brothels, and killed. Olcott does not explain why the cult of a warrior protecting "women, children, and the old" disappeared over such a short period and gave way to an appalling misogyny.

¹⁵⁷ I avoid discussing here Viktor Dotsenko's *boeviki* with their explicitly pornographic scenes.

In his article on nationalism in contemporary Russian "Men's Magazines," Eliot Borenstein looks for answers in a more immediate historical and cultural context. Borenstein argues that the loss of Russia's status as a world power traumatized Russian society and, in particular, Russian men. He argues that the main ideological task of the Russian pornography magazine *Andrei* in the 1990s was to "compensate" for this trauma. On the pages of the magazine, moments that are insulting for Russian consciousness turn into a source of erotic fantasy (2002: 377). In the magazine, sex becomes "a magic formula" that was meant to help the Russian man overcome his anxiety about Russia's changed position in the world (2002: 375). *Andrei* turns attributes of military power such as weapons, masks, and soldiers' boots into sex symbols; militarism gives way to pornography (2002: 376). Men's anxiety about Russia's national identity, the crisis of the image of man as a warrior and the use of sex symbols to pacify anxiety about an identity crisis are also typical in *krutye detektivy*. The increased focus on sex and the aggressive treatment of women in *krutye detektivy* must be seen in conjunction with the crisis of the masculine ideal manifested in heroes of these novels.

To understand what led to the radical change in depicting Russian gender relations, one should consider the puritanical depictions of romantic and sexual relations before the lifting of censorship. In one episode of *Seventeen Moments in Spring*, for instance, Stirlitz recollects his last meeting with his wife. It is 1945, and Stirlitz has been in Germany for more than a decade. The voiceover explains that Stirlitz was to leave Germany in 1936 to go on a dangerous mission to civil war-ravaged Spain. Fearing for his life, the Soviet command decides to arrange Stirlitz's meeting with his wife. Portrayed in a flashback, Stirlitz is sitting in a small restaurant, glancing at the door from

time to time. A woman and a man enter the restaurant and sit at a table about eight meters away from Stirlitz. The woman glances at Stirlitz several times while sipping her coffee and talking to the man next to her; Stirlitz glances back. The man with Stirlitz's wife "leaves them alone" and moves to the bar. For the next fifteen minutes Stirlitz and his wife look at each other dreamily, their eyes "expressing everything" the characters cannot express with words. Then the man who was chaperoning Stirlitz's wife returns to their table and escorts her from the restaurant. Stirlitz continues to sit at his table. He will remember this scene for many years to come. He remains faithful to his wife. Only once in the film he allows himself to tell Gaby, a German typist whom he obviously likes, that she does not interest him as "a partner for a chess game." Considering that Stirlitz does not return to Russia after the war, but instead must leave for Latin America, the reader of Semenov's novels and the viewer of the Lioznova's television series are left wondering about Stirlitz's family life.¹⁵⁸

The obvious ideological constraints of Stirlitz's character aside, the viewer does not question his masculinity or sex appeal. He is a real man and a hero. To remain such, Stirlitz, unlike Bond,¹⁵⁹ does not need to get a new woman in his bed in each episode. Stirlitz's appeal as a hero, as an ideal man, is firmly grounded in social ideals of a stable society that makes a clear distinction between acceptable and unacceptable modes of

¹⁵⁸ Even by Soviet standards Stirlitz's puritanical behavior was too much. As a result, a number of jokes appeared about Stirlitz's sexuality. One of them tells the following story: "Stirlitz receives a ciphering from "the Centre." The Soviet command congratulates him on the birth of his son. A stingy man's tear runs down Stirlitz's cheek: he has not been to Russia in three years."

¹⁵⁹ In Russia, Stirlitz is as popular as Bond is popular in Anglo-American culture. He is also a character, which stepped over the frame of the novels and films and became an archetype of courage, charm, and intelligence.

behavior.¹⁶⁰ In contrast to the cultural chronotope in which Stirlitz appeared, *krutye detektivy*, as discussed above, are a response to the Russian *bespredel*, an expression of anxiety about Russian national identity and the role of the man in society, and a defiance of the ideological constraints of the Soviet *detektiv*. When masculinity is no longer inspired by social ideals, and when traditional forms of masculine behavior are questioned, what role do women play in men's search for a new ideal? What is a woman for a contemporary hero of detective fiction, television serials, and action movies? What does the attitude toward women in *krutye detektivy* reveal about post-Soviet Russia?

In *krutye detektivy*, women are "weak." Typically, Nikita Kudasov, the police detective in Konstantinov's *The Writer*, does not like weak men but thinks that weakness is an ornament for women (*The Writer* 108). Instead of offering the "weak" woman his protection as a knight in shining armor, however, the hero of *krutoi detektiv* takes advantage of her "weakness." Male characters share a belief in the physical, intellectual, professional, and moral inferiority of women. Heroes of *krutoi detektiv* are unsure of their social role and tend to blame their problems on women. Kudasov believes that women have inferior personalities. Because women are inferior, Kudasov cannot be happy in his personal life:

[A] real personal life does not end with bed; on the contrary, – it should start with it. ...If a woman is interesting (of course, not only in her looks), if she has a personality – how can she accept the only part that a real detective can offer her: to be just a part in his life of "secondary importance," in the time that is given for the maximum realization and rest, so that he could return fresh in his "main" life, that is, at work? She won't be able to accept this; she won't agree to

¹⁶⁰ It is possible to argue that Stirlitz's sex appeal as expressed in the film rests on the Russian viewer's cultural memory. Stirlitz is played by Viacheslav Tikhonov, who after he had played the part of Prince Andrei Bolkonskii in Sergei Bondarchuk's film *War and Peace* (1967) was considered one of the most handsome men in Russia.

be in the background... She will suffer and cause suffering to her man ... and if a woman is bleak and uninteresting, she is all the more boring for a detective, because a real detective is first of all a personality. And how is it possible for a personality to survive next to a non-personality? How is it possible to agree with the difference in potentials, in intellectual abilities? And thus, such a woman is reduced to cooking, doing laundry, and educating children – in one word, to an “all-purpose maid” ... is there much happiness in such life? (*Writer* 84-85)

In this passage, a woman’s “weakness” is perceived as a personality flaw, a sign of her unworthiness rather than an inspiration to protect her. Kudasov is not preoccupied with what he can offer his wife. He looks at what she *must* be for him. His “real” manly business is to trace criminals and, although Kudasov does not catch any significant criminal in *The Writer*, the narrator has no doubt that Kudasov’s life is complete. On the contrary, the life of Kudasov’s wife filled with work, educating her children, and household chores, is presented as just a “reduction.” The hero does not ask himself if his wife, who he considered to be interesting before their marriage, has any time left from “unimportant” matters to develop herself as an “interesting personality.” Kudasov’s attitude towards women expressed in the above quotation is based on the reversal of the feminine ideal promoted in Soviet culture. As Eliot Borenstein convincingly shows in *Men without Women: Masculinity and Revolution in Russian Fiction*, despite the rhetoric of women’s emancipation, the family and femininity had been relegated to the background of Soviet culture by the 1920s (30), and later in the 1930s “the inclusion of women in a strong yet subordinate role” reinforced “male dominance” (2000: 274). In the decades that followed, Soviet culture promoted the image of a strong woman, a faithful wife, a dedicated mother, and a professional woman. In Konstantinov’s *The Writer*, Kudasov does not consider his wife a professional and her role as wife and

mother are perceived as insufficient for Kudasov to consider her as his equal. The domestic sphere is viewed as something inferior to the social sphere in which men function.

Another character in Konstantinov's *The Writer*, the journalist Andrei Obnorskii, shares the belief that women are essentially weak. At one point, Katya, the main female character of the trilogy, points a gun at Obnorskii. After he takes the weapon from her, he "quotes" Marx: "Karl Marx ... once remarked that the strength of a woman is in her weakness and they say that the old guy knew women" (*The Writer* 312). Even if coated in irony, a stereotype is still a stereotype. On a different occasion, Obnorskii reassures Katya that *they* will find a way out of a difficult situation. He changes a proverb to refer to women's intellectual inferiority: "You know a saying – one mind is good but ... one and a half is better..." (*The Writer* 401). He adds condescendingly that he counted his own mind as a half. So not to be misled by the sincerity of the statement, the reader can recall Obnorskii's comment about his informant Julia, who, he says, "belonged to the beautiful half of humanity, to the half that uses emotions rather than logic when making decisions" (*The Writer* 269). Obnorskii, like Kudasov, also thinks that women are professionally inferior to men. In one episode, he comments on his female colleague's family problems: "Naturally, she 'fell out' of the work, and there was nothing one could tell her – it is as clear day that for each normal woman troubles at home are more important than work troubles..." (*The Writer* 245). The degree of a woman's devotion to her family and her man defines her normalcy.

The problem with the viewpoint expressed by Obnorskii and Kudasov is not that they define family and home as a woman's priority. The problem is that a woman,

according to their logic, will always remain inferior to men. On the one hand, the “normal” woman cares for her home and her family more than for her work. A woman that would reverse this priority would appear “abnormal” to Obnorskii. On the other hand, the domestic sphere itself is inferior. It does not allow the development of the woman’s “personality” in Kudasov’s words. In either case, a woman comes out to be inferior to a male hero.

The narrator in Konstantinov’s *The Writer* wants the reader to believe a woman needs a man at her side. Katya Shmeleva is described as “a strong and original woman,” but “only a woman who, although maybe subconsciously, want[s] to prop herself up against somebody’s strong shoulder, and even only for some short time to hide behind somebody’s back” (*The Writer* 334). This, of course, is not so much a compliment to Katya as a justification for “somebody’s” back and shoulder, both of which, no doubt, belong to a man. Throughout Konstantinov’s trilogy, Katya is depicted relying on “her man’s” help. Katya’s first husband conveniently leaves her six million dollars in a Swiss bank, a cottage in the Alps, and a business in Sweden. He also allows her to rely on his friend, a former KGB officer and assassin, Korablev. Katya’s other “helpers” are Oleg Zvantsev and Sergey Chelishchev. Zvantsev saves Katya from the Mafia in Moscow by making her work for the Mafia in St. Petersburg. Chelishchev helps Katya run a gang while Zvantsev is in jail. After Zvantsev and Chelishchev die, Katya’s helper is the journalist Obnorskii.

Admired and surrounded by “help,” Katya is occasionally portrayed as *morally* weak and, therefore, as unworthy of her men’s support. Korablev, Katya’s invisible guard while her first husband was away, once realized that she had a fling with her

former fellow-student Zvantsev. Korablev decided not to tell Katya's husband of her infidelity: "Oh, well... Things happen. The babe fucked once, couldn't help it, just happened so... why break her life because of one weakness?" (*The Writer* 338). By not reporting Katya to her husband, Korablev is doing her a great "favor": he is pardoning her "weakness." In contrast, men's infidelity is not only pardoned but in most cases it is not viewed as infidelity. Womanizing serves as a sign of fulfilled masculinity. For instance, in one episode depicting Kudasov's business trip, Kudasov's colleague persuades him to spend an evening in the company of women. He pacifies Nikita's pangs of conscience by arguing: "You are married in St. Petersburg... But we are in Moscow right now... Do you know how wonderful our girls are?" (*The Writer* 92). Women in this episode are reduced to a tourist attraction. To get a woman in Moscow is to experience the scene; for the new hero, getting a girl in a city he visits is similar to going to a restaurant and sampling the city's special cuisine.

Hardly a person, a woman becomes a signifier of a man's masculinity, a sex object, a commodity, a symbol of man's well-being and power. Practically all main characters in *krutye detektivy* are womanizers. They are always desirable and irresistible. Alexei Nikolaev, the hero of Dmitrii Svetozarov's television serial *The Agent of National Security* (2000-) is described as a "specialist in women" who can get "any chick" in his bed. Nikita Kudasov from Konstantinov's *The Writer* is also a womanizer. Nikita reveals the secret of *krutye fellows'* success with women:

A man with a gun is a man with a gun. ... A good detective can get any chick (*baba*) into bed. It is no hard science; it is just the matter of psychology and detectives must all be practicing psychologists... and it is not that hard to attract a woman – just press the right

buttons in her soul and play a tune as if it were an accordion. (*The Writer* 84-85)

There is a noticeable difference between Kudasov's perception of women as easy to conquer and his self-perception, which is expressed implicitly in the passage describing the inferior personality of women. A student of Freud would appreciate how the hero describes himself. "A man with a gun" who can "get any chick into bed," suggests that "a gun" in Kudasov's tautological definition ("a man with a gun is a man with a gun") is a sex symbol. It is used to "hit" on a woman rather than hitting a criminal. In their arrogance, men of *krutye detektivy* are similar to American egoistic private detectives who were described in the Cold War period by the slang term "private dicks." In *The Taste of Ashes* (1957), Howard Browne writes :

Private dicks had no business being married. Private dicks should live with nothing except for a few books and a bottle or two on the pantry shelf and a small but select list of phone numbers for ready reference when the glands start acting up. Private dicks should be proud and lonely men who can say no when the hour is late and their feet hurt. (23)

The term "private dicks" points to characteristics of American heroes that are similar to qualities portrayed in heroes of *krutye detektivy*. Both types display their macho masculinity through physically fighting their adversaries, drinking, using guns, reckless driving, callous language, and womanizing.

The bottom line, nonetheless, is that despite this display of strength, most heroes of the *bespredel* literature fail to meet the high standards of masculine behavior they remember from the past. Roger Horrocks defines the inability of an individual to meet the cultural standards of masculinity inherited from the past as a "crisis of masculinity"

(5). While failing to re-establish order in society, which is ultimately the goal of an investigator, heroes of the *bespredel* literature compensate for this failure at women's expense. The heroes' feeling of sexual power over women compensates for the feeling of powerlessness when faced with evil in society. Sexual domination over women substitutes for the ability to protect them from *bespredel*. There is a certain inflation of the attributes of heroic masculinity in *krutye detektiv*, for men's actual behavior does not substantiate these attributes. The depiction of women in *krutye detektiv* reflects a crisis of masculinity in Russia in the 1990s, and a loss of traditional forms of masculine self-identification.

A number of historical, political, cultural, and economic factors led to the rise of the Russian *krutoi detektiv*. Among them are the abolition of censorship, cuts to the army, loss of military prestige, rise of the Mafia, corruption, and dissatisfaction with the reforms. Notwithstanding the obvious influences of American hard-boiled detective fiction and American action thrillers, the fascination of post-Soviet detective writers with Rambo-type heroes also has domestic roots and a cultural significance that goes beyond imitation. The collapse of socialist ideology, legalization of private business, and the collapse of the Soviet welfare system resulted in a crisis of collective and individual ethics familiar from the Soviet period. Reconsideration of good and evil by characters of *krutoi detektiv* leads to the genre transformation. One change in the genre has been an increased emphasis on the individual pursuit of justice by a *krutoi detektiv* character. While the Russian army as a social institution lost its prestige, the search for order and an attempt to sustain the ideal of man as hero, and as an agent of order, shifted to the sphere of organized crime. Heroes of *krutye detektiv* become independent investigators,

or even noble criminals, as a substitute for the traditional masculinity and social roles the army used to define before *perestroika*. *Krutoi detektiv* is a fantasy about social order in a time of social and cultural instability. Failing to show the re-establishment of order, as was typical of Soviet detective fiction, *krutoi detektiv* instead portrays a desperate hero trying to find justice and – at least arbitrarily – to distinguish between good and evil in a time of *bespredel*.

Chapter 5

A LITTLE NOSTALGIA: THE DETECTIVE NOVELS OF ALEXANDRA MARININA

1. OLD SONGS ABOUT THE MAIN THINGS

In December 2002, Russkoe Radio-2, the station that broadcasts songs of the Soviet era, celebrated the year of its work with a party “Our Motherland is the USSR!” Upon entering a pub where the celebration took place, those who were older than thirty immediately “plunged into a state of pleasant sadness and euphoria.” The guests remembered how neither long lines to a beer pub nor beer that tasted like washing powder could darken their careless youth. Appetizers served at the party featured such hits of “Soviet cuisine” as Olivier salad, salami, spiced vodka, and stewed pears. In the end of the celebration, each guest received a gift executed in the style “An apotheosis of Soviet well-being”: canned sardines, a can of caviar, Odessa smoked sausage, a can of peas, a bottle of Stolichnaia, and a marinated herring. Everything was packed in a long forgotten net bag (*avos'ka*) that was previously considered so depressingly Soviet in its sheer ugliness. The sight of such net-bag in 2002 caused a different emotion: the face of a lady wearing a mink coat radiated happiness; she proudly tossed her stylish purse into *avos'ka* and, laughing, put the “treasure” onto the back seat of her Volvo.¹⁶¹

The success of Russkoe Radio-2 is a consequence of the post-Soviet nostalgia for the past. Besides Russkoe Radio-2, a Soviet-style repertoire can be found at Russkoe

¹⁶¹ See more details about the party in the on-line publication “Russkoe Radio-2: Nostal’giia po ‘Sovku’” <http://rr5.ccs.ru/07_history/dr/> last accessed 25 September 2003.

Radio, which began broadcasting in 1995, a Russo-French radio station “Nostal’zhi” that started broadcasting older songs in 1990-1991, the Kiev radio “Nostal’gia” organized in 1995, and local radio stations such as “Retro” in Novgorod and Kishenev. The most significant Soviet “song” brought back into circulation by popular demand is the old Soviet anthem. In 2000, after a ten-year break, Russians voted for re-adopting the old Soviet anthem; Sergei Mikhalkov, who wrote the lyrics of the previous two anthems, composed new lyrics to the familiar tune.

The popularity of old Soviet songs is only one form of expressing nostalgia for the past in the former USSR. Indeed, during *perestroika*, the Soviet period was condemned and tsarist past began to be idealized. However, with Yeltsin’s reforms failing, more Russians became nostalgic for the Soviet past. Politicians such as Vladimir Zhirinovskii, the leader of Liberal Democrats, and Gennadii Ziuganov, the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation used the sentiment of nostalgia in their political struggle for power. The journalist Leonid Parfenov became a TV star thanks to nostalgia. His TV “projects” include the retrospective *Ves’ Zhvanetskii* [All of Zhvanetskii] (1996) in which the popular Russian satirist reads his stories written in the period from the 1960s until the 1990s. Parfenov also took part in another “nostalgia project”: a New Year’s Eve music show *Starye pesni o glavnom* [Old Songs About the Main Things] based on performance of songs mostly of the Brezhnev era by new pop-singers.¹⁶² Parfenov’s largest nostalgia-inspired project is a forty-episode documentary

¹⁶² The three “episodes” of the show were broadcast in 1995, 1996, and 1997. Although there were only three episodes, the show’s broadcast time – New Year’s Eve Night, which is the biggest celebration of the year in Russia – reflects the significance of the sentiment of nostalgia in the 1990s. Each episode was rerun many times on Russian TV and became available on video tapes. *Old Songs About the Main Things-4* came out in 2001.

Namedni: Nasha era [The Other Day: Our Time] and *Namedni. Nasha Era: 1961-1991* [The Other Day. Our Era: 1961-1991]. The show encompasses the period 1961 until 1991¹⁶³ with each episode telling about the most important political, cultural, economic, or sport events of a year. Parfenov's "projects" revisit the Soviet past with irony; they highlight positive aspects in the past without, however, idealizing it. Like the Russkoe Radio-2 party, it is a tongue in cheek nostalgia, very different from nostalgia depicted in recent Anglo-American crime fiction about Russia. Nostalgia of those who listen to Russkoe Radio and watch Parfenov's "projects" is not an expression of craving for a comeback of Stalinism. Rather, it is an attempt at creating cultural continuity and incorporating the cultural memory of the Soviet past into the present.

In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym explores the sentiment of nostalgia on a variety of cultural materials such as literature, fine arts, historical monuments, urban culture, museums, architecture, and personal space. Boym proposes to differentiate between two kinds of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia evokes national past and future and is focused on recovery and preservation of what is perceived to be an absolute truth. The 1990s Anglo-American crime fiction about Russia interprets Russian nostalgia as restorative, as a manifestation of desire for a come-back of communism. However, many cultural forms in Russia of the 1990s are expressions of reflective nostalgia, which, according to Boym, is focused on the individualized meditation on history and suggests flexibility, an individual narrative, and cherishing shattered fragments of memory. While restorative nostalgia takes itself "dead seriously," reflective nostalgia, "can be ironic and humorous. It reveals that longing and

¹⁶³ By popular demand, Leonid Parfenov then created a sequel to this series that covered the decade of the 1990s.

critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment or critical reflection” (Boym 49-50).

Reflective nostalgia for the Soviet past has also affected the *detektiv* genre in the 1990s. In the mid-1990s, leading private publishing houses such as EKSMO and Vagrius reprinted old Soviet detective novels by such renowned authors as the brothers Vainer, Olga and Alexander Lavrov, and Nikolai Leonov. Russian TV channels reran old detective series. Today the opening of the detective story “A ‘Bouquet’ at the Reception” by the Lavrovs reads like a fairy-tale: the duty-room at 38 Petrovka beckons one to take a short nap or amuse oneself with something in between calls; Znamenskii and Tomin are bored, Kibrit is knitting. The impression of a safe society with a low crime rate is highlighted in Vladimir Brovkin’s TV serial *Sledstvie vedut znatoki* [The Experts Conduct the Investigation] based on the Lavrovs’ stories.¹⁶⁴ The catchy song launching each episode of *The Experts* reassures viewers that crimes occur in the Soviet Union only occasionally and only in some places and are committed only by people who for some reason do not wish to live honestly. The song also conveys that the police are reliable guardians of honest citizens because they never sleep and are on duty day and night.¹⁶⁵ In comparison with the slaughter described in contemporary Russian hard-

¹⁶⁴ Olga and Alexandr Lavrov wrote short detective stories from 1970 through the 1990s. The thirty-five episode TV series *The Experts Conduct the Investigation* was one of the most popular shows on Soviet TV. The first episode was broadcast in 1971 and the final one was shown in 1992. See a detailed discussion of the stories and the TV series in Serguei Oushakine, “Crimes of Substitution: Detection in Late Soviet Society,” *Public Culture* Vol. 15.3 (2003): 426-451.

¹⁶⁵ A. Gorokhov’s text reads: Если кто-то кое-где у нас порой/ Честно жить не хочет,/ Значит с ними нам вести незримый бой –/ Так назначено судьбой для нас с тобой/ Служба – дни и ночи. (If somebody somewhere sometime/ Does not want to live honestly,/ We’ll launch an invisible struggle with him –/ That is our destiny/ On duty – day and night).

boiled *detektivny*, the crimes in the Lavrov's *detektivny* seem minor.¹⁶⁶ In some canteen or restaurant, somebody steals meat intended for cutlets; somebody sets fire to a warehouse to cover up the theft of goods; somebody buys stolen diamonds; somebody plans to sneak an old painting out of the country.¹⁶⁷

Unlike Olga and Alexander Lavrov, who appeal directly to nostalgia for the “good old Soviet days” in the introduction to the reprints of their novels,¹⁶⁸ part of detective fiction written in the 1990s expresses nostalgia for the Soviet past in a more complex way. In the sections that follow, I analyze the ways in which nostalgia is addressed by Alexandra Marinina, the author of more than twenty mysteries, which were widely read in the second half of the 1990s. Alexandra Marinina is the pen name of Marina Alexeeva, a retired police lieutenant colonel and lawyer. In 1998-1999, Marinina was called a “popularity contest winner among Russian writers of detective fiction,” “a Russian Agatha Christie,” “the queen of the Russian *detektiv*.”¹⁶⁹ Marinina outstripped

¹⁶⁶ Soviet *detektivny* rarely depicted serious crimes. Vital ideological underpinning was required in order to describe grave crimes. Serious crimes were ascribed to incorrigible bandits predisposed by family background to do harm to Soviet society. For instance, in Yulian Semenov's novel *Protivostoianie* [Confrontation], a murderer and robber Nikolai Krotov is the son of an enemy of Soviet power; Krotov is a former Nazi collaborator; he is depicted as absolutely alien to Soviet society. In the chapter “Tough Guys in Rough Times,” I explained restrictions imposed on detective fiction by Soviet censorship.

¹⁶⁷ Such were the crimes described in the novels by the Lavrov and presented in the TV serial *The Experts*: “Iz zhizni fruktov” [The Life of Fruit], “Podpasok s ogurtsom” [The Shepherd with a Cucumber], “Svidetel” [A Witness], “Shantazh” [Blackmailing], “‘Buket’ na prieme” [A ‘Bouquet’ at the Reception], “Pozhar” [Fire].

¹⁶⁸ See Olga and Alexander Lavrov, “Avtory – chitateliu” [To Our Reader], *Sledstvie vedut znatoki* [The Experts Conduct the Investigation] by A. Lavrov and O. Lavrova (Moscow: Veche, 1994).

¹⁶⁹ See, e.g. Mikhail Berg “Gimn lenivym v ljubvi, frigidnym i nekrasivym” [The Anthem to Those who are Lazy in Love, Frigid, and Ugly], *Novaia russkaia kniga* No. 6: <<http://www.guelman.ru/slava/nrk/nrk6/38.html>> last accessed 2 June 2003. See also the transcript of Ilya Dashidze's TV show *Litsom k litsu* [Face to Face] of 10 January 1999 in which Marinina was a guest: <<http://koi.svoboda.org/programs/FTF/1999/FTF.011099.asp>> last accessed 25 July 2003. See also: Viacheslav Kuritsyn, “Marinina, kak prizrachnaia, tak i virtual'naia” [The Ghostlike and Virtual Marinina] <http://www.guelman.ru/slava/archive/11-02-99.htm>; and the site about popular TV detective serials: <http://topseriali.narod.ru/Kamenskaia/Kamserial/Kamserial.htm>.

the popularity of Viktor Dotsenko, Andrei Konstantinov, and Friedrikh Neznanskii, authors of the Russian *krutye detektivy* and *boeviki*. In the 1990s, most people knew the name of Marinina – both those who avidly read all her novels and those who could “hardly get through one or two of her books.”¹⁷⁰ Although in the past few years her star has started to fade, the history of Russian popular culture in the 1990s cannot be told without Marinina, any more than the story of Russian popular culture of the 1970s and 1980s can omit Vladimir Vysotskii and Alla Pugacheva, Arkadii Raikin and the TV series *Seventeen Moments in Spring*.

Marinina’s novels, sold across Russia, represent one more attempt to conquer time and interpret the flow of events and images triggered by the demise of the Soviet Union, ethnic conflicts, and shifts in politics and economics. Unlike authors of *krutye detektivy* and *boeviki*, Marinina presents the post-Soviet Russia from a less aggressive perspective. I argue that Marinina’s novels respond to the accelerated tempo of time in the Russian 1990s with nostalgia for the Soviet past.¹⁷¹

In regard to the Soviet past, *krutye detektivy* and *boeviki* generally followed the strategy of the *glasnost’* publications; they exposed the lies about Soviet society and aimed at telling the truth about Russia. As a detective genre, *krutye detektivy* were in many ways the opposite of Soviet detective fiction. Marinina’s vision of the past and

¹⁷⁰ See A. Levinson “Rendez-vous s Marininoi,” *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* No. 1 (1998): 39 – 44.

¹⁷¹ Marinina’s mysteries have been recently studied from a number of various perspectives such as gender roles, comparative perspective, from the point of view of their genre, their language, etc. See, e.g., I. Savkina, “Gliazhus’ v tebia, kak v zerkalo” [Looking at My Reflection in Yourself] 5-19, in: Trofimova, Elena (ed.). *Tvorchestvo Alexandry Marininoi kak otrazhenie sovremennoi rossiiskoi mental’nosti* [Alexandra Marinina Works as a Reflection of Contemporary Russian Mentality], Moskva: MGU, 2002; Elena Trofimova, “Fenomen detektivnykh romanov Alexandry Marininoi v kul’ture sovremennoi Rossii” [The Phenomenon of Alexandra Marinina’s Novels in Russia], 19-36, in: Trofimova, Elena (ed.). *Tvorchestvo Alexandry Marininoi...*; L. Geller, “Kogda zhenshchiny smeiutsia poslednimi” [When Women Laugh Last], 54-69, in: Trofimova, Elena (ed.). *Tvorchestvo Alexandry Marininoi...*

present in Russia is significantly less pessimistic than the vision of Konstantinov's noble criminals. Marinina's heroes do not cut themselves from the past as radically as heroes of Konstantinov. The opposite is true. Marinina reads the present through the lenses of the past while rediscovering some positive values in it that help sustain her heroes in the present-day Russia. In other words, Marinina's fiction is inspired by and forms part of the post-Soviet cultural phenomenon of nostalgia. Is Marinina's fiction an expression of nostalgia for the real past? Or is it an expression of longing for something that was never *there* in the first place? This chapter offers a thematic and genre analysis of Marinina's novels. I approach the discussion of nostalgia by analyzing Marinina's plots, choice of victims and criminals, as well as her strategies in portraying the protagonists. I argue that Marinina's mysteries combine elements of classical mysteries, hard-boiled detective novels, and Soviet *detektivy* in a way that is best suited for the expression of nostalgia for the Soviet past.

2. A MYSTERY OF THE 1990s

Alexandra Marinina writes intellectual and largely non-violent mysteries in a manner that is distinctly close to the tradition of European mysteries that present a crime primarily as a logical puzzle solved by a detective thanks to his/her intellect rather than to his/her triceps (Rahn 49-50). Most of Marinina's books are about a gifted female detective, Anastasia Kamenskaia, who unravels the most intricate mysteries in Moscow, and sometimes in the Russian hinterland, without ever firing a gun. Like Sherlock Holmes, who was often presented as a calculating machine devoid of a complex character, Kamenskaia is a thinking powerhouse whose only passion is to solve puzzles.

She insists that she is not a woman but a “computer on two legs” (*Prizrak muziki* [Spectre of Music]). She is “*neyarkaia*” (nondescript) “*nebroaskaia*” (inconspicuous); she is a “gray mouse” and one can pass past her “ten times without actually noticing her.” She hardly ever uses make-up; she applies it only occasionally either giving in to her devoted boyfriend and future husband Lesha’s pleading (in this case, prettying herself up is a torture for Nastia) or when it is required by the investigation. If the latter is the case, Nastia readily becomes a *femme fatale* or a romantic virgin, depending on the role she is to play.

Nastia’s laziness, of an almost mythical scale, is proverbial among her peers. Even her work “looked like idling in the office” (*Stechenie obstoiatel’stv* [Coincidence] 34). When she started working at 38 Petrovka, the headquarters of the Moscow police, Major Kamenskaia was described by malicious tongues as “a blue blood” who “does not take part in surveillance, chase criminals, penetrate criminal gangs. She just sits in her warm office sipping coffee and pretends she’s the great Nero Wolfe!” (*Coincidence* 33). This passage directly links Kamenskaia to the detectives of famous mysteries. Nastia’s laziness reminds one of Mycroft Holmes’ laziness.

However, apart from these characteristics that Marinina’s books share with classical mysteries, there are a number of elements that relate Marinina to the tradition of the hard-boiled detective fiction and Soviet *detektivny*. When we analyze the elements of the mystery in Marinina’s novels in the context of the post-Soviet culture, they may appear to have a slightly different purpose than merely following of the mystery tradition. Indeed, the absence of detailed descriptions of violence and relatively little “action” in Marinina’s novels may be interpreted as an antidote to the bloody violence

that had been splashing from the pages of *krutye detektivny* and *boeviki* of the 1990s. Yet, Marinina's books like the books by Konstantinov also take account of the *bespredel* situation in Russia of the 1990s.

Although her heroine, Anastasia Kamenskaia, is unlike the physically strong, bold, and brave men of *krutye detektivny* and *boeviki*, Marinina, like the authors of the hard-boiled detective novels, depicts investigation as being "constantly complicated by the milieu," by the existing social order and "social divisions" (Slotkin 91). Whereas European mysteries describe crimes as occasional violations of the habitual and overall just order,¹⁷² Marinina's novels offer a broader depiction of crime in contemporary Russia. Like *krutye detektivny*, Marinina's mysteries also depict a world in which gangsters can occupy high posts in society and the secret services may act against citizens of the country these services are to defend. The shocked outrage felt at the increase in crime permeates Marinina's books. In the novel *Ne meshaite palachu* [Stay Out of the Hangman's Game], Nastia Kamenskaia observes that at one time there were three or four murders per week in Moscow, but now there are seven to eight daily (246). In a fit of black humor, Nastia's colleague Yura Korotkov says that he bribes forensic specialists to make a priority of a corpse he needs: "Think of how the times change! Before, the living were lining up to buy Finnish boots and salami, now the dead are lining up for an autopsy. ... Sometimes I think that our life is gradually sliding into a non-stop nightmare" (ibid.). The fact that contemporary Russia seems like a criminal nightmare even to detectives does not inspire optimism. Rather, the comparison of this

¹⁷² Based on the assumption that the existing order must be defended, the classical detective novel is socially and politically conservative (Bargainnier 17).

“nightmare” with the peaceful (no matter how tedious) past is meant to evoke nostalgia: everyone would prefer to queue for a pair of boots rather than to be in line for an autopsy.

The pessimism regarding Russia’s current state in Marinina’s novels is aggravated because police are sometimes portrayed as powerless to the point that Kamenskaia has to use the help of the Mafia leader Eduard Denisov (*Ubiitsa ponevole* [The Unwilling Murderer], *Igra na chuzhom pole* [Away Game]). Sometimes, she has to track criminals among the police and even amongst her colleagues at 38 Petrovka (*Spectre of Music*). In the novel *Stay Out of the Hangman’s Game*, Kamenskaia muses: “Today, in order to bribe a policemen, one has to do very little” (314). Honest policemen are exceptions, while many policemen on duty immediately head off to “small businesses to collect ‘a tax’” (ibid.). In the novel *Ukradennyi son* [Stolen Dream], Nastia and her supervisor Gordeev cannot trust any members of their small department because the Mafia has penetrated the police and not only is able to recruit current employees, but to train and educate “their own” people over many years in the colleges for detectives, lawyers, etc. The Mafia can control even the assignment of “their graduates” to different police units across Moscow.

Although not as often as authors of *krutye detektivy*, Marinina sometimes introduces plots in which the main criminals remain free while the police catch only small fry. For example, at the end of the novel *Smert’ radi smerti* [Death for the Sake of Death], although Kamenskaia’s investigation puts an end to one scheme for designing and trading secret psychotropic weapons, the main criminals sponsoring this project – the Russian Federal Secret Services that act in cooperation with the Mafia – are not

brought to book. The novel ends on a pessimistic note, suggesting that Russians are hostages to a criminal state. In the same way as was depicted by Stuart Kaminsky in his mysteries about Russia, being a killer in Russia described by Marinina is nothing more than a peculiar occupation. In the novel *Coincidence*, it is made clear that the killer traced by Anastasia is only one of many who serve the criminal world and criminal high-rank officials commissioning murders. In a brilliant depiction of the psychological battle between Anastasia and the hit man, the narrator conveys respect for the unlucky man. Although inspiring awe, he is definitely portrayed with sympathy. In the novel *Shesterki umiraiut pervymi* [Flunkies Die First], the real criminals who hire assassins remain in the shadows. The novel ends with the death of a girl who out of greed wanted to “work” as a hit woman. In most of Marinina’s novels dealing with crimes that have social causes rather than with crimes committed by maniacs (*Smert’ i nemnogo liubvi* [Death and a Bit of Love], *Svetlyi lik smerti* [Radiant Face of Death], *Posmertnyi obraz* [Posthumous Image]), evil is portrayed as a serious threat, which sometimes cannot be fully eliminated.

Unlike Soviet mysteries promoting a belief that crime will gradually disappear from the socialist society and that criminals may be rehabilitated and reformed into good citizens, Marinina’s novels offer a more realistic depiction of the Russian crime scene. Furthermore, unlike in the Soviet *detektiv* which maintained that criminals are amoral people with serious defects in upbringing, Marinina offers a simple if somewhat cynical and pessimistic classification of the criminal and non-criminal world. According to Nastia, “criminals are not necessarily the worst part of the population, and the police are not the best part of the population” (*Stay Out of the Hangman’s Game* 324). Moreover,

talented people do not want to work for the underpaid police, but “naturally aspire to use their expertise and abilities” where they are paid well (ibid.). Nastia’s position in regard to her real and potential adversaries from the underworld reminds one of the episode in Konstantinov’s novel in which a hero says that “everything is relative in life ... Not every good person is our friend and not every scum is our enemy” (87). In Marinina’s mysteries, like in *krutoi detektiv*, a policeman is no longer automatically a good character and a criminal is not necessarily a negative character, as was usually the case in the Soviet detective fiction. This position expressed in the new Russian *detektiv* is quite different from the philosophy inspiring Soviet detective fiction; the new perception of criminals and crime by Russian authors of the 1990s is definitely a result of the chronotopic influences on crime fiction. The *bespredel* context then modifies the genre of a Russian mystery in a similar way it modifies *krutye detektivy*.

Marinina, although she works in the genre of mystery could not help reflecting the *bespredel* atmosphere in her fiction. Since the *glasnost*’ period, social reality was storming the pages of Russian detective novels breaking down the walls of the tradition of the Soviet *detektiv* with its ideologically glossed depictions of crime. Similarly, the troubled reality of the 1920s and 1930s in the United States entered the pages of detective fiction and the authors who did not ignore this reality for the sake of purity of the detective genre, became famous. The American critic Gavin Lyall explains:

At the time Hammett was writing, which was during the Depression, during Prohibition, you couldn’t be unaware of what was going on in America. If you had any sensitivity at all you would know that there were a lot of people starving, a lot of people out of work – that there were a lot of people being shot down by rich gangsters. But I don’t think that Hammett thought there was a political solution available. He may have thought of a more moral,

social solution. He just believed that 'the huddled masses yearning to be free' was what America was about. (qtd. in Pavett 79)

The perception of reality by Marinina's Major, her compassion for those who suffer in the new Russia reminds one of the perceptions of Hammett as it is presented in the above statement. Like Hammett, Marinina offers a moral judgment on her time and society and provides hope that there are honest and smart detectives, at least in fiction. If the utopian quality of the Soviet detective novel was that the genre offered an incomplete picture of crime in Soviet society and treated crime as an utter anomaly that could be rooted out through socialist education, the utopia of Marinina's *detektivy* is that she depicts ideal detectives, honest, uncorrupt, who are ready to work even without pay. But the difference between Marinina and the authors of hard-boiled detective fiction is that she advocates a non-violent and legal form of dealing with corruption and loss of social guide-lines. For Hammett, violence presents a solution to social problems, a method of exposing corruption. Nastia, by contrast, lacks the self-admiration of a knight in shining armor saving society from evil, which is typical of the eager and violent heroes of the hard-boiled school. Unlike them, Kamenskaia is remarkably low-key.

Marinina offers a peculiar combination of the genre features of a mystery and a hard-boiled detective story. On the one hand, her novels are socially engaged, abound in realistic detail, and depict crime panoramically as is typical of a detective thriller. On the other hand, her heroine, Kamenskaia, deals with crime as if it were a routine affair, an anomaly that occurs in an otherwise healthy and stable society, which was typical of European classical mysteries and the Soviet tradition of detective fiction. Unlike the characters in *krutye detektivy*, who protest against the current order and strive for a

radical change in society, Kamenskaia bows to the existing social order, although she does not like it. Her actions are akin to a painkiller addressing the symptoms but not the root causes of the problem. She simply goes to work every day because she enjoys solving crime puzzles and accomplishing the specific tasks assigned to her by her boss who, in turn, also follows the orders of his superiors and does not take responsibility for the society at large, as is done by the protagonists of *boeviki* and hard-boiled detective novels.

That Kamenskaia is remarkably non-heroic (*nikakaia* as Marinina's readers describe her), although she functions in a society whose values she criticizes, is a point of crucial importance for the argument of this chapter. Whereas the unjust world, widespread crime and instability are perceived as *present* in the here and now by the heroes of *boeviki* – in other words, as an opportunity to display their courage, virtue, and superiority in fighting for a better world, – Kamenskaia perceives the injustice and instability in Russia as a *lack*, which she is incapable of changing herself. Hence, the yearning for a world in which there was no such lack, or in which the *lack* was manageable (like the shortages of consumer goods mentioned in *Stay Out of the Hangman's Game*, for instance). The perception of the current *bespredel* (lawlessness) in Russia as a *lack* triggers nostalgia for the Soviet past.

Marinina introduces characters that would have been most attractive in the Soviet *detektivy*. While her plots have an affinity with classical mysteries, and her interpretation of the milieu and “major” statements about the social order in Russia link her novels to the hard-boiled tradition of detective fiction, Marinina's strategy in depicting characters, her choice of heroes, anti-heroes, victims, and criminals clearly connects her detective

novels to Soviet culture. In the actual past, the values professed by Marinina were often criticized in the unofficial popular culture; in the 1990s, they are readily absorbed into popular entertainment. Like the fiction of Soviet times, Marinina romanticizes the inconspicuous (modesty) and collectivism while criticizing wealth and individualism.

3. ROMANTICIZING THE INCONSPICUOUS

Marinina's "gray" inconspicuous heroine differentiates her *detektivny* from Western detective writing, both those of the European mystery and hard-boiled traditions. Unlike Western authors, Marinina has no taste for sensational crimes. While Holmes, Poirot, and female detectives in Christie's novels dealt with sensational crimes, or, in any case, stressed the exceptional nature of a crime they were investigating (the disappearance of a unique gem stone, a 'strangest' incident that happened to a young engineer, events that 'shocked' the whole of London), Marinina's heroine modestly works as a major (and then as a colonel) of the Moscow police. She takes on the cases that her superiors tell her to investigate, she neither has nor wants the liberty to pick and choose a task that would match her intellectual ability. Of course, the crimes she is investigating are always very unusual, complex and intricate, but they are presented to the reader from the point of view of Nastia herself: as a "little puzzle" (*zadachka*), a job, routine work. Because of Kamenskaia's attitude these crimes become 'the usual stuff.' She, unlike many famous detectives, does not *act* like a sleuth, beaming with excitement when hot on the trail. She does not consider her work heroic. It is just 'her job,' like teaching math is the occupation of her boyfriend Lesha. She is ultimately an ordinary

person, *prosto Nastia*, and not a James Bond who is bored when he is not on a mission that matches his ego (no less than saving the world).

Unlike superheroes of action thrillers, Nastia neglects her body. She does not work out, does not allow her body to expect “any help from her” (*Stay Out of the Hangman’s Game* 208). She can hardly “drag herself up” in the morning (*Coincidence* 19) and never goes jogging, has backaches, and does not know how to shoot a pistol. She cannot go for more than two hours without a cup of coffee and a cigarette. Repetition of these features in many novels attests to a conscious depiction of Kamenskaia as a *passive* detective, an inactive sleuth.

Why this fascination with unheroic characters? Why did Kamenskaia, a garden-variety type in everything but her deductive abilities, look so attractive to readers in the mid-1990s?

One can answer this question in part by examining the acting history of Yelena Yakovleva who played parts that became milestones in the development of Russian popular culture. In 1988, during *perestroika*, Yakovleva starred in Petr Todorovskii’s *Intergirl* based on the novel by Vladimir Kunin. She became famous playing a bright, scandalous prostitute attending to the sexual needs of foreign tourists in Leningrad. She shocked the Soviet viewer; she was so unlike the puritanical, bleak female characters of late Soviet times. A decade later, Yelena Yakovleva starred in the popular detective TV serial *Kamenskaia* (1999-2000) by Valerii Todorovskii who is son of Petr Todorovskii. It is symbolic (even if it was a pure coincidence) that the same actress, and, more importantly, the same facial and psychological type, became a great success as the female detective Nastia Kamenskaia, patently lacking sex-appeal and “gray” but

suddenly so outstanding, original and attractive amid the mob of boring, garishly dressed and totally uninteresting prostitutes proliferating in post-Soviet mass culture. Marinina and Valerii Todorovskii sensed the surfeit of the Russian reader and viewer fed up with scandalous revelations and bored with the actions of banal, in their so-called originality, characters, which, when they multiplied, stopped being noticed and formed a somewhat vulgar background. On the contrary, the ability to be “simple Nastia,” a normal ordinary person rather than *a femme fatale*, became attractive.

In the novel *Chuzhaia maska* [Somebody Else’s Mask], Marinina tells the story of a female character that very much resembles the story of the transformation of Yelena Yakovleva’s cinematic heroines. Irina Novikova, playing the part of the wife of a prominent politician,¹⁷³ dreams about family happiness, which she sees as an intimate family lunch and dinner in the kitchen rather than hosting guests in the dining-room. For her, a vacuum cleaner sounds like the best orchestra, and ecstasy comes from a chance to cook something for her husband. Irina’s attraction to the simple joys stems from her past experiences as a hooker working under cover of a massage parlor who lacked such simple and necessary things as home, family, and a relationship with one person. She understands that chasing wealth leads to slavery. *Perestroika* was a good time for Petr Todorovskii’s critique of the “gray” life and lies of Soviet everyday existence, whereas the end of the 1990s proved to be the right time for Todorovskii Jr.’s critique of scandals, notoriety, and individualism. Russian viewers, who were sick of historical and political revelations, were ready to accept a modest heroine, with all her aches and pains, as a role model.

¹⁷³ The real wife of the character was murdered.

The romantic twist on the everyday routine is Marinina's specialty. Nastia's husband Lesha, a charming and talented math professor, can occasionally fancy a long-legged blonde. Yet he quickly gets bored with the standard beauties and once again admits that he is only truly happy with "humdrum" Nastia who emanates the aura of the usual. Other homely or plain women in Marinina's novels earn the narrator's sympathy as well. *Illiuziia grekha* [Illusion of Sin], for instance, features ill-favored, uneducated Irina, who is nevertheless presented to the reader as a worthy attractive character, for she is exceptionally honest, industrious, responsible, and caring. That is why one of the positive characters in the novel (although married to a beautiful woman) falls in love with Irina. The principle governing the rendering of female characters in Marinina's novels reminds one of the professed Soviet principle that valued "spiritual beauty" over attractive appearance.

Catharine Nepomnyashchy observes that Marinina's books help the reader conquer his/her fear, the results from Russian instability; they make instability appear less threatening and thus help overcome it (182). There are a number of ways in which this effect is achieved. Kamenskaia appeals to the reader because she resembles an ordinary person, the woman next door. Like the majority of Marinina's readers, she lives in a small studio apartment in an outlying, nonprestigious area of Moscow. Like Marinina's readers, Kamenskaia is made happy by small things. She is happy when there is a pack of juice in the fridge, which she drinks sparingly because it is so expensive. She is happy if she can get a side-job during her vacations; she translates detective novels from French and English and spends her honoraria on luxuries such as coffee, cigarettes, and juice. Kamenskaia is elated when she gets a free trip to Italy, delighted when she has

a chance to sleep longer, finds time for a coffee break, or when her backache does not trouble her too much.

Kamenskaia may be attractive to the reader not only because she is temperate and clever, but also because she is attentive to people, kind, fair, not snobbish, and helps and protects the weak in a ruthless world in which money has become the be-all and end-all. Nastia is also attractive because while she has a chance to earn good money (by translating), she nevertheless remains a state-employed underpaid investigator. As a consolation to the army of Russians who can hardly make ends meet with their miserable salaries, Marinina shows that money is not everything in life and that it is possible to be a decent person in such seemingly indecent times. Yes, the time may not be the best, but poverty is not a vice; it is more important to look to your soul – that is the message of Marinina's novels.¹⁷⁴

4. GOOD COMRADE NASTIA

Kamenskaia would have been the ideal Soviet citizen. She is indeed an exemplary Soviet person in the post-Soviet epoch. She is no longer building communism and certainly does not want to look again toward the radiant future, but tired of reforms and the lack of stability in Yeltsyn's Russia, she lives according to the principles valued from her childhood (without viewing them as Soviet, but rather as the norm). She idealizes these principles and adjusts them to the contradictions of contemporary life.

¹⁷⁴ On renegotiations of intelligentsia values in post-Soviet *boevik* and *detektiv*, see my article "Intelligentsia v rossiiskom detektive" [The *Intelligentsia* and Detective Fiction] *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* (Moscow, 2001) No. 4 (18): 94-103.

Kamenskaia's collectivism is the feature that is especially telling in relation to the post-Soviet Russian nostalgia for the values of Soviet times and idealizing those values. Alexandra Marinina herself, in her interview given to *LifeStyle* magazine, expresses her regret that "people have become less trusting in their relatives, partners, friends and the government," that Russians have "developed a sense of humiliation because Russia has ceased to be the world's No. 2 superpower" and that "many have lost pride in their motherland."¹⁷⁵ Marinina's view of individualism explains her idealization of collectivist values and justice opposed to the values of her negative characters, corrupt politicians and crooks. Kamenskaia is a model comrade,¹⁷⁶ which distinguishes her from the heroes of Western classical mysteries and hard-boiled detective fiction.¹⁷⁷ Even though many famous Western detectives had their favorite assistants, their private life (personal relationships that were not connected with their professional work) were normally outside the narrator's attention. Marinina, on the contrary, introduces numerous passages on how much Nastia's colleague Kolia Seluianov suffers, or about the hard

¹⁷⁵ Alexandra Marinina, "Many Have Lost Pride in Their Motherland," *Lifestyle* №.12 (55). 3 April (2000): <<http://www.russijournal.com/ls/article.shtml?ad=502>> last accessed 25 July 2003. A well-known politician, Ella Pamfilova, also calls for a struggle for collective values: "we feel humiliated because Russia is not respected in the world and has been shunted off to the sidelines. This is why the Russians are suffering from spiritual degradation and escape into the cocoon of individualism and everyday life, though we have always been a nation with a strong collectivist drive. The Soviet era's collectivism was impersonal as the system suppressed individuality. Now we are standing at the crossroads — we will either develop into a society of egoists and individualists or revive our inherent collectivism." Ella Pamfilova, "We are a highly spirited nation," *Lifestyle* №.12 (55). 3 April (2000): <<http://www.russijournal.com/ls/article.shtml?ad=502>> last accessed 25 July 2003.

¹⁷⁶ Like the heroes of the Soviet children's writer Arkadii Gaidar, Kamenskaia takes care of the sick. She visits sick children in the *Spectre of Music* and the *Illusion of Sin*. She tries her best to understand the psychology and help victims, witnesses and even criminals (she tries to prevent the suicide of the maniac-killer in *Death and a Little Love*).

¹⁷⁷ On the genesis of the character of an individualist detective in the Western tradition, see: Stephen Knight, "Enter the Detective: Early Patterns of Crime Fiction," *The Art of Murder: New Essays on Detective Fiction*, ed. H.Gustav Klaus and Stephen Knight (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 1998) 10-26.

unhappy family life of her other colleague, Yura Korotkov; about the life of Volodya Lartsev after his wife's death, as well as about Nastia's family.

In the novel *The Stolen Dream*, Kamenskaia and her supervisor Gordeev are heartbroken when they learn that they cannot trust their colleagues until they find out who among their group has become a traitor. Normally Kamenskaia, like characters in the Soviet *detektivy*, works in a collective and structures the investigation in such a way that the best abilities and talents of everyone in the group are used to the fullest. She is a close friend of her colleagues, Yura Korotkov, Misha Dotsenko, Seluianov and Lartsev. They can stop by her place any time, stay for the night, count on her support and advice in their personal life. Gordeev's group ("kids" as he sometimes calls them affectionately) can call each other any time of the day or night, whether it concerns their work or personal matters. In a word, the office where Kamenskaia works is similar to a Soviet department in which employees knew everything, not only about the professional life of their colleagues but also about his or her family and personal life. This was (as in *Kamenskaia*) a place where people regularly got together for tea-breaks, for a friendly chat, shared their problems and their joys. In the novel *Requiem*, Kamenskaia has left her department. She now has a better, more secure, well-paid, and more prestigious post in General Zatochnyi's office, and is responsible for battling the Mafia. Yet, Nastia misses her colleagues at 38 Petrovka so much that she decides to quit the post in Zatochnyi's office and return to her old job. For the sake of the collective, for the sake of her friends and peers, Kamenskaia sacrifices her chance at the good life, the chance to be singled out and advance her career.

Such an interpretation of collectivism does not include the possible dark sides of Soviet-type closeness, conveniently forgetting how a Soviet collective could make one's life hell by constant intrusions into his/her private life. On the contrary, in depicting collectivism, Marinina's novels follow the examples of collectivism in Soviet literature rather than rely on the real-life prototypes of collectivism.¹⁷⁸ In other words, modern myths rely on the myths from the past about a historical future rather than on the raw material of that past. The loss of Russian closeness and intimate friendships (even if they are idealized by failing memory) causes nostalgia; and Marinina's modest and Soviet-like characters who still show the lost kind of intimacy and sincerity become popular whereas individualist supermen of contemporary thrillers and TV serials win the sympathy of fewer viewers and readers. In one word, Marinina's *detektivy* are a Soviet ode to collectivism performed in a new style, just another "old song about the main things."

5. 'OUR PEOPLE DO NOT TAKE A CAB TO GO TO A BAKERY'

One more significant feature of Marinina's detective novels relating them to the Soviet past is the criticism of the so-called "beautiful life." In the late Soviet period, *krasivaia zhizn'* was criticized in Komsomol and party meetings, in the newspapers,

¹⁷⁸ The Soviet detective novels featured a collective victory over evil. Two brave men and one woman were successfully fighting crime in *The Experts...*; the duo of Zhiglov and Sharapov impressed the readers of *The Era of Mercy (Era miloserdiia)* by the brothers Vainer and the viewers of the blockbuster TV serial based on this novel *Mesto vstrechi izmenit' nel'zia* [The Meeting Place Cannot be Changed]. Investigation was also a distinctly collective enterprise in Leonov's *Traktir na Piatnitskoi* [Tavern on Piatnitskii Street] and in Semenov's novels *6 Ogarev Street*, and *38 Petrovka*. A powerful *collective* – the system, society, and state – cemented on the pages of detective fiction, propped and supported each detective. The criminals, on the contrary, were solitary; even if the plot dealt with a criminal gang (as in *The Tavern on Piatnitskii Street*), each criminal was a loner, ready to betray the rest as soon as the necessity to act together was over.

cinema, and in literature.¹⁷⁹ In the Soviet detective novel, the desire to live in style inevitably led a character to crime. Spirituality and concern for the ‘moral aspect’ were offered as a means to counteract the spreading disease of *veshchism* (craving for things), and living in style. In the mass consciousness in the last decades of the USSR, however, the “beautiful life” was increasingly presented as a “norm.” Even before *perestroika*, the phrase “happiness does not lie in money” was supplemented by “but in its amount.” At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, millions of viewers started to avidly watch¹⁸⁰ images and models of the “beautiful life” shown in American and Mexican TV soap-operas. Viewers were fascinated by the clothes of the heroes, the houses, interiors, cars and other elements of the “living in style” that soon became available to Russian consumers in real life, in the sense that they were physically imported into Russia, rather than in the sense of their affordability. Yet, the greater the availability of the elements of the “beautiful life,” the greater the realization they were not affordable. The stylish life became a means of drawing a new social frontier between the lucky and prosperous ones, and the losers who could not afford to live in style.

In Marinina’s novels, wealth – even if it is not utterly immoral – is dangerous. To be rich, or to aspire to be rich, is to put one’s life at risk or to embark upon the path of crime that also leads to death. This is a significant distinction between Marinina’s *detektivny* and the mysteries of European authors for whom private property is a pillar of society and social order. In the mysteries of Simenon, Conan Doyle, and Christie, detectives protect the bourgeoisie and cultural elite, whereas the poor figure in the

¹⁷⁹ The formula of such criticism was the phrase from a famous comedy by Leonid Gaidai *Brilliantovaia ruka* [The Diamond Hand]: “Our people do not take a cab to go to a bakery.”

¹⁸⁰ It is a virtual consumption.

novels only as background, as realistic details of the setting, or as accidental victims or criminals. All the maids, butlers, and night porters form a social strata which is largely beneath the interest of famous detectives. Wealth as a social phenomenon, even if a criminal is from a rich milieu, is not morally condemned, is not linked to evil as it is condemned and linked to evil in Marinina's novels.

In the *Illusion of Sin*, Nastia's colleague, Yura Korotkov explains his view of the hard-heartedness of his compatriots:

Money poisons people, Nastia. The whole civilized world has a genetic, inborn understanding that some people have a lot of money and even a great deal of money, whereas others have very little money or have none at all. ... Our compatriots have grown up convinced that everyone should be equally poor. That is why when suddenly the accustomed flow of life has changed, and the change is so drastic, psychology was not ready for the change. Is it possible that a person could get a pension which is the equivalent of a monthly pass on city transport? And at the same time, his or her neighbour owns three cars and two country cottages and spends in a supermarket at one go the equivalent of three grannies' pensions? What can this generate but anger, envy, indifference to the troubles of others and unjustified greed? (62)

Marinina's sympathies are with the unfortunate, the poor, rather than with the "new Russians." Crime in Marinina's novels often takes place in the circles of well-to-do Russians. In the *Stylist*, for instance, the investigation takes Kamenskaia to a rich suburban area called "Dream" where the "new Russians" enjoy living in spacious houses in a protected environment, "unaffordable for old Russians" (*Stylist* 13). It turns out that it is dangerous to live in the "Dream" development; one inhabitant is a pervert who murders young men. The very seclusion of the district provides an opportunity for criminal behavior. In *Requiem*, a seemingly respectable couple, famous musicians, turn

out to be drug addicts who start an under-cover brothel at their dacha that features child prostitution, and production of porn-videotapes subsequently used as blackmailing material. The reader is expected to feel satisfied when a vulgar, luxury-craving pop-singer murders his manager, who was in turn involved in numerous crimes. In the novel *Stay Out of the Hangman's Way*, the death of the oil magnate Yurtsev at a reception with the glitterati of the business world is calculated to produce a similar effect. In the same novel, a top politician in the Russian province is shot by his own daughter who is a drug addict. Such deaths tell the reader: see how these people end up – they are killed, they have no peace at home, they are miserable. Kamenskaia exposes the moral degradation and crime among the celebrities: pop music stars, actors and film directors, businessmen, corrupt scientists and the KGB. Even the drive to become rich is condemned by Marinina. Just the desire to leave the ‘herd’ to stand out, be conspicuous, be original, leads Marinina’s characters into trouble. For example, a young woman Lera (*Requiem*) who aspires to be different, ends up as a plaything in the hands of an uncouth pop-singer prone to crime. Dissolute Vika Yeremina, a beauty whose only goal in life is to become rich and have a family (to which end she hires on as a secretary used by the company as a whore) becomes a victim of murder. The same logic governs the choice of victims in the novels *Away Game* and *Flunkies Die First*. Girls who sell their bodies as a means to get “rich” or who agree to become killers (in *Flunkies Die First*, the girl demonstrates her value as a killer to her potential employers by murdering innocent passers-by in the Moscow oblast) end up as victims themselves.

Why did such treatment of wealth and of the desire to live well become popular with Marinina’s readers? Perhaps reading about the ultimate failure of the rich, the

movers and shakers, and the prominent, is psychologically soothing for those who did not do very well in the Russian 1990s. Marinina's characters provide a vindication for those who are underpaid: Kamenskaia is a fine detective and yet she is not paid well, which means that a low salary does not necessarily signify inferior professional qualities. A modest lifestyle is thus excused by adhering to high moral standards.

6. TO THE RADIANT PAST

Kamenskaia resembles the famous Western detectives in her deductive abilities.¹⁸¹ However, Marinina does not utilize the opportunity that emerged after the lifting of censorship in Russia to make investigation the exclusive intellectual property of one person and the means of his well-being, as is typical of the classical mystery. On the contrary, in the Soviet manner, Marinina makes the intellect of her heroine serve the collective and serve it on principle rather than because she is well-paid. The detailed descriptions of Kamenskaia's everyday life and her home prove to the reader that in post-Soviet Russia one can feel quite content and happy by limiting one's requirements. By contrast, characters with exaggerated demands end up as losers in Marinina's novels.

The new element in Marinina's detective novels is the way the panoramic picture of social life in Russia, and the numerous details of the everyday life influence the investigating, details of politics, corruption, and economic hardships. In brief, unlike the classical mystery and Soviet detective novels, the heroine of Marinina lives in the "nightmarish" present, as did the heroes of American hard-boiled fiction in the 1920s

¹⁸¹ Western mysteries became very popular with Soviet readers soon after the Revolution; in particular during the NEP period when, on the initiative of Nikolai Bukharin, the series "Red Pinkertons" was published in Russian. See the details in Katarina Clark, *Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

and '30s. Yet, common features shared by Marinina's novels and Western *detektivy* serve the purpose of expressing nostalgia in post-Soviet Russia. Marinina's heroine continues to work as if the surrounding reality needs only minor adjustments rather than a large-scale major transformation. Kamenskaia does not suggest any radical changes. She is not looking into the future either. On the contrary, she is a comfort to her fellow-workers, who live in the nightmare. She does not console them with the promise of a better future, but rather by showing them how to adjust the customary familiar norms and values of the Soviet past to the new awful conditions; how to change (if you have to) minimally without losing one's own sense of decency, self-appreciation, and respect. In other words, instead of offering her admirers a radiant future, Marinina offers them the preservation of the "radiant" past, idealizing the qualities that were typical of Soviet life in the ideal: social justice, abolition of private property, collectivism and support.

The analysis of Marinina's novels shows that the same qualities that were taken for granted in the Soviet past and that were so readily rejected during the *perestroika* period became attractive again, after the fifteen years of attempted reforms. The Russian popular consciousness in the 1990s started to idealize the peaceful life, simplicity and comradeship of the Soviet type conveniently forgetting about the side effects that were loathsome to the same people during the Soviet period. Russian memory of the past in the second half of the 1990s seemed to erase the painful and the embarrassing features in order to resurrect the positive features perceived as being lost. Marinina's ideal reader is nostalgic not about the concrete order of things that existed in reality in the past but about the myths of the past, the ability to live in utopia, the capacity to be optimistic even if only self-deceived.

Marinina's novels are the expression of a nostalgia that is not a threat. The sentiment that developed by the middle of the 1990s and that, indeed, became contested by different social groups and expressed in a variety of more or less aggressive forms, was appropriated by mass culture, commercialized, and turned into popular entertainment. By changing "hands," the personal sentiment of nostalgia gradually became reified and reduced to a "little nostalgia" of the kind that is expressed in Marinina's novels and such shows as the *Old Songs about the Main Things*. Moreover, it seems that mass culture is a means to overcome nostalgia. The decline in Marinina's popularity by the end of the 1990s is only one piece of evidence that nostalgia is no longer the best sell and the top entertainment in Russia.

Chapter 6

THE COUNTRY RESEMBLING RUSSIA: THE USE OF HISTORY IN BORIS AKUNIN'S DETECTIVE NOVELS

1. ENTER AKUNIN

The historical detective novels signed "Boris Akunin" first appeared in 1998. Their elegant and witty protagonist, Erast Fandorin, became instantly popular.¹⁸² For the first time, people did not feel they had to remove a detective novel from their coffee table before guests arrived, nor did they try to conceal the book's cover with a makeshift newspaper jacket. On the jacket of Akunin's books there were no garish pictures of half-naked bodies and distorted faces covered in blood. For the first time, university professors were not ashamed of revealing they were familiar with the books their students were stealthily reading at the back of the classroom. Akunin quickly acquired the reputation of a detective writer for the *intelligentsia*.¹⁸³ Interest in his novels was

¹⁸² The Erast Fandorin series, *Novyi Detektiv* (1998-), had a record rating in 2001. See Dmitrii Tkachev, "Serial'nye ubiistva i prochee" [Serial Killers, etc.] in: *Moskovskii komsomolets-bul'var* 6 July 2001: <<http://www.Fandorin.ru/cgi-bin/forum/YaBB.pl?board=articles&action=display&num=522&start=0>> last accessed 20 June 2003.

¹⁸³ See Igor Shevelev, "Ai da altyn, ai da tolobas!" *Vremia MN* No. 169. 10 October 2000: <<http://www.russianshopping.com/news/bk/20001010/index.htm>> last accessed 25 July 2003; see also Natalia Trauberg, "Pelageia i Mumi-Trol'" [Pelageia and Mumi-Trol], *Nezavisimaia gazeta* 26 August 2000: <http://religion.ng.ru/printed/printing/2000-06-28/7_pelagia.html> last accessed 25 July 2003. Lev Pirogov argues that Akunin's novel *Altyn Tolobas* is good quality mass literature, which is favorably different from detective fiction about contemporary gangsters. See Lev Pirogov, "Evangeliie ot Iudy" [The Gospel According to Juda], *Knizhnyi razval. Prilozhenie k Literaturnoi gazete* 1-7 November 2000: <<http://www.fandorin.ru/akunin/articles/tolobaspirogov.html>> last accessed 25 July 2003. Olga Slavnikova claims that thanks to Akunin, Russia is witnessing the development of the cult of "stylish detective fiction": Olga Slavnikova, "Tysiacha vtoraia noch'" [The Thousand and Second Night], *Vremia MN* 4 September 2002: <<http://www.vremyamn.ru/cgi-bin/2000/1005/11/4.html>> last accessed 25 July

heightened by the fact that the author used a pseudonym, Akunin, and did not reveal his true identity. In the winter of 1999 the mystery was solved: Boris Akunin turned out to be the pen-name of Grigorii Chkhartishvili, a literary critic and scholar, known for his translations of English, American, and Japanese classics, and his work as the lead editor of the *Anthology of Japanese Literature* and former deputy editor-in-chief of the thick journal *Inostrannaia literatura*. Akunin's *detektivy* have been translated into French, English, Italian, Japanese, and other languages, received literary prizes,¹⁸⁴ have been adapted for the stage,¹⁸⁵ and made into TV series and films.¹⁸⁶

My purpose in this chapter is to discuss the representative sense of Russia which emerges from Akunin's novels. Of the three writers whose work I analyze in the "Russian" part of the thesis – Konstantinov, Marinina, and Akunin, – Akunin is seemingly the least interested in Russia's present. Apart from the series *Priklucheniia Erasta Fandorina* [Adventures of Erast Fandorin] (1998-), which is set before the Revolution, Akunin has developed two more series. *Priklucheniia sestry Pelagei* [The

2003. Akunin's works were also praised in reviews published in *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, *Izvestiia*, *Kommersant-daily*, *Kul't lichnostei* and other venues.

¹⁸⁴ In 2000, Akunin's *Coronation* won the Antibooker Prize and in the same year, at the Moscow Book Fair, Akunin was hailed the Russian writer of the year. See "Boris Akunin nazvan rossiikim 'pisatelem goda'" [Boris Akunin Named Russian Writer of the Year], *Utrenniaia gazeta* 11 September 2000: <<http://www.utro.ru/news/culture/2000/09/11/20000911105026.shtml>> last accessed 25 July 2003.

¹⁸⁵ The School of Modern Drama in Moscow started its 2002 theatre season with Akunin's 2000 detective remake of Chekhov's *The Seagull*. Olga Romantsova, "Trepleva i Zarechnui ishem vseгда: interviu s Iosifom Reihelhausom" [We Are Always Looking for Trepolev and Zarechnaia], *Vremia MN* 20 August 2002: <<http://www.vremyamn.ru/cgi-bin/2000/994/6/3.html>> last accessed 25 July 2003. Akunin's *Azazel'* was adapted for the stage by Aleksei Borodin at the Russian Youth Theatre in 2002.

¹⁸⁶ In 2002 Alexander Adabashian released a TV series based on Akunin's *Azazel'*; in 2003, the novel came out in English under the title *The Winter Queen*. Most reviews rated the TV serial as unsuccessful. For more on the reception of this adaptation, see: Slava Taroshchina, "Mul'timediinyi Akunin" [Multimedia Akunin], *Vremia MN* 15 March 2002: <<http://www.vremyamn.ru/cgi-bin/2000/893/8/5.html>> last accessed 25 July 2003; Olga Shumiatskaia, "Proiavlenie geroia" [Knowing the Hero], *Vremia MN* 12 March 2002: <<http://www.vremyamn.ru/cgi-bin/2000/890/7/1.html>> last accessed 25 July 2003. Currently an American film director Paul Verhoeven is working on a film based on Akunin's *Azazel'*.

Adventures of Sister Pelageia] (1999-2003)¹⁸⁷ is a trilogy about crimes in the Russian hinterland of the 19th century, investigated by a thirty-year-old nun. So far, the series *Priklucheniia magistra* [The Adventures of Nicholas] (2000-) is comprised of two novels. *Altyn-Tolobas* (2000) recounts the adventures of Nicholas Fandorin, grand-nephew of the famous Erast Petrovich, and those of Cornelius von Dorn, the patriarch of the Russian line of the family in the 17th century. *Vneklassnoe chtenie* [Recommended Reading] (2002) is about Nicholas Fandorin and his 18th century Russian ancestors, who lived during the reign of Catherine the Great.¹⁸⁸

My contention is that although Akunin's novels are mostly set in the distant past, they have relevance for the on-going debate about the "Russian path" and the Russian search for a new national identity. Indeed, the characteristic of the cultural chronotope of the 1990s that has been the focus of "Re-Writing Russia," the second part of my dissertation, is the struggle for the ways Russia constructs its vision of itself in time. Russian crime fiction offers varying perceptions of the 1990s. Each in its own way, different genres of the new *detektiv* capture the changes in Russia after 1991 and encourage a new understanding of Russian history. In the preceding two chapters of the thesis, I showed how the genres of *krutye detektivy* and post-Soviet mysteries contest the image of Russia in the 1990s. They claim their portion of Russian cultural memory

¹⁸⁷ At the 14th International Book Fair in Moscow in 2001, the series about Sister Pelageia received the "Bestseller" award. See Clarisa Pulson, "Solzhenytsin, "Kys," i "Pelageia" – nashe vse" [Solzhenytsin, "Kys," and "Pelageia": On Everything], *Vremia MN* 6 September 2001: <<http://www.vremyamn.ru/cgi-bin/2000/159/1/1.html>> last accessed 25 July 2003. The series consists of three novels: *Pelageia i belyi bul'dog* [Pelageia and the White Bulldog], *Pelageia i chernyi monakh* [Pelageia and the Black Monk], and *Pelageia i krasnyi petukh* [Pelageia and the Red Rooster].

¹⁸⁸ Besides these three series of detective novels and a detective remake of Chekhov's *Seagull*, Akunin published a small collection of stories entitled *Skazki dlia idiotov* [The Tales for Idiots], and *Staroe kladbishche na Donu* [The Old Cemetery on the Don].

while, to use Huysen's terms, "remembering" and "articulating" Russia's past and present. While *krutye detektivy* and *boeviki* manifest an aggressive response to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, mysteries by such authors as Alexandra Marinina express nostalgia for the Soviet past and only idealize the values promoted during the Brezhnev era. Both *krutye detektivy* Konstantinov and mysteries by Marinina re-write Russian past and depict the Russian present using the realist method. Konstantinov, as I showed in the chapter "Tough Guys in Rough Times: Literature of the *Bespredel*" claims that his novels are all based on real-life stories and that his goal is to tell the "truth" about life in Russia. The type of hero that emerges from Konstantinov's novels is a disillusioned individual who feels betrayed both by the Soviet past and in the present. Marinina's *detektivy*, by contrast, focus on characters that embody the idealized vision of the late Soviet period and are an example of how some positive principles from the Soviet past can help a person cope with Russia's problems in the 1990s. The "truth" about Russia told by Marinina is different from what is perceived as true by Konstantinov's heroes. How do we explain the co-existence of multiple perspectives on the Russian past in *detektivy*?

Unlike other authors of detective novels in contemporary Russia, Akunin chooses the genre of a historical detective novel, which allows him to avoid compelling comparisons between Russia's present and Russia of the late Soviet period. Moreover, unlike authors who concern themselves with deciding which period was better, Akunin departs from the realist tradition and seems not to worry about the "true" assessment of Russian history. While choosing the framework of the historical novel for his re-writing of Russia, Akunin is at the same time far less interested in constructing the "true" image

of Russia. He is the first among contemporary Russian detective authors to combine the genre of the historical detective novel with postmodernist aesthetics. I intend to show that the postmodern style of Akunin's detective novels and the exploration of the historical novel genre in his *detektivy* are a complex effect of the relationship between social practice and culture, and a relevant response to a cultural situation in Russia of the end of the 1990s.

2. AKUNIN AND THE DEBATE ON RUSSIAN HISTORY

Filling in the "blank spots of history" – as the process of historical re-discovery of the past was frequently described during the *glasnost'* period – became a new convention in Russian culture of the 1990s. The American cultural critic Susan Buck-Morss describes the end of the Soviet era as a tragic "shattering of the dreams of modernity – of social utopia, historical progress, and material plenty for all (68). Over the last two decades, the values of the Soviet past were "exposed as false myths."¹⁸⁹ The Soviet era was demythologized in memoirs, academic publications, press, drama and fiction, feature films, documentaries, and even commercials. During *perestroika*, the Russian intelligentsia denounced the Soviet period as a "no-time."¹⁹⁰ This

¹⁸⁹ A discussion of the changes in the treatment of Russian history in the post-Soviet cinema is offered by Birgit Beumers. See Birgit Beumers, "Myth-making and Myth-taking: Lost Ideals and the War in Contemporary Russian Cinema," *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 42, no.1-2 (2000) 171-189.

¹⁹⁰ Stanislav Govorukhin's documentary *Tak zhit' nel'zia* [We Can't Live Like This] (1990) helped destroy public belief in Soviet ideals. The title was borrowed from a monologue by a satirist Mikhail Zhvanetskii, one of many that served the purpose of propelling the politics of *glasnost'* and destroyed the old system of values. The shock experienced by Russians during radical critique of the Soviet value system is captured by Nancy Ries in the book *The Russian Talk*. See Nancy Ries, *The Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation During Perestroika* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997).

demythologizing concerned not only Soviet times but also the Soviet way of depicting Russia's pre-revolutionary history.

There is nothing new in the idea that a society that has just experienced significant, even shocking transition looks for something solid on which to build a new self-definition and for that task turns to history. As Georg Lukács reminds us in *The Historical Novel*, "the lessons of history provide the principles with whose help a "reasonable" society, a "reasonable" state may be created" (20). In the same way as "the history writing of the Enlightenment was... an ideological preparation for the French Revolution" (Lukács 20), the reconsideration of history in Russia since *perestroika* is an important part of Russia's transition from socialism to a new republic. Literature serves as an ideological preparation for the way out of a national identity crisis. The growth of historicism in the country serves as the social and ideological basis for the artistic reflection of the past. From it the new historical novel emerges.

The separation between the Russian past and its post-Soviet reconstruction in the 1990s paves the way for creating new national myths in Russia. With Soviet utopian aspirations discarded, the 19th century and the Silver Age became particularly exemplary. David Remnick argues in *Lenin's Tomb* that "the Communist Party's myth-making machinery had been replaced, to some degree, by Russian nostalgia for a pre-Revolutionary utopia that never was" (1994: 523). This nostalgia manifested itself in various cultural forms. In her review of the results of the Second All-Russian History Contest *The Person in History. Russia, the 20th Century*, Irina Shcherbakova mentions that the contestants' essays were full of nostalgic myths. The most noticeable among them was the myth of a "wonderful pre-revolutionary Russia, which 'we have lost.'"

Dozens of essays “about marvellous estates, magnificent factories and majestic monasteries that were burnt, robbed, and destroyed (later)” make no mention of the negative aspects of the imperial past. The myths about a “wonderful pre-revolutionary Russia” and “people’s wellbeing” before 1917 confer on the past a wholeness that had never existed.¹⁹¹

Television and the cinema have been particularly active in mythologizing the pre-revolutionary past.¹⁹² Stanislav Govorukhin’s 1992 documentary *Rossia, kotoruiu my poteriali* [The Russia We Have Lost] became very influential in the 1990s’ popular idealization of tsarist Russia.¹⁹³ The film depicts the last Romanov – “previously considered a dolt and a weakling in Communist propaganda – as a man of great learning, military skill, and compassion” (Remnick 1994: 523). Another important project with a nationalist agenda is Nikita Mikhalkov’s 1999 film *Sibirskii tsiriul’nik* [The Barber of Siberia], with Mikhalkov himself playing the part of Alexander III. The film described by Leonid Parfenov as “a three-hour commercial about Russia,”¹⁹⁴ idealizes the Russian imperial past and romanticizes the image of the Russian military.¹⁹⁵ As Mikhalkov himself commented, the film *The Barber of Siberia* expresses the national idea, the

¹⁹¹ Irina Shcherbakova, “Pamiat’ i mif” [Memory and Myth], *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* No. 6 (20) (2001): <<http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2001/6/sherba-pr.htm>> last accessed 25 July 2003.

¹⁹² In the 1990s, television often aired historical programs about Russia’s prosperity before WW I.

¹⁹³ Academic publications with a distinct nationalist flavor also contributed to a critique of the Soviet period and the establishment of a new myth about tsarist Russia. See, e.g. the following collection of articles: Iu.S. Kukushkin (ed.), *Russkii narod: istoricheskaia sud’ba v xx veke* [The Russian People: Its Historical Fate in the Twentieth Century] (Moscow: TOO "ANKO", 1993).

¹⁹⁴ *Namedni 1997* by Leonid Parfenov.

¹⁹⁵ Birgit Beumers writes that the film is “designed to boost the image of Russia as a nation with high ideals, unwilling to compromise, and with a strong leadership” and “contains a strange nationalistic statement for the future of Russia, envisaging the resurrection of absolute rule and discipline that would reinstate a system of moral values” (Beumers 176).

greatness of the union of the Orthodox religion, monarchy, and people. In 2000, Mikhalkov opened the 22nd International Film Festival in Moscow with Gleb Panfilov's film *Romanovy – ventsenosnaia semia* [The Romanovs – the Sovereign Family]. Like Mikhalkov's *The Barber of Siberia*, Panfilov's film propagated the same Russian myth about the prosperous pre-revolutionary past and continued the tradition of the post-Soviet glorification of Russian monarchism. Another memorable example of such glorification is the book *Nikolai II: Zhizn' i smert'* [Nicholas II: His Life and Death] by Edward Radzinskii; Radzinskii's research was much popularized in his TV show *Zagadki istorii* [Historical Puzzles]. The media campaign surrounding the burial and then the canonization of the Romanov family in 2000 also added to the idealization of Russian monarchy. The critic Oleg Kinskii comments on the changes in the public perception of imperial Russia:

[F]or the majority of people the monarchy has become associated with simply strong and fair regime that ensures the wellbeing of its people. This idealized image was formed by the film of Stanislav Govorukhin's film *The Russia We Have Lost* and by TV programs, books, and magazine and newspaper articles propagating ideas very similar to those of Govorukhin. For many, the idea of the monarchy has entirely lost its political pertinence; it is almost devoid of historical and political specifics, and what is left is only signs – the moral (such as “human” and “noble”) and the aesthetic (“beautiful”).¹⁹⁶

This idealization of Russia's imperial history and, in particular, of late 19th century and early 20th century provides the cultural backdrop against which Akunin creates his tales of sister Pelageia, Erast Fandorin and his ancestors and descendants.

¹⁹⁶ Oleg Kinskii. “Romanovy, kotorikh my poteriali: monarkhicheskaia ideia na 22m MMKF” [The Romanovs Whom We Have Lost: The Idea of Monarchy at the Twenty-Second International Film Festival in Moscow], *Neprikosnovennii zapas* No. 6 (14) (2000): <<http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2000/6/kinsk-pr.html>> last accessed 25 July 2003.

Russian nostalgia – an important theme in crime fiction of the 1990s both in American and Russian popular cultures – is also a defining characteristic of the cultural context of Akunin's novels. What does Akunin make of the Russian nostalgic sentiment of the 1990s? Is his work about the 19th century an expression of nostalgia for Russia's pre-revolutionary past? Is it, on the contrary, a critique of such nostalgia? Or does Akunin cater to both possible audiences: those who are nostalgic for the past and those who dissociate themselves from this sentiment? In order to answer these questions we need to look at the meaning of some of the postmodern techniques employed by Akunin. I propose to seek the answers to the above questions in the very style of Akunin's novels, a style that, I believe, helps modify the detective genre in response to the cultural chronotope of the 1990s. The following two sections focus on Akunin's technique of artistic reflection of the past and its significance for the debate about Russia's national identity. My discussion of historical projections in Akunin's works allows us to revisit the postmodernist aesthetic that itself has already become a canon in Western theory. The discussion of Akunin's deployment of virtual reality in the historical novel genre is framed by analyzing Russian nostalgia for its past.

3. AKUNIN'S HISTORICAL PROJECTIONS

Theories of postmodernism illustrate how society today is experiencing the fading of a sense of history.¹⁹⁷ In "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," Fredric Jameson describes this break with history in pessimistic terms as a loss resulting in

¹⁹⁷ See, e.g., Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: NLB, 1976). See also Paolo Portoghesi, *Postmodern, the Architecture of the Postindustrial Society*, trans. Ellen Shapiro (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), and works by Fredric Jameson.

emptiness, in living “in ‘a perpetual present’ without depth, definition, or secure identity” (125). As Jameson argues in “Postmodernism and the Video-text,” in the postmodern stage, “signs are entirely relieved of their function of referring to the world,” “the pure and random play of signifiers which we call postmodernism ... ceaselessly reshuffles the fragments of preexistent texts, the building blocks of older cultural and social production, in some new and heightened bricolage;” in postmodernism, metabooks “cannibalize other books,” metatexts “collate bits of other texts” (222). The emphasis on “randomness” in postmodern works is equated with a lack of purpose in them. Postmodernism, in this interpretation, is the advance on the autonomy of the self, an aesthetic threat to the established order of things.

While employing the argumentation of these theories of postmodernism, Russian critics accuse Akunin’s works of emptiness, perpetuation of the meaningless regression of styles, and the misuse of history.¹⁹⁸ Critics rally to defend the Russian classics from which Akunin unabashedly “borrows” imagery, phrases, ideas, and characters, and to protect Russian history from being retold by such an “unscrupulous” individual as Akunin.¹⁹⁹

These accusations, however, do not take into consideration that in his depiction of history, Akunin follows the tradition of Russian postmodernism, the best works of

¹⁹⁸ See, e.g., Marina Adamovich, “Iudif’ s golovoi Oloferna: psevdoklassika v russkoi literature 1990kh” [Judith with Holoferne’s Head: Pseudo-Classics in Russian Literature of the 1990s], *Novyi Mir* No.7 (2001) <http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi_mi/2001/7/adam.htm> last accessed 10 January 2003.

¹⁹⁹ See, e.g., Elena Chudinova, “Smert’ statui Akhillesa: Kritika tvorchestva B. Akunina” [The Death of Achilles’ Statue: Criticism of Akunin’s Works]: <http://www.chudinova.com.ru:8101/id14_8.htm> last accessed 25 July 2003; Galina Ulianova, “Parodia na pravdu: kak obfandorivaiut istoriiu Rossii” [A Parody on Truth: How Russia’s History is Falsified], *Nezavisimaja Gazeta Exlibris* 15 June 2000: <http://exlibris.ng.ru/margin/2000-06-15/8_parody.html> last accessed 25 July 2003.

which have always been politically engaged.²⁰⁰ Akunin's work is a good example of how postmodern aesthetics are used to produce a pertinent social and political commentary on contemporary Russia. Contrary to the idea of a postmodernist recycling *any* history, Akunin's novels exhibit a very selective approach as to which periods to parody. A cursory look at Akunin's texts suggests that his use of history is differentiable. Akunin skips the Soviet period altogether. All of Akunin's books are either set in the pre-revolutionary past, or after the demise of the Soviet Union. *Azazel'* is set in 1876, *Turetskii Gambit* [Turkish Gambit] takes place in 1877, *Leviafan* describes Fandorin's adventure in 1878, *Smert' Akhillesa* [Death of Achilles] takes place in 1882, *Statskii sovetnik* [Councilor of State] is set in 1891, *Koronatsia* [Coronation] refers to the coronation of the last Romanov in 1896, *Liubovnitsa smerti* [Mistress of Death] and *Liubovnik smerti* [Lover of Death] take place in 1900, and *Pikovyi valet* [Jack of Spades]

²⁰⁰ Russian postmodern works of the end of the 1960s-1980s were instrumental in destroying the canon of socialist culture. Although some postmodern works of the late Soviet period were imitations of Western postmodernism and had artistic value only insofar as they were different from the socialist canon, others – such as, for instance, Venedikt Erofeev's *Moskva-Petushki* [Moscow Circles], the sots-art of Komar and Melamid, and Il'ia Kabakov's conceptualism – were a powerful critique of Soviet modernity. While using many elements of postmodern style, they introduced characters that could not have existed in Soviet literature and art and discussed themes that Soviet culture avoided (e.g., Stalinist crimes, fate of a little man in Soviet Russia, the crisis of the *intelligentsia*). In this sense, Russian postmodernism was highly political (Terry Eagleton accused postmodern works of being apolitical) and, no doubt, was a viable and progressive response to the late Soviet period in Russian history. The break-up of the Soviet Union, the collapse of socialist ideology in the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s, the depoliticization of Russian culture by the end of *perestroika* and the re-institutionalization of capitalism formed the context within which postmodernist works acquire a different function and meaning. Some postmodernist works of the 1990s turned into kitsch, became commercial projects that exploited the meaning of postmodernism of the late Soviet period (e.g., the art by Oleg Kulik and Alexander Brener discussed in Viktor Tupitsyn, *Kommunal'nyi (Post)modernism* [Communal (Post)modernism] (Moscow: Ad Marginem, 1998). But there are postmodern works that address problems of historical and cultural change in Russia, the issues that grow out of the postmodern condition in the country. Postmodern in its style, part of contemporary Russian popular culture is a conscious transformation of old forms, a positive birth from both, the Soviet modernity and the postmodernism of the late Soviet era. For more on Russian postmodernism, see Mikhail Epstein, Alexander Genis, and Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover, *Russian Postmodernism: New Perspectives on post-Soviet Culture* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999); in Mikhail Epstein, *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995); and in Mark Lipovetskii, *Russian Postmodernist Fiction: Dialogue with Chaos* (Armonk, NY: M.E.Sharpe, 1999).

and *The Decorator* are both set in 1886. *Altyn-Tolobas* is about the adventures of Erast Fandorin's ancestor, Cornelius von Dorn, who comes to Moscow in May of 1675, and about Erast's grand-nephew, Nicholas Fandorin, who arrives in Moscow in June 1995. *Recommended Reading* is about Nicholas's life in Moscow under Putin, and about Nicholas's 18th-century ancestors. Akunin's other protagonist, Pelageia, lives in the 1860s.

According to the Russian critic Mikhail Trofimenkov, Akunin chose the period of the reign of Alexander III (which corresponds to that of the reign of Queen Victoria in England) because it was a time of stability and firm traditions when new "thunderous" developments were only beginning.²⁰¹ Apart from the obvious comparison of Akunin's detective with the great detective of Victorian times, Sherlock Holmes, Trofimenkov does not explain why it was necessary for Akunin to focus on the end of the 19th century, and why it was chosen as a particularly representative of stable periods in Russian history. Akunin's preference for *this* stable period, it seems, can hardly be accidental if one bears in mind that the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century is the period which has been recently idealized in Russian culture. Indeed, entertaining novels about Fandorin and Pelageia must be seen in the context of the debate about Russian history. When Akunin is accused of historical inaccuracies,²⁰² at stake is not so

²⁰¹ See Mikhail Trofimenkov, "Delo Akunina" [The Case of Akunin], *Novaia russkaia kniga* No. 4. <<http://www.guelman.ru/slava/nrk/nrk4/37.htm>> last accessed 25 July 2003.

²⁰² Such as the sum of money offered as a bonus to a young detective, or the cost of renting for a tiny apartment in Moscow.

much veracity,²⁰³ but actual faith in Russia's golden age, a utopia projected onto the past from the future.

Akunin's 19th century is not a golden age that can be emulated by contemporary statesmen. It is a time of misery, corruption, social inequality, and barbarism. His 19th century takes place in the criminal district of Khitrovka,²⁰⁴ where mass graves for the nameless and poor (*The Decorator*) is no sort of paradise to which contemporary Russians would aspire. Akunin once said that the 19th century was far from rosy, as it is now often presented; a thin stratum of cultured people in Russia was not possible without an appalling degree of poverty, ignorance and infringement on the rights of the vast majority of Russians. Consequently, these cultured few were responsible for the horrors that brought the country into Revolution.²⁰⁵ Akunin admits that although he does not view Erast Fandorin as a national hero, "something like a national idea" was indeed on his mind. As opposed to "something chauvinist or xenophobic" as a national idea, Akunin would like to offer the reader a national idea that is "great Russian literature." It is from this "magic batter" that Akunin "bakes" his novels.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Sir Walter Scott mentioned that it was impossible to attain complete accuracy in historical novels and admitted that in reproducing some details he might have confused two or three centuries. See Harold Orel, *The Historical Novel from Scott to Sabatini* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1995) 8.

²⁰⁴ In *The Lover of Death*, many images are taken from Vladimir Giliarovskii's *Moscow and Muscovites* (1926).

²⁰⁵ In his interview with *ELLE*, Akunin says that he is far from idealizing Russian history of the Silver Age, which serves as a background in many of his detective novels. That period sharpened social and political contradictions that were to be resolved in 1917. "All reasons, motifs, sources, all missed opportunities and unforgivable mistakes can be traced to that period, a charming time of Fandorin." See Gleb Shulpiakov, "Pisatel'-prizrak ili put' samuraia. Interviu s Akuninym" [The Ghost Writer, or the Path of a Samurai], *ELLE* July (2000) <<http://www.fandorin.ru/akunin/articles/elle.html>> last accessed 25 July 2003.

²⁰⁶ Elena Kuzmenko, "Pisatel' No. 065779" [Writer No. 065779], *Ogonek* No.34 (4621). November (1999) <<http://www.ropnet.ru/ogonyok/win/199934/34-42-43.html>> last accessed 25 July 2003.

Akunin's critical attitude of attempts to idealize the 19th century and his fascination with Russian literary classics determine his use of postmodernist techniques of quotations, allusions, and pastiche. Rather than being a random reshuffling of fragments of preexistent texts (such as theories of postmodernism claim), Akunin makes quotations and allusions from classical Russian literature a *historical* detail. In his texts, the readers recognize passages reminiscent of Dostoevsky's descriptions of Russian teen-aged prostitutes (*The Decorator*, *Altyn-Tolobas*), V. Giliarovskii's depiction of the horrible world of thieves in Khitrovka with its syphilitic street-sellers (*The Lover of Death*), Tolstoy's portrayal of racist policies in tsarist Russia (*Pelageia and the White Bulldog*), and, more generally, social inequality and *poshlost'* exposed by the great Russian writers of the past. 19th century critical realism becomes a powerful source of historical evidence for Akunin. In *The Lover of Death*, for instance, the details of the protagonist's life are reminiscent of the story of Van'ka Zhukov from "Van'ka," one of the best known short stories by Anton Chekhov. Like Van'ka, Akunin's Sen'ka is an orphan. The master beats Van'ka "with anything that comes to hand"; Sen'ka is also beaten regularly by his cousin. For Van'ka, "there is nothing to eat"; in the morning, he gets bread, "for dinner, porridge, and in the evening, bread again; but as for tea, or soup, the master and mistress gobble it all up themselves" (Chekhov 479). Sen'ka is hungry too: even during Shrovetide, when the house is full of food, the "orphan is given only two torn pancakes and a tiny bit of oil" (*The Lover of Death*, 13). Chekhov's protagonist writes a letter to his grandfather "imploring" him "to come and take [him] away" from the evil people who just beat him and who have made his life "worse than the dog's" (481). In Akunin's novel, Sen'ka receives a letter from his little brother who implores

Sen'ka "to come and take [him] away" from these evil people (13). Characteristically, the way Sen'ka's brother writes the address on the letter – "To brother Senia who lives at Uncle's Zot in Moscow, Sukharevka" (13) – is similar to the way Chekhov's Van'ka addresses his letter: "To Grandpa, in the village" (481). Although Sen'ka's brother was not really in a position to complain about his life, the allusions used by Akunin remind the reader of situations described by Chekhov.

While representation of pre-revolutionary Russia in the works of Mikhalkov, Panfilov, Govorukhin, and Radzinsky highlights the country's prosperity and stability under the tsars,²⁰⁷ Akunin supplements these techniques by reactivating Russian classics in the reader's memory. Through allusions, he reactivates the memory of depictions of the 19th century by actual witnesses we trust, the great Russian writers. Moreover, in society in which the historical period of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century is fairly well known through the system of education and media, the postmodern strategy of *providing* historical evidence via literary allusions, pastiche, and reminiscences seems to be an effective supplement to more traditional strategies of reconstructing the past through documents. Akunin certainly exploits the common perception of the tsarist past established through the system of education in Russia. His novels are an intertextual link between texts of the past and texts from the present. The postmodern strategy of intertextuality creates a convincing depiction of the past. By quoting from the classics and, moreover, quoting passages that are highly critical of 19th-

²⁰⁷ Such as costumes, manners, speech, etc. See more about this and the genre of the historical novel in general in Mary Lascelles, *The Story-teller Retrieves the Past* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); George Saintsbury, *The Historical Novel* (London: Folcroft Library, 1971); Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (London: Merlin Press, 1962).

century Russia, Akunin encourages a comparison between the different representations of the 19th century. Indeed, if the past were really the way it is presented in Mikhalkov's *The Barber of Siberia*, does it mean that Leskov, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Korolenko, and Tolstoy lied about the Russia in which they lived? "Testimonies" by the classics in Akunin's novels serve to counter the new myth about Russia's golden age. Akunin contests what Linda Hutcheon describes as "any modernist discarding or recuperating of the past in the name of the future" (Hutcheon 19). In their critique of the idealization of tsarist Russia, Akunin's novels are socially and politically engaged and represent a step forward in the development of the historical novel.

In order to make his tales credible, Akunin, like any author of a historical novel, carefully investigates the documents of the past. However, unlike many authors of historical fiction, Akunin slightly changes their names when introducing historical characters. For instance, General Mikhail Skobelev (1843-1882)²⁰⁸ becomes Sobolev in *The Death of Achilles*, and Prince Sergei becomes Prince Simeon in *Coronation*. The result is defamiliarization: historical figures are still recognizable but the reader is also always aware of the fact they are no longer historical figures but literary characters. In a 1999 interview with *Ogonek* magazine, Akunin maintains that the Russia of his novels is "not quite real historical Russia" but rather "a country that resembles Russia."²⁰⁹ What is the purpose of Akunin creating a greater distance between history and its artistic representation? One possible answer is that Akunin wishes to bring past and present

²⁰⁸ General Mikhail Skobelev (1843-1882) took part in Russian military campaigns in Central Asia. Skobelev was a hero of Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878).

²⁰⁹ Elena Kuzmenko, "Pisatel' No. 065779" [Writer No. 065779], *Ogonek* No.34 (4621). November (1999) <<http://www.ropnet.ru/ogonyok/win/199934/34-42-43.html>> last accessed 25 July 2003.

closer to each other on the pages of his texts. Indeed, Akunin's pre-revolutionary Russia is a projection of Russia's present, an allegory of sorts. Akunin highlights 19th century themes and issues that resonate with important topics in 1990s Russia. Trofimenkov points out that many details in Akunin's books refer to present day Russia. Significant themes for present-day Russia that Akunin develops in his novels are corruption, prostitution, misery, anti-Semitism, class differences, the "Chechen factor,"²¹⁰ and deviations from the accepted norms of sexual behavior. All of these were the topics of numerous publications and debates in the 1990s as well as a century ago in Russia. Akunin's novels provide a historical perspective on these problems highlighting that they are not something unique to today's Russia.

Let us consider an example of Akunin's allusions from the "past" to the present. *The Death of Achilles* describes political intrigue that leads to the death of a prominent Russian statesman in the bed of a courtesan. Fandorin, a secret agent of the Governor of Moscow, Dolgorukoi, investigates this incident. The character of Dolgorukoi in *The Death of Achilles* immediately suggests two historical figures, the current mayor of Moscow, Yurii Luzhkov, and Prince Yurii Dolgorukii.²¹¹ Of these two historical figures, Yurii Luzhkov is more important for giving the novel its *depth* – creating a multilayered postmodern text in which irony is a major trope. Akunin's character of Dolgorukoi is a social commentary on contemporary Russian historicism. In 1996-1997, in the course of the preparation for and then the celebration of the 850th anniversary of Moscow, the monument to the founder of Moscow Prince Dolgorukov was "half-jokingly and half-

²¹⁰ Trofimenkov, "The Case of Akunin."

²¹¹ Sometimes his name is spelled as Dolgorukov.

seriously” referred to as “Yuri Mikhailovich,” which is, of course, the first name and the patronymic of Luzhkov.²¹² Prince Dolgorukii (1095-7 - 1157) was the son of Vladimir, not Mikhail. However, the popular imagination aptly reacted to Luzhkov’s aspirations to view Moscow as *his* city and sacrificed historical accuracy for psychological precision.

The Dolgorukoi of the novel is clearly a 19th century version of Yurii Luzhkov. Like Luzhkov in the present, Dolgorukoi has ruled Moscow for many years as if it were his fiefdom. Like Luzhkov in the 1990s, Dolgorukoi supports expensive projects, such as the erection of “the Temple.” One of Dolgorukoi’s clerks complains about the project: “And the notorious Temple! It has taken all life from the city. ... How many shelters and hospitals could have been built on this money? But our new Cheops desires to leave no less than a pyramid after himself” (*Death of Achilles* 76). It is obvious that the subject of this remark is the famous Church of Christ the Savior (built in 1812-1883), destroyed in 1931 on Stalin’s order and built anew under Luzhkov (1990-2000). The biggest Orthodox church in the world with its squatting dome on the two-three-storied Volkhonka was, and continues to be, an aesthetic controversy among Muscovites. The idea of restoring the architect Tonn’s creation was criticized in Russian newspapers during the 1990s because the project was so costly. Muscovites argued that instead of rebuilding one more Christian temple in the capital, the money could be used to help hundreds of small parishes around Russia.²¹³ The ironic attitude of Akunin’s character to Dolgorukoi’s megalomania is a projection of Russians’ irony about Luzhkov’s

²¹² This usage was documented by Leonid Parfenov in *Namedni 1997*, an episode of a popular documentary series *Namedni: Sovremennost’, kotoraiia uspela stat’ istoriei, 1991-2000*.

²¹³ In *Altyn-Tolobas*, Akunin once again captures the controversy surrounding the Church of Christ the Savior. The protagonist’s father used to say that the “giant” “non-proportionate” dome of the church spoiled Moscow and the only good that the Bolsheviks did was to destroy this church. But Nicholas, the protagonist of *Altyn-Tolobas* finds the church quite agreeable (44).

megalomania. Moreover, this irony is also directed against the neo-imperial attitudes in Russia, the desire to re-instate Russia's greatness through pursuing grandiose projects such as, for instance, the erection of the WWII memorial on Poklonnaia Hill, the celebration of the 850th anniversary of Moscow, and Pushkin's bicentennial in 1999.

Reinforcing the Luzhkov allusion, is another allusion: the painting of the Temple is commissioned by a Georgian artist Gegechkori, who, according to Dolgorukoi's councilors, is a "well-known scoundrel." The councilors believe that it is both "cheaper" and more fair to commission the painting to Moscow artists who can paint "as well as, or better than, the Georgian" (*Death of Achilles* 66). This depiction is a projection of the recent past onto the 19th century. Akunin clearly is attacking the contemporary Georgian artist Zurab Tseretelli.²¹⁴ Tseretelli was indeed commissioned by Luzhkov to paint the restored Church of Christ the Savior in the 1990s. His other projects, such as statues to Marshal Zhukov and Peter the Great, enraged patriots of Moscow and earned him a reputation similar to the one of Gegechkori in *The Death of Achilles*.

Allusions from the past to the present makes the past "recognizable"²¹⁵ and help shift the narrative focus from a past that is no longer there to a past that is similar to the

²¹⁴ The attack on Tseretelli expressed here is hardly an expression of Akunin's anti-Georgian feeling, for Akunin himself is ethnically a Georgian.

²¹⁵ There are other examples of Akunin's collage of times from *The Death of Achilles*. For instance, Fandorin learns about corruption in Moscow from an old servant:

Say, a seller-man wants to open a shop to sell, say, ... pants. What can be simpler? Pay a city tax of fifteen rubles and do your business. But that's not the case! He has to pay a policeman, a tax officer, a medical inspector! And all that misses the city budget! And now those pants – their top price can't be more than 1,5 roubles – are sold for three roubles. It is not Moscow but a pure jungle.... (*The Death of Achilles* 71).

Every Russian who was reading newspapers and watching TV in 1990s' Russia, is familiar with similar expressions of indignation about Russian business, about tax police and regular police that became notorious for corruption in the 1990s. Of course, the prices quoted in *The Death of Achilles* come from the 19th century but the whole situation clearly refers to the present-day Russia.

present. For instance, the society of would-be suicides depicted in *The Mistress of Death* is a pastiche on the popular 1979 Yevgenii Tatarskii's movie, *Priklucheniia printsa Florizelia* [Adventures of Prince Florizel], which, in turn, is based on the *New Arabian Nights*, by Robert Louis Stevenson. This pastiche serves to mock a fashion to consult all sorts of "prophets" and parapsychologists in Russia of the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s.²¹⁶ Similarly, the novel *The State Councilor* is a re-make of a popular TV serial *Mesto vstrechi izmenit' nel'zia* [The Meeting Place Cannot be Changed] (1979) directed by Stanislav Govorukhin and based on the brothers Vainer's novel *The Era of Mercy*. *The State Councilor* provides a critique of revolutionary terrorism in tsarist Russia while drawing a parallel between 19th century revolutionaries and Russian gangsters after WWII.²¹⁷ The irony of Akunin's narrative is in that the reminiscences of the Soviet TV serial in *The State Councilor* serve to create a parody on the Soviet glorification of 19th century revolutionaries and revolutionary terror. At the same time, *The State Councilor* opens the ground for discussing terrorism in present-day Russia and reconsiders the history of terrorism in Russia in the light of recent terrorist attacks.

Coronation, the novel that caused most controversial reviews, also has scenes that are projections of the present Russian problems onto the past. The novel is about the

Another example to be used in support of Akunin's collage of times also comes from *Death of Achilles*. The servant also enlightens Fandorin about the vodka trade in the city. Sellers buy official stamps from tax officers – a kopeck per stamp – and glue them onto bottles filled with homemade vodka, selling it later as a brand product (*Death of Achilles* 71). The topics of homemade vodka and illegal trade were the focus of numerous discussions throughout the 1990s; with minor corrections of historical details, this passage could have been included in a novel set in the last years of the 20th century.

²¹⁶ More on this social phenomenon, see Eliot Borenstein, "Articles of Faith: The Media Response to Maria Devi Khristos" *Religion* 25 (July 1995): 249-66; Sabrina Ramet, "UFOs over Russian and Eastern Europe" *Journal of Popular Culture* 32.3 (Winter 1998): 81-99; David Remnick, "Bread and Circuses," *Lenin's Tomb: the Last Days of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Vintage, 1994) 256-263.

²¹⁷ The main character in the TV serial, detective Zheglov, turned into a cult figure of popular culture largely due to the fact that he was played by the famous bard singer and actor Vladimir Vysotskii.

kidnapping of Nicholas II's little cousin during Nicholas's coronation, in 1905. The kidnapper is Fandorin's old enemy, Dr. Lindt; some details of the plot suggest that the novel is a take-off on the story of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Moriarty by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. However, if one considers other codes in the novel, *Coronation* appears to be a critique of the idealization of Russia's imperial past. The novel depicts the Romanov family in a very unfavorable light. Tsar Nicholas ("small and uncomely") is a figure of little authority. His wife is more concerned about the disappearance of her jewelry than about the kidnapping of Nick's little cousin. The tsar's brother is the founder of a "homosexual brothel."²¹⁸ The depiction of the 19th century gay scene in *Coronation* resonates with the issues of homosexuality and homophobia in the 1990s. At the gay ball thrown by the Great Prince Simeon (his prototype is Prince Sergei, brother of Nicholas II), homosexuals believe that they have caught two "guardians" (*bliustiteli*), members of a secret society of homophobes whose mission is to protect the honor of the Romanov dynasty, and of old Russian aristocratic families. The homosexuals call to kill the "guardians" as "they kill" those whose sexual behavior does not follow the accepted pattern (*Coronation* 241-242). The analogy is with the present day Russian "repairmen" (*remontniki*), whose mission is to convert homosexuals into "proper men" who can marry Russian women and participate in the reproduction of the country's population.²¹⁹

Quotations, allusions, pastiche and parody in Akunin's works cannot be reduced to a meaningless *bricolage* of which postmodern texts are frequently accused. Rather, these postmodern devices serve to create historical projections that pave the way for

²¹⁸ See Elena Chudinova, "Smert' statui Akhillesa" [The Death of Achilles' Statue: Criticism of Akunin's Works]: <http://www.chudinova.com.ru:8101/id14_8.htm> last accessed 25 July 2003.

²¹⁹ In particular, Pavel Lungin's film *Luna-Park* (1992) depicts a brigade of young skin-heads who try to "straighten" two homosexuals.

discussing Russia's current problems in comparison to the problems of the past. Instead of focusing on Russia that "we lost," Akunin's postmodern historical novels focus on historical continuity. They create the impression that violations of social, political, sexual, and other norms are something that every society has to deal with. According to Lukács, the most important aspect in the historical novel is "the poetic awakening of the people who figured in [historical] events"; the reader "should re-experience the social and human motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality" (42). What matters for Akunin is not even a vivid depiction of a distant past but the co-presence of past and present. Such a shift in narrative focus leads to the affirmation of the position that there can be no idealization of either past or present. Idealizing the 19th century harbors the same problems as idealizing the communist future during the Soviet period. In the words of Susan Buck-Morss, to submit to melancholy after the shattering of the dream of social utopia "would be to confer on the past a wholeness that never did exist, confusing the loss of the dream with the loss of the dream's realization" (68). The comparison of past and present in Akunin's work serves to offer a critique of the position that the past was much better than the present. In this sense, Akunin's works is a way out of pessimism of the 1990s and of the Russian nostalgia for the past. Rather than promoting the idea of correcting the present by following the "best models" from the past, Akunin's historical novels encourage the more complex task of discovering the links between an individual and a time, the mystery of a personal chronotope.

4. VIRTUAL RUSSIA

The term "virtual Russia" most immediately evokes something computer-generated, viewed and interacted with by remote participants. Our culture, Mark Poster believes, "is increasingly simulational in the sense that the media often changes the things that it treats, transforming the identity of originals and referentialities. In the second media age 'reality' becomes multiple" (Poster 616). The multiplicity of images of Russia in the 1990s and, due to the identity crisis, the active participation in producing, asserting, and maintaining certain images within different cultural forms constitute an immediate context for a Russian individual in the 1990s. In other words, virtuality in the 1990s' Russia may be more than simply technological advancement. It is part of the cultural chronotope that, apart from incorporating the possibility of immersing oneself in the virtual reality of the cyber space, promotes a sense of simulating reality, re-creating the "truth" out of multiple stories about the past and present. Akunin's use of virtualization as a technique of postmodernist depictions of Russia is then a logical choice. In Akunin's novels, Russian history becomes a virtual playground manipulated at will and employed for use by Akunin's postmodern characters. For them, virtualizing Russia provides an alternative to pessimism and to Russian nostalgic nationalism. The sensibility of a person who is participating in a computer and the sensibility of the Russian individual who is immersed in conflicting discourses about Russia in the 1990s informs the treatment of the Russian past by Akunin's protagonists.

In *Recommended Reading*,²²⁰ the protagonist Nicholas Fandorin is a Russian who was born in Britain but moved to live in Moscow in the mid 1990s. Nicholas Fandorin is the head of a small business “*Strana Sovetov*,”²²¹ but since the business is minimal, Nicholas spends most of his time creating a computer game about his eighteenth-century ancestor Danila Fondorin, who lived at the court of Catherine the Great. Only one relic from that time is in Nicholas’ possession: a note from Catherine the Great to her chamber secretary, Danila Fondorin, which reads “Forever grateful. Catherine.” The reason for her gratitude was obscured by history but could be revived, according to our hero, Nicholas, through the construction of this computer game appropriately titled “The Chamber Secretary.” Such a radically constructivist approach to history is no source of shame to Nicholas, whose graduate degree was in history, but rather a source of inspiration:

No responsibility and a complete freedom of imagination; in other words, the absolute opposite of everything he had been taught at Cambridge. What a pitiful fate for someone with an M.A. in history: instead of becoming a serious scholar, he has turned into an author of pseudo-historical tales. But the striking thing was (and Nick could admit it only to himself) that these tales occupied his imagination much more than scientifically proven facts. (*ER* vol. 1: 16-17)

The narrative that follows has two story lines: One about Nicholas’ supposedly “real” adventures in Moscow and the surrounding *oblast*’, the other about the virtual adventures of his mysterious ancestor in 18th-century Russia. The two parallel story lines are linked by the striking similarity between the adventures of Nicholas and adventures

²²⁰ In references – *ER*.

²²¹ The name of the company is the pun evoking the name of the Soviet Union. In Russian, the word “sovet”(council) is homonymous to the word “advice.”

of Danila and Mitridat, a whiz kid whom Danila helps. The emotional states of the “real” and virtual heroes are also similar. Frequently, the end of a chapter telling about one Fandorin is echoed at the beginning of the next chapter about the other Fandorin. While Nicholas Fandorin, after a difficult, emotionally draining day, feels as if he had become ten years older, Mitridat, as if mirroring Nick’s mood, is thinking to himself: “I am not yet seven years old but I feel as if I were seventy” (*ER* vol. 2: 342). When the 18th-century character listens to the flutes starting to play, the melody is picked up by the flutes in the 20th century, to which Nicholas lends his ear. In the last sentence of chapter twenty-two, Mitridat hears an officer command the musicians: “Hey, flutes, start playing!” (*ER* vol. 2: 371). And the first sentence of Chapter Twenty Three, which tells about Nicholas’ adventures in contemporary Moscow, reads: “And the flutes started to play clearly and with much feeling...” (*ER* vol. 2: 371). The melody makes Nicholas think about his ancestors, although Nicholas hardly realizes how close he is to one of them in the parallel worlds of Akunin’s novel. In their alienation from their environment, in their responses to demanding situations, Mitridat and Nicholas are alike. The parallelisms in the novel create projections of the past onto the present and of the present onto the past, while encouraging questions about the individual’s distance from past and present.

The co-existence and the interpenetration of the past and the present are so great that when looking at the scene of city life in contemporary Moscow, Nicholas finds himself witnessing the scenes that occurred centuries before. In Chapter Five, after composing his 18th century for hours on end, Nicholas gets up from his desk and looks out the window:

In a daze ... after a session of computer programming ... Moscow appeared strangely diffused and even, to put it in the language of computers, buggy. At first glance it was a typical evening view: bright ads, a magically blinking snake of traffic that was curving along the Solianka, the Kremlin towers lit by searchlights, the "skyscrapers" of the New Arbat rising like rare teeth in the distance. But if you looked closer, all these objects had different consistencies and behaved differently. The Kremlin, churches and the massive block of the house of Education stood like solid nontransparent cliffs, whereas the rest of buildings were shivering lightly and allowed to peep inside. There, behind unsteady (vacillating) ghost-like walls, lurked the contours of older structures, smaller and mostly wooden, with pipes that were letting out smoke.... (*ER* vol. 1: 100-102)

Nicholas is a romantic. His shield against the crude reality of Moscow 2002 is his virtual Russia, his imagined country, which he is capable of seeing everywhere in contemporary Moscow. The imagined country is so important for him that Nicholas becomes afraid of the effects of plunging into the eighteenth century "so deeply." He shakes his head, trying to dispel these excessively detailed visions. From this moment, the 18th-century virtual Russia continues to exist on the pages of *Recommended Reading* independent of Nicholas' switching on his computer. As in many computer games, the game "A Chamber Secretary" goes on even when his creator is distracted by the 21st century "reality."

Recommended Reading is the only novel by Akunin in which the Russian past is explicitly introduced at the beginning of the novel as virtual Russia *per se*, as a computer game. A closer look at other Akunin novels, however, reveals a similar questioning of the Russian past, the same co-presence of past and present. Of course, one can support this argument by pointing out that Akunin is turning his novels into computer games.²²²

²²² See, e.g., *The Turkish Gambit* by Akunin is now also available in a computer game format.

Moreover, as the author admits, writing detective novels for him is similar to paying computer games.²²³ An argument that I believe is more relevant for our discussion of the images of Russia rubbing against each other in the 1990s, is that the co-existence of the present and the past – a notion first mentioned by Akunin himself in his interviews, – shapes all Akunin’s novels. Even novels with no parallel plots, such as the books about Sister Pelageia and Erast Fandorin, have qualities of a virtual space. One may argue that although parallelism, the central organizing device in *Recommended Reading*, is not as explicit in the series about Erast Fandorin and the nun Pelageia, it is still important for making the novels in these series a social commentary on contemporary Russia’s search for its past. Akunin’s virtual Russia reconciles the images of Russia that have been rubbing against each other with friction in a cooler contemplation about Russia. This reconciliation of different perceptions of Russia is reminiscent of reflective nostalgia as it is described by Svetlana Boym. In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Boym argues that for reflective nostalgics,

the past is not made in the image of the present or seen as foreboding of some present disaster; rather, the past opens up a multitude of potentialities, non-teleological possibilities of historic development. We don’t need a computer to get access to the virtualities of our imagination: reflective nostalgia has a capacity to awaken multiple planes of consciousness. (50)

In the sense that many of Akunin’s heroes consciously choose to absorb fragments of different cultures and open up their consciousness “to the virtualities of imagination,” they are all reflective nostalgics; they become cultural hybrids in their vision of Russia.

²²³ “I love games. When I was younger, I used to play cards. Then I began playing computer games. Then it turned out that composing detective novels is even more engaging than computer games.” See Kuzmenko, “Pisatel’ No. 065779.”

*Altyn-Tolobas*²²⁴ is a wonderful example of Akunin's virtual Russia. *Altyn-Tolobas*, like *Recommended Reading*, also features parallel story lines. This time the historical line is not a computer game. Nicholas, again the main character, while attempting to find the second half of a document written by his ancestor in the 17th century, imagines the adventures that might have befallen his ancestor in Russia. The protagonists, Nicholas Fandorin and Cornelius von Dorn, are two foreigners. Nicholas is a Russian born in Britain, into a family of émigrés. Cornelius is his 17th-century ancestor, who arrives in Moscow from Holland, lured by the promise of a high salary at the court of Tsar Alexei. Nicholas Fandorin goes to Moscow to investigate his family history. He has one half of the will written by his 17th-century ancestor and wants to find the rest of the document. The choice of such protagonists is not accidental. They are simultaneously inside and outside of Russia. In one of his interviews, Akunin said that he purposefully made the hero of *Altyn-Tolobas* an Englishman, since many Russians feel like strangers in their own country. He also said that "any thinking person tends to perceive not only culture but the whole world as something estranged, as the other." If one is capable of such perception, one tends to feel almost otherworldly.²²⁵ Akunin exploits this defamiliarization. Making his protagonists foreigners, he provides a critical view of both Russia and the West. This immediately makes his works part of the long Slavophile/Westernizers debate, in which one side idealizes the West and condemns

²²⁴ According to Akunin, *Altyn-Tolobas* is a mixture of Veniamin Kaverin's *Two Captains* and Dumas' *Three Musketeers* with a bit of *Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco. See Aleksei Makarkin. "Rossiia, kotoroi my ne teriali: Boris Akunin sozdaet epos novogo tipa" [The Russia We Have Never Lost: Boris Akunin is Creating a New Type of Epic], *Segondia* No. 164. 28 July 2000: <http://www.segodnya.ru/w3s.nsf/Contents/2000_164_life_text_makarkin1.htm> last accessed 25 July 2003.

²²⁵ Shevelev, "Ai da altyn, ai da tolobas!"

Russia, while another does exactly the opposite. Akunin's heroes see the advantages and drawbacks of both the West and Russia, de-idealizing, though not denigrating, and offering a more appreciative view of both.

The adventures of Cornelius von Dorn mirror those of Nicholas Fandorin, in that both find themselves in similar situations as soon as they cross the border into Russia. The narrator emphasizes that nothing has really changed in Russia. As it used to be a barbaric, strange country during the reign of Tsar Alexei in the 17th century, so it remains barbaric at the end of the 20th century. As Nicholas' romantic visions about his "historical motherland" go up in smoke after his first experiences in Russian territory. Cornelius' expectations are not fulfilled either. Both protagonists are stuck in Russia, yet, they soon discover that there are compensations for Russia's backwardness. They realize that they *can* be truly happy in Russia, that life in the comfort of Europe is boring in comparison to the life full of adventures in a rapidly changing Russia. As Cornelius is told, "the main thing is that for a brave and inventive person who wants to become happy, this Asian country opens up truly infinite possibilities" (*Altyn-Tolobas* 31). Despite all its problems (corruption, dirt, bad manners, and violence), Russia is portrayed as an enchanted space that enraptures a traveler with its people, true love, openness, broadness of soul, compassion, and generosity.

Akunin's protagonists change their views on Russia gradually, through exposure to different perspectives of other characters: a British consul in Moscow; a statesman of Tsar Alexei, foreigners who, like von Dorn, are in the service of Russian tsars; Nicholas' father; Russian historians; the Mafiosi; the journalist Altyn Mamaeva. The adventures of Nicholas and Cornelius start from a realization that their views of Russia, or rather, the

opinions that they had adopted from others and merely accepted as true, do not do justice to Russian reality. These characters remind one of Svetlana Boym's "reflective nostalgics" who "are aware of the gap between identity and resemblance" and who, after they have lost their "home" experience defamiliarization, a sense of distance that "drives them to tell their story, to narrate the relationship between past, present, and future. Through such longing these nostalgics discover that the past is not merely that which doesn't exist anymore, but, to quote Henri Bergson, the past "might act and will act by inserting itself into a present sensation from which it borrows the vitality" (Boym 50). The task of such characters is more difficult than a task of a modernist hero who simply joins the right camp (for instance, Bolsheviks or the White Guard), for Cornelius and Nicholas constantly have to reconsider the evidence before them, and reformulate their understanding of Russia.

On his way to Moscow, Nicholas begins to question his old ideas about his "historical motherland." His father, Sir Alexander, used to tell him:

There is no Russia at all. ...there is a geographic area that was previously occupied by the country that was called Russia, but all its population is dead. Now there are only the Ostgoths on the ruins of the Coliseum. They make bonfires and herd goats there. The Ostgoths have their own traditions and their own language. The Fandorin have no reason to see that. You can read old novels, listen to the music, and leaf through photo albums. That is our Russia.
(*Altyn-Tolobas* 4)

Russia, in this passage, is a subjective, almost fictional entity, a highly personalized experience. The Russia of Nicholas' father is novels, music, and images. It is a Russia that has no voices of the living; rather, it is an intellectual and aesthetic experience. It is a virtual Russia and as such possesses potential of being adjusted.

Nicholas follows his father's advice for some time, finding it "easier and more pleasant to love Russia from a distance" (*Altyn-Tolobas* 4). Majoring in 19th century Russian history allowed Nicholas to preserve his pure feelings about Russia, for *then* even the negative aspects of its history were still within the bounds of European "nastiness." This image of the country was challenged, however, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, when, because of the changes in Yeltsin's Russia, Nicholas started to be ashamed that he was born Russian. It is only in the course of his adventures in Moscow that Nicholas learns the great potential of living in an adjustable virtual Russia.

Akunin's protagonist is a vehicle for a critique of the Russian nostalgia for imperial past, "restorative" nostalgia that "is focused on recovery and preservation of what is perceived to be an absolute truth" (Boym 49). Nicholas who attempts to re-create his family history out of shattered fragments of memory is a reflective nostalgic "focused on the individualized meditation on history" and "can be ironic and humorous" (*ibid.*). Akunin, in a typically postmodern way, suggests that one should not worry about the impossibility of discovering a true Russia. Instead of overcoming pluralism, multiplicity, and the heterogeneity of positions that became a source of worry for the Russian politicians of the 1990s, Akunin depicts life *with* diversity, and makes these decentralizing impulses a point of departure, not for achieving a unified opinion, but rather, a non-aggressive co-existence of ideas that cannot be easily united according to some modernist fashion. Akunin's postmodern character, slightly ironic, yet not cynical or aggressive, is capable of going beyond perceived differences by means of cultural eclecticism. While for Walter Scott history is linear in development, for Akunin history

is fragmented, pieced together from documentaries and monuments, and thus is a product of creative, artistic imagination.

In the example of Akunin, the complexities and creative potential of postmodern practices become clear. The constant complaint that postmodernism is either ahistorical or, if it uses history, that it does so in a naïve and nostalgic way, just will not stand up in the light of actual novels” (Hutcheon 20). The strategies and images we associate with postmodernism are not merely matters of style, fashionable clichés, or intellectual fashion; rather, they are an expression of a shift in the way we think about Russia. Paraphrasing Steven Connor’s assessment of postmodern theory, one can say that in Akunin’s novels postmodernism is a positive rebirth from the fallen giant of modernism. In his work, “the ‘post’ of postmodernism signifies not the fatigue of the late-comer, but the freedom and self-assertion of those who have awoken from the past” (Connor 74). The postmodern style in Akunin’s novels helps substantiate the argument that it is possible to come to terms with Russia’s past and present by adopting a more appreciative and playful perspective on Russia. Akunin’s characters have stopped worrying about losing the “real” Russia and just enjoy living in the country that offers so many fascinating possibilities for work, love, and adventure.

Conclusion

CARTING AWAY HISTORY

1. WHAT IS IN THE END?

In *Lenin's Tomb*, David Remnick writes:

From the first moment that Mikhail Gorbachev began his frenetic tinkering with the Soviet system, time, and the perception of time, lost its normal rhythm. Every year seems like an entire era. So many triumphs, agonies, and bitter surprises register on the landscape of the old empire that it is hard to focus on anything more distant than the previous week. (1994: 533)

In his description of Russia, Remnick captures the changed quality of time during *perestroika*: time lost its “normal rhythm” and each year seemed like “an entire era.” This accelerated rhythm of time, the swiftness with which Russia changed during *perestroika* and in the 1990s, compelled writers to re-think Russia, to explain what was happening in the country in the end of the 1980s and following the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. The topic of the new Russia was obviously important in Russia. But since Russia had played a role of chief adversary of the United States for many years before *perestroika* and since the image of Russia as America's other had been imperative for creating American national identity, the theme of changing Russia became also pertinent in American culture.

In the 1990s, many authors took the challenge of writing about Russia. I have discussed a large number of thrillers and detective novels by such British and American writers as John le Carré, Len Deighton, Jack Higgins, Joseph Finder, Robin Moore, Tom

Clancy, Frederick Forsyth, Robert Harris, Stuart Kaminsky, and Martin Cruz Smith; and by such Russian writers as Alexandra Marinina, Boris Akunin, and Andrei Konstantinov. There are many more novels and many films that have informed my study: thrillers by Ralph Peters, Pierce Read, John Griffith, Greg Dinallo, William E. Holland, and Reggie Nadelson; detective novels by Viktoria Platova, Tatiana Poliakova, Daria Dontsova, Friedrikh Neznanskii, and Andrei Kivinov. All these authors capture similar details about Russia of the 1990s. In their novels, Russia is a country in chaos, it is economically and politically unstable, it is struggling to cope with its past and present, its social structure is incomprehensible. Russia's chaos and instability, however, are depicted from various perspectives.

How are we to understand the co-existence of different images of Russia in crime fiction from the 1990s? Without questioning the accuracy of diverse images of post-Soviet Russia, my comparison of Anglo-American and Russian detective novels and thrillers was to uncover the values expressed in these aesthetic constructions. In order to go beyond registering obvious similarities – details such as increased crime, unemployment, political corruption, etc. – we need to ask a question of what informs various representations of Russia. The analysis presented in this thesis allows me to argue that crime fiction about Russia from the 1990s thrives on identity crisis, reconsideration of history, nostalgia, and the feeling of uncertainty about good and evil. A quest for the past, for the self and the other, and the sentiment of nostalgia define the genre changes in Anglo-American and Russian detective novels and thrillers of the period. The exploration of such themes as moral ambiguity, uncertainty, history, and nostalgia is an essential similarity in representations of post-Soviet Russia in British,

American, and Russian crime fiction. Despite their multiplicity, different interpretations of these themes in the novels analyzed are not “random” pictures of Russia; they are culturally specific; they are mediated by the history and structure of popular culture in which they appear; they are embedded in their respective cultural chronotopes. The differences in the ways Anglo-American and Russian authors explore history, the ambiguity of the 1990s, and the sentiment of nostalgia arise due to cultural asymmetries that inform popular cultures in the United States and in Russia. Indeed, in political history, the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union are perceived as closely related events. For Russian and American popular cultures, these events have asymmetrical significance. Cultural asymmetries that existed during the Cold War influenced the development of crime fiction in the 1990s. For British and American authors, the end of the Cold War is a defining factor in constructing post-Soviet Russia. In Russia, the end of the Cold War, as expressed in popular culture, is not as significant as the disintegration of the Soviet Union. For Russian detective writers, the demise of the Soviet Union is a central factor that shapes perspectives on Russia’s present and past. Put differently, in Anglo-American fiction of the 1990s, the end of the Cold War triggers the quest for the past, uncertainty about the self and the other, as well as nostalgia. For *detektivy* of the 1990s, the fall of the Soviet Union plays the role of a powerful catalyst for the reconsideration of Russian history, national identity, morality, and memory.

2. A LESSON OF HISTORY

Reconsideration of history is a preoccupation of Anglo-American and Russian crime fiction of the 1990s. An attempt to make sense of Russia’s present through

rethinking its past and history of the Cold War is an essential quality of the cultural chronotopes in both the United States and Russia in the 1990s. *Perestroika*, which, in Remnick's words, was "the last lingering dream of socialism," turned out to be "folly" (1994:553). On Christmas night, in 1991, when Gorbachev "signed his resignation papers and the red flag over the Kremlin was lowered for the last time," Remnick went to the Kremlin to see his friend Giorgi Shakhnazarov, who, like Gorbachev, "had hoped to reform communism, to rescue the system and drag it into the modern world" (ibid.). By 1991, "the regime was in ruins and the empire in dissolution. All the talk was of a democracy and a free market; Gorbachev had passed into history and the movers were coming to cart away the boxes" (ibid.). This story by Remnick captures the swiftness with which different eras in Russia change each other. At the same time, this story is incomplete. Indeed, Gorbachev and socialism "passed into history" but history and thinking about history passed into the culture of the 1990s. After Communist monuments had been knocked down, street names had been changed, and the Soviet Union itself had disappeared as a political entity, debates about the legacies of socialism and the history of Russia shaped public life in Russia in the 1990s. After such historical ruptures as *perestroika*, the end of the Cold War, and the demise of the Soviet Union, re-writing history became an important characteristic of cultural chronotopes in the United States and, more so, in Russia.

Early in this dissertation, I discussed a definition of popular culture as a historically changing "terrain of contest and contestation" that reproduces social relations (Hall 1992: 278). One of the tasks of my analysis of detective fiction and thrillers of the 1990s was to find out what exactly was contested in Anglo-American and

Russian interpretations of Russia. After examining a large number of narratives, I can argue that the analyzed representations of post-Soviet Russia contest the past; they contest Cold War history as well as Russian imperial and Soviet history. Revisiting and re-writing history in the detective genre in the 1990s are attempts to conquer time, which indeed had spun out of control since *perestroika*.

Cultural history and political history do not coincide. There is asymmetry in how the Cold War and the Soviet Union end in reality and as fiction. The clash of culture and history in the 1990s invites one to reconsider the concept of history as progress. In *The Idea of History*, R. G. Collingwood writes about the significance ascribed to the idea of progress in historiography of modern societies. According to Collingwood, the historical thought of the eighteenth century "laid the foundations for the dogma of progress, as that was accepted in the nineteenth century" (328). Collingwood explains that the notion of historical progress "refers to the coming into existence" of new types of actions, thoughts, and situations (324). Typically, historiography in the modern period emphasizes the current: new themes, new events, recent political figures, and innovative doctrines. Modern histories of culture tend to focus on what is new in music, the fine arts, and literature. If we were to follow the same model in writing a comparative history of Russian crime fiction from the 1990s, we would emphasize how, in evolving from controlled Soviet literary landscape, the *detektiv* now incorporates elements of Western detective fiction. Although such an interpretation would be correct, it does not encourage a reading of *detektivny* as an indigenous expression of Russia's anxiety about its past.

The end of the Cold War is unanimously recognized as political and social progress. However, the role that thinking and fighting about the past played since the

1990s invites one to look for concepts of history that go beyond a traditional focus on the new when discussing evolving literary, social, and cultural forms. In *The Age of Extremes*, Eric Hobsbawm argues that the twentieth century started around 1917 and ended in 1991. A crucial characteristic of “the short twentieth century” was its utopianism, its focus on a belief in a better future. In the words of Andreas Huyssen, in the early twentieth century, “modern societies tried to define their modernity and to secure their cohesiveness by way of imagining the future” (11). After 1991, however, historical memory has emerged as a powerful cultural phenomenon in many Western societies, and “it now seems that the major required task of any society today is to take responsibility for its past” (ibid.). Reconsideration of the past in Russia seems to coincide with a current cultural tendency that Huyssen observes in Germany and North America. In *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, Huyssen writes:

One of the most surprising cultural and political phenomena of the 1990s has been the emergence of memory as a key cultural and political concern in Western societies. This turning toward the past stands in stark contrast to the privileging of the future so characteristic of earlier decades of twentieth-century modernity. Modernist culture was energized by what one might call “present futures.” Since the 1980s, it seems, the focus has shifted from present futures to present pasts, and this shift in the experience and sensibility of time needs to be explained historically. (11)

Where are both former superpowers following this short century? At the beginning of the third millennium, Russia seems to be emerging from economic, social, cultural, and political crisis. In the United States, the World Trade Center attack of 11 September 2001 served as a catalyst for reconsidering the role of the United States as the

leading player in international politics. The decade of the 1990s hence is a transition period following the era inspired by dreams of communism and the struggle to prevent its spread and the new millennium, whose cultural preferences are still to be discovered. While our new time shows some traits of the utopian thinking typical of the twentieth century, it is still too early to define the period that has commenced in terms of utopia. It is clear, however, that in the 1990s' cultural transition, preoccupations with the past were important for coping with the present. I therefore disagree with Elaine McClarnand and Steve Goodson, the authors of the collection *The Impact of the Cold War on American Popular Culture*, who write that less than a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the era of the Cold War disappeared, became obsolete and "receded from public consciousness like a bad dream" (v). In my analysis of Anglo-American spy novels, thrillers, and mysteries, I showed that the Cold War was alive in the literary imagination in the 1990s. In post-Cold War spy novels by John le Carré and Joseph Finder, the Cold War, instead of being an object of fear, has become an object of nostalgia for a time when actors were clearly defined as either good or evil, and there was none of the uncertainty of the relativistic 1990s. While post-Cold War spy thrillers question Cold War perspectives on Russia, mysteries with Russian protagonists and action thrillers recycle these perspectives. The cultural logic of rethinking Russian history in thrillers by Tom Clancy, Robin Moore, Robert Harris, and Frederic Forsyth and mysteries by Martin Cruz Smith and Stuart Kaminsky involves projections of Cold War sensibilities onto the present. In these thrillers, the perception of present-day Russia is placed in the perspective of Cold War history. Anglo-American action thrillers of the 1990s represent crime, corruption, collapse, and instability in post-Soviet Russia as a

legacy of the Soviet Union. The evil in thrillers by Harris, Clancy, and Forsyth is represented by persons linked to the Soviet past: former communists, nationalists, Stalinists, and corrupt bureaucrats. To reinforce the evil nature of a villain, authors frequently make the reader associate him or her with Stalinism or Hitlerism. The use of historical details in post-Cold War thrillers about Russia reminds one of the techniques of negative characterization in Soviet *detektiv*. A villain in the Soviet *detektiv* was associated with the Nazi or was a former Nazi himself. Whereas Nazism is represented as the ultimate universal evil in both traditions of crime fiction, Stalinism is almost never a topic of discussion in Russian *detektiv*. The reasons for the asymmetry in Anglo-American and Russian crime fiction are complex and go beyond the simple argument that the Russians' reluctance to discuss Stalinism in certain forms of popular culture proves the vitality of Stalinist ideas in Russia.

Krutye detektiv, mysteries, and historical detective fiction give different responses to the demise of the Soviet Union and Russia's search for a new identity. These responses range from aggressive, as in *krutye detektiv*, to playful, as in Akunin's historical *detektiv*. In *krutye detektiv*, demonstrating the corruption of the Soviet system is used to justify the protagonists' decision to become criminals. In contrast, Marinina's mysteries idealize the Soviet past. Unlike heroes of *krutye detektiv* who tend to condemn both past and present, Marinina's protagonist tries to create a meaningful continuity between society's old beliefs and the values cherished in the present. In his depictions of Russia, Akunin avoids the Soviet period altogether; rather, his critical re-evaluation of Russia's history involves comparison and contrast between Russia in the 1990s and Russia before the Revolution. The imperial past of Russia in Akunin's novels

serves as allegory, a space onto which Akunin projects problems that are relevant in today's Russia.

3. THE MOTIF OF UNCERTAINTY

After the Cold War and the fall of the USSR, characters in crime fiction reconsider notions of good and evil familiar to them from the past. Normally a crime novel is structured around the idea that good and evil need to be defined clearly. Uncertainty as to whether post-Cold War Russia continues its evil, ambiguity about the West's methods in its struggle against Russia, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, questioning moral norms from the Soviet period and comparing them to post-Soviet morals, trigger a series of genre transformations in the 1990s.

In Anglo-American spy novels, ambiguity and uncertainty about definitions of good and evil, about Russia, and about Western heroes' own identities lead to an increased focus on character psychology. The heroes of the Cold War period retire. They are no longer sure what is the right attitude to Russia; they question the validity of their work during the Cold War. Moreover, the disappearance of Russia as the ultimate adversary of the United States propels a fruitful blending of the spy novel and the conspiracy novel. Joseph Finder's novels *The Moscow Club* and *Extraordinary Powers* are examples of the change in focus from the old antagonism between Russia and America to problems within the CIA. The dynamics of the spy novel in the 1990s may be described as a gradual change from a novel based on plot to a novel based on character. In mysteries by Cruz Smith and Kaminsky and in thrillers by Clancy, Moore, Harris, and Forsyth, the ambiguities of the post-Cold War are glossed over. These genres

generally retain the older notions of good and evil, although some uncertainty about a proper attitude to Russia is also manifested in the post-Cold War thriller.

In their treatment of ambiguity, contemporary *krutye detektivy* may be viewed as an asymmetrical counterpart of the post-Cold War spy novel about Russia. As in the spy novel, feelings of ambiguity in defining good and evil contribute to changes in the genre of *krutoi detektiv*. Its heroes, unsure about their understanding of good and evil, become noble criminals. Like le Carré's characters, heroes in Konstantinov's novels are disenchanted about the world around them; they do not understand it. Nevertheless, the difference between heroes of the spy novel and *krutoi detektiv* is significant. Le Carré's disenchanted spies gradually 'fall out of the picture' in the post-Cold War world. They turn into "small men" whose lack of commitment to new causes of socio-political importance makes their participation in these causes immoral. Konstantinov's heroes, by contrast, strive to occupy key positions in post-Soviet Russia. Their uncertainty about ethics in post-Soviet Russia leads to romanticizing criminal behavior, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to aggressively assert the new heroes' masculinity. While the motif of uncertainty in Anglo-American crime fiction is linked to depictions of the Cold War spying crisis, in *krutoi detektiv* the same theme is linked to the crisis of the ideal of heroic masculinity. Organized crime and the opposition to it substitute for the Russian military as the traditional masculine institution of interest. Forms and types of characters in Russian fiction that resemble forms and characters from Western fiction are culture-sensitive. They express ideas relevant for a particular culture in a particular period.

In Akunin's historical *detektivy*, the theme of uncertainty about good and evil is linked to depicting Russia's quest for its history. By introducing postmodern characters

in his novels, Akunin proposes to come to terms with Russian history and Russia's present by adopting a more appreciative and playful perspective of Russia. He wants to stop worrying about losing the "real" Russia and enjoy the country's multiple historical and emotional landscapes.

4. NOSTALGIA FOR THE RADIANT PAST

When one thinks about nostalgia as a theme in literature, the names of such writers and poets as Rainer-Maria Rilke, James Joyce, Vladimir Nabokov, and Iosif Brodsky come to mind. We are not used to thinking of detective novels or action thrillers as a suitable literary form for expressing nostalgia or for looking at this sentiment from a more critical perspective. Yet, as the analysis presented in this thesis shows, Anglo-American and Russian crime fiction of the 1990s capitalizes on the sentiment of nostalgia. In this type of fiction, nostalgia is both a significant theme and an object of critique. Because of cultural asymmetries underlying popular genres of Anglo-American and Russian crime fiction, nostalgia is inscribed into different cultural chronotopes. Consequently, this fiction projects diverse images of Russia.

As expressed in spy novels from the 1990s, the Western sense of victory in the Cold War is tinted by nostalgia for Cold War heroism and clear moral values. Political thrillers by Clancy, Forsyth, and Harris and mysteries by Kaminsky interpret Russian nostalgia for the Soviet past as a sign that Russia may still be a threat to the world. At the same time, in their use of old readings of Russia, these political thrillers are themselves a manifestation of nostalgia for the Cold War, an expression of the West's inability to shake off the "cold" of the previous era.

In Russian crime fiction of the 1990s, the theme of nostalgia is part of Russia's attempt at reconstructing a new identity. As a theme, it plays almost no role in *krutye detektivy* by Andrei Konstantinov. His heroes tend to dissociate themselves from the Soviet past. At the same time, the structure of *krutye detektivy* and their genesis suggest a kind of repressed longing for the heroic ideal of masculinity that was lost in the upheavals of *perestroika* and the reforms of the 1990s.

Nostalgia for the Soviet past is hardly discussed on the thematic level in Alexandra Marinina's mysteries. However, this sentiment is a defining factor underlying the structure and characterization in Marinina's mysteries. Although there are a number of similarities between Marinina's fiction and European classical detective novels, her books became part of a Russian subculture of nostalgia for the Soviet Union. Unlike thrillers by Clancy, Forsyth, and Harris, it is not a restorative nostalgia threatening to resurrect communism; Marinina's is a reflective nostalgia that revives those pages of the Soviet past that may be helpful in Russia's present and future. Marinina's mysteries express nostalgia for the past that had never existed; they are an expression of nostalgia for idealized Soviet values.²²⁶

In Akunin's *detektivy*, Russian nostalgia for the past is an object of critique. Akunin attacks the nostalgia for imperial Russia idealized in a number of literary and cinematic works from the 1990s. Akunin's depictions serve to destroy the myth that the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were Russia's golden age.

²²⁶ Marinina's recent novel *Tot, kto znaet* [The One Who Knows] (2002) expresses nostalgia more explicitly than her previous works. In this novel, Marinina idealizes a Soviet *kommunalka*, a communal apartment of the 1950s and 1960s.

The variety of mass culture responses to the historical changes in the 1990s demonstrates the complexity of relations between culture and history, and between history and society. In culture, the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union took longer than in politics and history. Cold War beliefs continued to influence the representation of Russians in the 1990s in American thrillers and detective fiction. Similarly, the Soviet Union continued to haunt the cultural responses to the 1990s in Russia. Within the prism of crime fiction of the 1990s, Russia becomes a collection of various representations, an intertext, a never-ending quest for the self and the other.

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