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The Petersburg Text of Russian Cinema in the Perestroika and Post-Perestroika Eras

Natalia Bratova

Lund 2013

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To my father

Coverphotograph: From *Happy Days* (Aleksei Balabanov, 1991). By courtesy of CTB Film Company.

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…но ни на что не променяем пышный
гранитный город славы и беды.

Anna Akhmatova, 1915[1]

Эй, Ленинград, Петербург, Петроградище
Марсово пастбище, Зимнее кладбище.
Отпрыск России, на мать не похожий
Бледный, худой, евроглазый прохожий.
Герр Ленинград, до пупа затоваренный,
Жареный, пареный, дареный, краденый.
Мсье Ленинград, революцией меченный,
Мебель паливший, дом перекалеченный.
С окнами, бабками, львами, титанами,
Липами, сфинксами, медью, Аврорами.
Сэр Ленинград, Вы теплом избалованы,
Вы в январе уже перецелованы.
Жадной весной ваши с ней откровения
Вскрыли мне вены тоски и сомнения.
Пан Ленинград, я влюбился без памяти
В Ваши стальные глаза…

Iurii Shevchuk (rockband DDT), 1993[2]

---

[1] But we shall never seek a substitution
For this grand city — our woe and prize. (Bonver 2002)

[2] Hey, Leningrad, Petersburg, Petrogradishche,
The pasture of Mars, the Winter cemetery.
Russia's offspring not resembling its mother,
A pale, thin, euro-eyed passerby
Herr Leningrad, overstocked to its paunch,
Fried, boiled, gifted and stolen,
Monsieur Leningrad, marked by the revolution,
Which has burnt its furniture, a mutilated house
With its windows, grannies, lions, Titans,
Lindens, sphinxes, copper, Auroras.
Sir Leningrad, you are pampered by warmth,
Already in January you are showered with kisses
By the avid spring. Your revelations to it
Have cut my veins of anguish and doubt.
Pan Leningrad, I have fallen in love
With your steel eyes.

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Part I

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

Backgrounds

1.1 Staging the Problem

The study of a city can proceed in a variety of directions. It is possible to explore the history of the city from its foundation to the present day, its architecture and different architectural styles represented in it or the quotidian life of its citizens and of separate sections of its population, so to speak, and the physiology of the city in the different periods of time. Or else such a study can include an analysis of the city's toponymy and geographical position, of its cultural and political life, the way in which it has been represented in literature, art and even music in different epochs and many other commonplace or totally unexpected aspects. One more extremely interesting sphere when studying a city can be mentioned here. It is hard to define but at the same time it can probably cover all the other aspects that have already been listed above. It is the myth of the city.

While I was thinking of how to start my work and to introduce its subject my little son, who was visiting Petersburg for the first time in his conscious age, told me about his visit to Peter and Paul's cathedral. The dialogue went like this:

'What did you learn about the fortress?' — 'Peter I was there.' — 'Who was he?' — 'A tsar.' — 'What did he do?' — 'He founded a great city there.'

This was actually my son's first solid knowledge about the history of Petersburg (knowledge he apparently received from his grandmother who accompanied him there). This short episode illustrates quite well how important the mythical vision of the world is for us and how deeply it is settled in our minds. It is the most immediate and obvious knowledge we are able to give to a child or to a person not acquainted with the history of a place. It can also explain my own choice of the subject for my work. Being born and brought up in

Saint Petersburg, I could be regarded as a natural bearer of the myth of the city, which both simplifies and complicates my task of studying it.

It is impossible to put aside the myths when looking at a city's history, not only in an average person's consciousness but in the consciousness of a scientist as well.[3] In talking about these myths, it turns out to be very hard to designate thoroughly where a pure myth begins and where the history, reality or factual information of any kind ends. Writing about a myth one risks getting attracted too much by its charm and getting involved too deeply in the 'reality' of the myth. It can sometimes be difficult for the researcher to distinguish whether he or she is talking about myth or history. Aware of this risk, I still sometimes feel unable to make a clear distinction between the myth of the city, the subjective feelings evoked by it and the factual history of the city. Perhaps this subjectivity is impossible to avoid in the kind of research that concerns common mythical consciousness and therefore it should be taken into account both by the researcher and by the reader of an article on the subject.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Andrey Bely in his novel *Petersburg* proclaimed: «Если же Петербург не столица, то — нет Петербурга. Это только кажется, что он существует»[4] (Bely 1981, p. 10). For various writers and scientists of the twentieth century this phrase served as an argument when speaking of the city and its myth. For many, the myth of Petersburg finished its development after the October revolution and the mythopoeia of the city was put aside to remain in the literature and artistic works of the previous epochs and could no longer be topical for a city living out its last days. But another century has passed and Petersburg still has not lost its metaphysical vitality meaning attractiveness of its image and destiny for writers, poets, artists and musicians of the twentieth century. In the following work, my principal object is to defend the idea that the myth of Petersburg still exists, and that it is still developing and transforming in accordance with historical reality. To do so I have chosen to enter a field of art that has hitherto scarcely been studied from the position of the myth of Petersburg, namely film art.

The time limits defined for the empirical material that I include in my research embrace the period from the films of the first years of perestroika, meaning films dating from 1988–1989, as the earliest relevant to this work and produced under the perestroika years, to the films produced on the threshold or soon after the tercentennial anniversary of Saint Petersburg and dating from

[3]This idea was discussed, among others, by Roland Barthes in his book of 1957, *Mythologies* (see Barthes 1969, or Barthes 1993).

[4]'If Petersburg is not the capital, then there is no Petersburg. It only appears to exist' (Bely 1978, p. 2).

2003 to 2006. The initial choice of the perestroika and post-perestroika periods for my work was a rather incidental one, as dictated firstly by my personal preference for a period that was familiar to me as to its immediate observer and participator. But more profound research into the subject in question showed that this initially almost instinctive choice of period was reasonable and correct. Firstly, mythmaking and transformations of the existent myths become most intensive and explicit at the turning points in a community's history.[5] Perestroika and the following years were precisely such a turning point in the history of Russia and no less of Saint Petersburg. Secondly, the myth's manifestations in contemporary films have scarcely been seriously studied until now. One more reason for choosing the correlation between the Petersburg myth and cinema as a subject for this thesis is its extreme interdisciplinarity. It embraces various fields of study — literature, history, cultural studies and film theory — which makes it even more exciting and offers a scientist numerous ways of entering and studying it.

In my work I not only try to survey separate films and their exploitation of the Petersburg myth, but I make an effort to include these films in a more general meta-text, the so called Petersburg text, using Vladimir Toporov's notion (Toporov 1995). According to his theory, literary works of different epochs and writers that choose Petersburg as their setting and as their theme can be united into a homogeneous and easily discernible concept of the Petersburg text. Since the subject is vast, some aspects of the myth of the city and their manifestation in films will not be discussed in my work, among them is the confrontation between contemporary Moscow and Petersburg. In my opinion, this aspect is profound on its own and deserves to be examined in a separate work. Another considerable aspect of the myth that cannot be embraced in this thesis is Petersburg as the criminal capital of Russia. It is virtually excluded from this thesis, except for the films on this subject which also have significant interconnection with other ideas of the myth examined in this work. Another limitation that I have observed in my research concerns the choice of material. Only long fictional films are taken into account and studied in the thesis. Due to the variety of empirical material I have been forced to leave out of the research documentaries, series and short fictional films apart from the cases when these films belong to film-makers whose other works are discussed in this thesis and thus can illustrate more clearly their general view of the myth and its possible transformation in time.

Before we come closer to the Petersburg myth and text it should be defined

[5] A more detailed discussion of myth and its characteristics will follow, but this statement is a commonplace for different scholars who deal with the subject of myth (see, for example, Cassirer 1946, Schöpflin 1997).

what the myth in general is and how the city in general is visualised in cinema.

1.2 The Definition and Functions of Myth

It is no secret that the most problematic task in any discussion of myth and mythmaking is to formulate a single concrete and uncontroversial definition of myth that will satisfy scholars in all fields of research. This lack of one universal definition has become a common complaint among researchers who deal with the problem of myth and mythmaking and will be found in the introduction to almost any paper on the topic. Without deviating from the existing tradition, I will note that this disadvantage serves at the same time to benefit researchers, allowing them to choose the most acceptable definition among the diverse alternatives already formulated or simply to come up with a definition of the notion that best suits their studies.

There are various approaches to the notion of myth which supplement or conflict with each other: anthropological, sociological, semiotic, religious, etc. Using the words of Cassirer, we can say that every scholar operating with this notion observes it from the viewpoint of his/her own science and hence prefers to find only familiar objects in it. 'The linguist found in it a world of words and names — the philosopher found a 'primitive philosophy' — the psychiatrist a highly complicated and interesting neurotic phenomenon' (Cassirer 1946, p. 6). Though, said in the past tense, these words are still relevant in the discussion about myth today. The concept of myth is continuously revised by different scientists, but there still does not exist any generally accepted definition and the existent definitions can still be divided into a number of groups according to the field of their application.

I will try to constitute my own conception of myth and define its meaning and functions in a human community. To do that, I will use some of the existing theories. In the first place, it is the ideas of George Schöpflin and of Ernst Cassirer that have inspired me in the quest for a definition of myth. Schöpflin, in his article 'The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myth', presents myth as a set of beliefs of a community about itself providing it with a deeper comprehension of its own history and systems of morality and values (Schöpflin 1997, pp. 19–35). For Ernst Cassirer, myth is a form of cognition as significant as science, history, art and religion. I do not include here the much wider conception of myth as a metalanguage saturating all the spheres of life given by Roland Barthes in his *Mythologies* (Barthes 1993). However, this approach to myth could also be useful in my study and help to reveal the traces of myth hidden in the most common words, images and acts. In the case of this thesis, films are the major empirical material as well as several interviews

with film creators. Some, if not most, of the films included in my study do not have much in common with the Petersburg myth if regarded perfunctorily. Quite often a reference to the myth is hidden in the most ordinary images, such as a communal flat, a tram, a city roof.

A rather apt definition of myth, or at least of a scientific approach to it, is provided by a Russian proverb: «Сказка ложь, да в ней намек, добрым молодцам урок».[6] Although it concerns a fairy-tale and might be regarded as rather primitive and obvious, this proverb, which has been widely used as a conclusion to Russian fairy-tales and a truism of a tale's moral, illustrates the main feature of myth. Myth is situated on the borders of reality and fiction and can, by an unprepared or unsophisticated audience, be regarded simply as a fictional story that has no connection with real life. On the other hand, in archaic societies myths have always been considered true stories or histories.[7] By combining these two visions of myth, as a fictitious story on the one hand and as an undoubted reality on the other, we can try to outline the main functions of myth and thereby come closer to its definition.

The principal and the most significant function of myth is to act as an instrument of self-identification for a group of people. Myth allows a given community (most often in the case of myth it is a nation implied by 'community') to establish and develop, through a series of allegorical stories, its cognition of the world and to gain its self-identification as a community bound by common interests and, which is even more important, by common history. Myth allows this community to find its place in the changing world and to integrate into it. It is an allegorical vision of the group itself, its past, present and future. For Schöpflin, 'myth is about perceptions rather than historically validated truths' (Schöpflin 1997, p. 19). This formulation establishes a strict hierarchy between fiction and reality in the myth — reflection over historical events and natural phenomena is of much greater importance for myth than their plain verification. Mythological perception deals with meditation about reality and its allegorical transformation. It constitutes an emotionally experienced reflection on the reality of a given community. The model of the world constructed with the help of this perception might deviate substantially from reality, but it will always be based on it and imply an effort to comprehend and evaluate it.

Thus the principal functions of myth can be denoted in the following succession:

- cognition — myth is a way (one of the ways along with history, art,

[6] 'A tale is false but has a hint, a lesson to all fine men'.

[7] More about myth perception by archaic societies can be found in Eliade 1998 (first published in 1962), e.g. pp. 1–13, or in Overing 1997, pp. 1–18.

science, etc.) for a community to examine and comprehend the world around it and the given community itself, though in the case of myth, when compared to other forms of cognition, this is an emotional experience that dominates and gives form and content to the final product, the myth.

- self-identification — myth allows a group of people to gain an abstract schematic picture of their own being, of their history and moral values and by this to distinguish themselves from others as a separate and united community. Thus myth can help to form a separate group or community on different scales: it can be a nation, but it can also be a smaller group inside a nation (or not bound inside one nation at all), designated by its subculture, place of living, professional, religious or other interests. In the case of this thesis, we are focused primarily on a community formed due to location in or interest towards a certain city, Saint Petersburg.

- integration — with the help of myth, a community can find its own place in the constantly changing world. It serves as a foundation on which the illusion of a coherent community is erected. Myth can unite individuals only superficially. It is not able to eliminate the fundamental ambiguity of any society. It can only allow a sense of unity to the given community to a certain extent.

- collective memory — myth serves as an instrument for collecting not so much memories of the past as emotional experiences and reactions to the events of the community's past and present and the ideas of the community about its future. It is, in Cassirer's words, a collection of the hopes and fears of a community, directed towards both its past and its future, which cannot possibly be preserved by any other means (Cassirer 1946, p. 47).

Taking into consideration all the functions mentioned above, it is no wonder that new myths appear most frequently in periods of crisis for a community, such as wars, revolutions or other unstable political situations or power crises. Mythmaking can be considered as a reaction to these stressful changes that affect the life of a given community. In other words, myths appear at the moments when giving a new meaning and understanding to the surrounding world and to the community's new role in it are the most pressing needs. These periods not only make new myths blossom but usually give a powerful incentive to the accumulation and revision of the old ones.[8]

[8] A good example of a myth revised under crucial periods of a national history is given by

This constant revision of the mythological heritage prepares the ground for another characteristic feature of myth. Each myth consists of a number of elements that can be defined as its 'building blocks' (Schöpflin 1997, p. 20). Despite all the changes that a myth can undergo in the course of time, due to any social and political turmoil or other circumstances, these 'building blocks' remain almost unchanged. The term 'blocks' refers to the separate symbols or elements of a particular myth. Together these blocks form, I would say, a chromosome set of the myth and allow the myth to remain recognisable and not lose its peculiarity, notwithstanding all the changes that might occur to its content. In my opinion, this is quite similar to the ideas of Vladimir Propp concerning fairy tales and their functional elements (Propp 1970). The building blocks that build a myth's framework make it possible for scholars to divide myths into a number of typical groups. Among them are recognised, for example, cosmogonic myths (myths of the creation of the world), myths of the 'Golden Age' (myths of heaven on earth), eschatological myths (myths of the end of the world), etc.[9]

Despite this seeming constancy of the blocks in a myth, in the course of time every myth undergoes certain changes that keep it alive and make it topical for the community at present. Usually, these transformations remain unseen by members of the community in a separate period of time and can be observed only if the whole of a myth from its very beginning is being examined. But even with these updatings, the building blocks of a myth — its 'chromosome set' — remain almost untouched. This ability to transform and actualise its content without loss of its genuineness provides a myth with vitality and validity through the centuries.

I would like to add here one more feature of myth, which is probably quite obvious but extremely important to remember for anyone who studies myth and its manifestations in a community's various spheres of life. Although expressing a community's emotional vision of the world and, therefore, being developed in a community's consciousness, a myth is not expressed clearly and remains undefined by separate members of the given community. In other words, an ordinary member of the community does not have a clear and complete picture of a myth in his/her consciousness and never correlates his/her own vision of the surrounding world consciously with that of a myth. Myths exist in the individual's subconscious, rooted there already in childhood. Hence we can define the knowledge and the usage of a myth and mythmaking of an individual as passive and unconscious. Therefore, for

Barbara Törnquist–Plewa in her research *The Wheel of Polish Fortune. Myths in Polish Collective Consciousness During the First Years of Solidarity* (Törnquist–Plewa 1992).

[9]See e.g. Schöpflin 1997, Eliade 1998, pp. 1–21, 54–75, 162–195, Klukhon 1960.

an individual it becomes almost impossible and even unnecessary to make a distinction between myth and reality. Even political or artistic figures who operate actively with existing and newly appearing myths do so usually on a more or less intuitive basis. Hence, when studying myth and its manifestation in art or politics, one should not forget that for the people who operate with a given myth it exists usually at a subconscious, intuitive level and is not analysed theoretically. It is then almost impossible for a researcher to claim with confidence whether or not the use of a particular idea or element of the myth has been taken intentionally, for example, in a political speech or in a film.

Summing up all the previously mentioned characteristic features and functions of myth I will formulate my definition of myth. By myth I understand a set of emotionally experienced ideas of reality established in a number of building blocks and continuously revised by a community in order to comprehend and define its role and place in the changing world. The most significant features of myth are its emotional basis, allegorically performed perceptions of reality, ability to become topical in accordance with the views and feelings of the present community and with the community's living conditions.

Before moving forward to the overview of the myth of Petersburg I will cite here an assertion of Schöpflin about mythmaking and television which is no less apt in relation to cinema and thus is extremely relevant to this thesis:

> 'The impact of the electronic media should be noted in this (mythopoeic) context, because television not only reaches a very large number of people and thus penetrates into areas of society not easily reached otherwise, but also because the visual image is excellent at creating a sense of mythic reality and verisimilitude which are then very hard to check against other experiences' (Schöpflin 1997, p. 25).

1.3 The City in Cinema

Anton Chekhov's well-known motto about theatrical space proclaims: 'One must not put a loaded rifle on the stage if no one is thinking of firing it.'[10] Not aiming to discuss here the ambiguous meaning of the phrase that relates to props, protagonists and their actions, I shall note that it is no less relevant in regard to cinema. I would claim that it is even more applicable in respect to cinema. The fragment of space framed by the camera is more concentrated

[10] Чехов 1976, pp. 273 and 463. The phrase was repeated by Chekhov several times in different circumstances and consequently several variants of it can be found, some regarding a rifle, some a pistol. In one version it is proclaimed in respect of a literary work but the phrase is much more known and frequently used concerning theatre.

and compressed than that of the theatrical stage. Therefore, each object inside a shot bears a certain meaning and adds to our comprehension of a narrative.

This statement, of course, can be disputed taking into consideration some of experimental abstract or surrealist films where objects caught by the camera do not strive to build a story but, on the contrary, to totally confuse the viewer. Nevertheless, a canonic perception of a film as a whole contains the following idea: nothing is redundant inside a film and each rifle shown there, especially in close-up, will undoubtedly be fired in some way. This means not only a straightforward action but also a semantic load of relevant information which we as spectators are supposed to decode and bind with the rest of the narrative.

At first sight, however, the choice of a city as the scene of action in a film can seem rather insignificant. Obviously a story can not take place in a vacuum[11] and consequently a city is the most ordinary, even banal place for most stories to be set, since the majority of people in our urbanised society live nowadays in bigger or smaller cities. But this is not unambiguously the case. A city as a film set offers filmmakers a variety of choices and solutions.

Roughly speaking, a cinematic city as scenery and place of action without taking into account functions that it might have for the narration, can be categorised in several ways:

- Firstly, film scenery can be built entirely in a studio, often with different special effects added. This is primarily a suitable solution for science-fiction films that have Méliès' féeries (fairy stories) as their starting point and aim to show a city that does not exist in reality. However, the replacement of natural location with built scenery or computer graphics can be dictated by other reasons than a need to represent an imaginary place. Filmmakers can strive to achieve more artistic effects, including stylisation and visualisation of the narrative or other artistic effects.[12]

- Secondly, the anonymity of the cinematic city, where all the local traits are demolished and it is hard to attribute the place shown to any familiar

[11] A few cinematic examples might allow us to dispute this statement that a story can take place in a vacuum as it was, in a masterly way, shown in Lars von Trier's *Dogville* (2003). But such a minimisation or even denial of filmic space astonishes the viewer even more. It gives no escape for the viewer's eye from the performance of the actors and from the depressive and overwhelming narrative.

[12] German expressionism is a good example of this kind of stylisation by means of creating a distorted and artificial milieu in films (e.g. *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920) and *Raskolnikow* (1923) by Robert Wiene, *Nosferatu* (1922) by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau or *Metropolis* (1927) and *M* (1931), both by Fritz Lang). On scenery in German expressionist films see Licata and Travi 1985, pp. 10–5, Bordwell 2002, pp. 103–9.

town or city, is also a recurrent solution for a filmmaker that gives a story a sense of the global and eternal. This phenomenon was noticed by Pierre Sorlin when studying films of some European directors from the 1960s, in particular *Blow-Up* (1966) by Michelangelo Antonioni, *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1966) by Jean-Luc Godard and *Alice in the Cities* (1974) by Wim Wenders (Sorlin 1991, pp. 130–7). Sorlin calls this kind of anonymisation of cinematic cities the 'destruction' and 'negation' of cities. He assumes this phenomenon to be typical of the late 1960s European cinema. Any local distinctions of a city become uninteresting and irrelevant in these films, they are cut out of the screen no matter how famous, interesting and diverse the city (even London or Paris) where the story takes place actually is. He compares filmed towns to 'a skeleton, an idea of a town rather than any defined place' (Sorlin 1991, p. 133). Sorlin underlines how the distance between plot and setting becomes extremely wide in these films. He explains the alienation of the plot and setting together with the effacement of any local features of a town, first of all by the social transformations of post-war Europe, where urban growth started the process of globalisation and led to a crisis in representing towns in cinema. 'Towns become increasingly humdrum expanses crossed by indifferent drivers and damaged by greedy property developers' (Ibid.). This tendency of negating cities intensified with time in a segment of European cinema, as shown by Mazierska and Rascaroli in their analysis of the city in cinema in *Sliding doors* (Peter Howitt, 1998) and *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999) (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003, pp. 171–180).

- Thirdly, a city or a megalopolis can be chosen as a film set due to its definite and easily recognisable identity, which has already gained an intertextual image in earlier artistic works. Such cities usually offer more or less connoted plots and protagonists (the most banal examples here are Paris as a city of love and romance or Chicago as a city of gangsters). Yet they can be transformed in the course of time. A recognisable or stereotypical image of a city can be exploited in a revolutionary way as well, being broken or modified by a film.

Even with such a rough and by no means complete classification of cinematic cities one can see that the choice of a category is never restricted for purely technical reasons. It offers a number of connotations and semantic loads to a narrative. Hence a city in film, just like in literature, works not just as a decorative setting for a plot but as a foundation which contributes to forming and developing a narrative.

Generally speaking, a city — whether real or fictional — is a place strongly loaded with confrontations and contradictions. First of all, a city as the fruit of urbanisation and industrialisation is in implicit contrast to the countryside that usually represents the positive pole of the pair. The countryside functions often as a tranquil, safe and natural space as opposed to an overcrowded monstrous megalopolis filled with dangers and temptations where a person becomes alienated and vulnerable. Moving to the countryside is then regarded as a return to one's roots, quite often even as a return to childhood and moral innocence.[13]

This confrontation, however, may well contain ambivalence with the city representing a way of escape from the routine and even poverty of countryside life. In this case, the city becomes a place of immense opportunities and openings, which, of course, does not eliminate its dangerous and threatening nature. Traits of critical discourse between these two roles of the city as opposed to the countryside, both in the role of its dystopia and utopia, can be found in a variety of films giving rise to a variety of interpolations. But, apart from this external contradiction, a city also harbours a variety of inner conflicts and contradictions ranging from power and class related ones to those concerning race and gender. A further inward contradiction of the city space widely discussed these days is, for example, that of a modern/postmodern space (or in some cases a Fordian/post-Fordian city).[14] In my work however I do not plan to pay much attention to the discourse of modern/postmodern cinematic cities in the chosen films. Looking for a postmodern city is first of all looking for a globalised space with disappeared or disappearing local features whereas my interest is focused on the contrary on Petersburg's distinct identity.

It should be noted that the subject of the city in cinema has recently aroused a significant interest among scientists in different fields of study.[15] A

[13] For the first time a city is represented as an explicit menace to humankind in the films of German expressionists such as *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, *The Golem* (1920) by Carl Boese and Paul Wegener and, of course, *Metropolis* (Licata and Travi 1985, p. 12, Al Sayyad 2006, pp. 71–96). Another example of this confrontation is provided by *film noir* where a city is a macabre labyrinth in which a protagonist never feels safe. It is usually shown by night in comparison to sunny landscapes of the countryside where protagonists of some films of the genre find shelter. See more on city in film noir, for example, in Christopher 1997. A more recent example can be found in *Star Wars* where, as was pointed out by Mark Lamster, the techno-world of the evil forces opposes the much more natural world of the Rebels (Lamster 2000, p. 233).

[14] See, for example, Shiel and Fitzmaurice 2003, pp. 15–40, Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003.

[15] Apart from a large amount of books and articles devoted to the subject, several conferences have been held, e.g. *Screenscapes*, a conference organised at the Leeds International Film Festival in 1993 (for the papers of the conference see Shiel and Fitzmaurice 2003), and

good explanation, in my opinion, is that a cinematic city is in fact a borderland that can be regarded from the positions of various disciplines, such as architecture, geography, cultural studies, gender studies, film studies and many others. On the one hand, this interdisciplinarity makes the topic attractive to scholars of various scientific fields and, on the other, makes it extremely profound and inexhaustible and insufficiently explored at least for the present, despite a fair amount of volumes and articles on the subject.

Owing to the topic's interdisciplinarity there are numerous approaches to the study of a cinematic city. Some scholars adopt the concept of chronotope introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin. This concept combines both a definite space and time and puts a narrative into a very strict relation and even subordination to the given chronotope's rules. Although Bakhtin is interested only in examples from literature, a cinematic city constitutes a perfect case of Bakhtin's chronotope theory as it is a pure embodiment of the interrelation between time and space.[16]

According to another intriguing theory, a city — both cinematic and real — can be regarded as a body or a piece of corporeal geography.[17]A camera in this approach can play the role of a voyeur.

A city became an important topic in films early in the history of film art, already in the silent era of cinematography. In comparison to the other arts cinema offered many new possibilities when portraying a city. It had the ability to describe its rhythm, dynamics, movement and even 'the breath' of the city. Inevitably, this turned a city into a living being and into one of the prominent actors of many films. In the 1920s perhaps the most city-addicted genre appeared, namely the so-called symphony of the city. It was first represented in Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin, the Symphony of the Great City* (1927) and in Dziga Vertov's *Chelovek s kinoapparatom* (1929) (*Man with the Movie Camera*). These two films, which are nowadays considered archetypal, celebrate the beauty and extravagance of the urban environment and the congruence of its units: dwellers, mechanisms, cars, buildings, etc. It is sometimes argued that these films neglect the human as the distinctive subject of art and humiliate the species by placing it on a lower hierarchical level in respect to a more powerful and omnipresent being, the metropolis. In the eyes of some scholars, such ideas make these films obvious precursors of the totalitarian regime in both Germany and Soviet Russia (Strauthausen 2003, pp. 5–41).

Visualizing the City, a symposium held in the University of Manchester in 2005.

[16]See, for example, Konstantarakos 2000 a, pp. 2–3, Konstantarakos 2000 b, 112–123, Jesinghausen 2000, pp. 77–92, Spaas 2000, pp. 152–165, Massood 2003, pp. 200–215.

[17]See, for example, Pile 1996, Bruno 1993, Hayward 2000, pp. 23–34, and Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003, pp. 63, 81–4.

Notwithstanding these remarkable examples of the cinematic city filmed on location, a built scenery was more often used as a film setting for a city in the early years of cinematography.[18] The tradition of built city sites was widespread up to the 1940s. As mentioned above, German expressionists had a marvellous way of using built city scenery to achieve the desired effects of their narratives.

Filming on location in cities gained huge importance in the films of the neo-realists who also preferred to use non-professional actors and documentary footage of devastated cities. In the Soviet cinema, the city as a set and a streetscape with its ordinary unstaged crowd, oblivious to the filming, became extremely important during the years of the Thaw. Such films as *Ia shagaiu po Moskve* (*Walking the Streets of Moscow*, Georgii Daneliia, 1964), *Zastava Il'icha/Mne dvadtsat' let* (*I am Twenty*, Marlen Khutsiiev, 1964) and *Iiulskii dozhd'* (*July Rain*, Marlen Khutsiiev, 1966) can be regarded as genuine symphonies of the city's beauty. Most of them frame Moscow as a set for, and even as the main protagonist of, their narrations. The shooting on location in these films, just as in the works of the neo-realists or the Montage school, resembles a newsreel: unexpected and unstaged events are caught by the camera. People are either unaware of being filmed or gaze curiously straight into the camera's lens. The stream of city life is observed by the camera without interrupting its natural flowing. Unstaged shootings of the crowd in the streets and of cityscapes often overshadow the story itself. The life of the city not only interacts with other characters, it dominates them. The protagonist appears to be just one of the many faces in the crowd chosen at random by the camera to follow his/her life for a while.

The underlying reason for such newsreel-like filming, which unites filmmakers of Montage, neo-realism and Thaw cinema, is perhaps that in each of these periods extraordinary political events were taking place. The sense of history that changes right by the walls of your own house was strong, as was the desire to capture these moments with the help of a camera and thus to take part in these crucial events.

The cinematic city in some Russian films of the 1990s can also be characterised by a similar newsreel-like shooting manner. This will be exemplified in detail in the following chapters. This is not to deny, of course, that the reasons for shooting on location were not purely poetical during the perestroika period. There were serious economic motives for doing so. These were years of hard economic conditions for the film studios of the country and many direc-

[18] The most tremendous example of such scenery was Babylon in Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916) which, even after the film had been produced, was left standing for some years on the hills of Hollywood.

tors were forced to work in the streets and in their own apartments or those of friends instead of in studios. But whatever the reasons, this choice of natural locations brightened the films of the period with a real whirlpool of the city life of the moment.

It is important to note that a city is not limited only to its architecture: its streets, squares, buildings and monuments. For a filmmaker to be able to reveal a city's metaphysics, other constituent parts of the city are also important: the social element (people and their activities), nature (parks, trees, rivers, weather, etc.), mechanisms (transport, factories, etc.) and many other aspects. Studying a cinematic city one should see how and to what extent these parts are shown, which of them prevail over the image of the city on the screen, etc. However, a vivid and true-to-life portrayal of a city is built on the integration and interaction of all these components. At the same time, in different arts different components can be emphasised and endowed with significance. For a cinematic city, its colour and tempo also have to be included as building elements of its image.

An interesting element of this structure is the figure of the flâneur. This is an idler walking the city streets and enjoying city life. Most of the scholars dealing with the problem of the city and its personification in fiction attribute importance to this character. Often it is the promenade of a flâneur followed by a camera that gives a viewer a wide panorama of city life. As Mazierska and Rascaroli point out, flâneurs' habits have changed with time.

> 'The citizen who promenades in the beautified city centre is the contemporary version of the modern flâneur, who enjoyed looking at the crowds and goods, but always maintained a safe distance — like the narrator in Edgar Alan Poe's short story *The Man of the Crowd* (1845), who sits in the window of a London café and observes the passing people. The postmodern flâneur renounces that distance and seeks to experience the enchanted city, to play (or have the illusion of playing) an active role on the kaleidoscopic urban stage' (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003, p. 22).[19]

St. Petersburg is truly a city of flâneurs as has been pointed out by many but probably most vividly by Josef Brodsky in his article on the renamed city:

[19] Although the flâneur is an important figure of the cityscape some cities lack this figure on the screen:

> 'What is striking in the whole history of London cinema is how rarely it is depicted as a city of strollers, as opposed to other European metropolises, such as Paris (an archetypical city of flâneur, thanks to, among others Baudelaire and the French New Wave), Rome or Dublin. We rarely see people in films walking the streets of London and when they do, it usually ends badly for them — they are raped, mugged or killed and their bodies are disposed of in the Thames, as shown in *Corridors of Blood* (1958) by Robert Day or Hitchcock's *Frenzy*' (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003, pp. 169–170).

> «Человек, рожденный в этом городе, нахаживает пешком, по крайней мере смолоду, не меньше, чем хороший бедуин [...] оттого, что идти под этим небом, по набережным коричневого гранита, вдоль огромной серой реки, есть само по себе раздвижение жизни и школа дальнозоркости» (Brodsky 1999, pp. 67–8).[20]

In my work, special attention will be paid to the portrayal of the flâneur in the films of the contemporary Petersburg text along with other elements of the cinematic city. I will discuss whether the characters' promenades through the city are important for the films' narratives, what role they play in them, if any, and, generally speaking, how often the characters can be seen walking aimlessly in the city and enjoying city life. My approach to cinematic Petersburg will be discussed at length in the next chapter. Before that, one more aspect will be looked at, a brief review of Russian cinema in the perestroika and post-perestroika periods.

1.4 A Short Overview of the Cinema of the Perestroika and Post-Perestroika Periods

In this section I do not aim to give an analysis of the artistic value of the films of the period under discussion, nor to trace the history of film within this period. This is merely a short introduction to the technical and economic conditions of the decade in which the films analysed in this thesis were produced.

The perestroika period has no exact starting point and different historians tend to assign its start to various political, economic and social events. But in the case of cinema, if it is at all important to find out the countdown point for perestroika, it seems to be much easier to define. In accordance with Anna Lawton (Lawton 1992, p. 53) and *The Encyclopedia of Soviet/Russian Cinema*. I will assume the Fifth Congress of the Filmmakers' Union that took place in May 1986 to be 'the countdown of the new cinematographic times' («точкой отсчета новых кинематографических времен») (Ibid.). The Congress did not lead to any serious decisions and solutions, yet it was a litmus test that showed a new attitude of mind among Soviet filmmakers. There the problems of censorship and shelved films as well as of copyright, film distribution and possible forms of ownership were discussed at length.

[20] 'In his youth, at least, a man born in this city spends as much time on foot as any good Bedouin [...] It's because to walk under this sky, along the brown granite embankments of this immense gray river, is itself an extension of life and a school of farsightedness' (Brodsky 1985, p. 89).

The solution to these problems came soon afterwards and created many new problems that filmmakers had to face. What seemed at first to be a revival of cinematography after the Stagnation Period appeared in fact to be a decline of Soviet cinema. Freedom from censorship turned out to be a true temptation.[21]

In many films, including some of those analysed in this work, sex and nudity as well as scenes of violence became excessive and quite often unmotivated by the narrative. The well-known label of *chernukha* appeared that characterised negatively many films of the period for their depressive and hopeless, even macabre, tones.[22] Official funding was cut to a minimum, which was a hard blow to cinematic production. The search for other forms of funding including various joint-ventures and co-productions with European and American producers was rarely successful. Investing into film production became also 'a convenient method of money-laundering' (Beumers 1999 a, p. 2) which attracted unreliable and even criminal individuals into this business

[21] This is how one of the prominent Russian producers and film directors, Sergei Sel'ianov, has depicted this sense of freedom after years of censorship in 1997:

'I am convinced that any sort of restriction benefits art, and that art cannot exist without restrictions. These may be external, or they may be internal, i.e. the artist must act as a self-censor.

...Then *perestroika* burst upon us. Suddenly things from a life that was healthy and natural appeared, which we had forgotten about in Russia. Life itself became more natural, an elemental force that knows no limits. But art is all about limits, about conventionality. Our artists were not ready to assimilate, process and evaluate this new elemental force. In our daily life such things appeared as money, when for decades prices and salaries had not changed; starving people emerged who had been hidden away; sex was spoken about as though it had never existed before. These features of everyday reality had not existed in the consciousness of directors, audiences or the Soviet people as a whole. Money, hunger and sex became the building blocks of art' (from *Russia on Reels. The Russian Idea in Post-Soviet Cinema* 1999, pp. 44–5).

[22] '...they [filmmakers] began to portray the reality that surrounded them without the ideological constraints hitherto imposed. What they saw was a bleak picture: beggars on the streets, impoverished pensioners, economic chaos, street crime, Mafia shootings, pornographic magazines and videos, decaying houses and ramshackle communal apartments, and the emergence of a new class, the New Russians, who adapted quickly and learnt how to make money in a society under reconstruction. Literature and film, visual art and music which are set in this bleak reality are commonly referred to as *chernukha* (literally: that which is made black).

The mainstream of Russian cinema largely indulges in this bleakness, or blackness, and offers neither alternative nor perspective. Filmmakers have rejected their 'mission' to act as prophets (as they had done in the Soviet period), or to guide morally and aesthetically. The audience, in turn, rejects films which offer no positive outlook or spiritual guidance amid the chaos, and have turned instead to Latin American soap operas screened daily on Russian television' (Beumers 1999 a, p. 1).

and often made filmmakers hostages of the investors' own plans and tastes.[23] Low-budget films produced in poor technical conditions resulted often in films of low quality, both technically and artistically. Besides this, some of them never found their way to the public.[24] The old infrastructure for film distribution had collapsed, and together with that the audience inside the country had turned aside from the national cinema towards foreign, chiefly American, films shown freely now in cinemas and video halls.

The end of the 1980s and the whole decade of the 1990s was a time of crisis for the regeneration of Russian cinema. During this period the old system of funding, production and distribution of films collapsed and all but disappeared. Life itself had changed drastically and filmmakers had had to adjust themselves to new topics, to the new interests and tastes of the audience and to the lack of any kind of censorship, as well as to the new rules of financing film production. Altogether, it was a tough period for Russian cinema. Larisa Maliukova refers to the cinema of the 1990s as to an Atlantis (Maliukova 2007, p. 225) since many of the films produced during these years are now forgotten and unknown by the national as well as the foreign public.

In 2007, a volume of collected articles by various Russian critics was published with the significant title *The 90s. The Cinema That We've Lost* which echoes the title of Stanislav Govorukhin's film from 1992, *Rossiia, kotoruiu my poteriali* (*Russia That We've Lost*).

The perestroika and post-perestroika periods for Russian cinema were per se a time of struggle for existence and not many films succeeded in this struggle. Thus this study aims in part to open this page of Russian cinema's history, including as it does a close analysis of more than twenty films from this period. I intentionally do not give a systematic list of film titles in this section. Listing all the important and noteworthy films of the period would take too much space. The films analysed in this work include some films totally forgotten by the public, such as and *Nikotin* (*Nicotine*, 1992, Ievgenii Ivanov), as well as films that have remained milestones of the 1990s: *Gospodin oformitel'* (*Mister Designer*, 1988, Oleg Teptsov), *Brat* (*Brother*, 1997, Aleksei Balabanov). Apart from revealing and mapping out the Petersburg text in

[23] See more on this subject in Dondurei 1996, pp. 268–9, Dondurei 2007, pp. 6–7. According to Dondurei, many films were killed at the stage of preparation after the money had been laundered.

[24] Some films produced during this period show such a low quality of picture and sound that they can satisfy only very devoted viewers. *Ulybka* (*Smile*, 1991, Sergei Popov) can serve as a clear example here. The only surviving copy of this film, belonging to its director, had to undergo serious repairs only twelve years after its production in order to become accessible to the public. The story of its rebirth told by film critic Larisa Maliukova can be read in Shepotinnik 2007, pp. 40–1.

films of the 1990s this work is also intended to bring together and recall some outstanding but unjustly forgotten films of the 1990s.

The period under examination covers the time of perestroika and post-perestroika but, since there are only a few films discussed in the thesis that were produced before this decade, for convenience it will be referred to in the rest of the work as the 1990s. The first films of those available to me in my research and concerning the subject of the changing Leningrad–Petersburg date from 1988–1989 at the earliest. But it should be underlined here that in my choice of material I did not take into account any films before 1986.

The titles of the films are given in the text in transliterated Russian with an English translation of each title given in parentheses, together with the film's year of production and the name of the director when the film is introduced for the first time. As the source for the majority of English translations I have used the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). In cases where several translations are available for a film I prefer the international version or if this does not exist, the USA version. If a film is not represented in the database or no translation is given, the translation of the title is my own. Thereafter, the films are referred to using the English version of the title. A list of all the movies used in this work with basic information on each film is given in the appendix. The filmography for further studies lists films that, for various reasons, were not included in the present work. In some cases this is done due to my inability to find them accessible; in others it is due to the lack of space and time to include all the existing material in one work. Nevertheless, I hope that these additional films may be of interest to those who would like to engage more deeply in the subject and perhaps continue or dispute the present research. Technical information about the films is taken mainly from on-screen credits, but in cases where a film record is unavailable, the primary source for all the general film information is the electronic version of *The Encyclopedia of Soviet/Russian Cinema* edited by Liubov' Arkus, the chief editor of *Seans* magazine. In the case when articles or books that are referred to in this thesis were not published in English, the translations of quotations that are given without any reference are my own.

Part II

THEORETICAL APPROACH

Chapter 2

The Myth of Saint Petersburg

2.1 The Petersburg Myth

Mythmaking and myths play a significant role in the history of almost any settlement, but in the first place this concerns the important centres of a country. A myth of a city, especially of its foundation can be regarded as a discussion of a community's origins (Riekmann 1997, pp. 62–3). Quite often this kind of myth acts as a miniature model of the myth of the state, particularly when it concerns the myth of the capital. It absorbs the principal ideas of the myth of the state giving it a more narrow local sense and at the same time rendering the myth of the capital the central idea of the myth of the state. In my work I will name this kind of myth *the myth of the city.* The main function of such a myth is to help the dwellers in the given settlement define and evaluate the place that it occupies in the history of the given land and in world history and to consolidate the attitude towards it that exists in the community's common consciousness as of a political or cultural centre.

The key moment of almost any myth of the city is the legend of its foundation and of its creator which determine the spirit and the general idea of the myth. In the majority of cases the goal of this legend is to show the predetermined destiny of the locus to win the central political, economic, religious and cultural position in the state. Therefore, a characteristic and rather obvious feature of the myth of the city is that it grows bigger and becomes more complicated and detailed together with the city's significance. The older and the more important the place grows, the more well-known and well-formulated its myth becomes. It can be regarded as a natural order of things that a city does not appear from nowhere but grows slowly from a smaller settlement into a commercial, industrial, economical and, as a consequence of all these aspects, political centre. And it is the myth that is appealed to in order to revise

and analyse on the emotional level these transformations and the growth of the city's importance for the community, leading to the change in its status. As a rule the city is not planned and created from the very beginning as an important centre of the country. It is the myth of the city and especially the legend of its foundation that gives, as it were, a 'legal' grounding to its present and its future as a big city, thereby rendering the city's past a sense of its predestination and glorious fate. As time passes the myth of the city grows so deep in the history of the place, jumbling together with the real facts and acting as the community's attitude towards the place, that it becomes extremely difficult to separate it from the historical reality. At this point the myth becomes such an indubitable and at the same time unnoticeable part of the city's history that it impregnates the vision of the city both in the minds of its citizens and in art, politics, etc.

The Petersburg myth is both a very unusual and at the same time striking example of the myth of the city. In this section I will give a survey of the history of the appearance and development of this specific myth and of the most important studies of it. I will try to formulate my own vision of the myth of Saint Petersburg as well. It is, of course, impossible to give a full and complex analysis of the myth of the city in several pages, but I will at least point out its most important characteristics, specifically in regard to my study of the myth in film. However, most of these traits of the myth and even some of those omitted in this survey will be discussed later in the thesis in relation to specific films analysed in the following chapters.

Before taking a closer look at the myth, one important trait of it should be underlined. The Petersburg myth can, from its very beginning, be seen as an amalgam of two views of the city and its creator, views that are opposed and even hostile to each other. Each of them gave birth to a number of legends that formed two opposite myths of the city: a positive, laudatory myth in one case and a negative, anathematising one in the other. A serious distinction between these two myths is where they originated from. The positive myth appeared as an officially established view of the city of the tsar and his adherents, while the negative myth was created by the enemies of the new order of things and therefore can be seen as an unofficial myth.

As has already been mentioned, normally the appearance and development of a myth of a city is a consequence of the development and prosperity of the given city itself which in its turn usually takes many years. The history of St. Petersburg breaks with such a gradual historical order when between the foundation and the golden age of a city decades and even centuries can pass. The fortress Sankt Piter Bourkh (or else Piterburkh) (later renamed as Peter-and-Paul's fortress) founded on Zaiachii (Hare) island in 1703, after the

first naval victory of Russia over the Swedish fleet, was very soon considered by Peter I to be a convenient place for building a new city. Soon afterwards it was proclaimed as the new capital in place of Moscow.[25] Thus the idea of making a big new centre out of a newly built fortress appeared very soon after its foundation (after all, what are 5–10 years regarding a city's age?). It would not then be a mistake or exaggeration to say that almost from its first days the city was planned as a new centre and, moreover, as an antithesis to the old capital and to the old traditional Russia on the whole. It became the quintessence of all Peter's ideas about the reconstruction and Europeanisation of the country, the quintessence of the new country he was striving to create. This desire of Peter I to create a new ideological centre of the country out of the newly founded city was quickly transformed into an officially established myth that was supposed to explain the chief task of the new capital to turn Russia towards Europe and also the predetermination of the city to become the new capital. The first legends about the foundation of the city, which serve as a ground for the official mythology, appeared soon after the city was founded. Many of them glorified the moment of foundation and the uniqueness of its creator, Peter I.[26] It is hard to date their appearance to the exact year as well as to define which legend was first to appear, but these ideas can be found in literature and written texts quite early on. In these sources the city is often proclaimed as a personification of the new Europeanisation Russia, the city of military and state glory (Dolgopolov 1985a, p. 153). Teofan Prokopovich was among the first men of letters to praise Petersburg. In 1715, he referred to St. Petersburg as 'the place for the tsar's throne'(«место престолу царскому») and 'the new reigning city of Peter' («новоцарствующий граде Петров»)[27]. But even as early as 1709 Aleksandr Menshikov, in his letter to Peter I, calls Petersburg 'a holy land' («святая земля») (Uspenskii 1976, p. 289), an epithet strongly loaded with the idea of the city as a place blessed by God and predetermined therefore to have a glorious future.

At the same time as this positive official mythologisation of the city was going on, another myth that gave a negative meaning to the creation of the city was conceived in almost no time. This myth of Petersburg was invoked to make it easier for the community, first of all to that part of the nobility and people that stood in opposition to the tsar's reforms[28], to comprehend and to accept the crucial and objectionable changes that shook the country. Hence

[25] See more on the events of the North war and on the city's foundation, for example, in Hughes 1998, pp. 203–224.

[26] See, for example, Hughes 1998, p. 210, Sindalovskii 1994, pp. 11–7.

[27] Quoted after Dolgopolov 1985 a, p. 153–4.

[28] The most active mythmakers and myth bearers, especially in the first years of existence of the city, were the Raskolniks (see Dolgopolov 1985a, p. 151).

the two myths, the two opposite visions of the newly erected city, appear almost simultaneously with each other and with the city itself. Very soon these two initially separate myths melt into one.

As has already been pointed out in Chapter I, in the general discussion of the notion of myth, one of the principal functions of any myth is the cognitive one. Myths offer a community a way to examine the world, although doing so through their feelings rather than through intellect and knowledge. By way of myths the community's emotional attitude towards the surrounding world takes form. Therefore, a myth becomes of the greatest importance for a given community at the crucial moments of its history. The myth of Petersburg originates from exactly this kind of period. The reign of Peter I proved to be a turning point in the history of Russia. The reforms oriented towards modernisation and Europeanisation of the country that penetrated absolutely all the spheres of life, the successful expansion of Russia both to the East and West, serious changes in the governmental system — all these features of the policy of Peter I became associated in the first place with the newly created city of St. Petersburg. Developing with a velocity that was extraordinary for a city's development at that time, receiving more and more power and finally turning into a capital of the resurrecting country, young Petersburg needed to occupy its own separate place in the history of Russia and in the consciousness of the community. It was not even a need but a demand of the newborn city and its creator. This speed and suddenness in appearance, construction, substituting and dominating Moscow, the traditional centre of the country, was regarded as aggressive and threatening towards the rest of the country. Petersburg announced loudly about itself too soon after its foundation and almost immediately became the political and economic centre of the country. All the resources of Russia, both human and material[29], were sent to the quickly growing city. Petersburg at that time could be compared to a big funnel swallowing all the reserves of the country. In other words it was inevitably regarded as a threat to the existing order of life. On the other hand in the minds of its creators, Peter I and his associates, the city figured as the heart of the new country, its Prime Meridian, and as an antipode to the conservative-minded opposition headed by Moscow with its boyars. Due to the tension between these two perceptions of the rapidly developing new capital, a new myth was established as an interaction of these two visions, the official and the informal one. This ambivalent myth was destined to become one of the most extraordinary, mysterious and complicated myths of a city.

[29] A well-known fact is that, during the first year of the construction of Petersburg, stone construction was forbidden in the rest of the country and stones served as a kind of fee for entering the city.

The phenomenon of the myth of St. Petersburg has been studied for many years and a great number of works exist on this topic. Works by Antsiferov (Antsiferov 1990, Antsiferov 1991)[30], Lotman (Lotman 1992, Lotman and Uspenskii 1992, Lotman 1996), Dolgopolov (Dolgopolov 1985a, Dolgopolov 1985b, Dolgopolov 1985c), Lo Gatto (Lo Gatto 1960), Bethea (Bethea 1989), Sindalovskii (Sindalovskii 1994)[31] can be named here. But among various scholars who wrote about the myth I would like to distinguish in the first place the research by Vladimir Toporov (Toporov 1995) and Katerina Clark (Clark 1995). The ideas presented in these two works accord most closely with my own view on the problem of the Petersburg myth and probably owing to that reason have had a major impact on my work.

Vladimir Toporov was a leading Russian philologist and member of the Russian Academy of Science. The extensive field of his research includes many subjects, among them linguistics and literature, folklore and ethnography, myth and religion. The study of city and space occupies a significant place in his work.[32] After Toporov, the concept of the Petersburg text as a specific separate city text was introduced into literary and other scientific research. It was studied most profoundly in his work *Petersburg and the Petersburg Text of Russian Literature* (Toporov 1995).

It is important to note that, for Toporov, there is no myth of Petersburg considered as an organised and homogeneous bulk of interpretations and views on the city. Instead, it is the text of the city that substitutes the idea of the myth in his works. The Petersburg text in his idea is an amalgam of its

[30] *The Soul of Petersburg* was first published in 1922, *Petersburg's Truth and Myth* — in 1924.

[31] Although this work, like other works by Sindalovskii, is a compilation of various legends, anecdotes, folklore texts concerning the city, its particular loci and famous personalities, and does not give any definition or analysis of the myth of Saint Petersburg, it is an invaluable source of empirical material.

[32] See his other works about space: Топоров, В. Н., 2004, 'О понятии места, его внутренних связях, его контексте (значение, смысл, этимология).' // *Язык культуры: семантика и грамматика. К 80-летию со дня рождения академика Никиты Ильича Толстого (1923–1996)*, Москва, p. 12; Топоров, В. Н., 1983, *Пространство и текст* // *Текст: семантика и структура*, Москва, pp. 227–284; Топоров, В. Н., 1987, 'Текст города-девы и города-блудницы в мифологическом аспекте.' // *Исследования по структуре текста*, Москва, pp. 121–132. Aside from his works on Petersburg discussed in this chapter, Vladimir Toporov wrote about other cities as well: Moscow (Топоров, В. Н., 1982, 'Древняя Москва в балтийской перспективе.' // *Балто-славянские исследования 1981*, Москва, pp. 3–61), Vilnius (Топоров, В. Н., 1980, 'Vilnius, Wilno, Вильна: город и миф.' // *Балто-славянские этноязыковые контакты*, Москва, pp. 3–71), Riga (Топоров, В. Н., 2002, '*Одическая песнь городу Риге* (1595) Базилия Плиния.' // *Балто-славянские исследования*, XV, Москва, pp. 42–6), Rome (Топоров, В. Н., 1987, 'Вергилианская тема Рима.' // *Исследования по структуре текста*, Москва, pp. 196–215).

constituent part such as streets, squares, waters, islands, gardens, buildings, monuments, but not only there. People, history, notions are also included. All of these parts, being reflected in artistic works, create a homogeneous image of the city (Toporov 1995, p. 274). He mentions that, similarly to the text in literature, the city text can be studied in other kinds of arts and in folklore.

Yet Toporov does not exclude the myth totally from his concept. He gives it a secondary position in comparison to the text. By singling out a number of groups of myths he deprives it of its integrity. Strictly speaking most of the elements that he lists in his work as myths can be considered legends or historic anecdotes (Toporov 1995, p. 348).[33] However some of his remarks concerning the city myth are valuable. The myth or — since Toporov divides it into several categories — myths are also included in the Petersburg text and play a role subordinate to it. Nonetheless, he distinguishes two main categories of the Petersburg myth and they are of major interest for my attempt to define the city myth. According to Toporov, the taxonomy of the Petersburg myths includes amongst others two myths: the positive and the negative one, the myth of the creation and that of the destruction of the city, the eschatological myth (Ibid.). This is an important idea and I shall return to this distinction later in this section.

Still, Toporov's primary concern is the Petersburg text in Russian literature. He studies it in works of different Russian writers and poets, discussing its development and alterations in works of different authors and making an almost all-embracing (and unique in this sense) analysis of literary works in which the narration is set in Petersburg. Some of the given examples belong to world literature, as with Adam Mickiewicz's *Dziady* (namely the passage *Oleszkiewicz*) and de Nerval's *Aurelia* (Toporov 1995, pp. 298–9). The study also includes a short overview of the Petersburg text in fine arts to demonstrate how vast this subject is.

Another scholar whose work on Petersburg is important for forming the concept of the Petersburg myth is Katerina Clark. Unlike Toporov, she uses the term of the city myth similarly to the way I use it in my work. Even more important is that, in her book *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Clark 1995), she speaks about the ambivalent nature of the Petersburg myth, namely of its myth and antimyth as she refers to it:

> 'Together with the official foundation myth of Saint Petersburg there developed a foundation antimyth that included virtually the same elements in

[33] These texts are categorised, among others, as historical mythologised fables, myths of 'appearance' or 'language' myths. More likely they can be interpreted as legends or historic anecdotes, taking into consideration that some of them bear no or almost no such strong emotional and semantic load as a myth does and can be regarded in some cases as a completion or a detail of the Petersburg myth and not as the myth itself.

> the story of Petersburg's foundation as did the official myth, but reinterpreted each.
>
> Such negative interpretations had been largely festering in oral lore, but in the early nineteenth century the antimyth assumed a major role in the written tradition. Writers identified the foundation of Petersburg in a poor, inhospitable and dreary site as Peter's cardinal error, the moment that symbolised how he turned Russia from her natural course; they lambasted the city as "founded on tears and bones" ' (Clark 1995, p. 5).

Indeed, the nature of the myth of Petersburg is double-sided and can be regarded as falling into two separate myths, the positive and the negative one, the official and the unofficial one. But I would like to argue here both against Clark and Toporov who observe the myth as two separate myths. In my thesis I would prefer to consider them as one and the same myth, hence they represent two controversial emotional loads caused by the same event and, moreover, they cannot and do not exist separately either in folklore or in literature. The terms myth and antimyth offered by Clark, albeit clearly characterising the nature of the two sides of the myth, are not satisfactory in my opinion if we consider these two sides or aspects as a homogeneous myth. Therefore, I would like to offer the term *reversible myth* (*миф-перевертыш*) for the myth of Petersburg, which, in my opinion, gives a better reflection to its double-sided nature.

The two sides of the myth, named by Clark as the myth and the antimyth, will be referred to in this work respectively as the positive and the negative aspect of the reversible myth of Petersburg. This solution seems reasonable to me since in many cases these two aspects represent two opposite mythologised interpretations of the same historical events and facts. Orientation towards Europe, acting as 'a window' on it and turning Russia towards it makes the city a model for the rest of the country, on the one hand, but also a foreigner, even an outcast in its native country, on the other. The curse that predicts its instantaneous destruction becomes a logical corollary of the speed, even the instantaneousness of its rise. The attractiveness of Petersburg's Northern beauty is often observed in literature as a curtain that hides its sinister evil spirit. This spirit spoils the souls of those who come here. The city is so real and materially-minded by day, busy, full of movement and the vanity of people all hurrying somewhere having some urgent affairs. Opposed to it is the Petersburg night, immersed in blue mist and the lights of its yellow lanterns. Night transforms it into a phantasmagoria, an ideal place for lonely dreamers and devilish tricks.

This reversibility finds its reflection in the fact that almost any feature of the myth is observed in the Petersburg myth and text both as a positive and as a negative one. Any feature of the myth can be seen as its own counterpart

if observed from the two opposite aspects of the myth. For example, the long, wide and straight streets of the city make it feel uncomfortable and unprotected to its citizens. This detail has been noted by Toporov. As he pointed out, the thieves in Gogol's *Overcoat* attack Akakii Akakievich not in some narrow dark alleyway as one might suppose, but on a wide and open square (Toporov 1995, pp. 333–4). Even if someone noticed you from the other side of a square or a prospect he would not be able to help you, so great are these features.

The huge panoramic views of the city's prospects and embankments are deceptive. They create an illusion of closeness and of short distances. It seems that the point you are looking at is just a few minutes' walk away from you and yet it can take hours to reach it. The harmoniousness of the city's architecture on the whole is blamed for the soulless and machine-like nature of the city. The crowded nature of the city makes its citizens feel lonely and lost, and its multi-nationality and direction facing Europe makes it un-Russian and cut off from tradition. This reversible mythologising also concerns the figure of Peter I. Peter the Demiurge who created the city and changed the destiny of the country solely by the power of his will is regarded as Peter the Antichrist whose evil will bring sorrows and hardships and even damnation to the Russian people.

Thus we can see that each detail of the myth can be regarded both in the positive and in the negative vein within the myth. Quite often these two viewpoints are impossible to separate from each other. This is why, in my opinion, it is more valid to speak of one and the same myth, the reversible myth of the city, instead of separating it into two myths that exist independently of each other.

However, in order to enter such a complicated, almost labyrinthine myth as the Petersburg myth, I will need to examine its constituent parts one by one and thus to make a short overview of the two aspects of the myth, beginning with the positive one.

The duality of the attitude towards the city which developed in society in the first years of its existence has been mentioned above. The opponents of the Petrine reforms considered Petersburg as an aggressive and threatening new centre of the country, while Peter's companions-in-arms saw it as the major plan implemented by Peter I. It is the latter vision of the city that formed the basis of the official, positive aspect of the myth. This official conception of the creation and destiny of St. Petersburg carries obvious and easily recognisable traits of a cosmogonic myth. A cosmogonic myth is one that supposes the ideal new world to be created by the hands of God from Nothing (ex nihilo) or from Chaos. This new ideal world is opposed to Chaos and defeats it in

order to give humanity an idyllic resort. It is a Paradise on Earth. Yet in the course of time it becomes spoilt or ruined by the people themselves.[34]

Being a typical example of cosmogony, the Petersburg myth claims that the city appeared in almost no time on a desert territory covered with bogs. In other words, it appeared practically out of Chaos. Nowadays, historians deny the presentation of these lands as being absolutely uninhabited before the foundation of Petersburg. It is known now that, on the territory of the historical centre of the city alone, around forty settlements have been counted that belonged to Novgorod even before the Swedish dominion. The toponymy of St. Petersburg reminds us of some of these settlements and manors (Kalinkin bridge, which apparently derives from the name of the Finnish village Kallila; Kupchino, Volkovo that bear the names of old settlements, etc.).[35]

Cosmogonic traces in the reversible myth can also be discovered in various legends of the city's foundation. Many of them introduce the idea of God's benevolence towards the planned city using common symbols of this benevolence, such as the appearance of an eagle[36] during the foundation of the city's first stone, for example.[37] But in the context of cosmogony of the myth the most curious is the following legend of the foundation of St. Petersburg. According to this, the builders of the city failed for a long time to lay the first stone to found the city. The marshy ground immediately swallowed each stone they tried to lay. Each unsuccessful attempt of the builders made Peter the Great, who was observing them, more and more furious and impatient and finally he started to build the city on his own, holding it in his hands. After having completed the construction he put it down on the ground and the city remained on the surface. This legend includes all the main features of a cosmogonic myth: the miraculous and momentary nature of the world's (in our case, city's) creation, an indication as to the uniqueness of its creator (meaning both him being the unique creator and his extraordinary ability to accomplish the mission alone) and the charismatic character of his figure.

The figure of Peter I is indeed surrounded by numerous legends that cast him in the role of a demiurge. They depict his various talents, his severe character and extravagances. And through these legends he gains many of his god-like features, such as austerity, the ability to behave as an equal with

[34] For more details about cosmogonic myths see Eliade 1998, pp. 54–75, Schöpflin 1997, pp. 28–9.

[35] More details about the toponymy can be found in Sindalovskii 1994 and Gorbachevich and Khablo 2002.

[36] In Greek, Roman and other mythologies the eagle was regarded as the messenger of the gods.

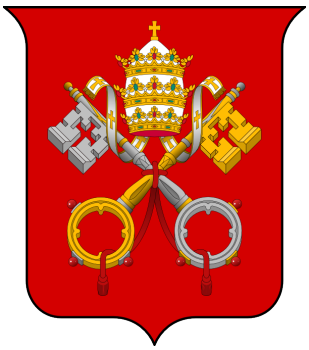
[37] I will limit myself here to mentioning just one legend of the foundation. More stories can be found in Sindalovskii 1994 and his other works.

common people, disdain of nobility and outstanding all-round giftedness.[38] The statement that the tsar and the city are related to each other as the Creator to His Work is obvious here. Even today the city is frequently referred to as 'the city of Peter' («град Петров», «город Петра») and a mistake about the origins of the name, St. Petersburg, as deriving from the name of Pyotr Alekseevich Romanov, Peter the Great, and not from Saint Peter the Apostle is made often and is considered to be one of the most usual in the history of the city. This misleading interpretation of the city's name also contributes to consolidating Peter's role as the Creator.

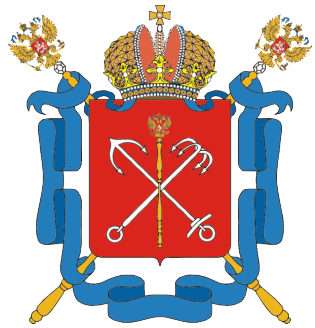
The cosmogonic vision of St. Petersburg finds its reflection in one of the names with which Peter I himself referred to the city, 'Paradise'

[38] An example of such a legendary representation of Peter the Great's figure is given in Solomon Volkov's book on the culture of Petersburg. In his book, Volkov portrays all the eminent personalities in the city's cultural life through its tercentenary history observing them from the viewpoint of the city myth. Yet at the same time the author is unable to release himself from the Petersburg myth's irresistible charm. His descriptions and conclusions regarding the protagonists of the book are often influenced by this mythopoeic charm.

Solomon Volkov's portrayal of Peter I turns into a continuous hosanna to the tsar's every vice and virtue. No matter whether Volkov uses his own words or cites from other sources (which, unfortunately, he rarely refers to in the work), he really believes in what he says and never questions the tsar's legendary descriptions. Moreover, all the facts about Peter the Great in the book are regarded solely from the viewpoint of adoration. Volkov often speaks of him almost as of his own close acquaintance: «Петр вырос очень высоким и сильным человеком: без труда сворачивал в трубку серебряную тарелку или перерубал кусок сукна на лету. Он был неутомим, энергичен, деловит, любознателен. Ему нужны были просторы, морской воздух. [...] Петр оказался удивительным монархом. Казалось, он знал все и умел все. Уже в молодости он в совершенстве овладел 14 ремеслами, в том числе токарным, плотницким и сапожным. [...] Петр был соткан из противоречий и парадоксов. Он мог быть веселым, ласковым и милостивым. Но он также был страшен в гневе, часто непредсказуем и беспощадно жесток, лично пытая своих политических врагов. [...] Моментами Петр мог казаться простым, искренним и доступным человеком. Но он также ощущал себя демиургом, божественным актером, сценой которого была не только Россия, но и вся Европа...» (Volkov 2005, pp. 35–6) ('Peter grew up to be tall (over six feet seven inches) and strong. He could easily roll up a silver plate or cut a bolt of cloth in the air. He was tireless in all his pursuits, businesslike, with an insatiable thirst for knowledge. He longed for sea air. [...] Peter turned out to be an amazing monarch, and not only by Russian standards. As a young man he had mastered fourteen trades, including woodworking, carpentry, and shoemaking. [...] As no Russian monarch before or after him, Peter was full of contradictions and paradoxes. On occasion he could be gentle, merry, and kind. But more often he was horrible in his wrath, frighteningly unpredictable, and needlessly cruel, personally torturing his enemies in hidden chambers. [...] At times Peter seemed to be a simple, sincere, and accessible man. But he also perceived himself as a demiurge, a kind of divine actor whose stage was not only Russia but all Europe and more...' (Volkov 1997, pp. 7–8)).



(a) Coat of arms of Vatican City



(b) Coat of arms of Saint Petersburg

Figure 2.1: The reversed keys in the coat of arms of Vatican City changed to the reversed anchors in the coat of arms of Saint Petersburg.

(«Парадиз»).[39] But even the proper name of the city itself is cosmogonic. Notwithstanding the widespread mistake, it is well-known that Saint Petersburg means the city of Saint Peter who was the patron saint of Peter the Great and, which is more significant in the context of the Petersburg myth, the gate-keeper of the kingdom of Heaven.[40] Without doubt, Peter I saw the city as serving as the gate-keeper or simply the gates to the civilised Europe that, for the young tsar, played the role of Heaven on Earth, or at least the example which Russia had to follow. It is not accidental, then, that the emblem of the city repeats that of the Vatican substituting the reversed keys with two reversed anchors, the fluvial and the marine (see Figure 2.1).

Continuing the parallel between the city and Saint Peter we should recall Christ's words addressed to his dearest disciple: 'And I tell you, you are Peter,[41] and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (*Gospel of Mathew*, 16:18). This metaphor is applicable to the myth of Petersburg as well, thus in the vision of Peter I it had been predetermined for the city to become the rock on which his belief or his church, the new Russia, had to be erected. Altogether the name that has so many biblical connotations, the legends of the foundation and the charisma of Peter the Great form a clear and integral idea of cosmogony embedded in

[39] See, for example, Hughes 1998, pp. 212–3: 'References to 'paradise' often coincide with Peter's return to the city after long spells of 'exile' in various 'hell-holes' ' (p. 213).

[40] In the *Gospel of Matthew*, 16:19, Jesus says to Peter, 'And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'

[41] The word Peter derives from Greek and means 'stone', 'rock'.

the Petersburg myth.

In accordance with the cosmogonic tradition the city had to overcome Chaos, which was represented in St. Petersburg by bogs as mentioned above, and later, when the city was founded, by water (the Neva River, the Baltic Sea and the Finnish Bay and the floods). From this viewpoint, such a thoroughly planned and ordered construction of the city with its long straight prospects,[42] accurate perpendicular and parallel streets and the strictly regulated façades of the buildings acquire a great importance. All these characteristics of the city stand in clear opposition to the city's predecessor, namely, Chaos.

The cosmogonic concept of Petersburg's rise became a commonplace both in belles-lettres and in scientific literature. Nikolai Antsiferov, in his book (*The Soul of Petersburg*), notes:

> «город создается как антитеза окружающей природе, как вызов ей. Пусть под его площадями, улицами, каналами «хаос шевелится» — он сам весь из спокойных прямых линий, из твердого, устойчивого камня, четкий, строгий и царственный, со своими золотыми шпицами спокойно возносящимися к небесам.» (Antsiferov 1990, p. 19)[43]

Undoubtedly the idea of the conquered Chaos and of Order and Harmony born from Chaos finds its best reflection in the prelude to Aleksandr Pushkin's poem *The Bronze Horseman*:

> На берегу пустынных волн
> Стоял он дум великих полн,
> И вдаль глядел. Пред ним широко
> Река неслася; бедный челн
> По ней стремился одиноко,
> По мшистым топким берегам
> Чернели избы здесь и там,
> Приют убогого чухонца;
> И лес, неведомый лучам
> В тумане спрятанного солнца,
> Кругом шумел.
> И думал он:
> Отсель грозить мы будем шведу.
> Здесь будет город заложен

[42] The word prospect itself was introduced into the Russian language from French due to the long wide streets of St. Petersburg, which had a good panorama at both ends, in other words perspective. The first variants of the word were namely pershpektiva or proshpektiva. More about the word's derivation can be found, for example, in Топоров 1995, p. 290.

[43] 'the city was created as an antithesis to the nature that surrounded it, as a challenge to it. Let 'the chaos move' under its squares, streets, channels — the city itself still consists of placid straight lines, of hard and stable stones, it is clear, strict and majestic and its golden spires rise tranquilly towards the sky.'

Назло надменному соседу.
Природой здесь нам суждено
В Европу прорубить окно,
Ногою твердой стать при море.
Сюда по новым им волнам
Все флаги в гости будут к нам,
И запируем на просторе.
(Pushkin 1981, pp. 260–1)

44

This image of Peter dreaming about the pride and beauty of his new capital on the bank of the storming river, however, has most probably been borrowed by Pushkin from Batiushkov's essay 'A Promenade to the Academy of Arts':

> «И воображение мое представило мне Петра, который в первый раз обозревал берега еще дикой Невы, ныне столь прекрасные! Из крепости Нюсканц еще гремели шведские пушки; устье Невы еще было покрыто неприятелем, и частые ружейные выстрелы раздавались по болотным берегам, когда великая мысль родилась в уме великого человека. Здесь будет город, сказал он, чудо света. Сюда призову все художества, все искусства, гражданские установления победят самую природу. Сказал — и Петербург возник из дикого болота» (Batiushkov 1984, p. 27).[45]

Let us not, however, be misguided by these images of the positive aspect of the myth since Chaos is not totally conquered but subdued and the struggle between the city and Chaos is perpetuated in the frequently repeating floods. This battle of the elements with human creation is described in Iurii Lotman's article 'The Symbolics of Petersburg and the Problems of Urban Semiotics':

[44] Written in 1833. 'On a deserted, wave-swept shore, he stood, filled with lofty thoughts, and gazed into the distance. Before him the river sped on its wide course; a humble, lonely skiff moved fast on its surface. On the mossy and swampy banks black huts were dotted here and there — the homes of miserable Finns; and the forest, impenetrable to the rays of the sun shrouded in mist, murmured all around.

And thus he thought: 'From here we shall threaten the Swede; here a city shall be founded, to spite our arrogant neighbour. Here we are destined by Nature to cut a window into Europe; and to gain a firm foothold by the sea. Here, over waters new to them, ships of every flag will come to visit us, and, unconstrained, we shall make merry'.' (translation by Obolensky from *The Penguin Book of Russian Verse* 1962, p. 111).

[45] Written in 1814. 'My imagination portrayed to me Peter viewing for the first time the banks of Neva, that were wild and isolated then-a-days and that are so magnificent now-a-days! Swedish cannons were still thundering in the Nyenskans fortress; the estuary of the Neva was still occupied by the enemy and rapid gunshots were ringing out over the marshy riverbanks when a great idea flashed across the mind of a great man. In this place a city shall arise, he said, a wonder of the world. To this place I shall urge all the arts, all the crafts, civil establishments shall conquer nature itself. He said so — and Petersburg arouse out of the wild swamp.'

> «Петербургский камень — камень на воде, на болоте, камень без опоры, не «мирозданью современный», а положенный человеком. В «петербургской картине» вода и камень меняются местами: вода вечна, она была до камня и победит его, камень же наделен временностью и призрачностью. Вода его разрушает» (Lotman 1992, p. 12).[46]

This eternal confrontation between the Order of the city and the Chaos of the elements directs us to a discussion of the negative aspect of the myth of Petersburg, namely its eschatological element. I should note once again that both sides of the myth were caused by the same events and that it is the same facts, although experienced from different angles, which serve the basis of both the positive and the negative aspects of the Petersburg myth. The new capital was constructed in a very short period of time which, as shown above, was reflected in the cosmogonic (positive) aspect of the myth. But the speed of the new capital's construction demanded a heavy sacrifice from its constructors. A well-established statement is that the majority of the first constructors were soldiers and workers from all over Russia and in the beginning around twenty thousand people were working on the construction of the city. Later, about forty thousand new workers were sent yearly for reinforcement to Petersburg and Schlisselburg.[47] Owing to malnutrition, hard conditions of work and life, humidity and climate on the whole, many of these workers died here — the city was literally built on the people's bones.[48] Although most of these statements

[46] 'Petersburg stone is stone laid upon water, on bog, it is stone with no support. It is not contemporary to the universe, but placed by a human being. In the 'Petersburg picture' water and stone change places: water is eternal, it was here before stone and it will defeat it, stone belongs to the temporary and the illusory. Water demolishes it.'

[47] These figures derive from various descriptions and memoirs written by foreign visitors to the city but also from the first newspaper of Petersburg, *Vedomosti*, dating from 1703 (see Bespiatykh 1998, Andreeva 2012, Andreeva 2013). Partly they can be explained by the fact that the figures given in Peter I's orders were often overstated in comparison to the actual number of workers sent yearly to the city, partly with superficial descriptions and estimations given by foreign observers. For more information on the subject as well as on the death rate in the city during the first years of its construction see Luppov 1957, p. 81, Andreeva 2003, Andreeva 2012 Andreeva 2013.

[48] According to Vladimir Toporov, the city had no rivals during its first two centuries, neither in Russia, nor among large European cities, for the citizens' death rate. It should also be taken into consideration that statistics cannot give the whole picture since many guest workers departed for their homes, being already incurable, to die there. Even as late as the 1870s the death rate still exceeded the birth rate by a third and the increase in population was a result of newcomers to the city and not of newborns (Toporov 1995, pp. 283–5). Yet some historians find this statement questionable assuming that workers were not serfs but employees who worked at the city construction in shifts going home for winter and then coming back to the city. See, for example, Petrov 1884, Luppov 1957, Grach 1957.

are highly disputable and are questioned by historians of Petersburg, they are often perceived as reliable.

Stone construction was interrupted in the rest of the country and even stones that served as a foundation to unfinished churches in other parts of the country were brought to the city. Together with social, political, economic and cultural reforms spread by force among the population this situation caused a very negative reception of the tsar and his new city. Peter was proclaimed to be the Antichrist and there even appeared rumours claiming that he had been kidnapped and replaced by another person during his journeys to Europe. This image of the Antichrist can be regarded as the other side of the reversible image of the Demiurge that uses the very same legends and stories about Peter and the same traits of his character to produce a deeply negative figure of a cruel despot.

Thus St. Petersburg as the city of the Antichrist and the city that demanded many people's lives was condemned to turn to ruins one day. As the quintessence of the negative aspect of the myth and also its keystone can be regarded the curse often ascribed to Peter the Great's first wife, Evdokiia Lopukhina, 'May Petersburg be deserted!' («Питербурху быть пусту!»).[49] The idea that a city that was built in almost no time can disappear in no time was often regarded as quite logical, as well as the idea that water conquered by city's stones will swallow it back.[50]

This part of the myth is easily recognisable as an eschatological one, especially if observed together with the cosmogonic aspect discussed above: a Paradise on Earth that in traditional archaic myths later becomes spoilt by people themselves, entailing punishment of these people. Yet this interpretation of eschatological myth has some serious differences when compared to traditional eschatological myths.[51] Firstly, as opposed to these, the curse of destruction attends the city from its birth and this verdict is not caused by people's sins. It is caused by the Creator's and the city's own evil spirit that must be demolished. Secondly, uncommon for an eschatological myth is that it contains no indications about the time after the catastrophe, which is usually marked in this sort of myth as the rising of a New Heaven on Earth. Water, on the contrary, is a recurrent motif of eschatological myths and for St. Petersburg, surrounded by water and exposed to frequent floods, water is an obvious instrument of punishment.

Together the cosmogonic and eschatological aspects of the myth form a

[49] For more on the history of this phrase see Dolgopolov 1985a, p. 152.

[50] This theme of sudden disappearance and therefore the illusory nature of the city remains recurrent in Russian literature in the works of Gogol', Dostoevsky, Merezhkovsky, Bely and other writers.

[51] On eschatological myth see Eliade 1998, pp. 54–75.

complicated, ambivalent, mythopoeic image of St. Petersburg. It is the polarisation between these two elements that forms a myth of the city unmatched in its bewitchment, tension and complexity.

Below a rough draft of the reversible myth of St. Petersburg is given (see Figure 2.2).

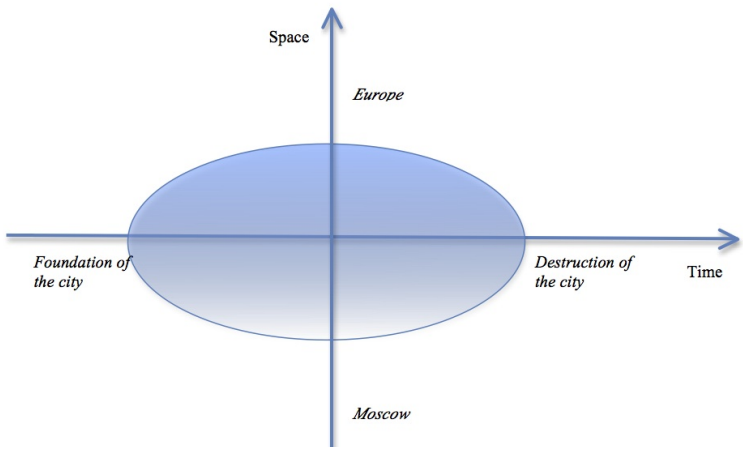


Figure 2.2: Graphic Representation of the Myth of Saint Petersburg.

This is an attempt to situate the principal elements of the myth and the relationship between them in one model. Both the positive and the negative aspects of the myth can be laid in the same coordinated system where the horizontal axis represents mythical time and the vertical represents the symbolic spatial tension of the city between Europe and the old Russia, which in the picture is defined as Moscow. On the time axis the myth is stretched between the foundation and its predicted end. The space axis is directed from Moscow to Europe since one of the main ideas of the myth is Saint Petersburg's orientation towards Europe and its alienation from the old Russia. This design can include all the main features of both the cosmogonic and the eschatological aspects of the myth of the city and shape them as one and the same myth, thus both of them are based on the same basic ideas and facts. Merging together they extend between the following four points: the foundation and the destruction of the city, Europe and Moscow. All the other motives or subtopics of the Petersburg myth that have been mentioned in this section can be placed in one of the quarters of this coordinate system. Roughly speaking, Lopukhina's prophecy, for example, can be placed in the lower right quarter of the figure, while representation of Peter I as an Antichrist belongs to its lower left quarter. This model preserves the balance between the positive and

the negative aspects of the myth, neither of which prevails over the other. One of the most essential features of the Petersburg myth is the difficulty of defining at what point the positive aspect grows into the negative one. The cosmogonic and the eschatological aspects of the myth cannot be completely separated from each other; in different pieces of the Petersburg text they continually interact with and complement each other in different proportions and relations.

I find this design even more relevant with reference to the words of Vladimir Toporov about Petersburg: «История Петербурга мыслится замкнутой; она не что иное как некий временный прорыв в хаосе» (Toporov 1995, p. 295).[52] In this model the myth of the city is represented as a closed curve outlined between a limited number of points.

In his preface to Solomon Volkov's *St. Petersburg: A Cultural History*, Iakov Gordin compares the construction of Petersburg by Peter I with the realisation of a utopia. This is how he characterises Peter I:

> «[Петр I] был принципиальным утопистом и несгибаемым реализатором утопии. Миф — неизбежный побочный продукт этого процесса. Он возникает в пространстве широкого зазора между утопией и реальностью, не давая катастрофически расколоться человеческому сознанию — как очарованному утопией, так и враждебному к ней» (Gordin 2005, p. 10).[53]

Continuing the idea of Gordin we can say that the mythopoeic image of Petersburg fills the space between utopia and antiutopia (or else cosmogony and eschatology) with all its controversial and ambivalent aspects.

The reversible myth began to develop in literature from the thirties of the nineteenth century in the works of Pushkin and Gogol who are considered to be the founders of the tradition of representing Petersburg in Russian literature. Studying Toporov's work on the Petersburg text of Russian literature one can say that the myth receives its most organic, harmonic and advanced form in literary works. As mentioned above, Toporov pays little attention to the myth per se, giving it a more vague and generalised meaning and observing it as one of many sides of the Petersburg text. In my opinion, Toporov depreciates the role of the city myth in the process of forming the Petersburg text. In fact the text is based on this all-embracing myth of the city. It is not the myth

[52] 'Petersburg history is apprehended as closed in itself; it is nothing but some temporal breach in chaos'.

[53] '...[Peter I] was in principle a utopian and an unbending creator of utopia. Myth is an unavoidable side product of this process. It appears in the wide gap between a utopia and reality and prevents human consciousness from a disastrous split both towards being charmed by utopia and being hostile to it.'

that is a part of the text but on the contrary the text that is a part and the continuation of the myth. The text develops and strengthens the principal accents of the myth, integrating numerous new traits, details and subtexts into it and rethinking them according to the spirit of time, the outlook and the destiny of the author himself.

I claim that it is this absorption of the Petersburg text into a much more general conception of the myth that explains the semantic unity, and the uniformity of the images and metaphors that different authors use when referring to the city. In his essay Toporov underlines several times that this unity is almost on the brink of plagiarism and that authors using these images and metaphors do not consider it as plagiarism or cliché but even see them as an organic and objective vision of the city that cannot be ignored (Toporov 1995, pp. 261, 278, 313–5). Only the uniqueness of the source of the text, which is the city myth, can provide this uniqueness of the image of the city in various examples of the city text. This is the reason why in my work I find it relevant to speak both of the Petersburg myth and of the Petersburg text in Russian cinema. It is the myth that embodies the emotional comprehension of the city by the community and forms the nucleus of the Petersburg text. The myth gives incitement to the rise of the text and its development. The text in turn develops and interprets the ideas of the myth according to the epoch and the artist's personality. The text in film continues the Petersburg text in art and literature and can be named the cinematic Petersburg text. Nowadays, it is impossible to speak of the myth just as a source of any piece of the contemporary Petersburg text. The text and the myth have grown so much into each other that any separation would seem artificial, in the same way as it is impossible to separate the positive and the negative aspects of the myth. The myth and the text find themselves in a constant interaction from the very beginning and cannot be observed as two different phenomena in the consciousness of contemporaries.

Nikolai Antsiferov, a historian and a passionate guide to the city, in his work *The Soul of Petersburg* (Antsiferov 1990) probably made the first scientific attempt to study the Petersburg myth and its manifestation in literature as a single whole. The title of the book itself could probably be used to denominate this complex amalgam of myth and text. In his work Antsiferov used this notion, 'the soul of Petersburg' and 'genius loci' to define the origins of the concept of the city in Russian literature. Another notion, the 'image' («образ»), is used in Antsiferov's work to identify the phenomenon to which Vladimir Toporov has later given the name of the Petersburg text. Antsiferov, moreover, regards the city as a living being and this is why he finds the notion of the soul applicable in his work. He claims that Petersburg has its given des-

tiny as an individual does and that this destiny is not influenced or formed by humans. The city's destiny and its image do not depend on the consciousness of humans who can only receive and express the message sent by the city but not rearrange it in any way. An author, then, is just a spokesman, a medium in this unilateral connection (Antsiferov 1990, p. 36).

In my opinion, this approach to the problem is not correct since it creates an impression of the Petersburg myth as given and immutable. The only freedom granted to the viewer is his/her ability to comprehend the soul of the city to a greater or lesser extent. This conception of the myth does not suppose any dynamics of its development and negates the existence of any historical and social basis to the myth's appearance. Moreover, seeing the soul of the city as something predetermined and independent of human influences, Antsiferov easily rejects the images created by some authors as irrelevant and the authors themselves as blind and insensitive to Petersburg's soul. Since Petersburg's soul is an immutable constant phenomenon, authors cannot influence or change it in any way but only follow its predetermined traits.

These are the reasons why, in this work, I reject the notion of the soul of Petersburg, which is also too emotional and poetic and can mislead a reader when attempting to comprehend the phenomenon.

Therefore, I will refer to the sum of the existing studies both of the myth and the literary text as the Petersburg myth and will use the notion of the cinematic Petersburg text to define the data of this thesis, i.e. films.

It should be underlined that the choice of the films that belong to the cinematic Petersburg text is not limited simply to the films that contain episodes including the panorama of St. Petersburg or in which the plot takes place in the city. In fact, the choice of the films belonging to the Petersburg text cannot be guided primarily by these characteristics. These are also the films where the mythopoeic image of Saint Petersburg is used and interpreted in a way and plays a certain (if not central) role in the film's narrative. But I do not find it reasonable to include in the study either travelogues or films in which the choice of Petersburg as a film set is unimportant and accidental. In the latter films it can easily be replaced with any other city including the possibility of erasing any features characteristic for a definite city.[54]

[54]Today producers choose Saint Petersburg more and more often as a set for their films for purely economic reasons. Petersburg in this case is used only as a bright and fetching background that has no or insignificant semantic load. Owing to its spectacular cityscapes Saint Petersburg has often been used as a film set in both Russian and foreign films. Among foreign films two extravagant examples can be given. One of them is *Golden Eye* (1995, Martin Campbell) with James Bond scudding dashingly along the streets of the city in a tank comically incongruous both for Bond, famous for his elegant cars, and for the city setting. Another one is *Orlando* (1992, Sally Potter) where Petersburg is used as

I will now outline the crucial stages in the development of the Petersburg myth. As mentioned above, myths come to life in the most dramatic moments in the nation's history. The foundation of Saint Petersburg, which was considered to be a quintessence of Peter the Great's policy, gave rise to the appearance of the myth of the new capital of Russia discussed on these pages. Two historical moments should be pointed out here which concern this connection between reality and myth. Firstly, these turning points in the community's history serve not solely as the sources of new myths. Most often these are also the moments when rethinking, overestimation and alteration of the already formed myths happen. Secondly, connection between a myth and reality is not unilateral, i.e. it is not only reality that influences a myth. Historical events cause re-evaluation and alteration of a myth, but the process can develop in the opposite direction as well. An existent myth that is already settled deeply in a community's consciousness gives a certain direction to the evaluation of historical events. It works as a lens through which the group looks at reality. Hence not only is the myth redone and rethought according to the facts, but the facts too are adapted to be able to suit the existent myth. Thus influence between a myth and reality is mutual and tension between them comes to its peak at the most crucial moments in the community's history. Graphically this relationship can be regarded as a DNA-schematic: two parallel spirals that never cross directly but always have some links in between and therefore can never go far from each other.

Returning to the discussion on St. Petersburg we easily find those crucial events that caused the rise of the city myth. Among them the foundation and the rise of the city itself has been mentioned, so rapid, so unexpected and well-planned and so violently accomplished. But together with it the Great Northern War (1700–1721) and cruel but at the same time innovative and progressive reforms were impulses that gave life to the myth of the city, laying the groundwork for its ambiguity and reversibility. The climatic conditions of the new city, its humidity and the floods that cost many lives and at the same time the beauty of the White Nights found their reflection in the myth. So did overpopulation, a large percentage of foreigners[55] and the dominance

a set representing the frozen Thames (Glaessner 1992, p. 14).

[55]To illustrate the city's foreignness, Anatolii Bakhtiarov's socio-economical review from 1887 *The Belly of Petersburg* can be quoted here: «В отношении своего населения наша северная столица имеет своеобразную физиономию: куда вы здесь не взглянете, всюду встретите угрюмого «пасынка природы» — чухонца. [...] По справедливости можно сказать, что обыватели столицы в своей повседневной жизни едва ли не больше имеют дело с чухнами, нежели с русскими крестьянами, так что коренной петербуржец, собственно говоря, даже и не имеет ясного представления о русском крестьянстве, ибо представление об этом последнем он получает, так сказать, издали» (Bakhtiarov 1994, p. 169). ('Our Northern capital has a remarkable phys-

of the male population over the female in the first centuries of the city. The latter in turn resulted in a significant percentage of unmarried men that was followed by the rise of prostitution, venereal diseases, suicides, alcoholism and orphanhood among the city's population.[56] These topics were actively exploited in the Petersburg text as well and making a significant input into the theme of the *'little people'* in Russian literature. In the Petersburg text these facts of city life were transformed into the city's malicious influence on the destinies of *'little people'* such as Evgeny in Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* or Akakii Akakievich Bashmachkin in Gogol's *The Overcoat.* The development of the myth in the Petersburg text was masterly described both by Antsiferov and Toporov, and Toporov in his work *Petersburg and 'the Petersburg text of Russian literature'* outlined the main milestones in its development:

1. Pushkin and Gogol' are proclaimed there as the founders of the tradition;
2. Dostoevsky is its 'genius designer' who succeeded in putting together all the features of the Petersburg text and shaping them into a homogeneous text;
3. Bely and Blok are named as the leaders of the period of conscious existence of the text;
4. Akhmatova and Mandelstam are given the roles of the completers of the text;
5. Vaginov is observed as the last creator of the Petersburg text. (Toporov 1995, p. 277)

Thus Toporov puts a full-stop to the history of the text with Vaginov's novels using the writer's own epithet and calling him 'a coffin-maker' («гробовых дел мастер») of the theme.

The idea that the Petersburg text came to an end after the October revolution entailing the loss of its status as the empire's capital was not only propagated by Toporov. According to Leonid Dolgopolov it happens even earlier. He names Bely's Petersburg and Bunin's *Loopy Ears* (Bunin 1988) written in 1916 as the last literary works of the Petersburg theme (Dolgopolov's term

iognomy in its attitude towards its population: wherever you look, you meet a sullen 'nature's stepson' — a Finn. [...] In justice one can say that the inhabitants of the capital in their everyday life deal much more often with Finns than with Russian peasants, thus a native Petersburgian has in fact no clear picture of Russia peasants, since he gains this picture from a distance, so to say.')

[56] The facts are taken from Toporov 1995, pp. 284–7 and Bakhtiarov 1994, pp. 155–162, pp. 171–6

to define the manifestation of the myth in literature, art, etc.) (Dolgopolov 1985 a, p. 175).[57] Among other scholars who hold a similar opinion is, for example, David Bethea (Bethea 1989, p. 144). In his work Bethea writes of St. Petersburg after the October revolution as of a dead tourist monument in the open air. To him it is an empty space filled only with its past.

The beginning of the twentieth century is a time of serious cataclysms in Russian history and is usually considered the closing stage in the discussion of the Petersburg myth and its manifestation in literature. The city is brought to the Apocalypse that it has been waiting for from its very beginning. The evil seeds sown by Peter I give their evil fruit. The idea of the Apocalypse was closely connected to the destiny of Petrine Russia on the whole, but again, as it was with the myth of the city in its beginning, Petersburg was understood as the nucleus and the quintessence of this idea. The revolution that destroyed the empire deprived the city of its main function and therefore of its meaning. Most vividly this was foretold by Andrei Bely in his novel Petersburg as quoted on page 4 of this thesis: 'If Petersburg is not the capital, then there is no Petersburg. It only appears to exist.'

The loss of status was closely followed by the loss of the name. All this beauty and grandiosity appeared now to exist in vain and for many writers and historians of the period it became obvious that the idea of the myth had become insipid and the city had died. In the 1920s there were many discussions in literature about the fulfilled prophecy. The loss of the city's original name, the war, illnesses and hunger that led to a serious loss of its inhabitants: taken altogether these events were observed as symptoms of the end of St. Petersburg.[58]

But even if the curse seemed to have come true and the myth seemed to have come to its logical ending for the contemporaries of the events, in my opinion this was simply a new stage in the development of the myth, another turning point in the myth's re-evaluation. This was no doubt the most important moment in the remaking of the myth since its appearance. Before the October revolution Petersburg was perceived as a symbol of the new pro-European empire founded by Peter the Great. Together with this the negative, dark aspect of the myth occupied a dominant position suppressing

[57] Yet at the end of the essay Dolgopolov marks in a footnote that the Petersburg theme and myth awake interest even later in the twentieth century. As an example of later mythmaking he gives Anna Akhmatova's *Poem Without a Hero* but underestimates it by asserting, unjustly in my opinion, that Akhmatova in her work succeeds only in sustaining the tradition, not in 'transforming it or creating an original conception of the myth' (Dolgopolov 1985 a, p. 194).

[58] For more on the 1920s in the city's history and its representation in literature and art see Antsiferov 1990, Toporov 1995, Ignatova 2003, Volkov 2005.

its positive element. After the October revolution the myth was revisited both on the official and the unofficial levels. The official ideology, without deviating in its interpretation of the myth from the official viewpoint of the previous regime, proclaimed the city the crucible of three revolutions and hence the symbol of the new Soviet Russia. This new symbolical meaning was made even more explicit by changing the city's name from Petrograd[59] to Leningrad; that is, from the city of Peter, the key figure of the Russian Empire, to the city of Lenin, the key figure of Soviet Russia.

A more interesting situation arose on the unofficial level. The literature of the first decades of the twentieth century was filled with despair and presentiment of a catastrophe. Dolgopolov, in his essay on the Petersburg myth and its transformations in the beginning of the twentieth century, writes concerning Bely and *Petersburg*:

> «Для Белого грядущее «исчезновение» города — символическая фигура, смысл которой может быть раскрыт с помощью его идеи о завершении «петербургского» (то есть западного) периода русской истории. Период этот завершается вот сейчас, на глазах. [...] И себя, и своих современников он воспринимал именно как деятелей завершающего этапа петербургского периода русской истории» (Dolgopolov 1985 a, p. 166).[60]

When the catastrophe finally burst out in the form of wars and revolutions, which caused the loss of the city's status, name and splendour and introduced hunger, disease, repression and devastation, it re-awoke Petersburg's traits of a city-victim or a city-martyr in art and literature. It also introduced the theme of regret, even mourning over the bygone epoch and the dying city into the Petersburg text and made another theme more noticeable and significant, referred to by Vladimir Toporov as the 'I love'-fragment. Toporov names the theme of admiration of the city after the lines from Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* («Люблю тебя, Петра творенье, люблю твой строгий стройный

[59]The change of the city's name from Saint Petersburg to Petrograd after the start of the First World War was also a significant event for the city myth in establishing the idea of the city's collapse. First of all the foreign name of the city (Dutch actually, although the change was dictated by antipathy to Germany) which underlined the foreignness, Europeanness of the city itself, was translated into Russian. Secondly, the city name together with the prefix 'saint' lost its patron saint, since Petrograd was now interpreted without the prefix only as a city of Peter the Great. Both of these losses already had an alarming significance for the citizens.

[60]'For Bely the future 'disappearance' of the city is a symbolical picture, its meaning can be revealed with the help of his idea of the completion of the 'Petersburg' (i.e. western) period in Russian history. This period is coming to its end right now, before his very eyes. [...] He perceived himself and his contemporaries as agents of the final stage of the Petersburg period of Russian history'.

вид...»[61]) (Toporov 1995, p. 261). Indeed this theme is expressed openly in Pushkin's poetry. After Pushkin it became almost invisible and insignificant in the Petersburg text for almost a century. But in the first decades of the twentieth century the theme regained its relevance and importance. A good example to illustrate renewal of this theme is Osip Mandelstam's poem *Leningrad* from 1930 («Я вернулся в мой город, знакомый до слез...»[62]). It is to be noted as well that 1920s gave rise to an extraordinary interest in the city's history and local lore[63] when the first important works on the myth of the city by Nikolai Antsiferov appeared.[64] Hence, although for artists and historians who were dealing with the myth during this period it seemed to be coming to its logical end and the prophecy seemed to have been fulfilled, they themselves were actually continuing and developing the Petersburg myth. Moreover, they added a new element, very important for the myth's continuation in the twentieth century. Petersburg obtained its martyr's crown and consolidated its image as a victim during the twentieth century. This gave an important feature to the positive aspect of the myth, balancing it with the hitherto dominant image of Petersburg the tormentor and blighter of souls.

Yet the idea that the myth survived the revolution and even underwent important changes after it is less popular among scholars. According to this viewpoint Petersburg became the significant other of the Soviet culture, opposing Moscow, although now from another side: '...by the time the city was renamed Leningrad, in 1924, it was fast becoming ever more peripheral... As Moscow became the centre of authoritarian culture, Petersburg changed its function from the seat of power to that of significant other...' (Clark 1996, p. XI). Amazingly, the city exchanged its status with Moscow once again and started to lead the life of 'the widow in the purple mantle' («порфироносная вдова») as Pushkin had referred to Moscow in the nineteenth century. Petersburg changed places with Moscow, accepting its lost illusions, the role

[61] 'I love you, Peter's creation, I love your severe, graceful appearance...' (translation by Obolensky from *The Penguin Book of Russian Verse* 1962, p. 113)

[62] 'I came back to my city, familiar to tears...'

[63] According to the professor of the Department of Historical Region Study of St. Petersburg State University, Iurii Krivosheev, the origins of the contemporary study of local lore in Saint Petersburg arose at the turn of the nineteenth–twentieth centuries when tutors and professors of various educational institutions of the city (including the University) started to organise numerous scientific, industrial and historical excursions for their students. Among the most important names of the scientists who founded the theoretical basis of the study of local lore in Petersburg–Petrograd–Leningrad were Ivan Grevs, Georgii Lukomskii and Nikolai Antsiferov. (Krivosheev)

[64] Although the appearance of such works as *The Soul of Petersburg* might illustrate as well the feeling of the end of the city myth and hence the ability and desire to observe it as a complete whole.

and the destiny that it once had prepared for Moscow. This gave a push to the development of both the positive and the negative elements of the myth just as in the beginning when the fact of the foundation acted as a source for both of them. The alternation of status did not change much in the relationship between Moscow and Petersburg; it only dislocated their usual poles. Moscow, which was once the symbol of the old Russia, became now the centre of the new life. Its tranquility and provincialism were left in the past and substituted by official administrative centrality that created out of Moscow a bulwark of regime, power and dictatorship. Petersburg, which had previously had all these titles, won the role of (using Clark's notion) the significant other, giving more freedom to the opposing intellectuals and becoming for the rest of the country the symbol of the old life and old traditions. The opposition to Moscow in the twentieth century became probably even more important for the Petersburg myth than it used to be in its first centuries.

A serious addition to the martyr element of the myth was made in the Second World War during the siege. I regard this as another crucial moment in the history of the city. The siege of Leningrad consolidated the idea of the city as chosen and exceptional and its citizens as heroic and unconquerable. It also made it possible to present the idea of the city-victim to the rest of the country more explicitly. The city was given the image of a martyr persecuted by the new regime that almost approved of the siege and left it to die of starvation. A significant accent was put on the cultural life of the city that never died during the siege: concerts in the philharmonic hall and performances in the theatres that helped citizens not to lose courage, crowded unheated libraries; Shostakovich's *Seventh* (*'Leningrad'*) *Symphony* written in honour of the city and performed in the philharmonic hall of the besieged city; museum exhibits saved by museum staff sometimes at the risk of their own lives and many other facts of this kind from this period in the history of the city are usually discussed and deeply appreciated.

Thus in the twentieth century the positive part of the myth was significantly developed. Even if an attempt to continue the positive myth was also made officially, in turning the city into the crucible of three revolutions, the siege of Leningrad was always regarded as the most tragic and heroic page of the Soviet history of the city. As Brodsky wrote in his 'A Guide to a Renamed City', it was this period that succeeded in reconciling the inhabitants with the name of their city (Brodsky 1999, pp. 67–8). Even today some people prefer this Soviet name of the city to the new-old one in honour of that drastic time. Undoubtedly the siege of Leningrad is still one of the most mythopoeic moments in the USSR's history and its mythopoeics can be daunting to overcome for a writer or a film director.

As seen here, the myth underwent its most important transformations in the periods crucial for the country as a whole. Yet the Thaw, which was a significant period for the whole country and especially for its culture, did not change the myth's appearance much, although it allowed the myth to be spread more freely outside the city as well.

2.2 The Myth's Transformations in the 1990s

The history of the twentieth-century Russia is rich with turning points that stimulate mythmaking and the remaking of existent myths. For the Petersburg myth, the latest turning point of this kind was without doubt perestroika and the following period of transition from communism to capitalism. Obviously perestroika was a crucial moment in the life of the community as a whole, meaning all the former Soviet Union. It was not only a political and economic but, what is more important here, a cultural and mental break point. It shook not only the country but also the whole world. And, on the minor scale, all these changes played an extremely important role for Petersburg and its citizens. Probably the most complete modern history of Petersburg covering the years 1989–2000 is made in a book by Daniil Kotsiubinskii *The Modern History of One Town. Essays on Political History of Saint Petersburg. 1981–2000* (Kotsiubinskii 2004). What changed drastically during the perestroika period was the political interest and consciousness of the citizens who began to participate actively in different political events and discussions (Kaplan 1993, pp. 153–167). Numerous discussions concerning the destiny of Petersburg came to a peak with a referendum which decided, with a majority of 54.2% (Kotsiubinskii 2004, p. 36), to change the city's name back to the original. Amazingly, the city referendum of 1991, which, according to the Charter of Saint Petersburg, is the highest expression of democracy together with elections (Clause 4 in *St. Petersburg Charter*), has been held only once in the history of the city in connection with the name change.[65]

The name change should, of course, be regarded as the central point and the quintessence of the remaking of the myth in the 1980s–1990s. But it was preceded by numerous discussions, both on a high political level and

[65] For more about discussions around the change of the city name see, for example, Kotsiubinskii 2004, pp. 36–8 and Volkov 2005, pp. 632–5. Interestingly, according to the polls of the independent noncommercial organisation Foundation 'Public Opinion', the name of Saint Petersburg was perceived as strange and unsuitable for one tenth of the respondents of the all-Russian poll held as late as in 2002. At the same time, the name of 'the city-hero Leningrad' has officially been allowed to be used since 1999 to refer to the city on the most eminent dates connected to the Second World War (Kotsiubinskii 2004, p. 170).

on TV, by eminent figures in the cultural and economic life of the city and even by average citizens at the spontaneous meetings and demonstrations that happened so often in the city at that time. The main subject for these discussions was how to develop the city on political, historical, economic and cultural levels, but in all cases these were based on the symbolico-mythopoeic perception of Leningrad–Petersburg as Russia's window to Europe and as the keeper of historical and cultural values and traditions for the whole country. The common feelings and ideas of the citizens at the end of the 1980s are well described by Kotsiubinskii:

> «...город над вольной Невой мучительно преодолевал синдром страшного «ленинградского дела», пытаясь нащупать опору для воскрешения своей потаенной столичной гордыни, попиравшейся на протяжении всех советских десятилетий» (Kotsiubinskii 2004, p. 16).[66]

But apart from its traumatic memories of the Soviet time the city had to overcome traumas on the everyday level, including the poverty of its citizens, the disastrous condition of its historical buildings and ordinary apartment houses where many families were still living in communal flats. All these problems did not match well with citizens' hopes for the city's resurrection as the country's cultural and spiritual centre and with the return to the original name of Saint Petersburg.

Perestroika gave citizens not only the hope of a more prosperous future after 70 years of oppression but also the opportunity to take a sober view of the situation in the city. This created a serious inconsistency between what the city looked like and what it was striving to achieve. In a foreword to the 1994 reprint of Anatolii Bakhtiarov's essay from 1887 on the everyday life of Petersburg, Felix Lur'e wrote:

> «...уже в 1970-х город начал катастрофически разрушаться. Из прогнивших, затопленных подвалов вырвались полчища комаров, стены нижних этажей покрылись плесенью, потекли крыши, подъезды пропитались зловонным запахом, улицы и дворы заросли смердящими нечистотами (культурный слой нашей эпохи), у липких помойных контейнеров появились растерянные роющиеся старики. Город, погрузившийся в мерзость запустения...» (Lur'e 1994, p. 6).[67]

[66] 'The city over the Neva was overcoming poignantly the syndrome of the 'Leningrad case', trying to find a ground for resurrection of its hidden capital pride that had been trampled on during all the Soviet decades.'

[67] '...the city started to fall into ruin already in the 1970s. Swarms of mosquitos appeared from rotten flooded basements, walls of the lower storeys became mouldy, roofs became leaky, halls and entrances were pervaded by bad smells, streets and yards were filled with stinking sewage (the cultural layer of our epoch), old perplexed ransacking people appeared around sticky containers. The city that had immersed itself into abomination of desolation...'

This city contrasted strikingly with the one described in the book of Bakhtiarov, the city that functioned as a perfectly working mechanism. The colours of the article are, of course, too dark and it represents the state of things as if everything happened in a single moment and the city suddenly turned into ruins, a process that in reality started long before the 1970s. But the ideas of this extract and its state of mind are very characteristic of the period, especially together with the main idea of the article that introduced the book of Bakhtiarov as hopefully useful for the city's coming resurrection: «Книга А. А. Бахтиарова *Брюхо Петербурга* побуждает к созиданию, она будет содействовать восстановлению нашего разрушающегося города» (Lur'e 1994, p. 9).[68]

Lur'e's viewpoint was a common one for citizens from the end of the 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s. On the one hand, the city's misery and decay became more and more obvious; on the other, hope for a better future was stronger than ever among both ordinary citizens and people of the arts, politics and sciences. Vladimir Toporov, revisiting in 1993 his own essay from 1971 on the Petersburg text of Russian literature in which he had named Konstantin Vaginov as the last writer of the Petersburg text, comes to the conclusion that the text could still be continued. Moreover, it could serve as a saviour of the city since, using his own words in concluding the article, 'сейчас город тяжко болен, и ему нужно помочь' (Toporov 1995, p. 320).[69]

The title of 'the cultural capital' of Russia, which became so popular then and remains popular now when referring to the city, concerns its best times and its great past. It even has a shade of indulgence — if not the real capital, then let it at least be the cultural one. Ideas about Petersburg as the second capital of Russia are no less vital today, due in large part to the fact that

[68] 'Bakhtiarov's book *The Belly of Petersburg* awakens one to creation, it will guide the resurrection of our ruinous city.'

[69] 'today the city is severely ill, it needs our help'.

Joseph Brodsky, probably the most important figure of the contemporary literary Petersburg text, found a good omen for the city's fate in the return of its original name: «В конце концов, речь идет о некоей преемственности культуры. Возвращение городу прежнего имени есть средство если не установить, то по крайней мере намекнуть на эту преемственность. И я чрезвычайно этому событию рад. Потому что думаю даже не столько о нас, сколько о тех, кто в Санкт-Петербурге еще родится. Много лучше, если они будут жить в городе, который носит имя святого, нежели дьявола». Cited after Volkov 2005, p. 634 ('After all, we are talking about a continuity in culture. Returning the city's previous name is a means of at least hinting at continuity, if not establishing it. I am extremely pleased by this event. Because I am thinking not so much about ourselves as of those who will be born in St. Petersburg. It is much better for them to live in a city that bears the name of a saint than that of a devil' (Volkov and Bouis 1997, p. 544).)

both the president and the prime minister and Putin's so-called 'team' all come from Petersburg.[70] Another name, that of 'the criminal capital', was attached to Petersburg by the mass media after a series of assassinations of politicians were committed in the city, a fact that, although strongly negative, also bears the same shade of indulgence.

Apart from the name change, which gave a serious impulse for rethinking and re-evaluating the myth, another event occurred the same summer of 1991 which had a serious resonance among the population of the city and in my opinion can also be regarded as a sign of a new phase in the myth's development. On June 7, 1991, a new, and at the time the third, monument to Peter the Great was erected in the city. It was donated to the city by the sculptor and artist Mikhail Shemiakin and the place chosen for it was in the nucleus of the city — inside the walls of the city's first building, Peter and Paul's fortress, in front of the cathedral where the remains of all Russian emperors starting from Peter I are buried. The statue — which represents Peter I as an ugly, ill-proportioned man with a small head and languid look — aimed to serve as an antithesis to the city's main symbol — the indisputable symbol of Saint Petersburg, the Bronze Horseman, that represents Peter I as a man of will, a man of action, a heroic, mythological figure. Moreover the statue was an example of the kind of city sculpture that was uncommon in Russia at the beginning of the 1990s (apart from obligatory pioneers and girls with oars that could be found in any park). This new statue was on the same level as the viewer without any pedestal, encouraging anyone to come and touch the statue and take a photo sitting on the knees of the tsar without this being regarded as an act of vandalism, as would be in the case with the Bronze Horseman. This statue and its approval by some of the citizens might signify the will and readiness of the population (at least part of it) to revisit the city myth and to transfer it to another level, demythologising some of its ideas and adapting it to the present of the city. The erection of the statue provoked a series of debates on TV. During the first days and perhaps weeks afterwards people gathered around the monument to discuss the possibility of such a satiric vision of Peter I which might ruin the myth of the great emperor.[71]

[70] An interesting picture is given by the gallup polls of independent noncommercial organisation 'Public Opinion' Foundation. According to them, 23% of respondents find it reasonable to delegate part of the capital's functions to another city of Russia (with 45% against and 32% hesitating) and 39% name Saint Petersburg as the most appropriate city for the capital's functions in comparison to 61% for Moscow and 10%, 9% and 8% for Ekaterinburg, Novosibirsk and Nizhnii Novgorod respectively. The respondents of the polls represent 100 cities and towns of different parts of Russia.

[71] These are my own memories of the event but they are confirmed by the facts gathered in the work of Volkov (Volkov 2005, pp. 630–1).

In my opinion, the statue itself and the whole situation around it should be regarded as one of the explicit signs of starting an active process of rethinking and remaking the myth.

The confrontation between Moscow and Petersburg persisted during the perestroika and the post-perestroika periods. It has been transferred to other spheres of life but is still relevant today. Moscow is perceived now as a noisy bustling business centre where all the money and all the people flow and where there is no space left for the feelings and sufferings of the little person. Petersburg, in contrast, is often regarded as a more tranquil and quiet place, almost frozen in time, dreaming of being resurrected to its past glory. This simultaneous awareness of its metropolitanism and provincialism can also comfortably enter the reversible myth of the city. The idea of the end of the city through flooding has in our days been partially side-stepped with the construction of the dam. A banality from the point of view of the myth has reduced the possibility of such a destructive deluge.[72] However, under the perestroika years, the dam received a new symbolic significance. Apart from all the discussions of its dangerous effect on the ecological situation in the region it turned into a token of the communist dam that stood in the way of the rough fresh democratic stream and did not allow it to reach the coast of the Baltic (Kotsiubinskii 2004, p. 26–7).[73] The city's flooding then started to be regarded as something extremely romantic. Sergei Kurekhin, a composer, musician and performer (since the word 'actor' seems to be too strict and poor when applied to him) in an interview at the beginning of the 1990s said that he believed that one day the city would be swallowed by the waters and one would be able then to dive and admire this new Atlantis with only the Peter and Paul's cathedral's spire seen on the surface.

In my opinion, for the city the perestroika and post-perestroika period is a time of self-identification, an effort to find its new face and a new global idea, after years of oppression and neglect, for its own history and destiny. The myth of the city in these years strives for re-evaluation, a new form that could possibly reconcile all the aspects both of the imperial and the Soviet myth and adapt them to the city's present. This search for self-identification, embarrassment in the face of the city's traumatic past and miserable present as well as a desire to connect into one smooth line the city's past, present and future finds its reflection in the films of the period.

[72] The full name of the Petersburg dam is The Saint Petersburg Flood Prevention Facility Complex. Its construction was started in 1979 and was completed in 2011.

[73] Note the similarity in an article on Russian rock-music of the same period 'Neva wave against the dam of stagnation' (Pozdniakov 1989).

2.3 Cinematic Petersburg in the Works by Leonid Muratov

Before I start my own analysis of cinematic Petersburg I have to recall the scientific work that has been done in this field prior to my thesis.

Despite, as was noted in the previous part, the interest in the cinematic city which has recently grown remarkably and despite the fact that Petersburg–Leningrad has always awoken the interest of different scholars, there is very little serious research concerning cinematic Petersburg. The only effort to provide a more or less systematic analysis has been undertaken in the works of Leonid Muratov. Muratov was a Soviet film critic and historian. He lived in Leningrad. Apart from his works focused on Italian cinema, neo-realism in particular, he was interested in representations of Leningrad–Petersburg in cinema and wrote several articles on the issue.

He returned to the topic of Leningrad–Petrograd–Petersburg several times in his scientific work and observed the different periods and themes of cinematic Petersburg. In all his articles the author treats the cinematic city from the viewpoint of its myth. Muratov regards the city in the first place as a metaphysical space, heavily loaded with different historical and cultural meanings. Some of Muratov's articles on the subject are biased, especially if compared with his own works written during the time of perestroika. Yet they comprise an interesting and important study on the given subject.

In his articles, Muratov tries to group different films related to Petersburg according to various historical events. He distinguishes, for example, films dealing with the October revolution. Among the films of this group he lists *Dvorets i krepost'* (*The Palace and the Fortress*, 1923, Aleksandr Ivanovskii), *Konets Sankt-Peterburga* (*The End of St. Petersburg*, 1927, Vsevolod Pudovkin), *Oktiabr'* (*October 1917*, 1928, Sergei Eisenstein, Grigorii Aleksandrov), *Lenin v oktiabre* (*Lenin in October*, 1937, Mikhail Romm). According to Muratov the city in these pictures has an ambivalent role, serving both as the stronghold of the ruined empire («олицетворяющий собой все историческое зло старого мира» (Muratov 1977, p. 4)[74]) and being the heart of the revolution and of the new life. To this second positive aspect in representing the city is adjoined a subgroup of films, those focused on Petrograd–Leningrad as the city of workers and factories and as an urban paradise of the Soviet people. Sometimes the city is portrayed in these films almost as a futuristic space.[75] Among the films of this subgroup are *Oblomok imperii* (*Fragment of an Empire*, 1929, Fridrikh Ermler), *Vstrechnyi* (*Counterplan*, 1932, Fridrikh

[74]'embodying all the historical evil of the old world'
[75]See Muratov 1977, Muratov 1978.

Ermler and Sergei Iutkevich) and *The Maxim Trilogy* (*Iunost' Maksima*,1934, *Vozvrashchenie Maksima*, 1937, *Vyborgskaia storona*, 1938, Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg). Here, as well, Muratov stresses the revival of the evil imperial and capitalist capital within the city of the proletariat that also inherits the cultural values of the old world. In my opinion, such ambivalence in visualising the city in cinema carries a clear and obvious connection to the earlier tradition of the Petersburg text in literature. As in the earlier tradition it presents a combination of the positive and the negative aspects of the myth.

Another category of films studied by Leonid Muratov in his works is films depicting the siege of Leningrad. His choice of films embraces both those produced in wartime and during the Thaw. Among them are such films as *Nepobedimye* (*Invincible*, 1942, Mikhail Kalatozov, Sergei Gerasimov), *Zhilabyla devochka* (*Once There Was a Girl*, 1944, Viktor Eisymont), *Baltiiskoe nebo* (*Baltic Skies*, 1960, Vladimir Vengerov), *Vstuplenie* (*Introduction*, 1962, Igor' Talankin), *Dnevnye zvezdy* (*The Stars of the Day*, 1966, Igor' Talankin). According to Muratov, the fate of the citizens in all these films is inseparable from the fate of the besieged city (Muratov 1986, p. 13). All these films praise the heroism of the city's everyday survival, which contributed to the development of the positive aspect of the myth of the city.

One more Petersburg theme actively studied by Muratov in cinema is the representation of the city at different stages of the Petrine period. Studying this topic he focuses mainly on the figure of tsar Peter I (Muratov 1992). In his article on the subject, Muratov analyses a wide range of films, from the first films of the silent era about Peter I up to the films contemporary with the writing of the article. Among them are *Petr Velikii* (*Peter the Great*, 1910, Kai Gansen and Vasilii Goncharov), *Tsarevich Aleksei* (*Prince Aleksei*, 1919, Aleksandr Sanin and Iurii Zheliabuzhskii), *Petr I* (*Peter the First*, 1938, Vladimir Petrov), *Skaz pro to, kak tsar Petr arapa zhenil* (*How Czar Peter the Great Married Off His Moor*, 1976, Aleksandr Mitta), *Iunost' Petra* (*The Youth of Peter the Great*, 1980, Sergei Gerasimov).

Muratov's interest in cinematic Petersburg revived once again at the end of the 1980s – beginning of the 1990s. This time it happened due to the serious political changes and the appearance of new films in which Petersburg was represented in a completely new way. In his article *The Screen of Destiny* Muratov analysed several documentaries of the late 1980s (Muratov 1991). According to him, these films were focused primarily on the tragedy of the city that had lost its identity, its history and culture. This was declared already in the films' titles: *Dmitrii Likhachev: Ia vspominaiu* (*Dmitrii Likhachev: I Remember*, 1988, Vladislav Vinogradov), *Rekviem* (*Requiem*, 1988, Konstantin Artiukhov), *V poiskakh Sankt-Peterburga* (*In Search of St.*

Petersburg, 1988, Valentina Matveeva). In some of the films, the spiritual bankruptcy caused by the Soviet years is shown symbolically. For example, in *Khram* (*The Temple*, 1986, Vladimir D'iakonov) this is implied in the images of ruined and devastated churches, in Efim Uchitel's last film about the head curator of the Hermitage museum, *Khranitel'. Iz biografii akademika Orbeli* (*The Keeper. From Academician Orbeli's Biography*, 1988), it is represented in an image of the empty frames of the museum in the 1930s.

Along with the idea of the curse to be fulfilled Muratov reveals another aspect of the city myth with the analysis of *Rok* (*Rock*, 1987, Aleksei Uchitel') in the same article (Muratov 1991, pp. 76–8). This is the idea of the significant other which was raised by Katerina Clark in her *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Clark 1996, p. XI). In the documentary by Uchitel', the underground rock music of Leningrad and its major representatives are highlighted. As if to underline the city's antithetical role to the official Soviet culture, the film's action takes place mostly at night and in some small private apartments where the characters meet to listen to each other's songs and simply to talk (Muratov 1991, p. 77). Muratov also draws a parallel between the underground position of rock music during the Soviet period and the underground position of the musicians as social outcasts. They were regarded not only as internal enemies by the official culture but were literally performing as outcasts, often working in the lowest social positions as stokers, watchmen, loaders and other unskilled labourers.

Muratov returned to the subject of cinematic Petersburg once again in the last article written not long before his death. In 'The City–the Time–the Screen' (Muratov 1996) he tries to correlate the Petersburg myth with several feature films. The article is focused on a film by Dmitrii Dolinin *Mif o Leonide* (*The Myth of Leonid*, 1991). Muratov interprets the film almost as an updated adaptation of Aleksandr Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman.* The story of Kirov's assassination, in his opinion, serves in this film to show the tragedy of an individual that comes into conflict with and challenges the authorities. Kirov's figure embodies here the nucleus of all the evil and infernal forces of the city; he acts as the city's demiurge, the modern Bronze Horseman of Leningrad. Muratov's reading of *The Myth of Leonid* is not unique. It coincides with the viewpoint of other film critics[76] as well as the vision of the film director himself. In his article Muratov tries to trace representations of devilry, a characteristic feature of many literary works of the Petersburg text, in other films as well. One of them, *Velikii grazhdanin* (*Great Citizen*, 1937, Fridrikh Ermler) is close in subject to *The Myth of Leonid* since it also

[76] One can name here such eminent Petersburg film critics as Oleg Kovalov (Kovalov 1992, Kovalov 2004), Dmitrii Dobrotvorskii (Dobrotvorskii 2005, pp. 103–6, written in 1993).

focuses on Kirov's assassination. The other one is a later short of the same film director, Ermler, *Zvanyi uzhin* (*Diner*, another title in Russian *Razbitye mechty*, 1953). It is a satire on tyrannical authorities.

Muratov's articles written during the perestroika period contradicts his earlier articles in which he praised the officially approved viewpoint of the Soviet period on Leningrad. His works about cinematic Leningrad–Petersburg suffer from being tendentious; this especially concerns his works on the films about the October revolution. This bias casts a shadow even on other, less one-sided articles by the author from the time of perestroika that also seem to be too passionate and hence also distorted, this time in another, opposite way. But despite their biased nature, leaning towards either the official Soviet ideology or reactionary liberal views, these articles can be appreciated as the first attempt at a serious general survey of cinematic Petersburg that involves even documentary films. Even though Muratov's research is spread over a number of articles and does not give a general analysis and definitions of cinematic Petersburg, it embraces almost the whole history of cinematography and reveals a number of important aspects of the Petersburg myth and its reflection in film.

One more blemish on Muratov's articles is that they are overloaded with quotes from other authors and films. This overload hinders any effort to follow Muratov's own ideas.

No other research of this kind has appeared so far. The isolated articles written by Muratov can be regarded as separate chapters of a book structured according to various aspects of the myth. In his articles Muratov groups the most essential aspects of the Petersburg myth. This grouping speaks also for the benefits of the theory of mythmaking according to which myths are revisited and re-evaluated by a community and transformed by it at the turning points in the community's history. These moments in the history of St. Petersburg coincide completely with the film grouping made by Muratov, i.e. the Petrine reforms, the October revolution, the siege and finally the perestroika period. These periods are regarded in Muratov's essays as the turning points in the representation of the city in cinema. He distinguishes them as dominating in the film plots but also as the historical moments during which the biggest interest in Petersburg has been taken by filmmakers. Consequently, it is reasonable to search for a serious contribution to the cinematic Petersburg myth in perestroika films.

In my work I do not examine the cinematic representation of Petersburg–Leningrad in the periods prior to perestroika and post-perestroika. Thus Leonid Muratov's articles are the main source for learning more about the Petersburg myth in film during the preceding periods. Keeping in mind the

main weaknesses of these works as discussed here, one can find many interesting examples of the cinematic Petersburg text from different periods of Soviet history.

Chapter 3

Coming to terms

3.1 Methods of the analysis

My chief objective with this work is to prove that the myth of Petersburg has not yet come to an end. In my opinion it is still developing and undergoing transformations in accordance with historical events, such as perestroika and the city's anniversary, and is following the pattern of the concepts of myth-making as discussed above. This work offers a possible way of examining the myth's development in art, specifically in cinematography. Inspired by the ideas of Toporov concerning a homogeneous Petersburg text of Russian literature, I attempt in this work to form a similar text inside contemporary Russian film. These are the films in which the choice of Petersburg as a scene of action is of great semantic importance for the film's story and in which the mythopoeic image of Saint Petersburg has a considerable impact upon the film's plot. Obviously, this does not mean that my only task regarding the contemporary cinematic Petersburg text will be to bring to light traits of the Petersburg text that already existed in literature from the eighteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century as discussed in the works of Toporov, Antsiferov and other researchers of the Petersburg text and myth. Apart from discovering in the chosen films elements that are faithful to the existent tradition, it is important to find new features, details and images which continue or are opposed to, re-analyse and refresh the tradition or distinguish the filmic tradition from the literary one. Retaining the basic ideas or, more to the point, the building blocks of the myth and, generally speaking, having the myth as its pivot, the Petersburg text undergoes transformations in each new work of art. Consequently, new motifs and subtopics appear in the text while some others, on the contrary, may lose their topicality in the course of time. Undoubtedly, this is true for the contemporary Petersburg text as well.

I repeat that in relation to the text the myth plays a more generalised role. It comprises the text in literature as well as the one in folklore, architecture, music, film, etc. The Petersburg myth functions as a pivot or a basis for the Petersburg text no matter which text is regarded: the one in literature, the visual arts or architecture. It is this pivot that allows Vladimir Toporov to unite literary works written by various writers in different epochs and in different genres into a homogeneous Petersburg text and to distinguish common themes and epithets in it.

By the Petersburg myth I understand the mythologised perception of the city's history and culture. By the Petersburg text I understand the imprint, the embodiment of the myth in a separate sphere of life or kind of art, in the case of this thesis in cinema. The myth makes it possible to form the text by uniting different works of art dealing with the mythopoeic space of the city. The myth provides the text with common ideas, symbols, notions, elements that underlie and nourish the works of various authors.

Regarding the cinematic Petersburg text, I have to take into account not only changes in the myth concerning historical and social processes but the technical specificity of cinematography as well, and those merits and demerits in the visualisation of ideas that film art offers us. This specificity of the technical and artistic mechanisms of cinema is discussed in various works on film language and narration, among others by Iurii Lotman (Lotman 1973), Seymour Chatman (Chatman 1990), and David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (Bordwell 1997; Bordwell and Thompson 2004). 'Film is a specific medium, and every film contains a distinctive combination of many stylistic techniques that combine to create a whole' (Bordwell and Thompson 2004, p. XVI).

Principal among these techniques and their combinations are mise-en-scène (interaction of setting, lighting, costumes and decorations and acting inside the shot) (Ibid., pp. 176–228), cinematography (photographic aspects of the shot, framing and duration of the shot) (Ibid., 229–293), editing and sound. The particular technical choices made by different filmmakers give a film its style, but in our case it is important to see whether these choices coincide and have some distinctions inside the cinematic Petersburg text. Apart from, or rather together with, the stylistic system the formal system of a film should also be surveyed. The formal system of a film means the way in which the film is told or organised. When we speak of fiction films, usually a narrative formal system is implied (among other film forms are rhetorical and category in documentary, and abstract and associational in experimental film).[77] In the case of the films studied in this thesis I deal solely with the narrative film

[77] On other than narrative forms of film see Bordwell and Thompson 2004, pp. 128–162.

form.[78]

In his work, Chatman offered another division of film elements. In his idea all the techniques of the stylistic system are also considered as narrative devices. He distinguishes the auditory channel (kinds and origins of sound), the visual channel (nature and treatment of image, including here editing and mise-en-scène) and point of view (slant and filter) (Chatman 1990, pp. 139–161, 172–184). In my opinion, the idea of Bordwell and Thompson of studying film's form and style as two separate, even though heavily interacting, systems[79] seems more justified (in comparison to Chatman's concept of narrative form dominating and comprising all the stylistic peculiarities of a film). This equalising division makes it possible to regard a film's style as a separate system, valuable per se. But in my research it is, of course, subordinate role of style to the narrative that interests me, since examining the interplay and importance of the technical choices for creating a narrative reveals the importance of the choice of set as well and hence proves a certain film's affiliation to the cinematic Petersburg text.

In addition to the many examples of films studied in this work, several films will be presented in the thesis as more or less complete film analyses, although with a stress on the myth's manifestation in them. My investigation will consider if it is appropriate in the case of the films of the 1990s to speak of a homogeneous cinematic Petersburg text which shares a common idea of the Petersburg myth and operates with a common embodiment of this idea concerning the choice of certain settings inside the city probably certain technical solutions such as lighting, colour, camera position and editing, choice of music, film genre, and, of course, of the narrative itself.

On a few occasions when a dialogue from a film is cited I give it in the form of a table, with *Image* (what is shown on screen), *Sound* (diegetic or nondiegetic music, sounds, noises), *Dialogue*(the words of the characters with the mode and intonation defined when possible), *Translation* (the translation of the dialogue into English) and *Commentary* (my commentary on the episode when it is appropriate) given, each in its own column. This cannot, of course, give a full picture of an episode or a substitute for viewing a film. However, I

[78] Bordwell and Thompson see among the main elements of a film's formal system the interaction between story and plot within a narrative, cause and effect patterns and time and space. They also list the main principles of a narrative film's formal system: function (every element in a film fulfills one or more roles), similarity and repetition (repeated elements become motifs), difference and variation (sharpening of motifs' various roles), development (a narrative's progression from beginning to end), unity/disunity (balance between perfectly unified elements of a narrative and dangling ends). See Bordwell and Thompson 2004, pp. 47–105, 389–412.

[79] Bordwell and Thompson 2004, pp. 48–9, p. 175.

hope it will help towards a better understanding of the exemplified episodes and of their significance in the framework of this thesis. In cases where the images and sounds are irrelevant compared to the dialogue cited these details are omitted.

Since I speak here of the films as a homogeneous text, it is appropriate to speak of this in terms of a morphological system using the ideas of a representative of the Russian Formalist school, Vladimir Propp (Propp 1998; Propp, 1970[80]). Although Propp, in his work on the morphology of the fairy-tale, speaks of functions and arranges them into a whole system of mutually affecting consistent functions: «если прочесть все функции подряд, то мы увидим, как с логической и художественной необходимостью одна функция вытекает из другой» (Propp 1998, p. 50).[81] In Propp's meaning, functions imply a restricted number of (most often) actions or preconditions for an action. These functions, succeeding each other and often paired with each other, form the recognisable text of a fairy-tale. He also distinguishes a limited number of characters that act in a fairy-tale. His approach to the fairy-tale allowed him to convey the idea of the integrity of folklore independent of its national identity.

Thus, in my opinion, this approach can help to form a homogeneous text of films dealing with the Petersburg myth. However, in the case of the Petersburg text I find it relevant to speak not of actions or functions as a basic scheme of the text, but of separate elements or components that recur in the films studied and bear similar morphological meaning in each of the film narratives studied in this work. By making a list of such repeating elements and analysing their meaning inside film narratives, a possible unity between different films can be found. for the sake of clarity and in order not to confuse the elements with Propp's functions these will be called the functional elements of the cinematic Petersburg text. The functional elements are unified in the thesis into several chapters: *Space*, *Time*, *Hero*, *Tradition*, and discussed there using examples from different films.

Another theory that is used frequently in this work is the carnivalisation theory introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin in his work *Rabelais and his World* (Bakhtin 1990). This work was written as Bakhtin's doctoral thesis in approximately 1941, but was first published in 1965. In Bakhtin's idea, folk laughter culture and carnival as one of its components were used to unleash the folk for a while from the strict rules and hierarchies of medieval society. On the larger scale, it was important to help a community to renew and rethink the

[80] First published in 1928.

[81] 'if we read through all the functions, one after another, we observe that one function develops out of another with logical and artistic necessity' (Propp 1970, p. 64).

social system and to make the transition from a medieval social structure to the Renaissance one. In art, the mechanisms of carnival — such as degrading meanings, turning them upside down and inside out, reversing and ridiculing — are called carnivalisation and are also used with the same purpose of renewal of the state of mind of a community in transitional moments in its history. In my opinion, the concept of carnival and carnivalisation helps us in studying the city's space of contemporary films and in finding the meaning of the space's functional elements.

It may be that the ideas of the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s that will be formed in this work are not entirely relevant or applicable to other kinds of art of the same period, such as literature, music, photography, etc. However, in my opinion, it is important at least to offer the myth a possibility of development at present and to give an initial pointer to any further studies in the field.

Another important task of my thesis, as mentioned in the previous section, is to acquaint the reader with films of the 1990s that today are almost unavailable and probably remembered only by film theorists and truly devoted cineastes.

3.2 Functional Elements of Space

In my opinion, to reveal a city text — the Petersburg text in our case — in film one must study the integration of the cinematic city's elements: streets, architecture, people, etc. It is important to see how these are represented in various films, what is chosen to be shown or concealed, and what semantic load these elements have in the narratives. Through such analysis it becomes possible to comprehend whether one homogeneous city text can be formed out of the city image in different films from the same period. Therefore, I find it reasonable to dismantle the cinematic city into these major components and study them separately.

An overview of the most recurrent and characteristic functional elements that represent the city space, both its interiors and exteriors, in reference to St. Petersburg will be offered below. These elements can possibly unite the films set in the St. Petersburg of the 1990s into a more or less homogeneous cinematic Petersburg text. Obviously it is important not only to find out what cityscapes are chosen to represent the city in a film, but to determine what has been kept away from the screen as well. In this study of the cinematic cityscape I choose not to concentrate on the purely topographic aspects of the onscreen city,[82] but rather on the most and the least recurrent details of the

[82]However, it should be admitted that a laborious mapping of all the protagonists' routes

filmic cityscape. They will first be presented briefly in order then to analyse their role and meaning in creating a cinematic Petersburg. A more detailed analysis of each of these functional elements will be given in Chapter 4 of Part II, together with the most pictorial film examples of each one.

1. The first motif that strikes one immediately in the films of the 1990s set in Saint Petersburg is their lack, even total neglect, of conventional images of the city. Such traditional symbols of the city as the Bronze Horseman, the Peter and Paul's cathedral's spire, the drawbridges over the Neva that give a viewer an immediate hint as to the place of action, remain out of sight. In cases where a recognisable image of the city is needed to locate the story the tendency is to show other, less famous, monuments and places. In some films such mapping is done only verbally or indirectly.

In *Mister Designer* the mapping of the story as located in Petersburg is done solely by the credits 'Petersburg, 1908' and 'Petersburg, 1914' that divide it into two major segments. No recognisable images of the city are ever shown in the film.

In other films, recognisable city sites are shown only briefly and with the purpose of giving the viewer essential information about where the action is taking place. Filmmakers seem to be ashamed of including and focusing on any postcard-images of the city in their films. The panoramas of postcard-like Petersburg that not so long ago were heavily exploited in the films set in the city have disappeared from the screen. As opposed to the city-megalopolises mentioned above, which lost their cinematic status in the 1960s, the 1990s films screening Leningrad–Petersburg, even though avoiding any clearly tourist reference points, still always include a hint which would help a viewer to recognise Petersburg as the site of the action. Detailed examples of the devices used to reveal Petersburg as a place of action in the films will be presented later in this work. First, I will try to make a generalisation as to the reasons that led to the relocation of the film set from pompous, visually attractive Petersburg gala-spaces to the city's uninviting gloomy outskirts and backyards.

This neglect of gala-images of a city so rich in them brings to mind the situation with the city's new-old name, St. Petersburg, which these pompous

and sites can be fruitful and give an interesting background to the film's narration. As a curious example of such a study, based partly on mapping city routes in film, see Jensen, Jan Oxholm , 2004, *Blik for New York City... i Martin Scorseses* Taxi Driver *og Woody Allens* Manhattan, Frydenlund.

images best correspond to. In 1991, the city regained its original name of Saint Petersburg and (on paper) became again the city of Peter I. The new-old name was used unwillingly and with a modicum of shame by the citizens at that time. The pompous and over-complicated name came into extreme discordance with the actual conditions of a city: in acute need of renovation and oppressed for the past 70 years as the former capital of the Russian empire and later, as a centre of opposition, and where at the moment the inhabitants were short of almost all the most essential goods. This embarrassment in using the city's name was echoed in the films of the period. Avoidance of the city's name in the speech of characters of various films can be regarded as a functional element of the Petersburg text of the period, although not a visual but a verbal one. Moreover, it is paired with the rejection of the postcard city shots in these films. Since these two elements are paired with each other I find it more relevant to examine them in interaction and not to regard this verbal element as a separate one.

The name of the city remains unspoken in the majority of the films studied. Petersburg is often referred to simply as 'the city', both in the cues of the film characters and in the titles.

The clearest examples here are Aleksandr Burtsev's *Gorod* (*The City*, 1990) and Dmitrii Svetozarov's *Arifmetika ubiistva* (*Arithmetic of a Murder*, 1991).

2. Instead of the postcard views of Petersburg, more anonymous parts of the city, often in its outskirts or faceless tenement houses ('dokhodnye doma'), are chosen as the main sets for the films. Anonymous city streets together with dirty, dilapidated houses, grey crowds and trash in the streets give an impression of a market place or a dump more than of a city street. In fact, in many films of the period streets explicitly begin to look like some kind of a market square or a flea-market and seem to have lost their property of being transport arteries through the city. This is the next essential functional element of the films of the period, which can be used as a key element in this analysis.

In Aleksei Balabanov's *Brother* the episode of acquaintance between Danila and Nemets as well as the episode of assassination actually take place in a market. In Iurii Mamin's *Okno v Parizh* (*Window to Paris*, 1994) most of

the city scenes take place in streets full of trash, dirt, bonfires, people selling and buying and thronging the streets; it is hard to understand whether this is a market square or an ordinary street camouflaged to look one. An even more vivid example can be taken from *Smile*. Here a short scene showing two women singing in some crowded place that looks like a market square recurs throughout the film in between its sequences. Only at the very end of the film when the camera tilts up from the crowd does it unmask the place: the very heart of the Nevsky prospect. This final episode unmasks the city which earlier in the film was shown rather anonymously and could not be easily identified as Petersburg.

Thus even the main streets of the city seem to be camouflaged, to have lost their ordinary function as arteries that lead one from point A to point B inside the city. They start to function as public spaces serving as marketplaces where people can gather, meet other people, but have no destination to move forward to. On the other hand, this change turns streets into a space where people start to spend a longer part of their day, not hurrying anywhere else. In other words, this shift of the streets' destination gives people the possibility of leading the life of flâneurs or vagabonds who have no place to go to but spend almost as much of their time outside in the street as at home. The crucial role of flâneurs for the Petersburg text will be discussed later in this thesis. Note that their presence in the films of the 1990s is made possible by the functional shift of cityscape as represented in these films.

3. In this connection it is interesting to note another peculiarity of the studied films. They are almost totally lacking in any images of the underground. It seems as if it does not exist at all and the means of transport most often used is a tram or simply feet. In my opinion, this absence of the underground accords well with the changed role of the streets. The underground, as the speediest way of moving inside the city space, is not needed anymore in the Petersburg of the 1990s since any point of destination is neglected by making market places out of streets. Trams, which are sometimes used as a way to move across the city, also contribute more to the idea of neglecting purposeful movement. A tram is the slowest means of public transport which exists in the modern city and the most old-fashioned one. Together with this the huge windows of trams make them almost continuous with the city space if one happens to be inside. Hence they give an illusion of a continued flâneurie while going by tram.

4. In many films this unfolding of city streets into a huge crowded market square and into a home for vagabonds has its parallel in apartments being presented as a place where characters feel most vulnerable and defenceless. In the same manner as streets, apartments seem to have lost their ordinary purpose. They seem to have grown into a public place instead of a private one. It is clear that communal apartments, that currently appear in the Petersburg films[83], are by definition not private spaces, but in the films discussed they often become an aggressive, dangerous space where inhabitants cannot feel safe by any means. Inside the apartment, and sometimes with the neighbours as witnesses, the characters are abused, beaten, wounded, raped or even killed.

A great number of examples can be found in *Brother* but even in *Novaia Shakherezada* (*The New Scheherazade*, 1990, Mikhail Nikitin), *Smile*, *Arithmetic of a Murder* and many other films of the period. Home can be aggressive even in a more science-fictional way, as happens in *Lestnitsa* (*The Stairway*, 1989, Aleksei Sakharov) where the protagonist literally gets trapped by the house itself.

5. Consequently another recurrent functional element of the films can be identified as follows. Opposing this dangerous and threatening milieu of the city houses some of the protagonists take refuge in unexpected places, such as lunatic asylums or cemeteries.

In *Brother*, Nemets hides from the city's evil in a cemetery, which he even refers to as his Motherland where all his ancestors are buried. In *Smile*, an asylum provides shelter for many of its inhabitants who have been humiliated and insulted in the streets of the city and in their own homes. In the same way, an asylum becomes the last shelter for the female characters in both Petersburg films by Andrei Nekrasov, *Sil'na kak smert' liubov'* (*Love is as Strong as Death*, 1996) and *Liubov' i drugie koshmary* (*Lyubov and Other*

[83] Communal apartments are undoubtedly a very common film set in Soviet/Russian films. Most often this is related to the image of Leningrad–Petersburg. It will be remembered that one of the first propaganda films made from Lunacharskii's script in 1918 by the Petrograd Film Committee was *Uplotnenie* (*Congestion*) promoting the idea of the harmonious co-existence of people from different social backgrounds in one and the same communal apartment.

Nightmares, 2000).

Other elements of the city space which many filmmakers return to as a possible means of escape from the city are its roofs. They appear as a significant narrative element in several films of the period, among others in *The Stairway*, *The New Scheherazade*, *Dukhov den'* (*White Monday*, 1990, Sergei Sel'ianov), *Window to Paris*.

Taken together all these elements of the Petersburg film space both contrast with and complement one another. They tear the city apart, turn it upside down and inside out, mix and change all the meanings of its space. They mask themselves under something absolutely different. Streets become unfolded into market squares or even dump yards, houses turn into threatening public spaces, roofs and asylums give the best refuge to the citizens. The city, just like a mask in a carnival, seeks to conceal its identity, keeping off-screen any recognisable images and restricting to a minimum the pronunciation of its name by the protagonists. Altogether these elements give Petersburg the constant illusion of some chaotic, fragmented space.

Chaos in depicting the city space appears to become a leitmotif that dominates the cinematic Petersburg of the 1990s. If we return now to the scheme of the Petersburg myth (Figure 2.2) it can be seen that chaos is to be regarded both as the initial point (the city appears out of the chaos of marshes) and the final point (the city is destined to be swallowed up by water) in the mythology of Saint Petersburg. In the myth of Petersburg, chaos is filled with ambivalence, since it denotes for the city both its birth and its death. Chaos is a primary element that plays an active role in both the cosmological and the eschatological aspects of the myth. In the canonical myth that is introduced above chaos is the trampled water element that opposes and fights constantly the stones and marbles, the order of the city, and threatens its existence as a whole. But it does this only from the outside, being in eternal opposition to the city. In the scheme chaos can be marked on the axis x on the frame of the oval.

On the contrary, chaos in the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s penetrates the city space on various levels. Different structural components of the city — such as streets, houses, transport — lose or exchange their functions, giving a feeling of confusion to the viewer. There are no more ordinary solid realia of the city; everything is mixed up and topsy-turvy. Here chaos becomes a mask that conceals Petersburg's usual appearance. Further on we will discuss possible reasons why this kind of mask is chosen for the city in the

majority of the films. A concept that can explain in many respects this choice of chaos as a mask for the city is, in my opinion, the carnivalisation theory that has been described at length by Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin.

3.3 Bakhtin and His Concept of Carnivalisation

In his book *Rabelais and his world* (Bakhtin 1990) Bakhtin proposes to decode Rabelais' *The Life of Gargantua and of Pantagruel* according to the conventions of the folk laughter culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Carnival is then the brightest and the most universal form of it that embraces other forms of folk laughter culture and follows its conventions and norms.

> «Для него (карнавального языка) очень характерна своеобразная логика «обратности» (à l'envers), «наоборот», «наизнанку», логика непрестанных перемещений верха и низа («колесо»), лица и зада, характерны разнообразные виды пародий и травестий, снижений, профанаций, шутовских увенчаний и развенчаний» (Bakhtin 1990, p. 16).[84]

According to Bakhtin, carnival and folk laughter culture granted the medieval community a special sense of freedom from the official high culture with its strict rituals and serious attitude towards life and its socio-political principles. This freedom was needed not only as a relieving break in the severity of everyday life materially embodied in the fasts that anticipated and followed the period of carnival (Bakhtin 1990, pp. 102–3, 300–3, 422). Its more global purpose, which seems to be even more valuable for artistic use, can be found in its ability to conduct the transition from one epoch to another. In the case of Rabelais, it is the transition from the medieval to the Renaissance public outlook. This transition implied an inevitable passage from one outlook to another by means of various grotesque mechanisms such as turning meaning upside down, lowering, ridiculing and uncrowning it. By ridiculing and lowering preconceived notions and ideas it became possible to alienate oneself from them and thus open the way to an innovatory outlook.

> «Искали внешней и внутренней свободы от всех форм и догм умирающего, но еще господствующего мировоззрения, чтобы взглянуть на мир другими глазами и увидеть его по-другому» (Bakhtin 1990, p. 300).[85]

[84] 'We find here (in the carnival idiom) a characteristic logic, the peculiar logic of the 'inside out' (à l'envers), of the 'turnabout', of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings' (Bakhtin 1984, p. 11).

[85] 'An outward and inner freedom was sought from all the dogmas of the dying yet still prevailing philosophy — a freedom that would permit one to see the world with different eyes' (Bakhtin 1984, p. 273).

> «Смеховое начало и карнавальное мироощущение, лежащие в основе гротеска, разрушают ограниченную серьезность и всякие претензии на вневременную значимость и безусловность представлений о необходимости и освобождают человеческое сознание, мысль и воображение для новых возможностей. Вот почему большим переворотам даже в области науки всегда предшествует, подготовляя их, известная *карнавализация сознания*[86]» (Bakhtin 1990, p. 58).[87]

Carnival penetrated all spheres of life, constructing its own norms for speech, appearance, relations and feast. It erased all the hierarchical limits between its participants and made no distinction between the audience and the participants, since everybody became part of the carnival (Bakhtin 1990, p. 12). Ridiculed and twisted in the whirlpool of carnival, the world could now be re-estimated and re-evaluated without fear or idolisation and, consequently, changed (Bakhtin 1990, p. 422). Carnival, according to this theory, is a celebration of the death of the old world and the birth of the new one (in a narrow sense, it may be comprehended as the transition from winter to spring, whereas a deeper interpretation implies a more fundamental transition from one epoch to another). «Карнавал празднует уничтожение старого и рождение нового мира — нового года, новой весны, нового царства» (Bakhtin 1990, p. 454).[88]

Therefore, Bakhtin chooses an image of pregnant death, a death that gives birth to something new, as one of the main images of carnival:

> «Снижение[...] значит приземление, приобщение к земле как к поглощающему и одновременно рождающему началу: снижая, и хоронят, и сеют одновременно, умерщвляют, чтобы родить сызнова лучше и больше[...] Снижение роет телесную могилу для нового рождения[...] оно *амбивалентно*[89], оно отрицает и утверждает одновременно. Сбрасывают не просто вниз, в небытие, в абсолютное уничтожение, — нет, низвергают в производительный низ, в тот самый низ, где происходит зачатие и новое рождение, откуда все растет с

[86] My italics.

[87] 'The principal of laughter and the carnival spirit on which grotesque is based destroys this limited seriousness and all pretense of an extra temporal meaning and unconditional value of necessity. It frees human consciousness, thought, and imagination for new potentialities. For this reason great changes, even in the filed of science, are always preceded by a certain *carnival consciousness* [my italics] that prepares the way'(Bakhtin. p. 49).
The literal translation for «каравализация сознания» is 'carnivalisation of consciousness'. I find it more appropriate to use in my thesis since it maintains the difference between 'carnival' and 'carnivalisation' that Bakhtin makes in his work.

[88] 'Carnival celebrates the destruction of the old and the birth of the new world — the new year, the new spring, the new kingdom.' (Bakhtin 1984, p. 410)

[89] Bakhtin's italics.

> избытком» (Bakhtin 1990, p. 28).[90]
>
> «Существующий мир разрушается, чтобы возродиться и обновиться. Мир, умирая, рожает» (Bakhtin 1990, p. 57).[91]

In Bakhtin's concept of carnival, an important symbolic role was given to the belly and the bowels. Physically these are the significant parts of the human body that accommodate food but also give way to defecation and place the development of a new life in a woman's body. This ambivalent position made them so important for carnival folklore and later for carnivalised literature:

> «Внутренности, живот, кишки — это чрево, утроба, это — нутро, это — жизнь человека. Но в то же время это и поглощающая, пожирающая утроба. Этим двояким значением, так сказать, — верхом и низом этого слова обычно играл гротескный реализм...(потроха) стянуты в один неразрывный гротескный узел — жизнь, смерть, рождение, испражнение, еда; это — центр телесной топографии, где верх и низ переходят друг в друга» (Bakhtin 1990, pp. 180–1).[92]

Bakhtin gives a detailed account of folk laughter culture precisely in the transitional period between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and clearly links all the carnival motifs of Rabelais' book to the historical period to which it belongs, claiming it to be the quintessence of the embodiment in literature of folk laughter culture.

Bakhtin's concept of carnival relies on a number of obligatory characteristics, such as an exaggerated interest in the human body and its physiological needs, the grotesque and the attempts to deride the whole world, etc. Yet the rules and mechanisms of carnival can serve to decode and comprehend a much broader circle of artistic works not necessarily belonging to the Middle Ages and Renaissance nor corresponding strictly to all the rules of folk

[90] 'Degradation[...] means coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better[...] Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive negative aspect, but also a regenerating one. To degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place' (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 21).

[91] 'The world is destroyed so that it may be regenerated and renewed. While dying, it gives birth' (Bakhtin 1984, p. 48).

[92] 'Tripe, stomach, intestines are the bowels, the belly, the very life of man. But at the same time they represent the swallowing, devouring belly. Grotesque realism played with the double image, we might say with the top and the bottom of the word[...] Thus, in the image of tripe life and death, birth, excrement, and food are all drawn together and tied in one grotesque knot; this is the center of bodily topography in which the upper and lower stratum penetrate each other' (Bakhtin 1984, p. 162–3).

laughter culture. When transported from the medieval market square into art this approach can be called carnivalisation in accordance with the terms used in Bakhtin's work (carnivalisation of consciousness, carnivalisation of world outlook, carnivalisation of literature).

According to Bakhtin, the tools of carnivalisation come to be adopted by authors of later epochs who exploit them unconsciously in their works and sometimes change slightly the purposes and the tone of carnival and grotesque (as happens, for example, in romanticism and modernism (Bahtin 1990, pp. 48, 56–7)). Just as the medieval carnival contains accepted and revised ideas of archaic and antique folk culture and literature, so the authors of the successive periods, consciously or not, use the devices of carnivalisation in their works to achieve their purposes. Often this purpose is the freedom which carnivalisation devices offer to the one who brings them into play. Cognition of the world with the instruments of carnivalisation at hand give a fruitful vantage point to its explorer:

> «[оно] разрушало и отменяло все созданные страхом и благоговением дистанции и запреты, приближало мир к человеку, к его телу, позволяло любую вещь трогать, ощупывать со всех сторон, залезать в нутро, выворачивать наизнанку, сопоставлять с любым другим явлением, каким бы оно ни было высоким и священным, анализировать, взвешивать, измерять и примерять — все это в единой плоскости материального чувственного опыта» (Bakhtin 1990, p. 422).[93]

Thus, the instruments of carnival culture, although most vividly expressed in the folk life of the Middle Ages, do not belong solely to this epoch. In his work, Bakhtin mentions a number of writers and artists whose works can be analysed from the positions of carnival culture (for example, Hieronymus Bosch and Peter Bruegel the Elder (Bakhtin 1990, p. 34), William Shakespeare (Ibid., pp. 302–3), Miguel de Cervantes (Ibid., pp. 28–30), Molière, Voltaire, Denis Diderot, Jonathan Swift (Ibid., pp. 42, 51, 84, 136–7), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (Ibid., pp. 270–1)). Not all of them date from one and the same period. Moreover, in an essay attached to the published work, Bakhtin makes an effort to use the mechanisms of carnival culture to interpret the works of Nikolai Gogol. According to Clark and Holquist, the ideas of Bakhtin can be applied even to his own work:

> 'In describing Rabelais' strategy, he [Bakhtin] reveals his own. The relation of Rabelais to Villon mirrors the relation of Bakhtin himself to Rabelais.

[93] '[it] destroyed and suspended all alienation; it drew the world closer to a man, to his body, permitted him to touch and test every object, examine it from all sides, enter into it, turn it inside out, compare it to every phenomenon, however exalted and holy, analyze, weigh, measure, try it on. And all this could be done on the one plane of material sensual experience' (Bakhtin 1984, p. 381).

> [...] In treating the specific ways in which Rabelais sought to find gaps in the walls between what was punishable and what was unpunishable in the 1530s, Bakhtin is looking for similar loopholes at those borders in the 1930s. His examination of Rabelaisian license is a dialogic meditation on freedom' (Clark and Holquist 1984, p. 298).

* * *

The city carnivalised into chaos. Returning now to our topic, we can see that the preconditions to use the tools of carnivalisation for treatment of the existent myths are built into the essence of perestroika since it is clearly a transitional period. The community was striving for re-evaluation of its own past, present and future. Re-evaluation of myths of the collapsed state and among them the Petersburg myth's re-evaluation became highly important at that time.

Assembling together all the functional elements that represent the space of Petersburg described above, we see that they all resort to the use of the tools of carnivalisation by means of which the city space changes into total chaos. But if we try to give meaning to this chaos, basing it now on the concept of carnivalisation, it cannot be interpreted only as the filmmakers' negation of the city's past and their unwillingness to recognise Petersburg's ability to recover and rise again. Vice versa, this chaotised vision of the city can be interpreted as giving the city a new starting point for future renewal.

The chaos that embraces various canonical elements of the Petersburg myth can be interpreted as a possible new starting point. From this point a discussion about the prospects of the myth's development can be started when no clear idea of its present can be formed. In accordance with the idea of carnivalisation we can understand the chaotised city space as a reproductive lower stratum that, for Petersburg, serves both as a grave and as a crucible. Hence the city degenerates into chaos to resurrect out of it afterwards. Blending numerous elements of the cityscape into a spatial chaos, filmmakers do not destroy the city in cinema. Instead, they offer ground for a future development of the myth. They bring the myth to a zero point from which to start anew. The image of chaos for Petersburg is, in my opinion, akin to the image of pregnant death at the medieval carnival.

Let us recall that the initial chaos in both the eschatological and cosmogonic aspects of the myth was considered to be nature. The water and marshes surrounding the city were conquered by its foundation, but nevertheless they continued to represent a serious threat to Petersburg, menacing it with transformation back into swamps and water. This is a clearly material, tangible chaos barricaded off from the material world of the city, most explicitly by

the granite of the city's embankments. It remains an outer counterbalance, alien and contrary to the spirit of the city. It represents natural chaos versus the city's order, nature versus human, spontaneity versus rigorous planning, a reference point (no matter if we observe it as the initial or the final one) versus long-term existence, outer versus inner.

Yet in the films of the 1990s chaos is already inside the city, it is in its own nature, in its structure, as if the chaos has already conquered and destroyed the city as it should according to the eschatological aspect of the myth. It is also important to note that the chaos is no longer a clearly materialised substance. It penetrates the city and becomes the city. At the same time, according to the city's cosmogony, the city should have a chance to be resurrected from this chaos, as was the case initially (since initially it was erected from the chaos of swamps and waters). This follows as well the traditionally ambivalent structure of the myth according to which the same elements and events of city life may be interpreted as both negative and positive aspects of the myth. The chaos of the city space that we find in the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s gives it the feeling of danger, evil, hopelessness. But at the same time it can also give life to its new order. This echoes Mikhail Bakhtin's interpretation of carnival according to which death gives birth to the renewed body. Using Bakhtin's words, the destruction and distortion of the smooth and structured cityscape 'frees human consciousness, thought and imagination for new potentialities' (Bakhtin 1984, p. 49).[94]

Carnivalisation in the period of transition. At the beginning of the 1990s the Petersburg myth, as has already been mentioned, was in a difficult situation. Having already been re-evaluated and re-thought several times in the course of its almost tercentennial existence and embracing cultural strata from both the Imperial and the Soviet time, it now faced a necessity to re-analyse and reconcile the existent complex myth in accordance with the present historical events.

On the one hand, the Soviet period was over and the Soviet motifs adapted by the myth started to lose their topicality. On the other hand, the desire to return to the city's glorious past, most obviously expressed in restoring the city's original name, came into total discordance with the reality of an impoverished provincial city. Many other circumstances that anticipated the change of the city's name also testify to the attitude of mind of the citizens as hesitating at a historical crossroads, not sure which road to choose for the city's future development.

[94] «освобождают человеческое сознание, мысль и воображение для новых возможностей» (Bakhtin 1990, p. 58).

This is how Daniil Kotsiubinskii describes it in his book on the city's political history in the perestroika period:

> «...Город над вольной Невой мучительно преодолевал синдром страшного «ленинградского дела», пытаясь нащупать опору для воскрешения своей потаенной столичной гордыни, попиравшейся на протяжении всех советских десятилетий.
>
> При активной поддержке горожан был возрожден Музей обороны Ленинграда [...].
>
> Исполком Ленсовета объявил открытый конкурс на создание проекта герба города.
>
> На страницах газет шла бурная дискуссия на тему о том, каким быть Ленинграду в XXI веке» (Kotsiubinskii 2004, pp. 16–7).[95]

None of the discussions about the possible ways of Petersburg's development led to clear results.

> «Перестав быть Ленинградом — городом-героем и городом-оппозиционером, невский мегаполис не стал и прежним Санкт-Петербургом — городом-властелином, вершившим судьбы мировой истории. Современный Петербург так и не сумел найти себя» (Ibid, p. 61).[96]

Consequently any effort (conscious or, more likely, unconscious) to handle the theme of Petersburg in art inevitably encountered (and still encounters) a variety of discrepant ideas and angles on the city's past, present and future and also inevitably had and has to face all the complexity of the Petersburg myth and text.

Accordingly, the mechanisms of carnivalisation analysed by Mikhail Bakhtin seem to be highly appropriate for the films that deal with the Petersburg myth in the 1990s since they also strive to fragment and turn inside out any subject they deal with. In the films of the period the ability to turn Petersburg into a carnivalised space offers a way to overcome the problem of

[95] 'The city over the Neva was overcoming poignantly the syndrome of the terrible 'Leningrad case' trying to gain a foothold for the recreation of its hidden pride as capital, pride that had been oppressed during all the Soviet decades.

With the citizens' active support the Museum of Leningrad's defence was reopened [...].

The committee of the Leningrad Council of People Deputies declared an open competition for an outline of the city's emblem.

In newspapers there were heated discussions as to how Leningrad should be in the twenty-first century.'

[96] 'Having ceased to be Leningrad — the 'Hero City' and the city in opposition, the Neva megalopolis did not become the former Petersburg — the Master City, deciding the destinies of world history. Contemporary Petersburg failed to find itself.'

forming a clear picture of the myth during a period of transition, just as the carnivalised folk consciousness of the folk laughter culture helps to accomplish the transition from the medieval to the Renaissance state of mind. Turning the cityscape upside down and carnivalising it, finally reducing it to total chaos, allows us to re-evaluate it, to see it from a new perspective and probably to find a new meaning or a new interpretation for the whole of the myth. If we follow further the logic of Bakhtin's carnival notion the city becomes totally uncrowned in the films (being thrown back or forward into chaos), just like the king in the carnival feast, in order later to be crowned again in a new quality.

Interestingly, Bakhtin remarks that, apart from socio-cultural changes of the epoch that urged Rabelais to use the instruments of carnivalisation in his book, *The Life of Gargantua and of Pantagruel* was written by Rabelais at a moment of serious natural disasters and its goal was further to ridicule the eschatological fears of the time (Bakhtin 1990, pp. 375–6). However, Bakhtin assigns primary attention to social, cultural and political changes as a motive power that urged writers to exploit the devices of carnivalisation in art. In the same work, *Rabelais and his world*, Bakhtin writes:

> «...писатели, которые отражают [...] большие переломные эпохи мировой истории [...] имеют дело с незавершенным перестраивающимся миром, наполненным разлагающимся прошлым и еще не оформившимся будущим. Их произведениям присуща особая положительная и, так сказать, объективная незавершенность. Произведения эти насыщены объективно недосказанным еще будущим, они принуждены оставлять лазейки для этого будущего» (Ibid, p. 141).[97]

Undoubtedly, this characteristic coincides with the role that can be attributed to cinematographers of the 1990s. Caught between the decomposing Soviet past and a vague and uncertain future they were still forced to speak about this future, whether on the level of the whole country or of the city of Petersburg.

Incompleteness of films. The incompleteness of the works of art noticed by Bakhtin is highly noticeable in the works of the filmmakers of the 1990s. The majority of the protagonists in the cinematic Petersburg text not only lack any clear biography, some of them do not even have a name, as, for example, the protagonist of *Shchastlivye dni* (*Happy Days*, 1991, Aleksei Balabanov).

The narratives themselves are frequently abrupt, clipped and fragmentary. In some films they consist of smaller stories from the life of one or several

[97] '[...] writers who reflect essentially and deeply the great moments of crisis in world history. These writers deal with an uncompleted, changing world, filled with the disintegrating past and with the as yet unformed future. A peculiar positive and one might say objective incompleteness is inherent in these writings. They are imbued with loopholes for this future' (Bakhtin 1984, p. 127).

characters. Much of the stories' information is left to the viewer to assume and infer on his/her own.

The dreams, fantasies, hallucinations and visions of the characters, which can be referred to as the mental subjectivity of the narration[98], frequently alternate with the objective narration (actions that happen in reality and not in the dreams or visions of any of the characters) of the films in such a manner that they cannot always be clearly distinguished from each other. The characters' external behaviour — things that they do and say — may be considered as relatively objective. There are two different levels of subjectivity: *perceptual subjectivity* that includes point-of-view shots (shots as if seen by the character) and sound perspective (sounds as if heard by the character) and *mental subjectivity* when we penetrate the character's mind and hear his internal voice or see his dreams, memories and hallucinations (Bordwell and Thompson 2004, pp. 85–6).

Mental subjectivity enters almost all the films examined in my work and is usually hardly distinguishable from the objective narration. This confusion works in favour of the films' incompleteness and inconsistency.

In the beginning of *Lyubov and Other Nightmares* the narrator describes a dream in which he sees himself as an inventor of some software that could register one's dreams. He starts to exploit the device registering his own dreams. Thus the story becomes a dream in a dream. However, in the end its consequences are objective and include the assassination of the narrator and madness of the protagonist.

In her flashbacks the female protagonist of *The New Scheherazade* transforms her one-hour short love affair with a holiday-maker at a health resort into a fabulous romantic story which she herself starts to believe in.

In *White Monday* the events of the whole story are balanced between seeming to be objective and mentally subjective and finally we see a row of possible deaths of the protagonist, Ivan Khristoforov: he jumps from a roof only to find himself on a roof in Paris, he drowns in a barrel, and finally, the film ends with an off-screen burst of machine-gun fire which apparently kills Khristoforov. But even after that, the song led by Ivan is still heard, which means that he is still alive.[99]

In *Smile* we see a number of smaller stories from the life of inhabitants of an asylum. Some of these novels represent the 'true', i.e. objective, stories of the patients of the asylum, but some are introduced as fictional stories

[98] For more on subjectivity vs. objectivity in film narration see Bordwell and Thompson 2004, pp. 85–6.

fantasised by the asylum residents, although it is implied that they might be objective stories as well.

The profusion of mentally subjective narration and its blending with objective narration is important in one more sense. It facilitates for the viewer the possibility of reorganising and reconstructing the film narration in several possible ways. The viewer may consider these pieces as purely subjective or see them as a part of the objective reality of the narration or even as a new, different story, a story within a story.

But concerning the possibility of loopholes for the future in the films that belong to the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s, let us specifically note that an overwhelming majority of the narratives in these films have an open ending. It gives these films a feeling of incompleteness, leaving the viewer to imagine a possible, suitable ending on his/her own. These open endings help to create the same idea as chaos does for the city space. They also leave a number of choices, both happy and unhappy. From a loophole the viewer can recreate the continuation of the story just as that of the myth in both the cosmogonic and eschatological directions. An open ending can thus be regarded as quintessence of the perception of the myth in the 1990s, localised inside one piece of the Petersburg text.

The city as an unframed carnival. In the films the whole city turns into chaos. It becomes a totally carnivalised space where all the ordinary and habitual meanings and properties of the city areas are changed and juxtaposed. Film directors play with these and whirl the lives of the citizens in a joyful or scary whirlpool. Not only the space, but also the protagonists and even the action itself become carnivalised in the films of the Petersburg text of the period. The totality of the city carnivalisation coincides with Mikhail Bakhtin's depiction of carnival as an unframed performance that swallows the whole world:

> «[...]карнавал не знает разделения на исполнителей и зрителей. Он не знает рампы даже в зачаточной форме. Рампа разрушила бы карнавал [...] Карнавал не созерцают, в нем живут, и живут все, потому что он по идее своей всенароден. Пока карнавал совершается, ни для кого нет другой жизни, кроме карнавальной. От него некуда уйти, ибо карнавал не знает пространственных границ. Во время карнавала можно жить только по его законам, то есть по законам карнавальной свободы» (Bakhtin 1990, p. 12).[100]

[99] According to an apt remark by film critic Mantsov, this film is inspired by Márquez and magical realism. Mantsov 2004, p. 363

[100] 'In fact, carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge

This depiction of carnival as an unframed action finds its most illustrative expression in the image of the city–theatre that appears in some of the films discussed. It will be studied in detail in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

Masks. In carnival, an important role is given to masks that allow people to drop out of the otherwise strict hierarchy of the state (Bakhtin 1990, p. 48). In the same manner, masks are used in works of art that utilise carnivalisation mechanisms.

The unclear identities mentioned above as typical for characters in the films of the Petersburg text can be interpreted as a form of masking. Loss of identity and a constant search for it is a recurrent motif in many films. It can be found as the protagonist's main inner drama in *Brother* and in *The Stairway*, in *White Monday* and in *Window to Paris*. Although such a loss of identity can possibly be interpreted in a more global sense as a loss of identity by the nation as a whole after the collapse of the Soviet Union. But, as will be seen later in Chapters 5 and 6, in their loss of/search for identity characters often interact with the city's lost identity. Moreover, they become noticeably influenced by the city, by its loss of identity and by its carnivalised and chaotised space. Frequently this loss of identity turns out to be intentional and is combined with a protagonist who masks him/herself under false identities. In some films this masking of oneself gains an explicit nature when the protagonist literally wears a mask, as does Lyubov in the beginning of *Lyubov and Other Nightmares*.

Apart from identity loss and masked identities there is another kind of playing with masks in the films of the Petersburg text. In several films we can find striking examples of doubles. Usually these are evil doubles of the heroic or idealised protagonist.

The motif of a double-antagonist can be found, for example, in *Lokh — pobeditel' vody* (*Dude Water Winner*[101], 1990, Arkadii Tigai) and in *Mister Designer*.

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any distinction between actors and spectators. Footlights would destroy a carnival[...] Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom' (Bakhtin 1984, p. 7).

[101] The translation of the title found at the IMDb website seems too straightforward and therefore not appropriate. In Russian slang of the 1990s, 'lokh' means 'dude', even 'loser' or the like. But the film has several references to an epos that can be presumed as ancient Irish epos of Aos Sí. Thus the fact that 'lokh' means 'lake' in Scottish (the word exists with this meaning in Russian as well) might be significant in the film's title. The word 'lokh' in the title has then a double meaning, which is unfortunately impossible to render in translation.

The destiny of the protagonist sometimes links up to the destiny of his antagonist and the hero can then unwillingly become his vicious double, repeating or accepting the antagonist's fate. A more extensive analysis of these characteristics of the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s will be given in Chapter 5. Here it is important at least to mention that carnivalisation is total in fact and considers not only the space of the city but even people acting inside this space. This fact accords with Bakhtin's words about the all-penetrating nature of carnival and the absence of any framing for it.

Echoes of the beginning of the twentieth century. The sensations of chaos and of a collapsing world relate myth manifestations in the films of the 1990s to the Petersburg text in the literature of the turn of the twentieth century. Speaking about Andrei Bely's *Petersburg* Dolgopolov notes:

> «Каждое явление одновременно скрывает в себе и сущность и то, что ее отрицает («антисущность»), то есть тоже сущность, но противоположного качества. Мир встает со страниц *Петербурга* в виде *готового окончательно распасться хаоса*[102], где нет ни одного явления, которое равнялось бы самому себе» (Dolgopolov 1985 b, p. 202).[103]

I repeat that the beginning of the twentieth century was not only a turning point in the history of the country; it was also an important period in development of the myth. This period is considered by many scholars the final in its development. After it they claim the city is dead and its curse is accomplished. Probably the reason for that was precisely this leveling it down to the state of chaos in literature, chaos which, as we can see, plays for Petersburg the role of incentive which both demolishes and gives birth to something new.

The early period of Mikhail Bakhtin's scientific activity coincided with the 1920s in Petrograd. According to Solomon Volkov, the ideas of polyphony and carnival expressed later in his books were highly influential for the intellectuals of the city during this period.

> «Бахтин заметил однажды, что карнавальная жизнь — «это жизнь, выведенная из своей обычной колеи...». Трудно вообразить себе город, более выбитый со своей привычной траектории, чем Петербург после большевистской революции. В этом смысле он являлся по преимуществу карнавальным городом в бахтинском понимании этого слова. Все установившиеся веками иерархические барьеры были здесь разломаны, традиционные ценности выброшены, религия подвергалась «карнавальной» профанации, и на поверхность всплыли многочисленные

[102] My italics.

[103] 'Every phenomenon conceals in itself both the essence and that what denies it ('anti-essence'), that is also an essence, but of the opposite quality. The world erects from the pages of *Petersburg* as *a chaos ready to disintegrate completely* where no essence is equal to itself'.

> эксцентрики разных сортов. Все это, по Бахтину, были важные признаки карнавальной культуры. Они отразились в музыке Шостаковича, прозе Зощенко, стихах Заболоцкого и причудливых выходках Хармса, которые тот называл «фортиками». Карнавальным духом наполнены картины Филонова. Это урбанистическое искусство, как глубоко урбанистической была философия Бахтина, рожденная в городе и к городу обращенная» (Volkov 2005, p. 458).[104]

Among those who entered the philosophical circle organised by Bakhtin was Konstantin Vaginov, an eccentric novelist of the 1920s–1930s. His *Kozlinaia Pesn'* (*The Goat-Song* if translated literally, but also known in English translation under two different titles as *The Tower* or *Satyr Chorus*[105]) would later be considered by Vladimir Toporov the concluding work of the Petersburg text. Altogether, it can be summarised that the creators of the Petersburg text were acquainted with ideas of carnavalisation and applied them in their art, probably even consciously, long before the 1990s. Using these ideas in the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s can be seen as following the tradition of representing Petersburg as degenerating into chaos at the turning points in its history.

An example of applying Bakhtin's idea of carnival and carnivalisation within the Russian cinema of the 1990s can be found in the book by Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli, *From Moscow to Madrid. Postmodern Cities, European Cinema* (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003, pp. 137–159). They apply the idea of 'carnivalesque', as they put it, when exploring Pavel Lungin's Moscow in *Taxi Blues* (1990) and *Luna Park* (1992). In *Luna Park*, they claim, the image of an old devastated Luna Park used as a gathering place for an extremist nationalist gang is a carnivalesque place since it is devoid of any hierarchic, social and even sexual norms.

Yet Mazierska and Rascaroli are apparently inspired not by Bakhtin's ideas but by those of Rob Shields (Shields 1991) about marginal spaces. Luna Park,

[104]'Bakhtin noted once that the carnival life is 'life taken out of its usual ruts.' It would be difficult to imagine a city more torn out of its usual trajectory than Petersburg after the Russian Revolution. In that sense it was the quintessential carnival city . All the hierarchical barriers that had formed over centuries were broken down there, traditional values were tossed out the window, religion was subjected to 'carnival' profanation and numerous eccentrics of various types floated to the surface. These were all important signs of a carnival culture, according to Bakhtin. They were reflected in Shostakovich's music, Zoshchenko's prose, Zabolotsky's poetry, and Kharms' eccentricity. Filonov's paintings are also filled with the carnival spirit. This is urban art, just as Bakhtin's philosophy was urban' (Volkov 1997, p. 401).

[105]The translations under each title can be found respectively at `http://www.websher.net/srl/twr.html` and at `http://www.nnnonline.org/vaginov/index.htm` Last visited 15.05.2012.

they suggest, 'is a liminal zone. 'Liminality' indicates borderline, marginality, 'in-betweenness'; moments of discontinuity in the social fabric, in social space and in history' (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2003, p. 154). However, normality is not to be found inside the city either. In fact, the whole city of Moscow in *Luna Park* seems to be a marginal space. It is decentralised, 'devoid of any cultural, historical or even geographical centre' (Ibid., p. 158).

A similar picture of Moscow is to be found in Lungin's earlier production *Taxi Blues*, although in the analysis by Mazierska and Rascaroli the authors prefer not to use the term carnivalesque, probably because there is not such an explicit carnivalesque zone in it as in *Luna Park* . However, Moscow in these two films bears some traits that make it similar to the image of Petersburg created in the films analysed in this thesis. A comparison of the two cities, Moscow and Petersburg, exceeds the scope of this work and merits a separate analysis.

One can object to binding carnivalisation strictly to the Petersburg films of the 1990s, given that the mechanisms of carnivalisation used so frequently in these films are also applied in other films of the 1990s that do not belong to the Petersburg text. According to Horton and Brashinsky, these films can be named 'in Bakhtin's sense, quite 'carnivalesque', bursting beyond any conventional limits of narrative form and power' (Horton and Brashinsky 1992, p. 198). In their work they refer to *Gorod Zero* (*Zero City*, 1988) by Karen Shakhnazarov[106] as one of the best examples of carnivalesque films of the perestroika period (Horton and Brashinsky 1992, pp. 209–213). To make it easier to distinguish the films of the cinematic Petersburg text from other perestroika films that use carnivalisation devices let us call the latter ones, using the definition of Horton and Brashinsky as well as Rascaroli and Mazierska, *carnivalesque films*. Among other carnivalesque films of the period a film by Sergei Ovcharov, *Ono* (*It*, 1989), is usually named. Stylistically, it is a grotesque filming of Saltykov–Shchedrin's novel *The History of a Town*. Another director whose films are often considered as carnivalesque is Iurii Mamin.[107] Mamin's

[106]The film begins as an ordinary realistic story of a functionary coming to a small provincial town on business. But gradually the story grows into a totally absurd and surreal one, which only the protagonist played by Leonid Filatov, the unfortunate bureaucrat trapped in this town, sees as absurd and surreal, while the citizens find it normal and appropriate.

Very close to this film is *Zabytaia melodiia dlia fleity* (*Forgotten Melody for a Lonely Flute*, 1987, El'dar Riazanov). This is the first attempt of the popular Soviet comedy maker, Riazanov, to make a film under the changing conditions of perestroika. This film also stars Filatov in the main role and also bases its plot on the vices of the late Soviet bureaucratic system. Although it does not cross the border of a realistic story, giving way to the absurd and grotesque only in dreams of the protagonist, Horton and Brashinsky also classify this film as carnivalesque (Horton and Brashinsky 1992, pp. 197–200).

[107]See Lawton 1992, pp. 215–9; Horton and Brashinsky 1992, pp. 201–7.

Window to Paris, mentioned several times above, is without doubt a remarkable piece of the cinematic Petersburg text and will be discussed in detail below. But even though his other works, such as his cinematographic debut *Prazdnik Neptuna* (*Neptune's Feast*, 1986) followed by *Fontan* (*Fountain*, 1988) and *Bakenbardy* (*Sideburns*[108], 1990), have no or almost no connection to the Petersburg theme, they still carry various traits of the carnivalesque.

Ann Lawton in her book on perestroika cinema qualifies only two films of Iurii Mamin, *Neptune's Feast* and *Fountain*, as carnival films. Unlike Horton and Brashinsky, she consigns his later film of the period, *Sideburns*, as well as Ovcharov's *It* and Shakhnazarov's *Zero City*, to another group, dystopian films, which (according to Lawton) lack carnival bacchanalia of the grotesque and turn to a Kafkaesque icy surrealism (Lawton 1992, pp. 219–225). However, she unites both of these groups together with the third one, apocalyptic films, into one class of glasnost films that 'conjure up the future through the prism of carnival, dystopia and the Apocalypse' (Lawton 1992, p. 215).

It is comprehensible that the embarrassment of a community lost between the uncrowned past and a dark and uncertain future was true not only regarding Leningrad–Petersburg and its fate but the country as a whole as well. Consequently, the same feeling of uncertainty and perplexity resulted in a resort to carnivalesque devices in the films about the country as a whole as well. All the films mentioned in this section are loaded with an absurd and grotesque blending of high and low, sacred and profane, physical and spiritual, satirical and tragic. Meanings are often confused and perverse in them. Usually a story begins at a realistic point 'but this reality becomes a center from which absurdity multiplies and surrealism develops' (Horton and Brashinsky 1992, p. 203).

Quite often the carnivalesque narratives of these films turn into an explicit pure carnival in a medieval sense as described by Bakhtin. This becomes a triumphal and festive unification of all the participants in the carnival. This unification allows them to find a short liberation and relief from all the hardships of their being. An explicit medieval carnival emanates from an enthusiastic group spirit that rallies together all the characters of a narrative regardless of their previously shown relationships. A pure carnival can be found in *Forgotten Melody for a Lonely Flute* (the bureaucratic train in Filimonov's dreams) and in the closing scene of *Neptune's Feast*. But such an explicit carnival is shown most vividly in the finale of Mamin's *Fountain*. Here all the inhabitants of the house, which gradually collapses during the film, gather in the street outside the frozen, dark house and start dancing, singing and drinking around a bonfire, seemingly oblivious to the miseries of their tenement life.

[108] *Whiskers* in the translation of Horton and Brashinsky.

Nevertheless, even though these films profusely recur to the mechanisms of medieval laughter culture discussed by Bakhtin and even the images of pure carnival, there are some essential distinctions that distinguish them from the films of the Petersburg text:

1. It has already been pointed out in this part that, in the films of the cinematic Petersburg text, a hint is always left by the filmmakers that unmistakably points to Leningrad–Petersburg as the place of the film's action. This is true of all the films notwithstanding the fact that most of them avoid any easily-recognisable postcard images of the city. In contrast to the films of the Petersburg text, in the carnivalesque films the place of action usually remains unknown and, in my opinion, this is done on purpose. In *Zero City* Variakin, the main protagonist, finds himself in a provincial town named Zero (or Zerograd in Horton and Brashinsky's translation). The places of action in other films classified as carnivalesque are also often imagined towns with imagined titles (Malye Piatki in *Neptune's Feast*, Glupov in *It*, Zaborsk in *Sideburns*, etc.).

   The case of *Fountain* is, however, a bit more complicated and in my opinion can be regarded as a transitional film for Mamin anticipating his clearly Petersburg film *Window to Paris*. It already contains a hint to the Petersburg myth and the city can be defined as Leningrad, but the story seems to be more focused as a generalised satire on the communist and post-communist societies.

   In the carnivalesque films the place of action is usually an anonymous city, more often a provincial town or village, usually remote and God-forsaken, and quite often it is an imagined place with an imagined satirical name. The reason for such a choice of places of action is obviously the desire to achieve a general metaphorical level on which one remote village or town can stand for the whole country.

2. Speaking about carnival, Anna Lawton distinguishes two uses of it in art — as a style and as a strategy. 'The style is rich, ornate, baroque; the strategy is subversive' (Lawton 1992, p. 215). The grotesque mode serves as the style in carnival while its strategy aims to turn habitual norms and routines inside out and destroy and destabilise the common order of things.

   > 'While the trivial is blown up to hyperbolic proportions, commonly accepted values are trivialised. Normal relations are, therefore, upset, logic is destroyed without justification, and the natural order is subverted. The effect is unsettling because it leaves the viewer without parameters

> for a 'correct' reading of the text. It creates a semantic vacuum which challenges established worldviews' (Ibid, p. 216).

Symptomatically, all the films discussed by Horton and Brashinsky and by Lawton belong to the genre of comedy, most often grotesque or satirical comedy or comedy of the absurd. I would claim that, in the case of these films, it is in the first place the style that critics' attention is focused on. Lawton agrees with Horton and Brashinsky when it comes to the meaning of the plot being 'reductio ad absurdum' (Horton and Brashinsky 1992, p. 205) which provides the comic basis for these films.

The idea of the absurd as the ultimate value of these comedies makes me think that, in the case of the carnivalesque films, carnival as style is of much greater importance than carnival as strategy. At least this concerns the choice of the films made by critics to trace the use of carnivalisation in cinema. The grotesque mode in comedies is expressed explicitly and profusely and is justified stylistically in the first place. Any clear strategic reasons for applying it are not singled out.

Grotesque or 'grotesque realism' in Bakhtin's definition is a specific kind of figurativeness that is typical for folk laughter culture (Bakhtin 1990, p. 38). Bakhtin distinguishes grotesque realism as a particular literary trope used to degrade and lower sacred, ideal, spiritual matters to a physiological and material level. For grotesque realism, different kinds of exaggerations and ridiculing are important. When used in comedy, grotesque realism can help to create a special comical effect. But it can also be found in other literary genres as well.

If we turn now to genre classification[109] of the films of the cinematic Petersburg text we can see that only 7 films out of the 25 analysed in this work can be identified as comedies or at least phantasmagorias or dramas with elements of comedy (see genre description in Filmography). In fact, the genre of the majority of the films chosen for my analysis is hard to define with one word; usually they stand at the border of several genres, although it should be noted that dramas prevail in my film selection. Hence most of the films that I presume as pieces of the Petersburg text

[109] Speaking of genre here I mean primarily a straightforward commercial usage of this term rather than a general theoretical term. In defying films' genre I prefer to rely upon the filmmakers' self-identification of their films. On film genres see, for example, Bordwell and Thompson 2004, pp. 108–127. For more on genre see also Altman, Rick, 1999, *Film/Genre*, London; *Film Genre 2000: New Critical Essays*, 2000, ed. by Wheeler Winston Dixon, Albany; Grant, Barry Keath, 2007, *Film Genre: from Iconography to Ideology*, London.

lack an explicit grotesque mode in representing characters, events and places. What remains, though, in many of them is a phantasmagoric, fantastic element that being grotesque is more often frightening than merely amusing.[110]

Thus along with implicit but insistent specification of place of action it is the variety of genres that distinguishes the films of the Petersburg text from the carnivalesque films discussed by Horton and Brashinsky and by Lawton. In the films of the Petersburg text carnivalisation mechanisms are widely applied not only in comedies but also in the films of other genres and in the inter-genre films as well.

Therefore, it can be claimed that carnivalisation does not work solely to achieve a comic effect here. To use Lawton's words, carnival is not merely a style in these films. It is more likely a strategy. By means of carnivalisation of the city's physics (its space, characters, events), its metaphysics (the myth) also becomes carnivalised and degraded to chaos. Hence it becomes degraded to its final or to its new initial point. To study the myth's transformations in the contemporary cinematic Petersburg text it is important first of all to find the goals that carnivalisation mechanisms achieve when used. Therefore, I find it less important to search for a pure classical grotesque mode or grotesque realism exhibited in the films of the Petersburg text. Neither do I stick strictly to comical grotesque elements which are obviously the main reason to categorise such films as *It* or *Neptune's Feast* as carnivalesque. Still, the overall carnival strategy in the cinematic Petersburg text can be revealed by studying the use of carnivalisation mechanisms in the films of the Petersburg text.

3. One more aspect should be noted that distinguishes the carnivalesque films from those studied in this thesis. It has already been mentioned that some of the carnivalesque films contain images of pure carnival in them, i.e. episodes that explicitly show a light-hearted carnival-like feast, performance, etc. Usually these scenes have the function of liberating and bringing together a large group of protagonists.

   A similar carnival can be found in some films of the Petersburg text.

[110] This probably relates the grotesque of these films to the grotesque in romanticism and in modernism, which is actually more frightening and sombre than medieval and Renaissance grotesque. See more on different stadiums of development of the grotesque in art in Bakhtin 1990, pp. 54–61.

In *The City* the protagonist, Savrasov, participates in such a triumphant carnival in a dream. The carnival takes place in his home town (outside the railway station with the name of the town, Kochkin, written in large letters so as not to mislead the viewers). All his Leningrad acquaintances, both friends and enemies, are present at it as well as his fellow-townsmen, all displaying their warmest feelings towards him. Everybody is singing happily along with a bard played by Iurii Shevchuk. Savrasov is finally reunited with the woman he is in love with.

In another film, *White Monday*, we see allusions to the carnival twice in the film. First, when Khristoforov finds himself in Paris in an underground passage with French street musicians playing and singing there. He too enters the performance and seems to become united with these people and to totally liberate himself from all his troubles and above all from the curse of his voice that explodes objects when he shouts. Another carnival-like performance is found in the closing episode of the film when all the relatives with the surname Khristoforov gather together (as in *The City* where this happens in the protagonist's native village) and start marching to the accompaniment of a rollicking song.

Pure carnival is also to be found in *Window to Paris*. Like the one in *White Monday* it takes place in Paris. In the beginning of the episode the greedy members of the Gorokhov family are trying to sell massive and in fact stolen pianos in a Parisian street. Gorokhov decides to play the most primitive melody a man can play on the piano, namely Chopin's *Valse du petit chien*. His wife, daughter and mother-in-law start dancing to its accompaniment. But suddenly a poorly performed song starts to sound like a real waltz performed by a whole orchestra and the whole street starts dancing to its tune in a whirlpool of confetti, balloons and colourful garlands.

All the examples of pure carnival that can be found in the films of the cinematic Petersburg text have one important distinction from the scenes of pure carnival in the carnivalesque films. If in the latter ones an explicit carnival is always shown inside the ordinary place of action, in the Petersburg films an explicit gay and light-hearted carnival is always pushed beyond the limits of the city. Actually, there are only two possible arenas for it that we find in the given examples: it is either Paris or the protagonist's native village. Perhaps the city's macabre and gloomy carnivalised space cannot accommodate a really joyful and

liberating carnival. Therefore, it is always driven from the city to a more welcoming place.

Ambiguity in the myth and in carnival. Bakhtin emphasises the importance of the ambiguity and two-sidedness of carnival and folk laughter culture as their keystones. He claims ambiguity to be one of its main features and refers to it several times, speaking both about carnival and grotesque realism as a whole and about its separate elements such as defecation, mask, women's role in the carnival, praise and abuse in language, etc.[111]

Let us once again underline here the ambiguity and the reversibility of the myth of Petersburg and of its components. Just like in the carnival, in the myth ambiguity consolidates its characteristics. It has already been pointed out in this chapter that ambiguity gives to the myth of the city much of its vitality and ability to develop and constantly transform. Probably the presence of ambiguity in the carnival and hence in carnivalisation mechanisms and in the mythopoeics of Petersburg is the reason why the mechanisms of carnivalisation are so well suited to rethinking the myth. The carnival's double-sided concepts match those of the myth. I assume that the carnivalisation concept accomplishes the ideas and the instability of the contemporary myth of the city in the best way possible.

In my work I do not use the concept of carnival itself, but try to apply the carnivalisation mechanisms to the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s. Carnival as a historical phenomenon can be considered a temporary resort from the square everyday life of the Middle Ages and as a liminal space where all the hierarchical and religious foundations are removed and neglected for a short time. The mechanisms of carnivalisation (such as turning meanings

[111] See, for example, Бахтин 1990, p. 17 («...этот [карнавальный] смех амбивалентен: он веселый, ликующий и — одновременно — насмешливый, высмеивающий, он и отрицает и утверждает, и хоронит и возрождает» ('this [carnival] laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the came time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives' (Bakhtin 1984, pp. 11–2).)), p. 74 («...сущность гротеска именно в том, чтобы выразить противоречивую и двуликую полноту жизни, включающую в себя отрицание и уничтожение (смерть старого) как н е о б х о д и м ы й момент, неотделимый от у т в е р ж д е н и я, от рождения нового и лучшего» ('The essence of the grotesque is precisely to present a contradictory and double-faced fullness of life. Negation and destruction (death of the old) are included as an essential phase, inseparable from affirmation, from the birth of something new and better' (Bakhtin 1984, p. 62).)), p. 182 («Площадное слово — двуликий Янус. Площадная хвала, как мы видели, иронична и амбивалентна. Она лежит на границе брани: хвала чревата бранью, и нельзя при этом провести четкой границы между ними...» ('The billingsgate idiom is a two-faced Janus. The praise, as we have said, is ironic and ambivalent. It is on the brink of abuse; the one leads to the other, and it impossible to draw the line between them' (Bakhtin 1984, p. 165).)), etc.

upside down, twisting them, ridiculing sacred meanings, etc.) are defined as those means that allow the carnival to achieve its purpose. At the same time, in a more general sense and especially when applied to art, these mechanisms achieve a more global objective. During the turning points in the community's history they help to liberate the author's/public's consciousness from the frozen and outdated socio-cultural foundation and viewpoints. In this form carnivalisation mechanisms may be applied more broadly than may the carnival itself. The functional elements that are repeatedly seen in a variety of films are based on similar effects of twisting and turning — inside out and upside down — the meanings and the notions of the city space and eventually achieve an objective similar to that underlined by Mikhail Bakhtin considering the authors of the transitional periods in community's history (Bakhtin 1990, pp. 28–30, 34, 42, 51, 58, 84, 102–3, 136–7, 270–1, 300–3, 422). Thus carnivalisation is a device that facilitates the integration of the city's discrepant past with its present and future into one topical myth. Therefore, degrading Petersburg to a total chaos by means of carnivalisation allows the filmmakers to bring the Petersburg myth to some kind of zero point from which further development of the myth can be continued in any appropriate direction. In this way they can leave open the discussion of the city's future. The city space turned into chaos can later be transformed into something favouring the cosmogonic aspect of the myth of Petersburg or into nothing, favouring the eschatological one. Making this final decision is offered to the viewer of the film.

Part III

ANALYSES

Chapter 4

Space in the Cinematic Petersburg Text

In the previous chapter a list of functional elements for representing the city spacethat recur in the majority of the films of the Petersburg text of the 1990s has been given. The image of the city that arises out of these elements in the aggregate suggests that the Petersburg space is (deliberately or not) carnivalised and made chaotic in these films. Operating with Bakhtin's concepts of carnivalisation and folk laughter culture we can analyse now all the most significant functional elements of cinematic Petersburg of the 1990s more profoundly, with more detailed examples from the films.

The following chapter is structured in the same manner as the list of functional elements given above. Some of the examples given in the list are raised here once again in order to make a more detailed and now theoretically based analysis of each of them.

4.1 Functionality of Gala Space. Outskirts vs. Façades

The scarcity of gala spaces and other recognisable images of Petersburg appearing on screen was outlined as the first noticeable functional element that the films studied have in common. Filmmakers tend to reject any parade and tourist attractive images of the city in favour of ungainly backyards and outskirts. However, together with such neglect of Petersburg's engaging façade these films always give a more or less clear intimation of the place of action, namely Petersburg–Leningrad. The premise and necessity of such intimations become obvious, for example, in comparison to the carnivalesque films of the

same period discussed in the previous part.

These indications revealing Petersburg as the films' setting play a crucial role in distinguishing the films of the cinematic Petersburg text into a separate group. The films rarely point at their location straightforwardly, for example, simply by credits[112] or by postcard-like views of Petersburg. More often these intimations of location are indirect and resemble a puzzle or brain-teaser for initiates. Only a citizen or someone well-informed about the city's history, culture and, especially, myth would be able to decode them.

A good example of indirect intimations of location are opening credits in *Liubov', predvestie pechali* (*Love, the Presage of Sorrow*, 1994, Viktor Sergeev). During the opening credits of the film we see as their backdrop a variety of painted cityscapes representing Petersburg landmarks. They appear only in the opening credits of the film. Later in the film no other explicit details pointing to Petersburg as the film's setting are given. Furthermore, these indicate not only Petersburg as the setting, they also point to the profession of the film's protagonist, Filip, an artist.

Window to Paris, another film of the cinematic Petersburg text, starts in the same manner with painted landscapes as a background for the opening credits. It was filmed one year earlier than *Love, the Presage of Sorrow*, in 1993, and the coincidence in the two films is unlikely to be deliberate. In *Window to Paris* the pictures that serve as a background for the film's opening credits are misleading since they represent various recognisable sketches of Paris (the Eiffel tower, the Moulin Rouge, etc.) that decorate walls in a room in a communal apartment actually situated in Petersburg. Although a hint placing the story in Petersburg is given in the film's title, this can be considered a good example of hints-puzzles for initiates.

The expression *'Window to Paris'* echoes the renowned phrase of Francesco Algarotti about Petersburg through which Russia looks onto Europe as through a huge window (Strada 2003, pp. 15–26). Later it was paraphrased by Pushkin in *The Bronze Horseman* into a more euphonious 'window to Europe'. And what other city could symbolise Europe for a Russian if not Paris? In the course of the film the expression becomes materialised in an extravagant way with an actual window existing between the room shown in the first episode and a roof in the heart of Paris.

A much clearer hint appears at the end of the episode that follows the credits. The episode is linked to the views of Paris previously shown. It starts with what at first glance seems like a tableau vivant of the last picture of the

[112] With the exception of *Mister Designer* (see p. 62).

opening credits: a man bouncing on a trampoline with a small orchestra in the foreground and a modest chapel in the background. But the illusion is soon unveiled. The rest of the milieu is a familiar perestroika one. The camera moves to a queue outside an off-licence which has run out of spirits, as the queue, led by an orchestra, starts moving through the city to another shop. We see an ugly old lady jumping and grimacing ahead of the procession and juggling her crutch in the manner of a drum major (see Figure 4.1.).

Figure 4.1: Procession in *Window to Paris*.

Figure 4.2: Citizens versus the city in *Window to Paris*.

Other people in the procession, also of an unattractive and seedy appearance, sing the Internationale with great zeal while moving forward to the desired goal through damp streets with shabby, dilapidated edifices. The procession of the lumpen proletariat looks like a parody of the October Revolution. As if to give us a clearer indication, the camera tilts up to show an ink-pot silhouette of St Isaac's cathedral indifferently towering in the mist above the dirty streets and the comical march past. The cathedral, together with the music changing from the Internationale to a recognisable Bach finale, forms a bitter satiric contrast to the citizens and their miserable lives (see Figure 4.2.). This might be interpreted as the city looking down on its sunken citizens. The city's showy appearance seems to be on a different level, both spatially and spiritually, from the everyday routine of its citizens as gloomy and dark as the streets and even the citizens. The procession itself recalls the demonstrations of the Soviet period with the same songs and the same enthusiasm of the crowd moving on the 1st of May or the 7th of November, but with a grotesquely degenerated goal. Carnivalisation is an obvious instrument in this episode. The holy ritual of Soviet times is desacralised and drinking is

shown to be the explicit and only goal of the marching crowd.[113]

Apart from giving an indication of place in riddles there is another important trait that these indications share. This can be discussed within the episode from *Window to Paris* mentioned above. The image of St. Isaac's cathedral shown in the end of the episode leaves an impression of the city being unmasked momentarily from its masquerade costume. The motif of a masquerade costume and that of the mask are closely connected to the notion of carnival.

> «Маска связана с радостью смен и перевоплощений, с веселой относительностью, с веселым же отрицанием тождества и однозначности, с отрицанием тупого совпадения с самим собой; маска связана *с переходами, метаморфозами*, нарушениями естественных границ, с осмеянием, *с прозвищем (вместо имени)*[114]...» (Bakhtin 1990, p. 48).[115]

Giving an image of an easily recognisable dominating point of the cityscape, yet half-hidden by mist at a distance, it is as if the filmmakers partially expose the face concealed by a mask or a veil.

Other hints of *Window to Paris* that direct the viewer to Petersburg as the place of action throughout the film are gentle and indirect. Again they take the form of brain-teasers. These are, for example, references to Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades*, an important piece of the Petersburg text in literature. Its most thrilling fragment is read by Chizhov, a music teacher, to his pupils accompanied by a passage from Tchaikovsky's opera of the same name. Another hint is the singing of a renowned song, *Podmoskovnye vechera*, paraphrased into *Leningradskie vechera*[116].
The final episode of *Smile* is another remarkable example of the city revealing its true face for a moment. Finishing the story that unfolds in an anonymous but gloomy and unattractive city, the camera tilts up from the crowd at the centre of a supposed flea-market to reveal the centre of Nevsky prospect instead of a flea-market.

[113] We note again that drinking — along with eating, defecating and copulating — is one of the principal components of the grotesque in the medieval carnivals and of literature based on the carnivalisation tradition.

[114] My italics.

[115] 'The mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to oneself. The mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and *familiar nicknames* [my italics]' (Bakhtin 1984, p. 40).

In this example the city takes off its mask at the very end of the film like an actor who washes off his make-up after the end of his performance.

We see here that backyards changing places with the city's gala spaces suggest that the city has disguised itself simply by turning its coat inside out. This was a common way of masking oneself during a medieval carnival — simply by turning one's clothes inside out or by travestying oneself into the opposite sex.

The cityscape that is turned inside out is shown in many of the discussed films. Here we shall have a closer look at two episodes from *The City* that explain well functional meaning of this inversion.

The main character of the film, the young artist Savrasov, seeks to stay in the city in order to become a true artist. But to be accepted and to become an artist he must first accept the odd and repulsive beauty of Petersburg, of its dirty, ruined old yards and buildings, of its nasty grey weather stuck between autumn and winter. This idea can be illustrated by a dialogue between Savrasov and his artistic guru played by Dmitry Shagin, one of the founders of the Mit'ki artistic movement. The episode is preceded by a high-angle panorama of the city centre. The camera pans slightly from easily recognisable buildings of the Petersburg centre, finally to turn its back on them in favour of a less glamorous part of the city, a labyrinth of old dirty yards hidden beyond the elegant façades. As Shagin and Savrasov walk through this labyrinth and exchange insignificant phrases, Shagin suddenly stops in front of the next yard representing a row of half burnt and half destroyed old garages. The rest of the episode will be represented in a form of a table to give a more profound understanding of it.

[116] According to a legend, the lyrics of this well-known song were first devoted to Leningrad , but were changed under pressure from the authorities who foresaw the song's future success. The legend contributes to the perception of Leningrad as an oppressed and humiliated ex-capital during the Soviet time. Moreover, the song in such interpretations can actually be sung solely by citizens of Leningrad–Petersburg who cherish this legend and this aspect of the myth. This also favours the idea of bringing locating hints into the films, as if addressed to a group of initiates.

Image	**Sound**	**Dialogue**	**Translation**	**Commentary**
The camera rounds the two figures showing a yard with garages.	Tread of the two people.	*Shagin*: Ух ты... Ты смотри... *Savrasov*: Чего смотри? *Shagin*: Вот чего писать-то надо... Кра-сиво. *Savrasov*: Двор как двор. *Shagin*: Да ты, видать, не понял еще.	*Shagin*: Wow... Just look at that... *Savrasov*: Look at what? *Shagin*: That's what one should paint... Beautiful. *Savrasov*: A yard like any other. *Shagin*: Looks like you haven't got it yet.	Shagin's intonations during the whole dialogue are very calm and kind-hearted as if he is speaking and explaining something to a child. Savrasov's replies are abrupt, unwillingly squeezed out.
Camera shows them proceeding to another ugly and ruined yard.		*Shagin*: Ух ты... *Savrasov*: Чего?	*Shagin*: Wow... *Savrasov*: What?	
The camera moves away from the two staring men and starts gliding up the chimney, showing it as a dominant point of this dirty and trashy urban landscape.		*Shagin*: Вот это труба... Видать, еще при царском режиме построена. *Savrasov*: Ага... (pause) Ну чего, пошли, что ли?	*Shagin*: What a chimney... Must have been erected during the tsarist regime. *Savrasov*: Yeah... (pause) Well, shall we go?	
The well-courtyard[117]is panned in a whirling camera movement.	Quiet non-diegetic music starts. Off screen non-diegetic rustling sound of voices.	*Shagin*: Да погоди, давай посмотрим.	*Shagin*: Wait now, let's look.	These non-diegetic sounds imply some unseen life that exists or once existed in these yards.
The camera tilts down on the two characters and shoots them in a high-key angle. Then it pans back to the houses and yards.	Non-diegetic music becomes louder.	*Savrasov*: Да чего тут смотреть-то? *Shagin*: Не мешай...	*Savrasov*: What is there to look at here? *Shagin*: Don't interrupt...	

Image	**Sound**	**Dialogue**	**Translation**	**Commentary**
Panning around the yard, the camera returns to the faces of the two men still looking upward towards the chimney in some bewilderment.	Quiet non-diegetic music.			
The passage through the yards is now shot from the point-of-view of the characters walking.	Non-diegetic music becomes louder and more anxious; off-screen sound now includes dog barking.	*Shagin*: Понимаешь, браток, эти дворы, они такие старые, столько людей здесь выросло, столько было всего, что, вроде, их и не строил никто... так они и были всегда, как часть природы... Такая городская природа. Понимаешь? *Savrasov*: Угу.	*Shagin*: You see, brother, these yards, they are so old, so many people have grown old here, so much has happened here, that it seems as if nobody constructed them, as if they have always been like that, as part of nature... A sort of urban nature. You see? *Savrasov*: Yup.	
The camera tilts up a narrow well-courtyard.		*Shagin*: Посмотри. Это нам с тобой ближе, чем природа.	*Shagin*: Look. This is dearer to us than nature.	
The picture fades to black.	Non-diegetic sound of dripping water. The music seems almost like church organ music. Diegetic sound of steps.			With the sound of steps it becomes clear that the characters are walking forward through the yards.
A door opens. The camera shows the two figures from the back moving away to enter the next yard.	The music and the dripping sound continue.	*Shagin*: Они даже живее, чем мы. Понимаешь. Ты на них смотришь, а они тебя рассматривают. *Savrasov*: Хм, как это?	*Shagin*: They are even more alive than we are. You see. You are looking at them and they are examining you. *Savrasov*: Hm, how is that?	

Image	**Sound**	**Dialogue**	**Translation**	**Commentary**
The take is changed to the two characters facing the camera and moving towards it into the next yard.	The music and the dripping sound continue.	*Shagin*: А вот так, рассмат-ривают, думают себе чего-то. Да ты приглядись.	*Shagin*: Like that, examining, thinking of something. Look closer.	
The camera pans in low-key angle another dark and gloomy yard the protagonists have just entered with blind dead windows and naked tree branches that cross the picture in all directions.		*Savrasov (sighing)*: Да я смотрю, смотрю.	*Savrasov (sighing)*: I'm looking, I'm looking.	
The camera now tilts down and shows the two figures moving the same way outside the yard as if they came in only to enjoy its scenery.		*Shagin*: А еще кажется, что раньше, когда все это было новым, то была здесь какая-то другая необычайно красивая жизнь. И люди были получше, чем мы с тобой.	*Shagin*: It seems also that previously, when all this was new, there was some different beautiful life in here. And people were better than we are.	
The light has now changed and it is more like evening. The picture is also totally changed showing the two figures on some snowy waste ground clamped by some ragged walls and with a church seen in the background.		*Shagin*: А, как думаешь?	*Shagin*: Eh, what do you think?	

Image	**Sound**	**Dialogue**	**Translation**	**Commentary**
The camera zooms out and the viewer finds himself inside a room with a grill on the window. The characters are now inside this room.		*Savrasov*: Не знаю... Наверное. *Shagin*: Ну-ну... Хоро-ший вид, писал его?	*Savrasov*: I've no idea... Probably. *Shagin*: Well-well... A nice view, have you painted it yet?	The artist says his line about the sight of a waste ground just seen through the grill of the window.
The inside of the room and the two persons talking are shown.		*Savrasov*: Да нет, я как-то пейзажи не очень. *Shagin (surprised)*: Приехал в Петербург, не пишешь такой классный пейзаж?!	*Savrasov*: Nope, I'm not so keen on landscapes. *Shagin (surprised)*: You came to Petersburg and you are not painting such a cool landscape?!	The city is referred to by name thrice in the film. Each case will be discussed later in this section.

The idea of a better, more beautiful life that once existed in these ruined backyards echoes those of the historians and literary critics who consider that Petersburg and its myth have collapsed leaving only its monuments to remind us today of its past glory. The stamp of decay is blatant here.

Another interesting idea is familiar from the Petersburg text in literature. The city often acts as a trial for newcomers, those who wish to make their way in society almost from zero struggling and making important moral choices. Usually this is a reflection of the situation that writers and artists experience themselves. It is noted by Vladimir Toporov and other scholars that most of the creators of the Petersburg text were newcomers to the city just like their characters. In *The City*, as we can see from the quoted dialogue, the seedy side of the city has a significant role in Savrasov's initiation as a true artist. To become a true artist the newcomer must accept the unattractive, shabby side of the city.

The cited dialogue finds its dénouement in the closing episode of the film. First, we see Savrasov on the Nevsky again (this is where his adventures in the city began). But this time he is not an idler gazing at the paintings of other artists. This time he is one of those artists and is selling his works. He meets Alevtina, his ill-fated love. When he had no money and no work he

[117] A typical kind of Petersburg architecture is a courtyard formed by closely built houses (usually this regards tenement houses of the nineteenth century) and due to that nicknamed a well-courtyard.

failed to make her stay. Now she is wearing an expensive fur-coat and looking well cared-for. She tries to talk to him but they seem not to understand each other anymore. She retreats to a man waiting for her in his foreign car (an attribute of extraordinary wealth for that time) and it becomes clear that she has chosen to be a prostitute for foreigners.

In the next episode Savrasov is making a sketch of a cityscape in a yard. When the camera changes direction, the yard turns out to be New Holland, one of the city's remarkable historical monuments which, situated just outside the city centre, has remained neglected both by tourists and by the city authorities until recently. A passerby stops to speak to him and their conversation seems to continue the one started by Shagin earlier in the film and quoted above. But this time Savrasov is much closer to understanding the issue and to being a Petersburg artist. The words of the stranger can be perceived as all but a manifesto for filmmakers of the Petersburg text of the 1990s. The man's appearance and manner of speaking reveal him as a native citizen and a Petersburg intellectual. He makes note first of all of the fact that Savrasov is a newcomer to Petersburg. But this is done in a friendly manner and approvingly, in contrast both to the aggressiveness of an official at Savrasov's workplace and to the condescending manner of most of the artists of the bohemian circle who themselves have no doubt newly arrived in this city.

I will give here the most significant part of the dialogue:

Dialogue	**Translation**	**Comments**
Passerby: Вы художник? *Savrasov (grinning)*: Хочу быть художником.	*Passerby*: Are you an artist? *Savrasov (grinning)*: A wannabe.	
Passerby: Это превосходно. Это лучшее место для Вас. Если бы у меня был хоть маленький талант, как бы я хотел попытаться выразить потрясающую красоту плоти этого города. Не парадный петербургский пейзаж, а плоть. Это руинного типа кружево, почти всегда сырое от дождей или запорошенное снегом.	*Passerby*: This is great! This is the best place for you. Had I just a tiny bit of talent I should like to try to express the striking beauty of this city's flesh. Not a gala Petersburg landscape, but the flesh. This ruined type of lace, almost permanently wet from rains or powdered with snow.	By 'the best place' he means the view of the Arch of New Holland.

Dialogue	**Translation**	**Comments**
Лиловое небо над городом Петроградом. Выдался немилосердно холодный вечер. Ограды и вздрагивающая грусть парадных, Водой канала раздробленные свечи. Уйти из города. Навсегда наскучил Домами, делами, присутственными местами, А в сердце — бездна и как хлеб насущный Бездонное небо над зданиями и поездами.	Lilac sky over the city of Petrograd. It is an unmercifully cold evening. Fences and the flinching sadness of front doors, candles crushed by the canal's water. Away from the city. Forever bored with houses, businesses, offices and deep in your heart — an abyss and like daily bread is fathomless sky over buildings and trains.	Together with the declamation a non-diegetic melody is heard, first very timidly as a bell ringing, then it becomes more and more perceptible. The manner of the declamation is extremely expressive with resounding 'R' as if performed from a stage or from a lecturing desk.
Чувствуете? Конечно, чувствуете.	Feel it? Of course, you do.	Compare this to the speech of Shagin continuously interrupted by Savrasov's puzzled remarks 'What?', 'What to look at here?', 'A yard like any other', etc. and by Shagin's own repeated 'You see?' in an effort to convince Savrasov of the beauty of Petersburg's seamy side.
В этот город просто так не приедешь. Город сам выбирает людей. И они приезжают сюда, даже со всего света, остаются здесь и умирают. А некоторые продолжают жить вечно.	You can't just arrive in this city so easily. It is the city that chooses people. And people come here, even from all over the world, they stay here and they die here. And some keep living in eternity.	In these words we trace again the tradition of Petersburg as a trial for newcomers.

The last phrase and continuing music overlap with the next episode. We see Savrasov at a parade sight of the city, albeit barely visible because of snow and white scattered light. It can only be guessed that he is now at the Neva bank. Two more shots of Savrasov walking through the hazy, almost unseen city. Finally, he is shown entering a shabby yard again and walking through several yards to return to the dominant structure of the black chimney. Now music entirely prevails over all the diegetic sounds of the episode. The camera shows Savrasov walking through a series of yards familiar from the stroll with Shagin. The stroll ends in the same manner as the first time — a yard (or is it a waste ground?) is zoomed out through a grilled window into Savrasov's room. Savrasov is sitting at the window with a bare canvas which he is starting to

whiten as if preparing for work. The picture of him is overlapped with the film title. We still see Savrasov at work simultaneously with end credits.

It is superfluous to say that Savrasov stays in the city and stays determined to become an artist, moreover a Petersburg artist of the city's seamy side. But what is important here is his walk that starts at the gala side of the city and continues through its dirty and deserted well-courtyards and courtyards to finish at the seemingly unattractive sight from his window which will apparently become the subject of his next work.

Let us return now to Bakhtin's utterance quoted above concerning carnival mask and specifically to the words about a nickname instead of a name as one of the attributes of a mask. Not only do the filmmakers neglect the gala spaces of the city, they avoid using its name (any name at all, whether Petersburg, Leningrad or Petrograd). This is evident in most of the films discussed here. It can no doubt be explained by the insecurity of the name choice since all of the city's names have a certain inconsistency with the city's present-day reality for various reasons. The protagonists avoid even those euphemisms which have flourished in such profusion in Petersburg's history and literature: Northern Palmier, Northern Venice, Petropolis, city of Peter or Lenin, window to Europe, crucible of three revolutions and many others. In most of the films this profusion is simply cut down to 'the city'. The situation with the unspoken city name occurs in all the films studied.

In *The City*, for example, it is illustrated already by the film's title. Petersburg here is stressed as the dominating protagonist of the narrative by pointing at it already in the film's title. As we could see from the analysed episodes, the role of the city is indeed of a great importance for Savrasov's coming into being an artist. Yet the name of the city is hidden under a featureless epithet 'the city' already in the title. However the name of the city appears thrice in the film and each time a different name is used. It is as if the directors taste each of the city's names in order to understand which one suits the city best.

Two of the names, Petersburg and Petrograd, were used in the two quoted dialogues. Both times the characters using these names are positive and positively inclined towards the protagonist. The third name, Leningrad, appears in the conversation with a functionary of the factory where Savrasov gets a job with a view to registration and residence in the city. This time the name has a negative connotation since the functionary discontentedly mentions that

everybody comes to Leningrad as if it is greased with honey here. Compare this to the two dialogues quoted, which both concern Savrasov's position as a newcomer but in a positive and encouraging way. Thus in a way different names play the roles of the city's different masks or of the nicknames that correspond to its different masks. Still, the reference to Petersburg that prevails in this film as in many others of the period is simply 'the city'.

I suggest that this nonchalant mode of reference is favoured over any of the city's real names and other more florid epithets with the same aim as the city's backyards and outskirts being favoured over its postcard façades. This reference, 'the city', has the same function as the city slum chosen as the main film set. They both aim to delude the viewer into defining the place of action. Both seemingly render Petersburg anonymous in the film. Seemingly, since as we have already seen, there are some intimations (often given in the form of puzzles) in the film, which allow the viewer to recognise Petersburg. Thus the reference 'the city' obtains simultaneously two opposite meanings. While giving anonymity to the place it actually identifies it. Let us look at examples in other films that corroborate this statement.

In *Brother* the action begins in an unknown place, somewhere in the provinces. The name 'Petersburg' is given verbally at the beginning of the film, to where the mother sends there her good-for-nothing younger son Danila who has just returned from the army. His elder brother is working and prospering there. The film contains other references to Petersburg without using its name, only a colourless word 'the city'. Vagabond Gofman, nicknamed Nemets, uses it in his conversation with Danila. He warns the young newcomer about Petersburg's evil power. Nemets is obviously a native citizen of Petersburg and knows the city well. His ancestors are buried here, but he never pronounces the name of the city openly as if there is some kind of a prohibition for him.

Nemets: Хм, город!.. Город — страшная сила. А чем больше город, тем он сильнее. Он засасывает!.. Только сильный может... выкарабкаться. Да и то... / Hmm, the city!.. The city is a terrible power. And the bigger it is, the more powerful it is. It swallows one up! Only a strong man can ... scramble out. And even then...

The city's name is never uttered in his reasoning. But it is clear that the words of Nemets are aimed at Petersburg, wrather than urban threat in general. This refusal even bears traits of a mystical, almost religious or ritual attitude towards the name as a word that contains the power of the city itself.

Yet later in the film the city's recognisable scenery is shown. In my opinion, in *Brother*, just as in Mamin's *Window to Paris*, the city's recognisable images play the role of a comment on and a contrast to the protagonist.

After Danila's arrival in Petersburg we see him aimlessly walking the streets of the city: passing St. Isaac's cathedral, the Griboedov canal, the Fontanka river. Although this is his first day in the city and he is expected to look around with interest and admiration, all he looks at is a young girl and all that interests him is a broken piece of railing on the embankment. This down-to-earth and utilitarian view will later, together with other characteristics, show him to be a person lacking an inner spiritual core.

If we return now to the recurrent element of restricting the picture of Petersburg to its dirty backyards and outskirts and turning it into an explicit flea-market, a particular episode from *Arithmetic of a Murder* should be examined.

The opening and the closing scenes of the film are mirroring each other in reverse sequence. They represent an even more repulsive metaphor than a flea-market. This is a panoramic view of a huge rubbish dump seen on the screen and accompanied by the cries of seagulls (Figure 4.3). The camera first gives a broad view of the dump, which reminds one from a distance of an extremely long shot of some landscape, presumably a cityscape. Then the cries of seagulls abruptly cease and change to tense percussive beats, after which the picture is dissolved into a view of a roof with other roofs and chimneys in the background. The superimposition of these two pictures suggests a zooming in from a distance to a closer view of one and the same object, namely the city. The camera tilts down the façade of a shabby house. The picture is dissolved to a view of a dirty well-courtyard and the camera moves forward into the darkness of a house entrance, the one where the protagonist and other characters live.

An interesting parallel can be drawn here to the views of Il'ia Kabakov. This well-known Russian conceptual artist used garbage as a prominent object in some of his installations from the late 1980s, first of all in his installation from 1988, *The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away* (*The Garbage Man*). In his conversation with Boris Groys, Kabakov explains the metaphorical meaning of garbage in his works as an element that appeals to both life and death, to memory and oblivion. On the one hand, garbage is a visualisation of death and, on the other, it embodies life, particularly the life of an

(a) Panorama of a rubbish dump...

(b) dissolving...

(c) ...into the city roofs,...

(d) ...tilting down a dwelling house...

(e) ...moving through an arch into a backyard...

(f) ...to an entrance of the house and then into it.

Figure 4.3: Opening sequence from *Arithmetic of a Murder*.

individual (Groys and Kabakov 1996, pp. 319–330). Continuing Kabakov's idea that a single piece of unsorted garbage stands for a single private life (as it does in *The Garbage Man*), we can assume that a rubbish dump embodies the life of the whole city. If we continue with the analogy it can be supposed that the rubbish dump embodies the city itself. Akin to Petersburg with its history, culture and glorious past and ruined ambitions it is flooded with its garbage as reminders of the lives of many people. A rubbish dump's idea is binary in the same manner as is the idea of the Petersburg myth. It is loaded both with negative and positive meaning, with eschatology and cosmogony. It is both a burial ground and a museum, a soil populated with its specific life. Akin to Petersburg with its miserable citizens occupied with their miserable problems it is infested with rats.

It is no coincidence that after this opening scene of *Arithmetic of a Murder* the camera first shows the stairway and the apartment from a low angle as if supposing the point of view of a small creature — of a rat? Rats appear first as a true threat to the house. They inhabit it together with its human dwellers and vex them a lot. But the closer to the climax the more explicit

the metaphor becomes. First, it is found in an analogy with the scene of the *Mousetrap* in *Hamlet* (this episode of the 1964 *Hamlet* by Grigorii Kozintsev is included diegetically in the film) and shown also in some less evident details. Finally it is openly announced by the protagonist who calls all the inhabitants of the apartment 'rats'.

We can find close precursors of preference for outskirts and backyards to Petersburg's gala spaces in the visual art of Leningrad–Petersburg. Artists of *Aref'ev's circle*, who created their works in the 1940s–60s, made a similar choice of ordinary surroundings for their works. They were attracted to the modest life of the postwar Leningrad: street scuffles, hungry pigs beside dustbins, dance floors and other unpretentious everyday details of the city's outskirts. The members of the circle were Aleksandr Aref'ev, Vladimir Shagin (the father of the leader of the Mit'ki movement, Dmitrii Shagin, who appears as one of the characters in *The City*), Valentin Gromov, Rikhard Vasmi and Sholom Schwartz.[118]

> «[...] они изображали изнанку города: жизнь его «достоевских дворов» и лестничных пролетов, безрадостных и грубых танцулек, захудалых бань, унылых заводских окраин» (Volkov 2005, p. 612).[119]

Piling together all the above exemplified films we can see that a preference for Petersburg's backyards to its façades, the avoidance of any of its names, together with the presence of subtle intimations to the actual place of action create an impression of the city concealed by a mask in the films of the 1990s. The city seems to mask itself in different ways, but at the same time, with intentional carelessness so that the viewer always has a chance to unmask it. This impression is important if we look at the image of Petersburg in these films from the position of carnivalisation. Moreover, the mask itself is strongly carnivalised. As was noted above, the city's backyards and outskirts come to the foreground instead of the city's parade side. Recalling Bakhtin, it reminds us of *le monde a l'invers* of the carnival and carnivalisation literature. If we interpret this image of the city literally it can be said that this mask is a typical carnival one. Just like a medieval participant of a carnival that turns his clothes inside out, so the city opens its seamy side to the public and hides its parade appearance, revealing it for a short moment only, or not at all.

[118] An album of the artists' works has been recently published in St. Petersburg (*Aref'evskii krug* 2002).

[119] 'They depicted the city's under belly: its Dostoyevskian courtyards and stairs, its brutal dance halls, seedy steam baths, and depressing factory suburbs' (Volkov and Bouis 2005, p. 529).

In the Petersburg of the Petersburg text of the 1990s outskirts become a much more significant place for building a plot than the city centre. The active city life is displaced from the centre to its periphery. Outskirts and backyards are pushed into the foreground and become almost crowned as the core of the city's active life. Any important events that happen in the narratives occur usually outside the city's tourist centre.

The confrontation of Petersburg's outskirts to the city centre and their semantic interchange could also be due to the explicit ex-centrism of Petersburg.[120] This brings us back to the view of Petersburg as the former capital of the country which, even in present days, painfully suffers the loss of its former status and significance. By concentrating on the city's backyards, filmmakers seem to echo the words of Dmitrii Shagin in *The City* about the beautiful life and better people who lived in these ugly, ruined buildings when they were nice and new.

An episode from Balabanov's *Happy Days* is symbolic in connection to this discussion. Here the mapping of the place is done visually, by the picture of the Catherine Palace in Tsarskoe Selo, one of the major tourist attractions in the suburbs of Petersburg, but here shown from behind. Actually, what we see first can be interpreted as the back view of a food store, dump or market. On wooden boxes used for storing fruit and vegetables perches the homeless protagonist, played by Viktor Sukhorukov. Then the camera slowly tilts up showing a ruined wall with bare bricks with just a little stucco left, and steel reinforcements peeping out instead of columns. The camera moves on, and over the wall we discover a view of the Catherine Palace covered with snow shown from behind. It is shabby and deserted and a single lonely figure moves across the shot, stressing the desertion of the place. In the city the feeling of desertion is reinforced by a lonely tram that moves rapidly with a terrible rumbling sound. With doors open, lights inside the wagon but no person visible inside, not to mention the serial number consisting only of sixes, it reminds us of some tram-ghost or a Flying Dutchman.

Let us sum up by referring to Iurii Mamin who, speaking about his own films, mentions the predilection for 'the aesthetics of the ugly'. Intentionally or not, he is repeating the words of Bakhtin concerning the aesthetics of the grotesque, one of the important components of a carnivalised work of art.

[120] The idea of Petersburg's ex-centrism has been suggested offered by Lotman (Lotman 1992, pp. 9–11). Accordingly, Petersburg, being a new capital of the country, is at the same time brought beyond the borders of the country into its farthest outskirts, which puts it in the position of an outsider.

«Существенный аспект гротескного — безобразное. Эстетика гротеска — это в значительной мере эстетика безобразного» (Bakhtin 1990, p. 51).[121] And indeed only at first sight does the object world of these films (dilapidated houses, dustbins and trash in the streets, degraded landscapes and people) awake disgust in the viewer. This disgust usually shades into the admiration of the filmmakers that is transmitted to the viewer.

4.2 Public vs. Private Space

According to Bakhtin, the belly and bowels play an important role in carnival and grotesque aesthetics. They are the place in the human body that opens way for to defecation but also for new life, meaning pregnancy. Let us assume here an analogy between body and city where the belly is represented by the marketplace. In literature, a market has sometimes been nicknamed and paralleled to the belly of the city that feeds and in other ways serves its physiological needs[122]. A market square embodies a knot that unites the dirt and the renewal of the city space. In a more primitive way a market square is also a place of extreme chaotisation with its endless crowds, noise and movement.

Together with this physiological parallel, market squares played a significant role in the medieval carnivals. According to Mikhail Bakhtin a market square was the primary setting for a carnival performance and maintained its carnival functions in carnivalised literature as well:

> «[...] центральной ареной могла быть только площадь, ибо карнавал по идее своей в с е н а р о д е н и у н и в е р с а л е н, к фамильярному контакту должны быть причастны в с е. Площадь была символом всенародности. [...] В карнавализованной литературе площадь, как место сюжетного действия, становится двупланной и амбивалентной: сквозь реальную площадь как бы просвечивает карнавальная площадь вольного фамильярного контакта и всенародных увенчаний — развенчаний» (Bakhtin 2002, p. 75)[123].

[121] 'The essential aspect of this form [the grotesque] is the monstrous; the aesthetics of the grotesque are to a certain extent the aesthetics of the monstrous.' (Bakhtin 1984, p. 43)

[122] See, for example, the title of Émile Zola's *Le Ventre de Paris*, a story which is set around Les Halles, the enormous central market place of the nineteenth century Paris. But there is a closer example for our subject, a study by Anatolii Bakhtiarov named most probably after Zola's book *The Belly of Petersburg* (Bakhtiarov 1994). In his work, first published in 1887, Bakhtiarov examines the everyday life of the city, a huge mechanism that provided it with all the essential goods and services.

[123] '[...] the central arena could only be the square, for by its very idea carnival *belongs to the whole people*, it is *universal*, *everyone* must participate in its familiar contact. The public square was the symbol of communal performance. [...] In carnivalized literature

In Chapter 3 it was noted that turning streets into an almost explicit market square constitutes one of the recurrent functional elements. Thus carnivalising streets into a zone absolutely different in properties and meaning (and into an extremely carnivalised zone if we recall Bakhtin), the filmmakers open the gates for a carnival parade. All the dirt and animation that usually accompany this zone plunge us into the city's true physiology, into its belly and bowels speaking in carnival terms. Camouflaging Petersburg streets into a huge flea-market with people buying and selling and simply hanging about with no specific goal is not characteristic of all the films studied in this work. But this functional element is present in almost half of them. Thus we can speak of it as of a recurrent element in the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s. In the rest of the films city streets have another, also unified, appearance to be discussed below.

Petersburg streets visually transform into a kind of flea-market in (in chronological order) *The New Scheherazade*, *The City*, *Dude Water Winner*, *Smile*, *Window to Paris*, *Brother*, *Telo budet predano zemle. A starshii michman budet pet'* (*The Body Will Be Buried. And the Senior Midshipman Will Be Singing*, 1998, Igor' Makarov) (henceforth *The Body Will Be Burried...*). Now let us look closer at how this unfolding of streets into market squares is visualised in them.

The way the city is represented in *Smile* has already been described in Chapter 3. The final episode of the picture both introduces the place of action and reveals a flea-market in the centre of Nevsky Prospect. Interestingly, this scene is almost a mirror scene of the beginning of *The City*. Here Savrasov, the artist, arrives at the city by train and his trip in the city starts with a panoramic view of Nevsky. Then the camera tilts down and shows us a whirlpool of people and a market. It is in fact a market of artistic materials. Paintings and brushes are offered to the people in the same manner as cucumbers and carrots at a vegetable market. Thus coming to Petersburg Savrasov finds himself immediately inside the city, in its belly, as if the city turns its reverse side towards the newcomer, refusing him its welcoming façade.

Camouflaging Nevsky into a marketplace makes it possible to bring the protagonist directly to the seamy side of the city and to make him face immediately the city's carnivalised nature. The rest of the city represents ruined

the square, as a setting for the action of the plot, becomes two-leveled and ambivalent: it is as if there glimmered through the actual square the carnival square of free familiar contact and communal performances of crowning and decrowning' (Bakhtin 1994, p. 128).

and desolate backyards where the characters walk in search of the city's true beauty.

Another striking example is, indisputably, *Window to Paris*. Nicole, the unlucky Parisian neighbour of the Petersburg communal apartment, enters Petersburg through a fantastic portal between the two cities. A flea-market is the first place she arrives at in her wanderings in the city. She is thrown out of the communal apartment by its owners, the Gorokhov family, and walks out of the house unaware of the actual place to which she has come — she still believes she is in Paris. Nicole comes to a huge market square that begins just in the middle of the street immediately after she comes out from the backyards of the house. These backyards are indeed a trial for an unprepared French woman. People urinate shamelessly in a gateway, fish scraps fall almost on her head and a huge, almost human size, three-letter obscene word is written on the wall. All these details represent immediately the city's dirty and unattractive inside (Figure 4.4). Thus Nicole, just like Savrasov in the previous example, comes straight into the city's belly and bowels, missing its parade appearance. Again, the newcomer is placed directly in the middle of the city's chaotic carnival, almost forcing her to join it. Amusingly, Nicole arrives dressed only in her bathrobe and a towel around her head and with a stuffed parrot on a cane in her hand[124]. Nobody at the market is surprised at her appearance. Instead, her stuffed bird attracts the interest of passers-by and involves her, even against her will, in their buying and selling activity.

The market itself occupies most of the streets and prospects of the city. Traffic is obstructed by the spontaneous market. Instead, there are many people engaged in various activities there, as if they do not have any work or other specific occupation and need to do something with their spare time. There are people of opposite political views demonstrating for or against something, both communists with red flags and banners and monarchists wearing old-fashioned military costumes. There are people drinking seated on wooden boxes in the middle of the street. There are people buying and selling everything they can possibly offer to each other. We can try to trace Nicole's path through this market chronologically:

69:59 Nicole walks out of the house.

[124]She is a taxidermist and the stuffed bird is the apple of discord in her squabble with the Gorokhovs.

Figure 4.4: Nicole arrives from Paris directly into the Petersburg's unwelcoming backyards.

70:00–70:37 The camera follows her through the backyards.

70:38 Nicole walks out into a street. Only the arch through which she comes is shown, with no street space visible. It is Spasskii Pereulok.

70:53 Part I is finished.

70:55 Part II starts with Nicole approaching a market in the middle of a street. She is framed by the background. The foreground is given to a company of drinkers.

71:03–71:51 Demonstrators of various political views are shown. Nicole walks among them being disturbed by a couple of women. This is the first easily recognisable place in the episode — Bankovskii Bridge at the Griboedov Canal. Between the bridge and the home of the Gorokhovs is a 5 minute walk.

71:52–72:17 Nicole is now at Sennaia Square, the city's biggest flea-market of the period. The two places are shown as if compressed into one, although there is around 15 minutes walking distance between them.

72:18–74:17 The following episode, with the lady changing Nicole's bathrobe to an old coat, presumably also takes place at Sennaia square in a public lavatory.

Although these places are not very far from each other, there appears in

this episode an illusion of continuous space. This confusion is no doubt made intentionally in order to show the ubiquity of this street-marketplace that Petersburg has been transformed into. Wherever Nicole walks she meets a similar picture — a crowded buzzing flea-market. The whole city seems to have been changed into a boisterous jostling market square.

As stated by Bakhtin, the market square is a place of unceremonious contacts and communication beyond hierarchical borders. It also serves as a site for the crownings and uncrownings which are so important in a carnival. In the case of the city space degraded to a market square, it is important to note that this means that streets no longer serve their usual purpose for a megalopolis. They cease leading from one place to another. As we could see in the last example, sometimes there is no traffic at all in the streets. Instead, they become the place for a gathering of diverse ill-assorted people. It would seem that people feel more comfortable in this confusion than in their own homes. The reason for such a supposition will be suggested below.

Yet, according to Bakhtin, a market square is not necessarily the only place where carnival or carnivalised relationships between individuals can take place. An alternative to a market square in carnivalised literature can be any other place where people can gather freely and where different classes and professions may mix. Among those places that in some circumstances can replace a market square Bakhtin names streets, taverns, roads, bathhouses, ship decks (Bakhtin 2002, p. 75).

Streets are also mentioned as a possible substitute for a market square. But Bakhtin has in mind streets depicted highly realistically which, as he notes, still does not detract them from their carnivalised interpretation (Ibid.). In the examples given above, however Petersburg streets totally change their appearance to become explicit market squares. The authenticity of a street is replaced by the authenticity of a marketplace. Moreover, Bakhtin refers in the first place to the streets of a medieval city, which actually had more similarities with a marketplace than the modern streets of a megalopolis. For a medieval city the streets were a meeting place, a place of information and exchange of commodities. In Petersburg, as in any megalopolis, a street is instead often named an avenue or a prospect. The streets serve here as a way of movement through the city from one point to another. Thus in a megalopolis a street serves not as a place of destination but as a zone of transition between two places. As has been shown with the examples, this modern purpose is barely reflected in the cinematic Petersburg of the 1990s.

In *The Body Will Be Buried...* a night club, where all the film's characters meet and feel at home, takes the place of a marketplace or an updated tavern. The streets in this film instead remind one of race circuits where the protagonists zip along in their aimless pursuits around the city.

Another way of depicting the city space in the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s is to represent the city streets as deserted and abandoned. The city seems to be extinct. Only those characters who belong to the story appear on screen. This creates an ambiguous impression of Petersburg. On the one hand it seems to be an illustration of the city's decline. But on the other, this emptiness degrades the city to a theatrical decoration. The whole city then transforms into a huge and pompous but ramshackle backdrop. My interpretation of this emptiness is that it reduces the city to a stage where a performance by a few actors is to be given.

The best examples are two films by Aleksei Balabanov, *Happy Days* and *Pro urodov i liudei* (*Of Freaks and Men*, 1998). But also *Mister Designer*, *The Stairway* and *Arithmetic of a Murder* tend to reduce the population of the city to the participants of their narratives. It can be argued that such a transformation of the city into a theatre stage contradicts the idea of carnival and carnivalisation. A carnival is supposed to be frameless and almost spontaneous and to have no division into actors and public. Still, inside the films there is no obvious contradiction to the idea of all-embracing carnival since every single person in them participates actively in the play unfolding in these decorations. Just like in the case of the city streets masked into market squares and the city turned into chaos, these theatrical decorations can be regarded as Petersburg being cross-dressed. This also tends to deprive the city zones of their actual function of streets, squares, parks, etc. They all become reduced to the single function of a huge and impressive theatrical decoration.[125]

Compared to the streets/flea-markets — which can be interpreted both as friendly, comfortable places or as hostile ones — Petersburg's public spaces depicted as a theatre scene bear a more clearly negative character. Desolate streets occupied by the film characters give the impression of hostile and uncomfortable spaces. A character seems to be vulnerable here. There is no shelter he or she can find in such a city.

[125] The idea of Petersburg as a huge theatre stage is not new. It has been stated many times in literature, among others by Bely in *Petersburg*, Akhmatova in *Poem without a Hero* and Brodsky in his article 'A Guide to a Renamed City'. Lotman in 'The Symbolics of Petersburg and the Problems of Urban Semiotics' also points out this characteristic of the Petersburg space (Lotman 1992, v. 2, pp. 16–20).

In *Of Freaks and Men*, for example, the journey of Iogann and his henchman Viktor Ivanych through the city gives exactly this impression. On their way they see Dr Stasov with his Siamese twin sons walking along a frighteningly empty street. Viktor Ivanych follows them with his gaze. The city is absolutely empty. No movement, no figures. The only figures we see in the street are the two Siamese twins with their foster father caught by the cunning eyes of Iogann's assistant. They have nowhere to hide. Although unaware, they are already trapped by the villains. Their victimisation becomes inevitable with this kind of backdrop which is justified later in the story.

In *The Stairway* the only person the protagonist Vladimir happens upon in the street at the beginning is a woman called Alia. Their meeting seems to indicate the beginning of a romantic story. Vladimir follows Alia as a Dostoevskian dreamer would follow a tender girl he happened to meet. But she brings him into the house which proves to be a trap for him. He enters the house and accepts the trial it presents.

The episode from *The Stairway* connects us to another important functional element of the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s. Private spaces in these films give even less shelter to the characters than public spaces do. Misfortunes usually befall the film characters not in the street but in their apartments. The safety of their own homes turns out to be only apparent since the characters are even more vulnerable inside them. Home is supposed to be a reliable place, a shelter, and therefore all the troubles and misfortunes that squeeze into their homes are less expected and the characters are less prepared to face them. A home then becomes a hostile, threatening place where the characters are more vulnerable than anywhere else in the city. To illustrate this functional element let us examine the narrative of Aleksei Balabanov's *Happy Days*.

In *Happy Days*, the desire of the protagonist to find a place to live is fundamental to the story. A man without a name, he is discharged from some mysterious hospital at the beginning of the film and is seeking a new home. A hospital ward hardly amounts to a good example of a safe home but, when he starts looking for a new shelter, whatever he finds ends up bringing him humiliation and sorrow. The landlady of the first room he stays in treats him like a child and calls him by the name of her former lover, Sergei Sergeich. She locks him in the room so that the protagonist will not steal anything from her, which she openly explains to him. As soon as the real Sergei Sergeich

returns home his substitute is thrown out and deprived not only of the money he paid in advance but even of his galoshes (one of the few objects he owns).

Other places the protagonist briefly inhabits are similarly inhospitable to him. One of the is a damp, poorly lit vault. But the culmination of the story is when he comes to the house of Anna, a timid young girl who turns out to be a prostitute. Not only does she bring her clients to the place but she throws out the nameless protagonist as soon as her (and his, presumably) child is born. The place itself is weird. The room is full of old-fashioned furniture and decorations and seems long uninhabited. The film shows the repeated motif of a boarded door. There is one in the apartment of his first landlady and one in Anna's apartment as well. The landlady says, indifferently, that there is nothing behind that door. In Anna's place the protagonist opens the door himself, his interest caught by laughing voices heard from behind. Behind the door he sees the huge space of a half-ruined house with no floors; only cross-beams, supporting arches and shabby walls remain (see Figure 4.5). The joyful laughter of two unseen people, a man and a woman, is still to be heard and this creates a dissonance with the visible picture. As we find out later this is Anna's voice as she accepts her clients, a fact that contradicts the image created earlier of an unlucky, miserable woman driven to prostitution.

Figure 4.5: The house as if rotten from the inside in *Happy Days*.

The image of the house almost literally rotting from the inside reminds us of the skeleton of some huge animal or of the frame of a ship and makes quite clear what the private space in the whole film signifies. The protagonist has no adequate place for living in this city. He feels more or less comfortable only at the cemetery where he can sit peacefully on a bench and listen to Anna (still in her romantic guise) singing to him in a plaintive voice *Too many tears*. The rest of the city consists of flats, rooms and houses that are hostile to the protagonist and offer him no refuge. They are all dead and empty from the inside, just like the half-ruined space behind the forbidden door of Anna's apartment. In my opinion, the motif of a forbidden, mysterious door that should not be opened hints at the key secret kept behind it. Once opened it explains clearly to the protagonist the vanity of seeking a home in this city. This is why, after he is thrown out of Anna's apartment, he walks directly to his friend, a blind man, in search of his only possible refuge. The blind man's father has an old boat in the backyard. The protagonist crawls into it and pulls on a cover, giving the impression of a coffin lid laid on a coffin. This impression is also articulated by the camera angle that shows the episode from the point-of-view of the protagonist, i.e. from inside the boat with the image of a house towering above as the last thing he sees before everything becomes dark. The last episode gives a grim and grotesque explanation to the choice of the boat as the only refuge and salvation in this city. A street is shown with a tram in it, but the street is half covered with water and the tram is also partly sunk in water. The image is substituted by a childish drawing where one detail is added — a boat and an inscription to it 'This is me'. The boat may of course be interpreted as Noah's Ark saving the protagonist and giving him the only possible shelter in this cold, empty and unfriendly city.

Petersburg's inner spaces are threatening and uneasy, however, not only in the films under discussion, where Petersburg's outer space becomes a theatrical backdrop. Whatever the outer space of the city (a crowded market square or an empty theatre decoration), its inner space is still an unfriendly, sometimes dirty and unattractive and quite often dangerous place in the overwhelming majority of the films. A more or less neutral attitude towards the characters' domiciles can be found in *The Body Will Be Buried...* On the one hand, the characters are almost never at home and on the other the misfortunes and troubles that happen to them at home are insignificant, especially when compared to the other films. Nevertheless, the troubles that happen to DJ Maxim in his small apartment are an incitement to all the further misfortunes and to interweaving different plotlines.

In some films of the Petersburg text home is filled with an atmosphere of terror, fear and threat with no explicit manifestations of danger at all.

In *Love, the Presage of Sorrow* the apartments of the two lovers are the most dangerous place for them to meet since here they may well be caught by their spouses. The climax of the story and its dénouement are both connected to such moments of breathless expectation inside or in front of the apartment. In the first case, the protagonist's wife is expected to come and discover the adultery. Filip's spacious and luminous apartment then shrinks to the limits of the dark and shabby entrance hall. When Filip finally tells the truth to his wife, Marina, the living-room is also shot with faint light and in dark, almost black and white colours which gives an impression of mourning. The effect is reinforced by Marina's black dress and by the composition of the shot. Marina is seated in front of the camera and speaks to an interlocutor (who stays unseen at the beginning) in a weak voice, creating an impression of a documentary interview. At the end of the film Filip rushes to Anna's apartment fearing that her husband has murdered her after the affair has been revealed. He falls down from a drainpipe in his attempt to break into Anna's apartment. Apparently he dies and the story ends.

An apartment is often a place of constant quarrels and squabbles as, for example, in *Window to Paris*. This is, of course, a traditional representation of a communal apartment found in Russian literature in respect not only of Leningrad–Petersburg but Moscow and any other Russian city.

Still, in the majority of the films the fact that home loses its characteristic of shelter, of a place where one can feel safe, is shown much more explicitly. Homes are not castles anymore. They become the most unreliable part of the city space. Moreover, they lose their privacy. They become public spaces, a fact underlined by the communal apartment often used as a film set. Not only can one be humiliated, violated or even murdered within one's home, but this may happen with the collusion of the neighbours as is the case in *Arithmetic of a Murder* where everyone in the communal apartment had a reason to wish the murdered neighbour's death and where each of the neighbours is spying on the others and is being spied on by them.

A somewhat amusing example of the impossibility of staying alone in your home is shown in *The City*. When Alevtina and Savrasov try to make love in her hostel room they are repeatedly interrupted by different off-screen voices of the neighbours.

In *Lyubov and Other Nightmares* Lyubov freely speaks and squabbles with her invisible neighbours from other rooms if not other floors of the house.

This vision of the people's domiciles is partly rooted in the traditional representation of a communal apartment of the totalitarian period where walls have ears and one can be caught and arrested at any moment. Yet in these films the threat takes an extremely palpable and openly aggressive form. Danger lies not in being taken from one's home but in the fact that any harm can be caused to one inside the home. The false security of homes can easily be jeopardised and it becomes impossible to stay alone without the neighbours' close watch that in effect transforms the private into a public space. This fits well into carnival logic according to which all the notions are turned inside out and changed into their opposites. Just as streets turn into flea-markets so homes turn into public and often hostile places. They lose their property of refuges and shelters and become masked being attributed with an opposite meaning. They are also a part of the total city carnival. One cannot hide from it inside one's apartment.

Let us now list the types of domiciles shown in different films and the types of threat and aggression present in these homes in the form of a table (Table 4.3). The table shows that aggression and danger are present in most of the films in question. I do not list all the acts of aggression in every film in the table below but only those that happen inside one's domicile or other places that serve as characters' homes.[126]

Private and communal apartments are present in the films in equal parts: fourteen films with communal apartments or rented rooms and twelve with private. Yet the balance between them changes with time. Communal apartments dominate in the films produced in 1989–1993. Beginning in 1994, the balance is changed to the opposite. Other recurrent sets in the films are mental asylums and undefined hospitals (also most probably mental asylums). They appear in six films. Their meaning for the narratives will be discussed later in this part when speaking of the ways of escape from the city. It is worth noting here that the mental asylum is rarely connected to the detention of the protagonist.

Another recurrent place is a studio, found in six of the films under discussion (if we include Iogann's underground porno photo studio as well). This is usually connected to the characters' professions to be discussed in the next chapter. Notably the most serious cases of aggression that happen in the

[126] In *The Myth of Leonid*, a story of Kirov's assassin, I assume that Smolny stands for Kirov's home since he spends most of his time there.

Table 4.3: Acts of Domicile Aggression in the Cinematic Petersburg Text of 1990s.

Film Title	*Mister Designer*	*The Stairway*	*The New Scheherazade*	*The City*	*White Monday*	*Dude Water Winner*	*Arithmetic of a Murder*
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Types of domicile	Private residence, mansion, artist's studio	Communal apartment and neighbouring communal apartments, sculptor's studio	Communal apartment, artists' studio	Communal apartment, rented room with roommate, artists' studios	Communal and private apartments, hospital (mental asylum?)	Communal apartments, office, country cottage	Communal apartment
Manifestations of aggression	Deception, attempted seduction, homicide, attempted murder	Entrapment, imprisonment, attempted seduction, risk of death	Constant abasements and other humiliations of the protagonist and other characters, attempted seduction	Moral humiliation of the protagonist. Generally very few interiors	Betrayal, imprisonment, persecution, pursuit, homicide, risk of death, attempted murder	Homicide, racketeering, pursuit, imprisonment, moral humiliation	Homicides, suicide, moral humiliation, imprisonment, eavesdropping, sexual assault, banishment

Film Title	*The Myth of Leonid*	*Smile*	*Happy Days*	*Nicotine*	*Window to Paris*	*Love, the Presage of Sorrow*	*Music for December*
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Types of domicile	Communal apartments, Smolny Institute, mental asylum	Communal apartments, mental asylum, police station, school	Rented rooms, apartments, hospital (mental asylum?)	Communal and private apartments	Communal apartment, apartment in Paris, police station, school	Apartments, country cottage, artists' studios	Apartments, country cottage, office, restaurant, pub
Manifestations of aggression	Betrayal, infidelity, eavesdropping, attempted seduction, detention, Kirov's assassination	Moral humiliations, homicide, attempted seduction, blackmail, physical assault, detention	Moral humiliations, assault and beating-up, deprivation, imprisonment, attempted seduction, deception, death, banishment	Pursuit, betrayal, shooting	Squabbles, scuffles, banishment, detention	Infidelity, betrayals, deception	Betrayal, infidelities, deception, sexual and physical assault, suicide, homicide, shooting

Film Title	*Love is as Strong as Death*	*Brother*	*Of Freaks and Men*	*The Body Will Be Burried...*	*Lyubov and Other Nightmares*
	15	16	17	18	19
Types of domicile	Communal and private apartments, mental asylum	Communal and private apartments	Private apartments, underground photo studio	Apartments, night club, boat hotel	Communal and private apartments, office, motel, mental asylum
Manifestations of aggression	Betrayal, homicide, detention	Moral humiliation, homicides, attempted murders, rape, physical assault, shooting	Seductions and attempted seductions, defilement, sexual assault, imprisonment, moral humiliations, homicide	Misappropriations, racketeering, imprisonment, humiliation, shooting	Attempted assassination, assassination, squabbles, infidelities, seduction, betrayals, imprisonment

studios are moral humiliation involving the protagonist either as victim or perpetrator.

In *Love, the Presage of Sorrow* the studio is also a shelter for the two lovers as well as the place where Anna's husband learns about her infidelity and his best friend's betrayal.

Other places that appear in several films are country cottages, police stations and schools. But apart from all the listed variants of the city's interiors there is one unexpected example of the city's internal space and of its inappropriate use, namely a public lavatory.

In *Window to Paris* the image of home as being deprived of privacy and of any characteristic of home is driven to its extreme. When Nicole comes to Petersburg and finds herself at the huge marketplace her accidental acquaintance brings her to the place where she apparently lives, a room at the back of a public lavatory, moreover a convenience for men. The room in which Nikolai lives in the beginning of the film is not even a room but a corner of the gym in the school. He is hosted there by his friend, a P.E. teacher, and is brusquely awoken by a ball thrown by pupils during their training.

Degradation of private space is expressed in the films in tiny details, but sometimes the space helps to degrade and ridicule some moments of the narrative.

In *The City* an idol's photo is sold in a public lavatory. In the same film a conversation between Alevtina and her old acquaintance takes place in front of a mirror, again in a public lavatory. The woman who works as a hooker tells Alevtina about the perspectives of a prostitute's life and the location gives a somewhat comical discrepancy to the episode. In *Arithmetic of a Murder*, the suicide of a character is committed in the toilet of the communal apartment. This underlines the miserable end of the miserable life of the character.

If we turn now to the types of aggression that recur most often in the films studied we see that homicide is the most recurrent evil that can happen to a person inside his home. Murder, the ultimate act of aggression, occurs in nine films and to this can be added four other films with attempted murders and assassinations, two films with assassinations and two with a high risk of

death of the protagonist. These films show how a human's life is most at risk when he/she is inside and feeling safe. In nine of the nineteen films it is the protagonist's death or murder that is shown or implied on-screen, with a high probability of occurring beyond the end of the narrative.

In *The Myth of Leonid* the credits inform the viewer about the execution of the historical Leonid Nikolaev one month after the assassination.

But the death of the protagonist can be purely accidental.

In *Dude Water Winner* the protagonist himself is guilty of his girlfriend's death at the end of the film. Unaware that she has been kidnapped he explodes and accidentally kills her in the mafia tycoon's house together with the tycoon himself in his final act of revenge.

Here the idea of the person's vulnerability in the city's interiors is driven to its extreme. A person's life proves to be highly fragile and can be harmed, even unintentionally.

Interestingly a recurrent form of aggression, apart from different forms of physical and sexual assault, is the imprisonment of a person, primarily of the film's protagonist or of one of the main characters. Different kinds of imprisonment and restriction of freedom are found in eleven films (the cases that take place at a police station or in a mental asylum are not counted here).

In *Arithmetic of a Murder* Il'a is confined to a wheelchair and cannot move out of the apartment on his own. He is entirely in his aunt's power and it is she who decides whether to let him have a walk or not, whether to leave him alone in the street or put him to bed. Finally she is the one who deprives him of life as a punishment for his crimes.

The above discussed case of *Happy Days* is also a good example of the protagonist's detention.

The most obvious example of imprisonment is shown in *The Stairway*. In this film some mysterious will of the house itself keeps the protagonist locked inside. The only way to come out is the stairway which never ends and seems to become circular when he tries to walk down to the entrance. When Piroshnikov tries to climb out of the window the house becomes openly aggressive and the floor bends backward from the window angularly, bringing to mind the rocking of a ship.

Thus many cases of imprisonment allow us to assume that the interiors of Petersburg are not simply dangerous for their inhabitants; they also have a tendency to lock the characters inside. In contrast to imprisonment there are only three examples of banishment (*Arithmetic of a Murder*, *Happy Days*, *Window to Paris*), which, however, in each instance is combined with detention. Thus keeping a person inside, all but arrested, becomes a much more common thing than simply throwing him out of the city's interiors. The most primitive explanation would be that keeping the characters inside can cause more harm than banishing them. But, in a more general way, we can say that prisons in the Petersburg text of the 1990s often become homes and, vice versa, a prison (most often it is a mental asylum) serves as a home for many characters in the films. The usual attitude of the characters in an asylum is exemplified by the protagonist of *Happy Days*. He finds it more comfortable and safe staying inside the asylum and does not wish to come out. Here the exchange of the functional meaning of the two places is obvious and also bears a carnivalised load of turning meanings inside out, making *monde a l'invers* out of the usual order of things.

Two more recurrent types of aggression should be noted here: firstly, attempted seduction is present in seven films along with two films with successful seduction and one film that also includes defilement (*Of Freaks and Men*); secondly, different kinds of betrayal, infidelity and deception are present in six, four and three films respectively. All these forms of aggression can be united under the definition of violation of trust. This frequent kind of aggression can be attributed to Petersburg interiors in general. The characters' hope of finding a safe place is violated and this can be interpreted as a general violation of trust that penetrates practically every film discussed.

Combining together the inner and the outer space of Petersburg in the films studied we see that the idea of safety and of home is totally reversed here. Homes become an aggressive and a violating place for citizens. Meanwhile, the streets unfold into busy and noisy market squares ready to welcome a carnival. Thus the meanings of the city space are turned upside down and inside out.

4.3 Liminal Spaces as Forms of Escape from the City

In the situation when homes turn out to be an unsafe place for the characters they start looking for other kinds of refuge. As mentioned in the previous section, these shelters often appear to be the most unexpected places inside the city space. I have noted several such places that recur in different films and serve as a refuge for some of the characters. Sometimes the presence

of a peculiar place in the city as of a shelter is articulated in the narrative, sometimes the presence of this functional element is shown casually, but in either case it is always closely related to the idea of private space as aggressive and hostile towards the characters. Therefore, a threatening and sinister home and an unusual place of refuge form paired functional elements as coined by Propp in his work on fairy-tales (Propp 1970, p. 27). This means that, in the case of one of these elements appearing in a film of the Petersburg text, it is usually paired with the other. If homes are unsafe and unreliable for the characters there may well appear another shelter where they can feel safe, at least temporarily.

The shelters distinguished in the films studied can be divided into two subcategories.

The first is represented in the films by cemeteries and lunatic asylums. These traditionally gloomy and sorrowful places become a friendlier and more consoling place and even a substitute home for various film characters who stay there of their own free will. They prefer to escape the city, remaining locked in a lunatic asylum or living in a cemetery. Sometimes the troubles and dangers they are trying to evade are real and concrete. In other cases, the danger is obscure and can be associated directly with the city. In the case of cemeteries and lunatic asylums the shelter provides an illusion of home and is located inside the city. However, staying in a madhouse or cemetery puts characters outside the city's ordinary life, which turns their inhabitants into voluntary outcasts. These are places that indicate the human transition from life to death and from normality to insanity. This makes them liminal, especially for those of their inhabitants who do not belong there (meaning they are not dead or mentally ill).

In contrast to these home substitutions the second subcategory offers characters an illusion of escape from the city. It includes roofs and the sea as featured in some films. Climbing onto a roof or sailing across the sea situates a character physically almost outside the city borders. Roofs and the sea can be regarded as topographical borders of the city that shape its skyline and shoreline respectively.

What unites all the places mentioned into one group, apart from their functioning as different kinds of refuge, is that they may all be observed as liminal in regard to the city space or to its inhabitants. They all represent some kind of borderline for the city concerning its space or its social life. The liminality of these places is an aspect that is also interesting from the position of carnival theory and which helps to include them in the outline of the carnivalised city.

4.3.1 Cemeteries and Lunatic Asylums

Frankly speaking, cemeteries seldom appear in the films, only twice and both times in the films of one and the same director, Aleksei Balabanov. We mean here, of course, cemeteries that act as a domicile for the characters and do not function in their usual role. However, their role in *Brother* and *Happy Days* coincides perfectly with that of the mental asylums figuring in the films of some other directors. This is why I find it possible to observe them not only as a recurrent motif of Balabanov's films but also as a functional element of the cinematic Petersburg text. Another reason is that Balabanov's choice of the Smolenskoe Cemetery (because it is precisely this Petersburg cemetery in both films) connects the films both to the myth of the city and to carnivalisation.

The Smolenskoe Cemetery is the oldest (and, before the revolution, one of the largest) in Petersburg, founded by the Most Holy Synod in 1738. Later, in 1748, the orthodox cemetery was augmented by arranging a Lutheran (or German) cemetery in its neighbourhood. Historically this cemetery was a place of gathering and begging for paupers and vagabonds.[127]

In *Brother* and *Happy Days* the cemetery is also inhabited by different social outcasts and some film characters are among them. Yet they do not go there only to beg, they actually live at the cemetery.

In *Brother*, Nemets, one of the most important figures in the story, is a vagabond with the appearance and manners of a representative of the Petersburg intelligentsia. For reasons that are unclear he prefers to stay at the cemetery with other vagrants. The motives of his choice might be found in his warnings to Danila about the city's evil power that dominates and defeats people there. Nemets himself calls the cemetery his Motherland where his forefathers are buried. His nickname's translation into English is 'German' which, together with his real surname Hoffman, reflects his actual lineage. It is to be remembered here that the Smolenskoe Cemetery includes the oldest Lutheran cemetery in the city where many German Petersburgians were buried. Thus the words about the Motherland are convincing in regard to the character's identification of the place as his home. But they are also extremely sarcastic since they imply that there is no other place in the city left for him apart from the grave.

Even for the protagonist, Danila, the atmosphere of the cemetery is friendlier than that of the city where he arrives to search for his elder brother. Waiting for his brother he is forced to spend the night in a dusty attic and

[127] For vivid depictions of the life of paupers at the Smolenskoe Cemetery see, for example, Bakhtiarov 1994, pp. 194–8; Grigor'ev 2001, pp. 121–3.

wander aimlessly in the rain through city streets. The cemetery is the first place where he communicates in a friendly way with other people, where he is accepted and where he shares with others the pirogs his mother sent to his brother. Nemets is also the one who tries to warn and guide Danila in his search for self-identity, and who helps him when he is wounded. He is opposed to the cruel and inhuman world of bandits. In fact, Danila appears to defile this place and his relations with Nemets and other vagabonds by bringing dead bodies to the cemetery to bury them here in secret. He tries to defend himself, saying that he saved good people by killing these ones, and asks Nemets to bury the bodies 'the way it should be' («по-человечески»). Understandably, this visit is his last one to the cemetery. The episode when Danila comes to say farewell to Nemets takes place outside the gates of the cemetery. They sit now at a bench near the cemetery gates side by side, hardly looking at each other and exchange only few words. Nemets gives Danila his final verdict on the latter's deeds and on his choice of the life of a hitman: 'The city takes away power. A strong one comes to the city and becomes weak. Now you are lost too.' In refusing to accept any money from Danila Nemets confirms his choice of the cemetery as his home.

In *Happy Days* the protagonist of the film also finds his shelter at the Smolenskoe Cemetery. Expelled from the hospital, the protagonist is forced to look for another place of sojourn but, as was discussed in the previous section, each time he fails to find a new home. The best place for him turns out to be a cemetery to which he returns several times. He has only a bench there to rest and stretch his legs on. But this is the only place in the city from which he is not driven away. His acquaintance with Anna also starts here. Inside her apartment she changes drastically from a timid poor girl into a vulgar cynical prostitute. At the cemetery the nameless protagonist acts towards Anna as though he were master in his own home, asking her to leave or stay, to sing or to keep silent. He still tries to act in the same manner when they arrive at her place, but this seems more like a defense in order to keep her from kicking him out. Very soon the balance in their relationship is changed.

The protagonist's final choice of shelter, the boat, is also consonant with the cemetery. This is in fact more effective as a way of leaving the city and can, in my opinion, be identified as death.

Life in a cemetery may be considered an appropriate metaphor for the city as a whole. Like Petersburg itself, which is often blamed for being a city built on people's bones, the people shown in the two films live literally on the bones

of their ancestors and find this place the most comfortable for their lives. This choice of the cemetery, the land of the dead, as a home can be equated with burying oneself alive. According to the theory of carnivalisation, death and symbols of death at a carnival are always combined with the idea of renewal and rebirth. In Part II we have already underlined that choosing to carnivalise the city and to bring it to a state of chaos, the filmmakers put the myth onto a crossroads from which it can be relegated into oblivion or resurrected. People choosing to live in a cemetery add to the feeling of the city's overall chaos. But this image can also be observed as a metaphor of the city as dying or already dead. The choice of a cemetery as the only shelter inside the city might as well be seen as a sombre carnival metaphor of freeing space for new people and for renewing the city.

The symbolic meaning of another marginalised place, the lunatic asylum, for the carnivalised Petersburg can also be approached by applying the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin:

> «Мотив безумия [...] очень характерен для всякого гротеска, потому что он позволяет взглянуть на мир другими глазами, незамутненными «нормальными», то есть общепринятыми, представлениями и оценками. [...]в народном гротеске безумие — веселая пародия на официальный ум, на одностороннюю серьезность официальной «правды»» (Bakhtin 1990, p. 47)[128].

This idea of madness as the possibility of seeing the world upside down, differently from the official or ordinary angle, can be applied to several films.

In *Smile* the world of a mental asylum turns out to be more normal, friendly and safe for its inhabitants than the real world outside its walls. Significantly, some of the patients are sane people staying in the asylum for various reasons as, for example, a writer who collects interesting experiences and stories there. The characters of the film are all hiding in the hospital from some dangers and problems of the real world and it is hard to define whether they are really insane or just pretending in order to stay there. The world outside the madhouse turns out to be dangerous and threatening for the characters, both inside and outside their homes. One of them, a shy and unsociable young man, afraid of women, is accused by a girl of sexual assault of which he is obviously innocent. In his own home he is humiliated and

[128]'[...] the theme of madness is inherent to all grotesque forms, because madness makes men look at the world with different eyes, not dimmed by "normal", that is by commonplace ideas and judgements. In folk grotesque, madness is a gay parody of official reason, of the narrow seriousness of official "truth" (Bakhtin 1984, p. 39).

blackmailed by a bandit friend of the girl, probably her pimp. However, it becomes possible to defeat the villains of the real world on entering the mental asylum, albeit the final episode — where these two worlds cross — denotes the tragic end of the harmony and paradise of the madhouse. The most harmless inhabitant of the asylum, nicknamed Slon (Elephant), is provoked to commit murder when the two worlds collide. It looks like some parody of a murder — he makes the bandit drink until he chokes to death. The action is accompanied by the gleeful and amused giggling of Slon and it is scarier than any act of violence shown earlier in the film. This last episode eliminates the safety of the asylum and connects it back to the dangerous and aggressive real world of the city. The film shows a double degradation: firstly *monde a l'invers* is shown in the form of the lunatic asylum as a home and a shelter for its patients who voluntarily prefer their confinement to life in the 'normal' world, and secondly when the two worlds collide with each other and the safety of the asylum is destroyed.

A lunatic asylum figures in other films of the cinematic Petersburg text as well, but in our discussion only the cases when an asylum acts as a shelter or a home for characters are observed. Cases when a character is imprisoned there against his/her will, as in *White Monday* and *The Myth of Leonid*, are not taken into account here since then the usual property of the lunatic asylum remains.

Apart from *Smile* we have already mentioned *Happy Days*. Like the characters of *Smile*, the protagonist feels most safe in the asylum and is extremely unwilling to leave it. The protagonist leaves against his will both because he has nowhere to go in the city and also because his life inside the walls of the hospital was comfortable and secure. Note that in the apartments where he later stays he accepts gladly all the routines reminiscent of hospital (locked doors, a pot under the bed, soup with meatballs and parsley). In Anna's apartment he even tries to establish these routines himself, taking a tureen instead of a chamber pot.

Other examples of a lunatic asylum that offers a refuge to film characters is found in both the films by Andrei Nekrasov studied in this work, *Love is as Strong as Death* and *Lyubov and Other Nightmares*, as well as in a film by Ivan Dykhovichnyi, *Muzyka dlia dekabria* (*Music for December*, 1995). In all these examples a woman, the protagonist or one of the prominent characters, is secluded in a lunatic asylum, usually at the end of the film. There she finally

finds the peace and reconciliation she has failed to find outside the asylum.

Making a lunatic asylum or a cemetery a substitute for home and shelter includes them into the structure of a functionally reversed city space. Beyond this the films directly make use of and play with extremely carnivalised notions such as life and death, normality and insanity.

4.3.2 Roofs and the Sea

The interaction between 'up' and 'down' and their exchange of place, marked by Bakhtin as one of the most significant mechanisms of carnival, becomes important when applied to the city topography as well. Bakhtin wrote about the landscape of grotesque realism as of a landscape of ups and downs and a landscape of hills and holes.[129] Geographically, Petersburg is deprived of any hills or holes being situated zero metres above sea level.[130] Natural hills are substituted in its landscape by the roofs of its buildings, the spires of

[129] «...художественная логика гротескного образа игнорирует замкнутую, ровную и глухую плоскость (поверхность) тела и фиксирует его выпуклости — отростки, почки — и отверстия, то есть только то, что выводит за пределы тела, и то, что вводит в г л у б и н ы тела. ([as a footnote:] Впрочем, эта гротескная логика распространяется и на образы природы и образы вещей, где также фиксируются глубины (дыры) и выпуклости.) Горы и бездны — вот рельеф гротескного тела, или, говоря на архитектурном языке, — башни и подземелья» (Bakhtin 1990, p. 352). ('Thus the artistic logic of the grotesque image ignores the closed, smooth, and impenetrable surface of the body and retains only its excrescenses (sprouts, buds) and orifices, only that which leads beyond the body's limited space or into the body's depths. ([as a footnote:] This grotesque logic is also extended to images of nature and of objects in which depths (holes) and convexities are emphasized.) Mountains and abysses, such is the relief of the grotesque body; or speaking in architectural terms, towers and subterranean passages' (Bakhtin 1984, pp. 317–8).

[130] Speaking of Petersburg's extensive open areas of squares and the Neva, Toporov says: «Говоря о высоком коэффициенте «открытости» Петербурга, нужно помнить не только о горизонтальной плоскости, в которой обычно «работает» взгляд (прямо перед собой), но и о вертикали, которая открывает взгляду еще одно открытое пространство — н е б е с н о е. Его роль, как и роль небесной линии, значительно важнее для петербуржцев или приезжающего в Петербург, чем для москвича, реже обращающего внимание на небо и меньше замечающего его, в частности, из-за большей закрытости и «приземленности» московского пространства. В Петербурге в «панорамных» позициях (например, на Неве) небо огромно, а обычно невысокие дома на набережных кажутся по контрасту еще ниже, как бы выступающими как обрамление огромной небесной открытости» (Toporov 1995, p. 352). ('Talking of a high coefficient of Petersburg's 'openness', one should remember not only its horizontal surface in which one's eyes are used to 'operate' (frontally), but also its vertical which offers one's eyes another open space: the celestial space. Its role as well as the role of skyline is much more important for a Petersburg citizen or someone who has arrived

its fortresses and churches and the grey Petersburg sky above them. This is probably why in the films studied the motif of roofs is recurrent and often has some significance for the narrative. The roof as the highest point in the cityscape is the closest place to the sky in the city. It is a place where one has a chance to be alone and hence escape the surrounding city. This escapist motif of roofs can be traced in many films of the period.

In *The New Scheherazade*, for example, painters literally escape from the protagonist who tries to enter their circle. They simply walk out on the roof and withdraw from her in a leisurely manner, and with their half clumsy, half airy movements they give an impression of angels or some other supernatural creatures. Roofs are also shown at the end of the film, implying the protagonist's renewal and the spiritual harmony she acquires in the end.

In *Window to Paris* and *White Monday* roofs offer a possibility for a sci-fi transportation in space from Petersburg to Paris. The protagonists of these films actually use city roofs to flee from Petersburg. Similarly, roofs in *Nicotine* are the place from where the protagonist moves to an absolutely different dimension. On his run from chasing villains he jumps down from the roof to a lower lean-to and observes an inexplicable and improbable scene as if taken from another movie. Nazis occupy a quiet Petersburg courtyard as if it was some Ukrainian village. In comparison to the rather successful transportations in *Window to Paris* and *White Monday*, however, in *Nicotine* the other dimension into which the protagonist moves is no less dangerous than his ordinary one, therefore after a short observation of the devastation caused by Nazi troops he moves back to the city.

In *The Stairway* the roof turns out to be the only possible way for the protagonist to escape from the house that has imprisoned him.

In the last example we approach another interesting nuance connected to the roof motif which otherwise could remain unclear, namely the motif of suicide. A roof is a place that offers one the possibility of jumping down to earth and this is actually the most feasible escape (from life, problems, city and whatever else) that can be offered by a roof. Therefore, if driven to its extremes, the meaning of the roof in the films can be interpreted in terms of death and renewal, death and rebirth. It is simultaneously the perfect place

to Petersburg than for a Muscovite who pays attention or notices the sky much more seldom, particularly because Moscow space is more closed and 'landed'. In Petersburg for someone situated in a 'panorama' position (on the Neva's bank, for example), sky becomes huge and normally not so tall edifices along the embankment seem by contrast even smaller and as if framing this huge celestial openness.'

for a suicide and the nearest place to the sky (or heaven), both physically and metaphysically, thereby offering some new and better life to the protagonist. The same interpretation can be given to the final episode of yet another film, *Love, the Presage of Sorrow*, which ends with the protagonist's fall from a house.

In *White Monday* Khristoforv's jump from the roof can be interpreted as a suicide, with the rest of the film showing the travels of his soul after death.

Another example in connection to Bakhtinian roof interpretation is found in *Brother*. When Danila meets and follows his idol, Viacheslav Butusov, he finds himself in a flat quite different from all the other flats in the film which all serve as a set for violence and cruelty. Unlike them this flat, occupied by easily recognisable well-known rock musicians, looks like a quiet and safe heaven where it is easy to enter. There are no obstacles at all for Danila to come in and stay in there, everybody is friendly and relaxed. It is also situated on the top floor of the house, which is nearest to the roof. And with all its friendliness and calm, relaxing and light-hearted songs (compared to the rest of the sound-track) and well-known people, for Danila almost gods, it creates an image of a descended Olympus or heaven. This can also be seen as a symbol of death with the promise of renewal and rebirth afterwards.

Similarly, in *Dude Water Winner* Gorelikov's climbing to the roof gives him a quiet break and suspends him from his vindictive intentions for a while. After his friend and business companion has been killed by racketeers, Gorelikov decides to take vengeance and begins to track them. He climbs a roof to spy after the mafiosi. This move, ridiculous under normal circumstances, lends him the air of being a super-hero, in accordance with the pseudo-mythological basis of the film. Sitting on the roof with binoculars he becomes omnipresent and god-like — from one single roof he can follow his enemies' progress through the city. But when two topless girls appear there to sunbathe he becomes distracted from his fight. Their appearance detaches the episode from the rest of the movie, confirming that roofs are an isolated, safe and paradisiacal place inhabited by houri (Figure 4.6).

In the poem quoted in *The City* the sky is mentioned as the only way of escape or consolation in the city:

> Уйти из города...
>
> ...как хлеб насущный
>
> Бездонное небо над зданиями и поездами.[131]

(a) Gorelikov's act of vengeance...

(b) ...is interrupted...

(c) ...by appearance of two naked houri.

Figure 4.6: Roofs in *Dude Water Winner*.

From these examples we see that roofs and the sky become for some characters the only possible way of escape from or temporary desertion of the city. Sometimes it can even mean escape at the cost of the character's life.

Another possible topographical exit from the city is the sea. Although Saint Petersburg is a city by the sea and one of the major ports of the western coast of Russia, this is almost never shown in films framing the city.[132] We find only two examples among the films discussed in this work. Yet on both occasions, the sea and the seaside become explicit places of refuge for the characters.

One such film is *Love, the Presage of Sorrow*. Here the seaside is an ideal place for secret meetings between the two lovers. Meeting here, Anna and Filip have no need to hide from their spouses. They can talk, make love, read and Filip can draw Anna's portrait. In contrast to this carefree dating, their meetings in the city, both inside and outside, are tense with the risk of discovery. In the city they are always separated from each other by their fears and hesitations. In the episode of their meeting in the car this is actually

[131] Away from the city...
...as daily bread
Fathomless sky over buildings and trains.

[132] Amazingly, one of the rare examples of films where the sea is mentioned is one unit of the animated series about Masiania by Oleg Kuvaev, *Depresniak* (*Depression*), where Masiania, the female protagonist, after a long depression exclaims with surprise 'The sea! We have a real sea here!' and going there experiences relief. This exclamation characterises a common attitude of the city dwellers to the existence of the port and sea as to some forgotten fact. Indeed there is no direct exit to the sea from the city, neither any developed passenger seaport nor a seafront suitable for promenades. At the same time this episode visualises the sea as a means of escape from the city and its madness/greyness that has provoked the protagonist's depression.

Figure 4.7: Filip and Anna are separated graphically by the reflection of the edifices.

shown graphically as the reflection of the well-courtyard on the windscreen (see Figure 4.7). It separates them from each other visually and suggests an abyss between them.

In *The Body Will Be Buried...* we again find the sea or at least a glimpse of it. At the end of the film the protagonist, played by Aleksandr Lazarev Jr., escapes from the city's mafia nightmare into narcotic hallucinations as he floats over the sea in a small motorboat to the accompaniment of Irina Evteeva's bright and romantic animation, which is in stark contrast to the faded night colours of streets and night clubs in the rest of the film.

The idea of escape from the city to the sea is, of course, not new. The sea in Saint Petersburg is equated with nature and uncivilised origins which in modern and post-modern art oppose the malicious and cruel city.[133] But it

[133] In his letter to Evgenii Ivanov from June 25, 1905, for example, Blok wrote: «...опять страшная злоба на Петербург закипает во мне, ибо я знаю, что это поганое гнилое ядро, где наша удаль мается и чахнет, окружено такими безднами, такими бездонными топями, которых око человечье не видело, ухо — не слышало...живем ежедневно — в ужасе, смраде и отчаянье, в фабричном дыму, в румянце блудных улыбок, в треске отвратительных автомобилей, вопящих на Зарю, смеющих догадываться о Заре! Петербург — гигантский публичный дом, я чувствую. В нем не отдохнуть, не узнать всего, отдых краток там только, где мачты скрипят, барки покачиваются на окраине, на островах, совсем у ног залива, в сумерки» (Blok in his letter to Evgenii Ivanov, June 25, 1905, quoted after Volkov 2005, p. 260). ('Again that horrible anger at Petersburg boils within me, for I know that it is lousy, rotten nucleus, where boldness wanes and weakens ...we live daily in horror, stink, and despair, in factory smoke, in the rouge of lascivious smiles, in the roar of disgusting automobiles...Petesburg is a gigantic whorehouse, I feel it. You can't rest, learn everything there, a brief rest only where the masts creak, boats sway on the outskirts, on the is-

should be underlined once again that, although the sea is historically so important for Petersburg and has a significant mythological meaning, it nevertheless appears seldom in the films of the cinematic Petersburg text, especially if compared to the other topographical motifs of refuge discussed here — roofs and the sky.

It is to be noted that in a film several ways of refuge can be combined. One and the same film can include both a cemetery and a lunatic asylum or roofs. Usually in the end one of them offers the character his/her final refuge, which quite often can be equated to death as the only possible way of escape from the city.

4.4 Moving Around

Previously we discussed the functional elements that directly concern city space. But, apart from the diverse constituents of the cityscape, there is one more aspect that should be dealt with. In this section we will look at the way characters move around inside the carnivalised Petersburg space. Moving around in space also has distinctive functional elements recurring in different films of the cinematic Petersburg text.

In Chapter 3 an almost total absence of the underground in the films was pointed out as one of the functional elements.[134] This fits into the carnivalised picture of the city where different locations lose their normal function. If city streets no longer function as thoroughfares for the city and lead nowhere then there is no need for an underground there either. Perhaps another reason for the filmmakers' neglect of the underground as a film set might be explained by the Soviet cinema's great devotion to the underground as one of the outstanding industrial achievements.[135] Probably the avoidance of images of underground was dictated to the cinematographers of the 1990s by their

lands, at the gulf, in twilight' (Volkov and Bouis 1997, p. 218).)

[134] There is no image of the underground in any of the films studied but this may not hold for every film in the cinematic Petersburg text.

[135] Cameraman and director Dmitrii Dolinin writes about this sarcastically: «В коммунистическое время начальство носилось с метро, как с писаной торбой, ибо оно было одним из немногих его реальных достижений и, кроме того, служило транспортным сооружением, носило сакральный характер. И попробовали бы вы тогда не показать метро, как сияющий дворец, наполненный светом и теплом, населенный дружелюбными «советскими людьми»! (*Я шагаю по Москве*)» (Dolinin 2009, p. 23). ('During the communist time the authorities made a big fuss over the underground, since it was one of their few true achievements. Moreover, it was a means of transport and also had a sacred meaning. Just you dare not show the underground at that time as a shining palace filled with light and warmth, inhabited with friendly 'Soviet people'! (*Walking the Streets of Moscow*)'.)

desire to distance themselves as much as possible from any associations with Soviet ideology.

The absence of the underground may be further decoded from a Bakhtinian position. Some film critics writing about the symbolical meaning of the underground in French films of the 1960s, for example, see it as opposing the normal state of things (Berry 2000, pp. 8–22). The underground can be considered as a possible place of carnivalisation of the everyday routine inside a film. But in the Saint Petersburg of the 1990s the city itself is actually carnivalised above ground, rendering the underground superfluous from this point of view.

Neither are other means of transport used frequently in the films studied. In principle, the ways of moving in the city are reduced to feet, automobiles and trams.

Cars appear quite frequently, not in their capacity as means of transport but in a symbolic role. In many films of the cinematic Petersburg text cars represent a threat to the protagonist or some other manifestation of evil.[136] Cars in the films usually belong to antagonists and to minor negative characters such as bandits, mafia members, racketeers, etc. A car becomes an attribute of the unrighteous life that such characters lead. The malicious role of cars is conveyed even more explicitly in several films. I will give two examples of films where it is shown most vividly.

In *Mister Designer*, an automobile is the weapon that the malicious mannequin uses to assassinate the protagonist, Platon Andreevich. The film is based on Aleksandr Grin's novel *Grey Automobile*. In it the automobile is an obsession of the protagonist that never becomes a real, materialised threat. In the film it actually kills the protagonist, serving at the same time as one of the symbols of man's evil, artificial world. The main symbol in the film is the doll, the mannequin created by the protagonist. She drives the car and runs

[136] Compare this to Mayakovsky's poem from 1913:

Адище города окна разбили
на крохотные, сосущие светами адки.
Рыжие дьяволы, вздымались автомобили,
над самым ухом взрывая гудки.
(Mayakovsky 1950, p. 9)

('The hell of the city has broken windows into the small light-sucking hells. Red devils, the automobiles, rose up, exploding with horns right at one's ear.')

This fear of cars and other vehicles invented by humans can be found in literature at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was already at that time tightly bound to fear of urban spaces. Automobiles were observed as one of the manifestations of this urban threat to humans.

over her creator to kill him. The dramatic effect of this episode is enforced by its overlapping editing that shows repeatedly, in slow motion, the protagonist as he falls illuminated by the headlights of the approaching automobile. We see the car as no more than a source of light — two bright headlights. Therefore, our attention is focused primarily on the overwhelmed and shocked face of Platon Andreevich. The moment of the crash itself is not shown. The face and movements of the protagonist show that he accepts his destiny obediently.

In *The City*, a car figures in the episodes crucial for Savrasov's relationships with Alevtina. It symbolises the social status of Savrasov's rivals, a status that he himself can never achieve. This status attracts Alevtina and she chooses it instead of love for a poor Petersburg artist. At the end of the film, a foreign car takes Alevtina away and this time, obviously, forever. A car in a similar role as a tempting attribute of high social status occurs in *The New Scheherazade*.

Another means of transport that appears in several films is the tram. It is widely used in the films by Balabanov, but also in Mamin's *Window to Paris*, Dolinin's *The Myth of Leonid* and in Nekrasov's *Lyubov and Other Nightmares*. In my opinion, a tram serves rather as a stylistic attribute of Petersburg than a means of transport in these films.

First of all, the tram is probably the slowest means of transport in the city. In addition to its slowness, tram routes in Petersburg are usually extremely roundabout. Taking a tram means that one has either to travel for only a short distance or has all the time in the world. In the films mentioned, this is confirmed by the fact that characters usually take trams when they roam aimlessly around the city.

In *Brother*, Danila moves through the city in a tram when he is waiting for his brother. Another time a tram is simply his way of escaping from bandits. This is also when Danila meets gets acquainted to Svetlana, who he has a romantic affair with afterwards. She works as a service tram driver and some of their dates take place in the tram park.

In *Happy Days*, the only tram that moves jingling at full speed (and actually the first object to appear on screen in the film) seems to have no destination at all and no passengers inside it. The tram looks like a phantom, some kind of Flying Dutchman. And just as in *Brother*, the characters escape from each other on this lonely tram.

In *Lyubov and Other Nightmares* the protagonist uses a tram as a place to pursue his dream experiments. He meets a girl there and initiates a new love

affair. He follows her and finally the tram brings them to a dull residential district where the girl lives. This episode may be classified as the protagonist's roaming in the city.

Even when film protagonists do have some place of destination they fail to reach it in a tram.

In an episode in *Window to Paris* Nikolai and Nicole use a tram to come back to the apartment. When it turns out that they have no tickets, they are simply kicked off it. The tram here might also be included as another ironic contrast to Paris: in Paris, the only means of transport that is shown is a comfortable, super-modern coach where the characters can lounge with cigars and listen to the guide's explanations.

Secondly, and this follows from the first reason, a tram is an old-fashioned means of transport.

This feature is also used consciously in the films. In *Happy Days*, the tram seems to be an artefact belonging to the frozen, absurd and timeless Petersburg. It is not by chance that it is included in the final eschatological picture of the drowning city. A tram is as inseparable a part of its landscape as palaces and cathedrals.

Thirdly, with their enormous windows trams create an illusion of participating. Sitting in a tram one remains a flâneur in the city streets.

The technical tram in *Brother* has no separation at all from the street. Danila can hop into it on the go.

Altogether, these interconnected peculiarities of the tram transform it into a natural part of the Petersburg landscape and of flâneurie that, in its turn, is an important activity within the city myth.

It is not surprising that, in the majority of cases, film characters choose to move around Petersburg on foot. A flâneur is an important figure for any city text and the Petersburg text is no exception. These idle strolls inside the city lead the protagonists into new adventures and give the stories interesting turning points.

The episodes from *The City* examined above illustrate well how promenades help a protagonist to come to terms with the city itself. Savrasov's two promenades through the city backyards show his changing attitude towards the city and his development as a Petersburg artist.

We may recall that in *Brother* Danila's acquaintance with Nemets happens in the street, as well as their conversations about the city and its evil power.

In *Mister Designer*, Platon finds his ideal model for the doll during a stroll, also in the city's backyards.

Piroshnikov from *The Stairway* meets Alia who brings him to the mysterious house at the beginning of the film when he walks aimlessly about the city streets.

In *Happy Days*, the whole life of the protagonist consists of vain roaming in the city in order to find a home.

Flâneur characters can be found in practically all of the films studied in this work. I have included these examples as convincing evidence of just how dominant the flâneur is in the Petersburg text and how roaming around the city becomes the engine that moves the story forward.

Finally, there are several films where characters traverse Petersburg by boat.

We have already mentioned *The Body Will Be Buried...* where the protagonist escapes from his persecutors by sailing out to sea on a boat. But this episode primarily concerns the sea as a way of escape from the city, therefore in this example we can hardly consider a boat as transport for moving inside the city.

In other films a boat is a way of moving inside the city, down its rivers and canals. These waterways of the city with their peculiarities influence the characters.

In *Music for December* this concerns not only characters but also the position of the camera. Many scenes are filmed at a low angle with the camera moving down a canal. We follow the characters walking through the city, or simply see the city edifices as if bending over the embankment grill towards water. Mitia, one of the characters, has an art-project that he works at during the film and which is accomplished by the film's end. He decorates canal walls with his collages. Closer to the film's conclusion several characters use tourist launches: Masha, in her new image of a bitchy business-lady giving an interview about the accomplished project of her ex-fiancé; Mitia, when

Figure 4.8: Anna speaking of her abortion in *Music for December*.

he leaves Masha and the city, presumably forever. Most interesting is the episode with Anna, the mother of Masha. This episode throws light on the peculiarities of this functional element.

While boating together with Mitia, Anna tells him the story of her abortion. She tells it without any regret as an ordinary incident in her life, even amusing in some details. Close-ups of her and Mitia's faces dominate the episode (see Figure 4.8). He looks indifferent to her story, his face expresses nothing while she smiles and gesticulates. She is proud, for example, at the depth of her fall as she tells him that at 22-weeks pregnancy it was not an abortion but a murder. Anna's sincerity and simplicity when she tells the story is bewitching and repellent at the same time. This narcissistic degradation rhymes well with the narcissism of the city itself.

Much of Petersburg's charm depends on a combination of its planned architecture and the reflection of the same in numerous rivers and canals. Looking into its reflection in rivers and canals, the city seems to be bewitched by its own beauty. But at the same time Petersburg's beauty, speaking in terms of its myth, is doomed. The water is predetermined to become destiny's weapon against the city. Therefore, the canals and rivers constantly remind us of the prophecy regarding the city's destiny. Thus Petersburg's neighbourhood, with its rivers and canals, can be interpreted from the ambivalent point of view of the myth both as a multiplication of its beauty (the positive aspect) and as a reminder of its inevitable destiny (the negative aspect). Here the two opposite alternatives of the myth are brought into a symbiosis most explicitly. Combined together these opposite aspects create the idea of a Narcissus city

that constantly sees its magnificent reflection in the waters but also sees the weapon of its destruction which one day will occur due to its evil nature. In my opinion, reflected in its waters Petersburg sees its sins and evil nature.

'The twelve-mile-long Neva branching right in the center of the town, with its twenty-five large and small coiling canals, provides this city with such a quantity of mirrors that narcissism becomes inevitable. Reflected every second by thousands of square feet of running silver amalgam, it's as if the city were constantly being filmed by its river, which discharges its footage into the Gulf of Finland, which on a sunny day, looks like a depository of these blinding images. No wonder that sometimes this city gives the impression of an utter egoist preoccupied solely with its own appearance' (Brodsky 1985, p. 77).

The idea of narcissism is represented most evidently in *Music for December*. It is a story of self-destruction. Its characters all admire their own degradation, their fall, their doom. This is why, in my opinion, moving by water and especially filming from water as well as filming of the embankments is so significant for the story. It draws a parallel between the city and the characters of the film, gives a deeper understanding of what happens to the characters and implies that they are consonant with Petersburg.

In other films, moving by water in Petersburg as well as being by water bears a similar meaning as in *Music for December*.

In *Brother*, Danila is also shown by the Neva with a wide panorama of the river. A dialogue is created between the city and the protagonist, especially significant since these scenes anticipate acts of violence and murder in the film. This scene continues the idea of Nemets about Petersburg and its evil power which ruins people and dominates them.

In *Of Freaks and Men* a small steamer floats waterways of the city. Iogann, the film's villain and a purveyor of perverse pornographic photographs, wends his way to a young aristocratic girl's house to ask her to marry him. He is sitting motionless on the steamer's bow looking straight ahead with a bunch of white lilies (see Figure 4.9). The steamer is smoking heavily while moving through the city beneath its low bridges, giving the impression that Iogann's dirty intentions are polluting the city. The emptiness of the city, the involvement of all the figures shown on screen in the action, combined with the figure of Iogann in a bowler hat, straight and unbending, even under the bridges, makes us believe that he owns the city, that he looks upon it as a conquest.[137]In two other episodes mirroring each other — Iogann's arrival in Petersburg and his departure from the city — he is shown on the bank of the Neva which suggests an association with a conqueror, with Peter the Great.

Figure 4.9: Iogann on his way to Liza.

Perhaps Peter I would have looked at the swamps of this place when he first saw them in the same manner. Iogann's face expresses similar admiration of his own projects and achievements.

Similarly, in other films a protagonist staying by the waterways of the city is usually immersed in his own ideas, thoughts and some kind of narcissism.

Summing up the aforesaid we can say that barely any means of transport appear in the films. But when they do, they do not contradict the flâneur nature of the protagonist. Instead, they may even underline it. Moreover, those few means of transport that appear on screen always have some specific

[137]The idea of a sexual penetration when the smoking steamer passes under the city's bridges was tipped to me by Mark Lipovetsky at the conference *The Poetics of Memory at Post-Totalitarian Narration* (Lund, 2007). Thereby an association is made between t the conquered body of the city and of Liza, the aristocratic girl.

Compare further the image of the city in this episode with a poem by Apollon Grigor'ev from 1845. As in the film here the city seems to be harbouring some hidden threat secluded in the seeming peace of the white nights:

И в те часы, когда на город мой
Ложится ночь без тьмы и тени,
Когда прозрачно все, мелькает предо мной
Рой отвратительных видений...
Пусть ночь ясна, как день, пусть тихо все вокруг,
Пусть все прозрачно и спокойно, —
В покое том таится злой недуг,
И то — прозрачность язвы гнойной.
('At the time when night with no darkness and shadow falls over my city, when everything is transparent, a swarm of dreadful phantoms glimpsed before me... Even though the night is clear as a day, and everything is silent, transparent and tranquil, this tranquility hides a malicious disease inside of it and this transparency is the transparency of a purulent sore.')

narrative significance which, in the case of watercraft, is linked to the special role of Petersburg's waterways as proclaiming the city's narcissism.

* * *

Functional elements of space in the cinematic Petersburg text frequently have their normal meanings exchanged. Their ordinary habitual properties are usually lost and are masked instead by something else: streets masked as market squares, homes masked as public spaces, etc. All this lends the city the idea of a chaotised space. According to the Petersburg myth, chaos is both a creative and a destructive element of the city. Its role is crucial for both the myth's cosmogonic and its eschatological aspects. In the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s the city's degradation into chaos provides the possibility of the zero point, which can be regarded both as the initial and as the final point for the city's mythology. It works both as the chaos and the cosmos of the Petersburg myth.

To describe the relations of chaos and cosmos in the carnivalised world of the cinematic Petersburg we can apply a term introduced by Umberto Eco in his work on Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*: *'chaosmos'* (Eco 1982). This is a compromise between chaos and cosmos and it expresses their propensity to spill over into each other.[138] 'Rather than resolving contradictions, they lead to a new intellectual space for the constant interaction of binary oppositions' (Lipovetsky, 1999, p. 31). In the 1990s filmic interpretation of the myth of the city, chaos is not opposed to cosmos, chaos is a new cosmos. This is not a question of the initial total chaos that we have in the myth in the form of the element of water and the swamp. The carnivalised chaos which can be traced in all the films we have discussed is formed on the basis of the city's cosmos. Due to this 'chaosmos' the myth remains vital and continues to develop. Thus we can call it, without hesitation, a compromise between chaos and cosmos: the chaosmos of the Petersburg myth.

[138]Quoted after Lipovetsky 1999, p. 30.

Chapter 5

The Protagonist

5.1 A General Overview

Being central to their stories, the protagonists of all the films discussed remain a part of the city at all times. They are Petersburg's dwellers: its natives and newcomers, its admirers and defamers, its conquerors and observers. Speaking of the non-fictional city we would have to speak about its population. In the same way speaking of the cinematic city we have to speak about the characters that inhabit it and the ways they interact with the city within the narratives. Unfortunately, there is no space here to speak of all the film characters and we have to restrict ourselves mainly to the protagonists of the films. In this chapter I will make an attempt to give a generalised portrait of the protagonists of the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s. Similarly to the previous chapter, the recurrent functional elements will be singled out for the protagonists of the films and discussed in respect to the Petersburg text. A few remarks will be given about the secondary characters as well.

Before starting the discussion about the protagonists of the cinematic Petersburg text, a general definition of the protagonist should be given. An obvious definitionof the protagonist is as of the main character of the story. The word itself derives from the Greek $\pi\rho\omega\tau\alpha\gamma\omega\nu\iota\sigma\tau\eta\varsigma$ which, in the Ancient Greek theatre, meant 'the actor of the first/chief role (Turco 1999, pp. 47–9; Murfin and Ray 2003, p. 375; Quinn 2006, pp. 27, 195, 341; Abrams and Harpham 2009, pp. 14, 265, 272). But this plain definition often turns out to be insufficient when applied to a specific story. Can there be more than one protagonist in a story? Can the narrator also be the main character? Must the protagonist be a positive character? In some glossaries of literary terms the protagonist is meant to be the hero of the narrative, usually opposed by an antagonist or an antihero, the narrative's villain. But can there be an antag-

onistic protagonist if there is no definite hero in the narrative? Usually these questions receive either different, contradictory answers in various glossaries and theoretical works or no exact answer at all.

The definition that I find the most useful belongs to Murfin and Ray. According to this, the protagonist is 'the most important or loading character in a work; usually identical to the hero or heroine, but not always'. The plot is activated by a conflict encountered by the protagonist (Murfin and Ray 2003, p. 375).[139]

With this definition in mind I shall also use my common sense and intuition as a film spectator in order to single out the protagonists among the other characters. I find it impossible to agree with the opinion that there can only be one single protagonist in a work of art. In some of the films studied, several characters turn out to have equal significance. In *Smile*, for example, there are three patients of the lunatic asylum who may rightfully be regarded as protagonists. In *Music for December* relationships between the characters are even more complicated since two couples can be regarded both as protagonists and as antagonists. Moreover, their roles of protagonists/antagonists are both unstable and interchangeable. For this reason, I prefer to consider all four characters as the protagonists of the film. This is the largest number of protagonists among the films studied here.

For the sake of simplicity I will start my analysis of the protagonists of the cinematic Petersburg text with a table (see Table 5.1). In this table the name of the film, the number of protagonists, their sex, age and other personal details will be given briefly. In cases when information is provided it will be marked with a plus. If the information is lacking it will be indicated with a dash. If the personal information of the protagonists is not given or does not follow from the film it will appear in the table as 'U' ('unknown'). If information is given or hinted at but remains unclear it will appear in the table as 'NC' ('not clear') or if information is dubious it will appear as a question mark.

[139] Although Murfin and Ray do not give any definite answer about the number of protagonists possible in one work of art, they remark that Simon Winchester is prejudiced against the existence of more than one protagonist in a novel and describe his viewpoint as the opposite of their own.

Table 5.1: The Protagonists of the Cinematic Petersburg Text of 1990s.

Film	**Nr**	**Sex**	**Name**	**Age**	**Profession**	**Origins**	**Past**	**Family**	**Home**	**In the end**
Mister Designer	1	M	+	Over 30	Artist	U	U	-	+	Murdered
The Stairway	1	M	+	Over 20	U	U	U	-	-	NC
The New Scheherazade	1	F	+	Over 20	Various	Provincial southern town	Love affair, false flashbacks	-	-	NC
The City	1	M	+	30	Artist	Provincial town	U	-	-	Becomes an artist
White Monday	1	M	+	Over 30	U	Village	Many flashbacks	Mother, father, grandfather, other Khristoforovs	-	NC
Dude Water Winner	1	M	+	30	NC Entrepreneur?	U	U	-	+	NC
Arithmetic of a Murder	1	M	+	30	-	Petersburg?	Flash backs	Aunt	+	Murdered
The Myth of Leonid	1	M	+	30	Unemployed	Provincial town	-	Wife	+	Will be arrested and executed (given in credits)

Table 5.1: The Protagonists of the Cinematic Petersburg Text of 1990s.

Film	**Nr**	**Sex**	**Name**	**Age**	**Profession**	**Origins**	**Past**	**Family**	**Home**	**In the end**
Smile	3	M	+	Over 20	N C	U	NC (fantasies or flashbacks ?)	-	N C	Leaves
		M	+	Over 20	NC	Petersburg?	Flash backs	NC	+	Stays in asylum
		M	+	40	Teacher?	U	NC (fantasies or flashbacks ?)	-	N C	Stays in asylum
Happy Days	1	M	-	Over 30	U	U	U	-	-	NC
Nicotine	1	M	-	Over 20	U	U	U	-	+ ?	Dies
Window to Paris	2	M	+	40	Music teacher, musician	U	U	-	-	NC
		F	+	Over 30	Artist taxidermist	Paris	U	-	+	U
Love, the Presage of Sorrow	2	M	+	30	Artist	U	U	Wife	+	Dies
		F	+	30	-	Moscow	Narrated in form of gossip	Husband	+	Stays alone ?

Table 5.1: The Protagonists of the Cinematic Petersburg Text of 1990s.

Film	**Nr**	**Sex**	**Name**	**Age**	**Profession**	**Origins**	**Past**	**Family**	**Home**	**In the end**
Music for December	4	M	+	Over 40	U	Emigrated	Memories	- (ex-wife and ex-lover)	-	Murdered
		F	+	Over 40	U	U	Memories	Daughter, husband	+	Mental asylum
		M	+	Over 20	Artist	U	Memories	Mother, fiancé	+	Leaves
		F	+	Over 20	Businesswoman	U	Memories	Fiancée	-	Stays alone
Love is as Strong as Death	1	M	+	30	U	Emigrated	Memories	-	-	Dies
Brother	1	M	+	19	No, becomes a hitman	Provincial town	Several indirect hints	Mother, brother, father deceased	-	Leaves for Moscow
Of Freaks and Men	1	M	+	Over 30	Photographer	U	U	-	NC	Leaves
The Body Will Be Buried...	3	M	-	30	Bandit	U	U	-	+	NC
		F	+	Over 20	Actress	U	U	-	+	Leaves
		M	+	Over 20	Composer, DJ	U	U	Brother	+	NC
Lyubov and Other	Narrator	M	+	U	NC research work	Petersburg	Flash backs	Mother	-	Murdered

Table 5.1: The Protagonists of the Cinematic Petersburg Text of 1990s.

Film	**Nr**	**Sex**	**Name**	**Age**	**Profession**	**Origins**	**Past**	**Family**	**Home**	**In the end**
Night-mares	1	F	+	30	Hit-man	U	Me-mo-ries	-	-	Mental asy-lum

Let us start with some simple statistics based on the information given in the table. Of the nineteen films represented in the table, fourteen present one protagonist only in the centre of the story. In the others, the number of protagonists varies from two to four at most. This is the case in *Music for December* which represents a love rectangle. In all, twenty nine protagonists are discussed in this chapter. It can also be pointed out that, of the nineteen films, only two present a woman as the main personality of the story, namely *The New Scheherazade* and *Lyubov and Other Nightmares*.

In *Lyubov and Other Nightmares* there is a narrator in the film who is a man whose position, in my opinion, stands on the border between narrator and protagonist. We hear Lyubov's story from him. It is not only told by him but shown from his optical point-of-view. According to the plot everything shown in the film is seen by him in a dream. But Lyubov, although she occupies the most significant part in the story, is not its only focus. The narrator himself is also in the story's focus and everything can be considered as his story rather than Lyubov's told to the viewer. Therefore, it can be disputed as to whether he is a narrator or a viewpoint protagonist (in analogue to the viewpoint character[140]).

Apart from these two films the protagonists are predominantly men. This is the case in fifteen films. In five cases, female protagonists are paired with male ones. Thus men occupy a dominant position in the films studied. This, in my opinion, is one of the features that links them to the Petersburg text in literature where a man as protagonist also prevails heavily. This feature may even be considered a tradition of the preceding Petersburg text and follows the typical choice of a male protagonist in the literature of the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries. This was dictated by the actual state of things in the city at that time. The majority of the population here were men: clerks, peasants

[140] A viewpoint character is a narrator who is directly involved in the plot, while not being its protagonist (Card 1999, pp. 155–172).

in search of a living, the military — often newcomers to the city, which entailed problems such as a rise in alcoholism, suicides, venereal diseases, prostitution and orphanage among the population (Toporov 1995, pp. 284–7; Bakhtiarov 1994, pp. 155–162, pp. 171–6). All this was incorporated into the Petersburg text. The films of the 1990s also focus mostly on men and their problems, and, which is also significant, on men being newcomers to the city. The portrait of a newcomer to the city, as we know, was important for the Petersburg literature.

In ten films the story starts with the protagonist's arrival in the city (in *Music for December* and *Love is as Strong as Death* it is a return from emigration). This choice can be explained by the fact that many of the film directors were once themselves newcomers to Petersburg.[141] This fact fits well into a traditional theme of the Petersburg text, namely the city represented as a trial for newcomers.[142] Usually the place he comes from is unknown or unclear. Petersburg challenges those newly arrived both with the hardships and the temptations of life in Petersburg. One has to overcome all of them and accept the city and its ambivalent, complicated nature to be accepted by it.

As the best examples of Petersburg-trial we refer again to two films: *The City* and *Brother*.

[141] According to Toporov, authors of the Petersburg text in literature were often newcomers to the city and this preoccupied the most outstanding creators of the Petersburg text (Toporov 1995, pp. 277–8). In fact, the majority of writers as well as people of other artistic professions (painters, musicians, etc.) originate from elsewhere than Petersburg. Therefore, we can say that in most cases the Petersburg text introduced an outsider's or a newcomer's view of the city.

Milashevsky, for example, noted this peculiarity when speaking of the artist and illustrator Dobuzhinsky: «У Добужинского есть это ощущение человека, будто впервые только что увидевшего Петербург. Нужно быть уроженцем других мест, чтобы все предстало в непривычной диковинности. Добужинский и не был уроженцем Петербурга, как Сомов, как Бенуа или Блок...'»(*Воспоминания о Добужинском*, 1997, сост., предисл., примеч. Г. И. Чугунова, СПб: Академический проект, quoted after Volkov 2005, p. 267). ('Dobuzhinsky gives the feeling of a person who has just encountered Petersburg for the first time. One has to be born elsewhere in order that everything will appear remarkable and strange to him. In fact, Dobuzhinsky wasn't born in Petersburg like Somov, Benois or Blok...')

Even Akhmatova, a native citizen, wrote in her poem from 1929 (*Тот город, мной любимый с детства...*) that she looks at the city with the curiosity of a foreigner, confirming the need to alienate oneself from the city, even if one is a native, to be able to see and apprehend its nature with a fresh look.

[142] On Petersburg as a trial in Russian literature see, for instance, Dolgopolov 1985a, pp. 163–4, 180–1.

In *The City*, Savrasov, a young man who hopes to become an artist, comes to Petersburg and meets a tough life, the necessity to work in a boiler room, betrayal by a woman he falls in love with, the role of outsider in an artistic circle. But in connection to the idea of the Petersburg-trial for newcomers the most important thing is that, to become a true artist, he has to accept the gloomy and unattractive beauty of the city's seamy side.

In *Brother* the situation is reversed. The protagonist does not stand the test. Danila Bagrov comes to Petersburg in order to find his brother, who turns out to be a hitman. Despite all warnings of Nemets, his guide in this trial, he becomes a hitman himself. In one conversation Nemets tells him about the city's evil power that dominates and swallows people.

In several films of the Petersburg text the figure of a guide appears. He is usually a native citizen and his role is to conduct the protagonist-newcomer through the city and help him or her to sustain the trial. Apart from *The City* this is the case in *The New Scheherazade* and *The Stairway*.

Other personal information about the protagonists, such as their origins, their past, their family connections, their profession and occupation, whether they have a home or not, is frequently only hinted at or not given at all.

The age of the protagonists is usually not announced but may be estimated from their appearance or some personal information. It differs from 19 in *Brother* to over 40 in, for example, *Window to Paris*, *Music for December*, *Smile*. However, most often the age of the protagonist is between 25 and 35.

It is often hard to reconstruct from the story any details of the protagonist's past. Usually this is simply unknown or unclear. In some films some of these facts are hinted at or told by other characters or by the protagonist him-/herself. Even flashbacks, if appearing in a film, do not help much to recreate the protagonist's past. Flashbacks are often dubious and improbable.

This is, for example, the case in *White Monday*. Ivan Khristoforov has the supernatural skill of shouting and in doing so causing catastrophic harm. The flashbacks of his childhood seem to be more fantasies than true flashbacks. They seem to be told after his death, which probably occurs at the very beginning of the film.

In *Smile*, the patient of a lunatic asylum tells his stories to a writer who deliberately remains in the hospital to gain interesting experiences and sensations for his work. Other patients take part in these stories as well as the narrator himself, but the stories are offered by him not as their true past but as its invention or reconstruction.

In *The New Scheherazade*, a one-hour love affair of the protagonist with a man in her flashbacks becomes a romantic love story reminiscent of Scheherazade's fairy tales.

Like other personal details, the professions and occupations of the protagonists are usually unknown or unclear. Lack of occupation reflects on the one hand the actual situation with work and unemployment in the 1990s in Russia, including Petersburg. On the other hand, unemployment and the lack of a specific occupation is also a characteristic feature of city newcomers of the time, contemptuously called limitchiki or limita[143].

Yet there is one more remark we can make in connection to the protagonists lacking an occupation as well as a home and family. With fifteen protagonists of the films studied it is unclear if they have any occupation, or if so what that is; fifteen lack a home and eighteen lack any family. In my opinion, these people without commitments and affections come close to the definition of a flâneur, an important figure for the creation of a literary as well as cinematic city.[144] The fact that the protagonists have no occupation (or no stable occupation, since a hitman or an artist is not bound to a fixed workplace), no home (of their own) and no family, enables them to explore the city, to meet various people and roam the city's outer space rather than stay inside. Although we find only six protagonists who totally lack all the attributes of social life listed above, in eleven cases two of the mentioned attributes are lacking. Sometimes the filmmakers use other narrative pretexts that help to turn a protagonist into a flâneur.

In *Window to Paris* for example, Nicole, a respectable French woman, has two of three vital social links in Paris, but is deprived of them all (including her clothes) in Petersburg, and degraded to the level of a vagabond. Transferred to Petersburg through the miraculous portal she is forced to become a flâneur.

In *Mister Designer*, the protagonist roams the city, predominantly its backyards, in search of a model for his new mannequin.

[143] The words is derived from the limited registration — a limited number of places to register newcomers in the city offered to various industrial organisations in order to attract provincials to commonly low-paid labour which was therefore unpopular among the natives.

[144] In the Petersburg text in literature we find numerous examples of protagonists-flâneurs. They are profuse in works by Pushkin, Gogol', Dostoevsky, Bely. Raskol'nikov, for example, walks the city space driven by his inner thoughts and may perhaps be regarded as a flâneur against his will.

In *The Body Will Be Buried...* Svetlana roams the city after she has quit her job in the theatre. She invites another protagonist, DJ Maxim, to join her on her walk.

As we can see, an artistic profession gives freedom to the protagonists to walk around the city and enjoy its life. Along with unknown or nonexistent professions and occupations, artistic work recurs in several films as the protagonist's occupation. Nine protagonists have artistic professions: there is a photographer, an actress and several artists and musicians. Apart from being a clear pretext for flâneurie, the profusion of artistic professions may derive from the filmmakers' interest in familiar professions and fellow artists. Mamin, for example, is interested in classical music. He chooses a musician as a protagonist for *Window to Paris*. In other films, members of the artistic movement Mit'ki act and represent themselves (often playing cameos). In some, famous Petersburg musicians such as Iurii Shevchuk and Sergei Kurekhin do.

Looking back we find that artists played a significant role in stories belonging to the Petersburg text in literature. This concerns Gogol' and his Petersburg novels *Portrait* and *Nevsky Prospect*. In *Nevsky Prospect*, Gogol' speaks of Petersburg artists as of an extraordinary and puzzling phenomenon:

«Не правда ли, странное явление? Художник петербургский! художник в земле снегов, художник в стране финнов, где все мокро, гладко, ровно, бледно, серо, туманно... У них всегда почти на всем серенький мутный колорит — неизгладимая печать севера. При всем том они с истинным наслаждением трудятся над своею работою. Они часто питают в себе истинный талант, и если бы только дунул на них свежий воздух Италии, он бы, верно, развился так же вольно, широко и ярко, как растение, которое выносят наконец из комнаты на чистый воздух» (Gogol' 2002, pp. 284–5).[145]

By choosing the occupation of artist for their protagonists, filmmakers throw a bridge between the Petersburg text in literature and they in film. It is also important to mention once again in this connection the necessity for an artist to accept Petersburg's seamy and shabby beauty in order to become

[145] Written in 1833–1834, first published in 1835. 'A strange phenomenon, is it not? A Petersburg artist. An artist in the land of snows. An artist in the land of the Finns where everything is wet, flat, pale, grey, foggy... Almost all these artists paint in grey, muddy colours that bear the unmistakable imprint of the north. For all that, they all work with instinctive enjoyment. They are often endowed with real talent, and if only they were breathing the fresh air of Italy, they would no doubt develop as freely, broadly, and brilliantly as a plant at last brought from indoors into the open air' (Gogol' 1985, pp. 213–4).

a true Petersburg artist. The choice of occupation explains also frequency of studios figuring in different films and serving both as the artist's home, workplace and shelter.[146]

An extreme case of a newcomer to the city is the protagonist of Aleksei Balabanov's *Happy Days*. He appears from absolutely nowhere, from a hospital bed. We first see him drawn on a childish drawing in a city street. After the opening credits against a completely black screen and a long interval of darkness the shot fades in to a hospital ward, from the optical point of view of the protagonist, i. e. from a hospital bed. The whole episode, especially in connection to the rest of the story, may be regarded as the birth of the protagonist. He himself remembers neither his past nor his name, accepting gladly any name given to him. Different characters give him different names and he changes it three times in the film. He has no belongings except for his hat, galoshes and a musical box. He has no home and feels most comfortable and safe in the hospital, at a cemetery and inside an old ruined boat that becomes his coffin.

On the whole we can see that it is difficult to make a clear and definite portrait of the protagonists of the films studied, to identify who they are, where they come from, what they do, etc. Together, these features represent them as people with lost identities. On the one hand, this can be explained by the situation in the country as a whole in the 1990s. People were lost and embarrassed and had no guide as to how to live. At the same time, the art of film had lost its archetypal and common heroes of the Soviet time and was also in search of new portagonists.[147] In fact one of the protagonists mentioned was to occupy this vacant place.

Danila Bagrov in *Brother* was proclaimed the hero of the new generation, both in a positive and glorifying sense and in a negative sense. Danila, a person with no roots, traditions or inner principles, is portrayed as being in search of an identity. Returning to civil life from army service and presumably from war,[148]he has to apply his war ideology to civil life or find some other worldview. He tries to find a possible new worldview through various characters: his brother-hitman, Nemets, the drug-abusing teenager Ket, and the

[146]Another recurrent profession of bandit or hitman appears in three films and is a characteristic occupation for the 1990s.

[147]This problem is discussed by various film critics, among others by Daniil Dondurei (Dondurei 1992), Birgit Beumers (Beumers 1999 b) and Yana Hashamova (Hashamova 2007).

devoted and unhappy Svetlana. However, he acts according to the primitive ideology he has inherited from the experience of war, dividing the world into friends and enemies, brothers and 'worms'.

On the other hand, the lost identities of the protagonists echo the confusion of citizens between the two epochs. The city itself was lost amongst different names, social statuses, an unclear past with even more unclear perspectives for the future, and a mythology which had to be revised and re-topicalised. Thus the protagonists of some films also found themselves in search of a clear identity, of a clear worldview, of answers to existential questions.

At the beginning of *The Stairway*, Vladimir Piroshnikov is on the verge of suicide, or at least a deep frustration, unable to find life's answers. Moreover, his inability to answer these existential questions is implied as the reason why he becomes trapped by the house.

The problem of lost identity and an effort to re-establish it in the city and no doubt with the city's help can be found in other films as well: in *White Monday*, *Brother*, *Arithmetic of a Murder*, *The New Scheherazade*, *Music for December* and others.

In parallel to the city's unclear future, the fates of the protagonists at the end of their stories also remain indefinite in the majority of the films studied. Seven of twenty-nine protagonists have a definite sad ending — they die or are killed at the end of the films. In one film only, *The City*, with its protagonist Savrasov mentioned above, can the end be regarded as happy.

The majority of the protagonists are left at the end of the films in a situation to be interpreted by the viewer in either direction — towards a happy, or an extremely unhappy end. This is usually done by means of open endings as was discussed in Part II. Open endings do not offer a straightforward happy or unhappy ending for the story, leaving space for viewers' insinuations concerning its possible development.

In *Window to Paris*, for example, we leave the protagonists enthusiastically digging a new transitional port to Paris to the accompaniment of Tchaikovsky's

[148]This surmise finds its proof in the film's sequel, *Brat-2* (*Brother-2*, Aleksei Balabanov, 2000) where he is explicitly introduced to the viewers as a participant in the Chechen war.

Old French Song. Likewise, the departure of the protagonist from the city that ends the story in several films can also be regarded as an open ending, possible to interpret in any direction that will satisfy the viewer. This is the case with Kolia in *Smile*, Danila in *Brother*, Mitia in *Music for December* and some other protagonists. All of them have unclear perspectives in the future that can be considered either fortunate or unfortunate.

Another possible example of an open ending can be a lethal open ending when the protagonist's death implied at the end of the film can be escaped only through some miraculous salvation. We find it in *White Monday*, *Love, the Presage of Sorrow*, *The Stairway*. *Happy Days* can also be considered a film with a lethal open ending.

The open endings and open fates of the protagonists are an important narrative element in the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s. Not only do they reflect directly the city's open and unclear fate at the time, but they have also a semantic load similar to that of reducing the city to chaos. Just as chaos that conquers the city space plays the role of the zero point from which one can continue the myth in both directions, favouring either the city's cosmogony or eschatology, so do the open endings leave a loophole for the story's future development, either in an optimistic or a pessimistic key. Open endings provoke the audience to decide for itself whether to choose a happy or a sad ending for a story and for a protagonist.

As such, open endings — especially lethal open endings — do not contradict the canonical Petersburg text in literature. According to Toporov, marginality is characteristic of the subjects of the Petersburg text. «В Петербургском тексте русской литературы отражена квинтэссенция жизни в «лиминальном» состоянии, на краю, над бездной, на грани смерти и намечаются пути к спасению» (Toporov 1995, p. 319).[149]

5.2 Masked Personalities

In addition to the lost identities that result from the unclear fates and personalities of the protagonists there is a special type of protagonist. This is partly based on their unclear personalities and it can be defined as the masked personality. Sometimes a mask is combined with a lost identity and quite often it is hard to separate one type from another. Usually the traits of both

[149] 'The Petersburg text in Russian literature reflects a quintessence of the life in the 'liminal' position, on the verge, over an abyss, on the brink of death and the ways to salvation are being outlined.'

are present in the film, with the domination of one or another. Below I give several examples of a masked personality but also of a combination of both.

The protagonist of *Arithmetic of a Murder* represents a clear example of a total loss of identity by the protagonist after becoming lost among his own masks. His role starts first as that of an observer and accuser of other neighbours in a communal apartment where a murder is committed. Gradually his role becomes more complex, mixing in roles of Raskol'nikov and Hamlet and also the role of the author of a play. When his true part in the crime is revealed it becomes clear that he planned every step not only for himself but also for other inhabitants of the apartment. His role starts to resemble that of a puppeteer who rules his puppets, having the script of the play in his mind.

But by the end of the film he has become trapped in his own sophisticated mousetrap and overtly loses orientation in his own play. His last words are full of perplexity and confusion. From a puppeteer he has become a puppet no longer knowing who is ruling his life and death, and his play. Beneath is the episode of Il'ia's death that gives understanding of his confusion.

Image	**Sound**	**Dialogue**	**Translation**	**Commentary**
The aunt is aiming the pistol at Ilya and murmuring.		*Ilya (non-diegetic)*: ...тогда у этой пьесы есть другой настоящий автор... *Aunt (diegetic)*: Нежить.	*Ilya (non-diegetic)*: ...then this play has another real author... *Aunt (diegetic)*: Monster.	
Ilya in a medium close-up.		*Ilya (non-diegetic)*: тогда я не буду сопротивляться.	*Ilya (non-diegetic)*: then I will not resist.	
Old clock with a pendulum on the wall.	Clock ticking.			

Image	**Sound**	**Dialogue**	**Translation**	**Commentary**
Image of the front door and corridor. Journalists with a camera and a projector enter the apartment and move into Ilya's room. Crosscutting shots of the journalists and of the shots taken by their camera as part of a newsreel. The perplexed face of the investigator. The aunt sitting with an otherworldly look, disinterested in any journalist's questions.	The waltz used in the episode of putting Ilya to bed by his aunt starts.			The episode is shot in the newsreel manner of the TV programmes so popular at that time (*600 seconds*, *Telecourier*, etc.).
The body of Ilya, is still in the wheelchair with unseeing open eyes and a tiny trickle of blood from his mouth.	Music fades out.	*Ilya (non-diegetic)*: Медленно уплывая от вас, я хотел бы произнести короткую прощальную речь.	*Ilya (non-diegetic)*: As I slowly slide away from you, I would like to make a short farewell speech.	The camera is waltzing around him just as it was in the ritual of putting him to bed shown earlier in the film.

Image	**Sound**	**Dialogue**	**Translation**	**Commentary**
The opening episode of the film is shown in reverse – from the house up to the roofs and to the bird's eye view of the rubbish dump.		Я не жалею ни о чем. Я мечтал освободиться и что из того, что мой путь к освобождению был так сложен, а замысел так громоздок. Ведь я был не только неподвижен, я был слеп, и теперь, когда я смотрю на все происшедшее сверху, я спокоен, ибо тот, кто заключил меня в тело этого ублюдка и раздавил этой беспросветной жизнью знал, что я выпутаюсь... Я не знаю, кто он, но я знаю, куда мне лететь.	I don't regret a thing. I was dreaming of being released. No matter if my way to freedom was so difficult and my plan was so complicated. I was not only immobile, I was blind, and now when I look at all the things that happened from above, I am calm, since he who has put me into the body of this bastard and crushed me with this hopeless life knew that I will succeed... I do not know who he is, but I know where to fly now.	

During the whole story Il'ia has used his masks and his view on the surrounding life as a theatre, masterly, absolutely sure that as the author of the play he holds the situation in his hands. But as we can see from this last sequence, Ilya dies puzzled and perplexed and totally disoriented with regard to his own life and to his own role in this life-play.

Before moving on to the next example, let us first recall the theory of

carnival and carnivalisation discussed in Part II. A mask is a significant detail of a carnival and, as its device, becomes a significant detail of carnivalised works of art. 'The mask is the very symbol of ambiguity, the variety and flux of identities that otherwise, unmasked, are conceived as single and fixed' (Clark and Holquist 1984, p. 304).

The idea of a mask corresponds well in its ambiguity to the ambiguity of Petersburg. As has been noted repeatedly in this work, ambiguity and binarism lie at the base of the myth of the city. In the previous chapter where the city space was analysed, it was shown that in carnivalising it, masking and camouflaging the space was used profusely. The space of cinematic Petersburg seems to be turned inside out or upside down like one's clothes during a medieval carnival. Another way of masking oneself at a carnival was to travesty oneself into the opposite sex. Cross-dressing was a usual motif of medieval carnivals.[150]

If the city in these films is carnivalised, so sometimes are the protagonist and even secondary characters. In some films, even examples of literal travestying of the film characters into the opposite sex can be found.

In *Smile* we find a capacious and very explicit carnivalised image of a man travestied into a woman. The episode may be designated as a fantasy of one of the inhabitants of the lunatic asylum. Two young men, who otherwise have no connection to the narrative, break into a deserted house in their pursuit of a boy who has stolen their tape recorder. Inside the house the camera keeps following one of the youngsters through rooms full of rubbish and wreckage (and a sleeping or dead person on a sofa among this disorder) to a window. The camera angle is changed to the point-of-view of the youngster and shows the view from the window onto the street and the crowd rushing by. The figure of a woman in a yellow raincoat with flowers in her hand catches the camera's and accordingly our attention immediately. The camera focuses on her while she smiles and walks with measured steps. Suddenly she throws open her coat as though especially for the camera and we discover a naked body and . . . a penis, large as life, framed by a garter belt.

This episode and its characters have no direct relation or significance to the narrative. The significance of this episode becomes clear if combined with the idea of the carnivalised city. The image of a cross-dressed man is included into the film as though to show the overall feeling of carnival in the city streets. We remember that, according to Bakhtin, neglect of a frame or footlights was

[150]See, for example, Bakhtin 1990, p. 454.

a significant feature of the carnival. Any kind of a frame would limit a carnival and lock it from the public. There is no separation into public and actors for a carnival. The figure of a man dressed as a woman, randomly fished from the crowd, is a perfect illustration or even a symbol of this idea. The city is completely absorbed by carnival and we can confirm this simply by looking out of the window at the crowd outside.

Examples of an explicit carnival unfolding in the city streets can be found in other films from the same period.

In *Dude Water Winner*, the mistress of the mafia boss is a transvestite who looks more like an androgyne, since not until the credits can we identify the person as a man or a woman.

Another film where we find the motif of cross-dressing is *Lyubov and Other Nightmares*. When the female protagonist, Lyubov, first appears on screen she is dressed as a man with a moustache. Even her hair is hidden under fake bald skin. She then tears it off to show her real face and identity as though being born, hatching from a cocoon. Although her disguise is dictated by the narrative — Lyubov is a hitman and has to hide her identity under different masks (later in the film she uses a wig) — a carnival subtext is tangible in this cross-dressing. Lyubov is part of Petersburg; she is tightly connected to it and influenced by its carnivalised nature.

One more example should be given here. It is a film that abounds in cross-dressing and other disguises, *The Body Will Be Buried*. . . . There are several carnival disguises in the film and one of them is a case of cross-dressing. This Tarantino-influenced film represents a number of narratives with a number of protagonists who briefly come across one another in different moments of the film: Svetlana, an actress, Maxim, a DJ and composer, and Senior Midshipman, a bandit.

Already in the opening credits of the film we find a reference to medieval culture and carnival. The film starts with a quote from *Carmina Burana*, *O Fortuna*.[151]The choice of *O Fortuna* does not set the tone merely for the first episode of the film but affects all that follows. All the characters can be regarded from the position of carnival or even a carnival procession. This becomes apparent first in cross-dressing and various disguises. There is a reference to the Divine Androgyne, a mythological genderless creature that symbolises the balance between male and female. One of the secondary characters has a tattoo of the Androgyne on his back. Later on in the film the idea of gender play is given more explicitly. Svetlana, one of the protagonists, is a young woman, artistic and impulsive. She disguises herself as a sailor.

Dressed this way she walks to a nightclub. There she comes across another protagonist, a gangster nicknamed Senior Midshipman. He has come there for a showdown with other mafia members about the corpse of his ex-boss and lover which he had kidnapped for some unclear reasons. Senior Midshipman becomes attracted to the young sailor and takes him on a ride. When he finds out the truth, he leaves Svetlana handcuffed to a sink pipe in the bathroom in a boat-hotel room. The one to release her is a chambermaid with hair rollers who professionally unlocks the cuffs with a pin. Moreover — and here is another example of a carnivalised disguise — after that she performs the only musical number of the film. To console the girl she sings a blues song. But now her appearance is changed — she is made up, her hair is styled and she is wearing a long blue dress with a transparent cardigan and a boa. Her performance and her momentary change of costume are totally non-diegetic. Having completed the song she withdraws gracefully through a long corridor, still well-dressed and pulling her boa and vacuum-cleaner behind her. The episode stands apart both from the narrative and from the film genre. It seems to be a musical insertion into the film without narrative load. But again, if we refer to the carnivalisation theory this episode adds to the idea of the totality of carnivalised Petersburg. One runs across manifestations of carnival anywhere in the city.

All the characters in this film are theatrical and unnatural. First of all this concerns Senior Midshipman who pathetically plays his role, giving long serious monologues inspired by some macho philosophy and addressed usually to his bull-terrier. He looks grotesque in his long leather coat and wide-brimmed hat and with his manners of a cowboy or a samurai in the streets of Petersburg. The fact that he is playing a role and putting on a show is obvious and accentuated. Senior Midshipman is not the only character in disguise; the secondary characters are all disguised according to figures from medieval carnival: bandits with their nightlife and nightclubs correspond to devils and hell; sailors and the sea — to angels and heaven respectively.[152]

[151] Later in the film this poem is declaimed once again by Senior Midshipman in a rather grotesque context. He quotes it in the lavatory of the nightclub, being hidden from the viewer only by a semitransparent partition while urinating totally drunk.

[152] In the episode where two bandits are trying to take the uniform away from a sailor they are defeated by a crowd of sailors. The episode takes place on a bank of the Neva on a gangway of the ship early in the dawn. Thus the episode takes place in a liminal space

The protagonists, though, appear to be on the brink between the two worlds, entering both of them partly or indirectly. In the beginning of the film Senior Midshipman identifies himself straightforwardly. He comes to the morgue with his friend to take the corpse of his dead friend and boss. His ironic comments during this visit draw parallels between the morgue and the land of the dead. The puzzled guard asks them who they are and the answer is: «Мы вроде ангелов, только настоящие, а не такие, какими нас рисуют всякие мудаки» / 'We are a kind of angel but real, nothing close to what these motherfuckers draw.'

As to the dead body which sets the action of the whole story in motion and which, according to the film's title, should be buried, we never know what really happens to it. Three times in the film its burial is shown in different variations, but none of these seems to be true, they all are just the fancies of Senior Midshipman.

More examples can be given of the masked and otherwise hidden identities in the films discussed. However, we may conclude already that a masked identity is one of the manifestations of lost identity so characteristic for the protagonists of the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s. However we can also say that lost identity carries a broader meaning and can be regarded as characteristic not only of the Petersburg text but of Russian cinema of the period as a whole, in the moment of searching for a new hero. Masked identity in its turn is closely connected to lost identities and is often confused with them. At the same time it bears a tangible imprint of the myth of Petersburg and of carnivalisation.

5.3 Gothic and Carnivalised Doubles

5.3.1 Gothic Double (Doppelgänger)

A further variety of examples concerns not only the figure of the protagonist but represents a model of relations between the protagonist and secondary

and time for both forces. During the whole film recognisable attributes and details of bandit life (skirmish, slang, nightclubs, drugs) are alternated with hints at sailor life. The nickname of the protagonist is Senior Midshipman, his dead boss was once a captain, Svetlana disguises herself as a sailor. In a long dialogue Svetlana and Maksim tell their fortunes in front of the Sea Officers' House, instead of cards using the appearance and rank of the person who first exits the house. Finally, the sea is the only way of escape for the protagonist and not by chance this episode is interpreted in the dreams of Senior Midshipman as his flight with Svetlana dressed as a sailor and his dead friend, both with wings on their backs. This whole episode resembles an Ascension scene.

characters in the film. They are related to the phenomenon of doubles or *Doppelgänger* that is recurrent in the films of the cinematic Petersburg text.

According to Miller, the inventor of the term *Doppelgänger* was Jean Paul Richter and its idea was inspired by German writers Goethe, Tick and Kleist (Miller 1985, p. 41). The motif of *the doppelgänger* was widely used in nineteenth century literature, especially in gothic romances, and the most prominent examples of that time are Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener* (1856). Among Russian writers who used this theme, Dostoevsky is cited with *The Double* (1846) (Dryden 2003, p. 2).

Greenslade underlines that the theme was awakened by 'fear of the hidden presence of a 'monstrous' and disruptive energy' inside the human being itself, of 'the beast in man'. 'The fear of atavism, of reversion to a lower state, offered the perfect medium for the expression of these worrying questions' (Greenslade 1994, pp. 72–3).

According to Dryden, doubled identity can also be characteristic of a split or lost personality. 'The literature of duality is at its most obvious level a literature about identity, or even lack of identity' (Dryden 2003, p. 39). The doubles in literature embodied violation and the threat to a human's integrity and due to them an individual was supposed to endure splits and fragmentation (Ibid., pp. 38–41). As we can see, this motif of a split or lost personality applies to the protagonists of the Petersburg text in literature. It is no surprise, then, that examples of doubled identity can be found as well in the Petersburg films of the 1990s.

A metropolis was the usual place of action for romances involving a *Doppelgänger*. Important for the phenomenon of *Doppelgänger* in the cinematic Petersburg text is the fact that, according to some scholars, it was the modern city itself that originally gave rise to the motif of the double.

> 'Issues of duality — split personalities, physical transformations, mistaken identities, doppelgängers — were found to be manifested in the social, geographical and architectural schisms of the modern city' (Ibid., p. 19).
>
> 'Identity and the city are crucial to the imaginative representation of the divided self...' (Ibid., p. 17).

The labyrinths of the modern city of that time, first of all London, offered the perfect place for the story:

> 'The city (London) is a Janus-faced entity: if there is a slum, there is also a clean row of Georgian terraces; if there are labyrinthine alleyways, then there are also wide avenues; the cold squalor of a slum dweller's single room finds its counterpart in the warm firesides of the urban rich...' (Parsons 2000, p. 66).

If London's duality in the nineteenth century is in the first place a topological one with a precise separation into the East and West Ends, into regions of poor and rich, of danger and safety, then in Petersburg the duality is manifest primarily on a metaphysical level, namely in the city's reversible myth in which all the meanings obtain simultaneously a positive and a negative load. The city cannot be divided purely topologically into a safe and a dangerous part, light and dark, good and evil. A good example to illustrate this metaphysical duality is Gogol's *Nevsky Prospect*, the portrayal of the prospect itself, which evokes admiration and apprehension at the same time. Petersburg's own metaphysical duality provokes duality of the protagonists.

Of course, the films studied in this thesis were not the first to use the motif of *the doppelgänger*. This appeared in cinema very early. One of the first appearances of a double in cinema is Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) where angelic Maria is doubled by an evil robot. *Doppelgänger* is also a common subject of horror films. According to Dobrotvorskii, three major horror schemes in film can roughly be typologised in the following way:

1. Dracula films — based on fear of supernatural powers.

2. Frankenstein films — based on fear of human creation that exceeds human control.

3. Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde films — based on fear of a prehistoric monster inside a civilised human being (Dobrotvorskii 2005, p. 62, Brashinsky and Dobrotvorskii 1997, p. 44).

Interestingly, two of the three types, Frankenstein and Jekyll-Hyde types, are originally *doppelgänger* plots. Thus we may say that doppelgänger plots are dominant in horror films. Among the films studied we have just one example of a horror film with a Frankenstein plot, namely *Mister Designer*. In the other films, mentioned in this section, although not categorised as horror films, the *doppelgänger* plot inclines towards the Jekyll-Hyde plot.

There are several films studied in the thesis that contain some traits of *the doppelgänger* plot. Often the protagonist is forced or destined to replace his antagonist and takes his/her position. This episode is usually placed at the film's end. This creates the illusion of a vicious circle of one and the same unhappy destiny for various inhabitants of the city. This destiny does not depend on the protagonist's actions. Whatever he or she chooses to do, however he or she succeeds in confronting the evil usually embodied in the antagonist's figure, the antagonist's destiny follows the protagonist to over-

take him/her at the end.[153] This dénouement excludes a happy ending. It also fragmentises or even completely demolishes the protagonist's personality which has been integral so far. But at the same time a doubled protagonist reflects the city's duality, its double-sided nature. It can be argued that it is the myth's influence that has created doubled protagonists in literature and in film.

In *Music for December* there are four prominent characters who form a love rectangle. Mother Anna, her ex-husband Larin who has returned from abroad, her daughter Masha who has once been in love with her step-father and the daughter's fiancé Mitia. They form two antagonistic pairs: the mother and the daughter, the lover and the fiancé. The rivals in each pair do not have the clear roles of protagonists or antagonists. Both younger protagonists hate and despise the older ones. But at the end, when Larin is dead and the mother is placed in a lunatic asylum, the young couple seems to have occupied the places of the older one. This is shown by making the last episode reminiscent of the opening episode of the film. At the beginning the mother is standing on the balcony looking down at Larin arriving from abroad after a long absence. By the end of the film, her husband has committed suicide, Larin has been murdered and she is alone in a mental asylum and ceases to recognise anybody. At the end of the story the episode on the balcony is repeated once again with Masha and Mitia instead of Anna and Larin. Masha stands in the same pose on the balcony and Mitia leaves her and the city, probably forever. Just like her mother Masha is left alone, abandoned by her fiancé, hated by her colleagues, and her lover is dead. Thus they accept the roles of Larin and Anna and one day the story will repeat, when Mitia finally returns from abroad.

In *Dude Water Winner* a hint at the protagonist's doubled identity is

[153] This recalls Blok's poem from 1912 *Ночь. Улица. Фонарь. Аптека* (*Night, street, street lamp, drugstore*), especially the poem's second quatrain:

Умрешь — начнешь опять сначала
И повторится все, как встарь:
Ночь, ледяная рябь канала,
Аптека, улица, фонарь.
(You die — you start everything again,
And everything will repeat itself as in the old times:
Night, the ice ripples on the channel,
drugstore, street, the street lamp
(Translation by Gritsman 2003, p. 137)).

Clear examples of a doppelgänger plot in the Petersburg text in literature are: *The Double* by Dostoevsky and *The Nose* by Gogol'. An antagonistic double later appears in Andrei Bitov's *Pushkin House*.

found only at the end of the film. After Pavel Gorelikov, the hero of this action film, wins his struggle against the mafia he is apparently forced to occupy the place of the mafia boss. In the film's last episode he receives a call from some mysterious person who requests him to send money to his account. This recalls a similar dialogue that has been repeated several times during the film between the mafia boss and the same voice on the phone. Gorelikov accepts the request and accordingly it is implied that he also accepts the place of the new mafia boss. Just like in *Music for December*, we see at the end how hopeless his fight has been. This ending is also reminiscent of legends about dragon slayers who finally, when the dragon is killed, take its place and become a dragon themselves. Given the fact that the film refers several times to some mysterious epos Sí [ʃi:],[154]this is certainly not a chance coincidence. The ending enforces the mythopoeical character of the plot which also distinguishes it from other action films of the period. But it also gives a reference to *the doppelgänger* plot. A hero becomes an antihero in the final scene and is thereby robbed of his individuality and his victory over evil forces.

The hint about the protagonists' doubled identity given only at the end of the films shows us the final and total loss of identity by the protagonist.

Mister Designer likewise has an illustrative image of *a doppelgänger* entailing the phenomenon of multiple doubling. A woman, formerly the model for the protagonist in the creation of his most beautiful mannequin and fascinated by him, is replaced by this evil mannequin. The designer's highest goal announced in the film is to compete with God and to create an even more beautiful creature than He can, a creature which will not fall ill and die. We see clear parallels with the Frankenstein plot. The doll outlives her prototype, who dies of tuberculosis. It tries to occupy the girl's place and to seduce the designer. In the end, she destroys her own creator using modern technology, an automobile.

As mentioned above, *Mister Designer* is based on Aleksandr Grin's novel *Grey Automobile* (Grin 1980)[155]. However, Arbatov, the scriptwriter, moved the action from the imaginary city of Alambo to Saint Petersburg at the beginning of the century, even indicating the year when the action took place.

[154]There is no proof of the existence of the text cited in the film as pieces of the epos, neither any evidence of existence of the epos itself. Although it can probably be identified as the ancient Irish epos of Aos Sí. At the same time these mystifying references are typical for Sergei Kurekhin and his works on the whole, and might be just one of his jokes and mystifications.

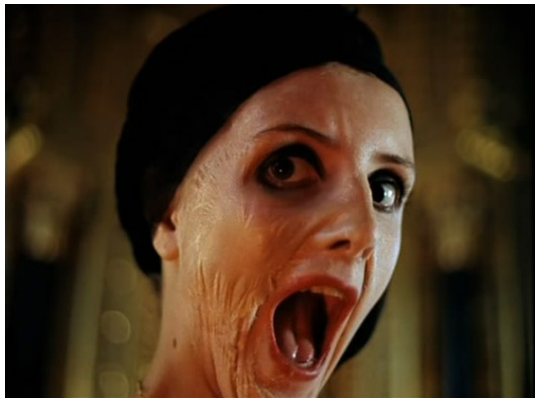

Figure 5.1: The mannequin's malformed mask in *Mister Designer*.

Together with the city's name the characters' names were changed from the extraordinary and bizarre Corrida El-Basso and Ebeneser Sidney to Anna (and her double Maria) and Platon Andreevich respectively.

Arbatov has also rearranged the focus of the story. In the novel, the malicious mannequin and her pursuit in a car is a game of the protagonist's imagination, a rebellion against the attractiveness of the material world and of progress. In *Mister Designer*, it is the relation between the master and his creation that is central. In Grin's novel the grey automobile represented the core of the protagonist's fears symbolising his fear of progress. The automobile may even be regarded as Ebeneser Sidney's antagonist in the novel that threatens his safety and his life. A mannequin is simply a weapon: «У него (автомобиля) есть также любовницы, эти леди, обращающие с окон модных магазинов улыбку своих восковых лиц.» (Grin 1980, p. 329)[156].

In the film the correlation between the car and the doll is reversed. The automobile becomes a weapon in the hands of the murderous mannequin. Fear of progress grows into a more global fear of the creator about his creation.

[155]Written in 1925.

[156]'He [the automobile] even has his mistresses, those ladies who give a smile of their wax faces from fashion shops windows'.

The double in *Mister Designer* follows strictly the traditions of the Gothic doppelgänger, of both the Frankenstein and the Jekyll-Hyde plots. She is a blood-thirsty treacherous creature under the mask of a fair lady. This idea is explicitly manifest in one of the last episodes of the film when the designer finally reveals the mannequin's true identity. He pokes her face with a firebrand and it is shown in a close-up, half-disfigured and malformed (Figure 5.1). It is clear now that it is not a face but a wax mask. In the next episode the mask is smooth and charming again. Note here also another example of the mask's role in the cinematic Petersburg text.[157]

5.3.2 Carnivalised Doubles

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* Bakhtin speaks of doubles as a phenomenon characteristic of carnival and hence of carnivalised literature. As examples of carnival doubles he mentions grotesque carnival pairs (for example, thin and fat, long and short) where each member of the couple/pair degrades, ridicules and uncrowns the other. In literature, the most recognisable example of such a pair are Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

Such pairs, according to Bakhtin, can be found in many Dostoevsky's works:

> «Пародирующие двойники стали довольно частым явлением и карнавализованной литературы. Особенно ярко это выражено у Достоевского, — почти каждый из ведущих героев его романов имеет по нескольку двойников, по-разному его пародирующих: для Раскольникова — Свидригайлов, Лужин, Лебезятников, для Ставрогина — Петр Верховенский, Шатов, Кириллов, для Ивана Карамзина — Смердяков, черт, Ракитин. В каждом из них (то есть двойников) герой умирает (то есть отрицается), чтобы обновиться (то есть очиститься и подняться над самим собою)» (Bakhtin 2002, p. 75).[158]

[157] There are other episodes in the film where masks appear physically. In the opening episode a group of mime artists with whitened faces perform. This is not directly motivated by the story, beyond locating the viewer in the beginning of the twentieth century (a superfluous hint since the year is given in the film's credits) and more precisely in the theatrical milieu. But at the same time this performance initiates a carnival game of disguise and masking central to the story.

[158] 'Parodying doubles have become a rather common phenomenon in carnivalized literature. They find especially vivid expression in Dostoevsky — almost every one of the leading heroes of his novels has several doubles who parody him in various ways: for Raskolnikov there are Svidrigailov, Luzhin and Lebeziatnikov; for Stavrogin — Peter Verkhovensky, Shatov, and Kirillov; for Ivan Karamazov — Smerdyakov, the devil, Rakitin. In each of them (that is, in each of the doubles) the hero dies (that is, is negated) in order to be

Note that Bakhtin does not include here Dostoevsky's *The Double* with Goliadkin and his *doppelgänger*. This is, of course, a typical example of the Gothic *doppelgänger* and not of carnivalised ones. However, we can argue here that *the doppelgänger* discussed previously in this chapter has a similar function to that of parodying doubles. The latter also give a new, ridiculing and uncrowning or in some other way degrading meaning to the figure of the protagonist and it is so doing they threaten in the first place the integrity of his personality.

In my opinion, what distinguishes these two types of doubles is that the appearance of a Gothic *doppelgänger* usually occurs closer to the film's end and destabilises the narrative on the whole, implying the improbability of a happy ending. A carnival double, in its turn, is a figure of secondary importance that gives new, maybe even unexpected, accents to the personality of the protagonist. The interaction between the protagonist and a carnival double continues throughout the story, but it does not play a decisive role in its dénouement.

Examples of a parodying double can be found in at least two of the films discussed.

In *The Stairway*, the protagonist's double, Georgii, reflects him as in a distorting mirror. Originally Georgii had also come to the house when in search of himself. But he chose not to go against the stream. He found an easy way-out — through the window in the female neighbour's room. And he keeps going in and out of the house through this window, still living in the house. Georgii envies Piroshnikov for his stubbornness and efforts to overcome the trial honestly.

Another film where the relations of the protagonist with other characters may be regarded as those of a carnival pair is *The Myth of Leonid*. The wife of the protagonist, tall monumental Mil'da, plays the role of a parodying double to her puny and frail husband.[159]The relationships of the spouses border on those of a mother and a child. In the film's opening scene she gently carries him out of the water in her arms. She makes him a dessert (a piece of bread dipped in sugar) when going to work while he is still asleep, etc. Her decisiveness, firmness, finally her employment and love affair with Kirov — all contrast with Leonid Nikolaev's inconstancy, nervousness, his suffering of unemployment and constant failures to meet Kirov, only to pass him a petition. In a way, Kirov's sublime figure also plays the role of a parodying

renewed (that is, in order to be purified and to rise above himself)' (Bakhtin 1994, pp. 127–8).

double to Nikolaev. Kirov's character also contrasts and opposes Nikolaev's, their indirect confrontation outlines more clearly Nikolaev's character.

We may note here that in some films the city itself obtains a parodying double. Interestingly, in all the examples found in the films studied it is invariably Paris that plays this role.

In *Nicotine*, an adaptation of Godard's *À bout de souffle* (*Breathless*, 1960), the city works as a double of Paris, the setting for Godard's film. In the Petersburg of *Nicotine*, the details that would make it recognisable are all but washed away. The city is covered with a haze of smoke and seems almost a dream about a city, not a real city. It is more likely a dream about Paris in Petersburg.

Relations between the two cities in a carnival pair differ from film to film. If in *Nicotine* Petersburg is a parodying double of Paris and Paris plays a dominating role in this pair, in *Window to Paris* the situation is reversed.

Here Paris as the double of Petersburg is apparent primarily in the way the characters perceive the former. They look at it through their own city as through a lens. They actually see Paris as if through a window in Petersburg and therefore look at it and estimate it as a part of their own city. Most explicitly, this happens in the episode of their first promenade in Paris when they correlate Parisian tourist attractions with those of their native city (the Eiffel tower with the TV-tower, for example). But this can be found even earlier in the opening credits when the landscape of a Parisian street transforms into a film episode placed on a street in Petersburg.

In *White Monday*, Paris also has the role of contrasting double to Petersburg. Ivan Khristoforov jumps from one roof in Petersburg and miraculously lands on another in Paris. Unlike in Petersburg, in Paris he does not suffer any more from the destructive abnormal power of his voice. If previously this was the reason for him being persecuted and turned into an outcast, here, vice versa, it helps him to assimilate with the citizens, to unite with others.

[159] According to Tat'iana Sukharnikova, director of Kirov Museum, Nikolaev and his wife were almost of the same height.

* * *

Summing up the generalised portrait of the protagonist of the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s, we can say that a lost or masked and in other ways distorted and fragmented identity is observed as a recurrent element in the material studied. A lost identity is understood as a characteristic of the period as a whole, not concerning solely the Petersburg text. However, this fits well with the city's carnivalised image in the films since it also echoes the city's perplexity in self-determination between the two epochs. The masked identities, the appearance of *doppelgängers* and especially of parodying doubles in their turn have a clear imprint of carnivalisation that penetrates the city as well as the lives of its inhabitants.

Chapter 6

Connecting to the Tradition

In this chapter I will focus systematically on those features of the cinematic text that unite it to the Petersburg text in literature and will try to give a more extensive analysis of the cinematic Petersburg text from this point of view. Two films with the kind of entangled plot-lines familiar from the Petersburg text in Russian literature have been chosen for closer analysis, namely: *Arithmetic of a Murder* and *The Myth of Leonid*. I will discuss these two films, with an emphasis on their adherence to the Petersburg theme and especially those familiar plots belonging to the Petersburg text in literature. The directors of both films have spoken of their conscious and deliberate decision to use classical literature as a basis for their contemporary plots. Therefore my task is not to prove a connection between the films and the Petersburg text in literature, but to analyse how and why this connection was established inside the films. Initially, a significant difference between the two films chosen and their use of literary source is clarified. In *Arithmetic of a Murder* two different plots are used profusely and numerous interwoven and interplaying patterns that derive from both of these original sources are included in the film. In *The Myth of Leonid* only the main plot-line is extracted from its literary source. Therefore, the analyses of the two films will be developed differently. In *Arithmetic of a Murder* we shall focus on how and to what extent the two works are exploited in the film and how they interact with each other. In *The Myth of Leonid*, in its turn, we will examine how the literary plot-line is revealed in the film.

In section 6.2 the traditional patterns and plot-lines found in some of the other films in question will be briefly discussed.

6.1 Familiar Plots and their New Forms

6.1.1 *Arithmetic of a Murder*

There are explicit connections with the works of Dostoevsky in the films of the 1990s. Often the milieu, the characters, what Bakhtin coins as 'slum naturalism' (Bakhtin 1994, p. 115) («трущобный натурализм» (Bakhtin 2002, p. 67)), saturate the films of the Petersburg text. It can be argued that criminal plots, poverty, the hard lives of the lower social strata, including prostitutes, drunkards and criminals, already familiar from Dostoevsky are also characteristic of the renowned chernukha-style films of the 1990s. Thus the features that distinguish chernukha films were new only to the Soviet cinema and not to Russian literature.

Arithmetic of a Murder is based on Mikhail Popov's novel *Let us talk!* (Popov 1998). This is a detective story with a predominance of psychological drama relating it to the works of Dostoevsky.

A murder is committed in a communal apartment. The murdered neighbour, Matvei Briukhanov, is a disgusting, despotic person detested and feared by all his neighbours, each of whom have both the motive and the possible means of killing him. Thus everybody in the apartment falls under the suspicion of the investigator, Petr Prokof'evich. One of the tenants of the apartment, a young wheelchair-bound man called Il'ia Muromtsev, undertakes to help the investigation. Confined within the four walls of the communal apartment and due to his wit and keenness of observation, he learns all the dirty and shameful secrets of his neighbours. Seeing him as a harmless cripple these even initiate him themselves into their secrets. But it soon becomes clear that Il'ia is playing a game of his own. Il'ia's provocative conversations with neighbours make them lie, inform against each other, make mistakes. Finally, one of them, Platon Sergeevich, commits suicide in a lavatory, driven to doing this by Il'ia's manipulations. The murder turns out to be Il'ia's neatly planned crime that would punish all the inhabitants of the communal apartment and reveal their true rat-like nature. At the same time, this plan is intended to help him to become noticed and to step out of his wheelchair, at least allegorically. The only person to understand the true nature of Il'ia and his devilish plan turns out to be his aunt, Varvara Petrovna. She is the only person who has really loved the murdered Matvei for many years and at the end of story she shoots Il'ia in revenge for his death. However, in fact, we never know for sure if the murder was actually committed by Il'ia or if he simply used Matvei's suicide as the starting point of his manipulative game.

Without recurrent references to Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* Il'ia's motives would remain obscure. References

to *Hamlet* take into consideration not only Shakespeare's play but, perhaps to an even greater extent, its film adaptation by Kozintsev. Il'ia associates himself both with Raskol'nikov and with Hamlet, a fact which introduces new patterns into the plot and gives a deeper understanding of other characters as well. There are no direct references to the names of the two proto-protagonists in the film. The reference to them is subtle and concealed in many tiny details on the narrative level.

Associations with Dostoevsky and his works are apparent first owing to the chosen locales. The action is restricted to a shabby, sombre communal apartment teeming with rats, to its dark stairway with a lift and to the backyards outside the apartment. This is the milieu of modified slums from Dostoevsky's works. In the film, much attention is paid to this poor and restricted locale. The scenes of the inhabitants of the communal flat interchange with long pans, tilts and tracking shots of the courtyards, the stairway and the apartment itself. These inserted sequences are extensive, varying from 15–20 seconds to a maximum of 3 minutes 36 seconds in the opening credits. On average the duration is around one minute. Some of these passages re-create Il'ia's promenade path in the backyards, on occasion accompanied by his neighbours and his aunt. These courtyards are similar to those filmed in other films of the Petersburg text (*The City*, *Window to Paris*, *Happy Days*, etc.). They are explicitly collapsing and derelict with an ugly half ruined wall in the yard, the shabby cracked walls of the houses, blind windows, dustbins overfilled with litter and piles of wooden boxes with rats hiding beneath. In these inserted sequences the yards are shown as an alternation of the dark gateways and bright apertures of well-courtyards. Other sequences give a view from Il'ia's window or show the inside of the apartment. There is no unifying explanation for these sequences. They are never clearly diegetic or non-diegetic. Most of them can be interpreted as Il'ia's visions or dreams or even his flashbacks. But this interpretation is very uncertain. The angle of the framing often changes within one and the same sequence. Low angles might well be interpreted as the optical point of view (POV) of the rats teeming in the apartment. Inside the apartment the light is often poor, even oppressive; it is not a home by any means.

Apart from creating a strongly Dostoevskian milieu these sequences also introduce us to Il'ia's world as restricted to the apartment, the lift and the backyards. He is repeatedly shot sitting with his back to the viewer near the window, looking into the backyard. Even in the episodes of his conversations with other neighbours he frequently turns his back to them and says his words without turning round. This underlines his reclusive lifestyle in this small and frightening world as well as his desire to free himself from this imprisonment.

Figure 6.1: Petr Prokof'evich looking down at Il'ia during their conversation shot in low angle.

At the same time this motif of Il'ia being filmed from behind has a subtle connection to Smoktunovskii as Hamlet in Kozintsev's film when he recites his main soliloquy with his back turned towards the audience. A window as a functional element in this film can be linked to the functional element of roofs and sky in other Petersburg films. At the end of the film, when Il'ia dies, the camera makes a pan and a crane shot showing first the house and its roof, then the shot is reframed to a distant shot of a rubbish dump as if the camera is flying into the sky. This image is accompanied by Il'ia's farewell soliloquy where he says that he is flying away and he knows where to fly.

The idea of Il'ia's small, isolated world is revealed verbally as well. Il'ia himself refers to it as to 'the cosmos of our communal apartment' («космос нашей коммуналки»). Indeed, this communal apartment with its freaky inhabitants and appended backyards is all he has seen in his life and all he knows. At the end of the film his aunt takes him for the first time beyond the yards to a public garden and leaves him there. Left alone outside his cosmos Il'ia becomes frightened and struck by paranoid panic. He rushes back to the house.

Il'ia calls his wheelchair his bier, his coffin on wheels and the bed coffin into which his body is locked. Compare this to Raskol'nikov's room being described as a coffin (Dostoevsky 1989, pp. 218, 225) in which his terrible ideas take shape. In the film, the impression of the narrow and squeezed space of the room is reinforced visually with the help of low angle shooting motivated by Il'ia's optical POV when he lies in bed or sits in his wheelchair (Figure 6.1). To these explicit definitions we can add two parallel scenes, firstly the one where Il'ia is put to bed by his aunt and secondly the one of journalists filming his

dead body at the end of the film. Accompanied by the same music heard otherwise only once in the film, a waltz by Oleg Karavaichuk, and filmed with a whirling, almost dancing movement of the camera, these two scenes equate Il'ia's life with death. The only significant difference between these two scenes is the exclusion of the image of the whirling ceiling in the second one, expressing the fact that Il'ia can no longer see and thus has no point of view.

According to all these details we can say that Il'ia is a person buried alive and his crime is his act of desperation, an inevitable evil he has to accomplish. It is the city that is to blame. This is why the above-mentioned inserted sequences representing the city's bowels play a remarkable role in the film.

Speaking with the investigator, Petr Prokof'evich, Il'ia underlines several times that it matters little who is guilty for the crime since everybody in this apartment could be guilty. He points openly to the influence on the humans of the world surrounding him. During his first conversation with the investigator, Il'ia says: «Неужели Вы не чувствуете, что здесь, в этой квартире, в этом городе, все... все буквально пропитано убийством!» / 'Don't you feel that here, in this flat, in this city, everything... everything is literally saturated with murder!'[160] He suggests that Petr Prokof'evich smells the air and senses that it smells sour, that everything has turned sour in this place. This intentionally echoes Dostoevsky who often claimed in his works that the thick and sultry Petersburg air was impossible to breathe.[161]

In her review of the film, Olga Sherwood emphasises this idea:

> «... В *Арифметике убийства* в сочетании абсолютного детектива с фильмом ужасов и петербургской мифологией можно найти классические отсылки: преступление порождено гнилым городом, «читавшим» Достоевского и Фрейда, а не московским «квартирным вопросом». Это картина про уродов и людей и Высшем замысле...» (Sherwood 1993)[162]

On the narrative level both works, *Crime and Punishment* and *Hamlet* , can be easily decoded in the film. From *Crime and Punishment* comes the murder

[160] Note here once again the nameless reference to Petersburg discussed in Chapter 3 and 4.

[161] Among the most usual negative epithets used by Dostoevsky concerning Petersburg Toporov mentions such as «вонь, грязь... грязный, душный... улицы (грязные, душные), жара-духота... душный, зловонный, грязный, угарный, тесный, стесненный, узкий, спертый...» (Toporov 1995, pp. 314–5). ('stench, squalor... squalid, suffocating... streets (squalid, suffocating), swelter and reek... suffocating, reeky, squalid, smoky, cramped, constrained, narrow, stuffy...').

[162] 'In a combination of a pure detective story with a horror film and with the Petersburg mythology of *Arithmetic of a Murder* classical references can be found: the crime is effected by the rotten city that 'has read' Dostoevsky and Freud, and not by the Moscow 'apartment problem'. This is a film of freaks and men and the Superior idea...'

of a despised neighbour that raises the question as to whether the murder of even the most detestable creature can be justified. From *Hamlet* comes not only the motif of revenge and the idea of a mousetrap for villains, but also the problem of the justification of the protagonist's cruelty. All these motifs interact and interweave with each other into one plot.

Il'ia watches a particular episode from the film *Hamlet* which reveals the whole plan of the crime he has planned. This is the episode of Hamlet's play, *Mousetrap*, staged by itinerant actors. When combined with the rats previously shown fighting and hiding, and with Il'ia's mention of rats inhabiting the apartment, his intentions become clear. When speaking of rats, Il'ia is referring to the humans that inhabit the apartment, not the animals. Compare this metaphor used recurrently by Il'ia to the episode of Polonius' death in *Hamlet* when Hamlet, intending to kill Claudius, as he believes, hidden behind the curtain, shouts 'A mouse!' and stabs the curtain with his sword. The murder of one of the lodgers of the communal apartment was intended to become a mousetrap for all the others. All of them fall under suspicion and all are forced to reveal the sins of their past and the skeletons hidden in their cupboards.

The characters of *Arithmetic of a Murder* are paralleled both with the characters of *Crime and Punishment* and those of *Hamlet*. Role parallels to *Hamlet* are traced more clearly than those to *Crime and Punishment*. Correspondences to the latter are usually schematic, picking up only a few of the most recognisable features of the proto-characters. The role connotations concerning *Hamlet* become clear as soon as we learn about the affair between Il'ia's aunt and the murdered neighbour who can then be interpreted respectively as Gertrude and Claudius. Thus to Il'ia can be attributed, without doubt, the role of Hamlet. The female neighbour of easy virtue, Marina, who sympathises with wheelchair-bound Il'ia, can be regarded as both Ophelia and Sonia Marmeladova. Another neighbour, Platon Bryzgalin, also characterised by Il'ia as half-dissident, half-profligate, corresponds most probably to Polonius and Svidrigailov. Il'ia Muromtsev is mindful of these roles during the whole story. He is trying to put these masks of his play not only on himself but on the other characters. He is aware of his own roles of Raskol'nikov and Hamlet and tries to fulfill them both. Even in his appearance, traits of both characters can be found.

We shall not discuss all the characters here but confine ourselves to speaking of Matvei and Petr Prokof'evich as probably the most illustrative examples of how two proto-characters are combined in each character of *Arithmetic of a Murder*.

In the film Matvei corresponds at one and the same time to the old pawn-

broker and to King Claudius. His past affair with Il'ia's aunt Varvara points to the latter role. This affair seems to be the reason for Il'ia's personal resentment towards Matvei. He mentions it in his conversation with the investigator. It is expressed explicitly in Il'ia's flashback of Matvei making love to his aunt when the small Il'ia, unable to leave the room, had to stay in his bed. Motivating the others' detestation of Matvei Il'ia speaks mainly of his appearance. He mentions his over-porous skin, his smell, sweaty palms, extraordinary salivation when speaking to someone, as if the interlocutor makes his mouth water, saliva bubbling around his lips. In its disgusted details this description is reminiscent of that of Alena in *Crime and Punishment* (Dostoevsky 1989, p. 9). It matches the only shot of the dead Matvei when the camera shows his face from a low angle, which changes the proportions of his face. It looks frightening, more like the face of a Neanderthal than of a human. Apart from the official 'victim' or 'the murdered' used by the investigators, he is referred to by his neighbours with different harsh epithets more often than with his name, such as 'gorilla', 'beast', 'hog', 'mountain'. In Il'ia's paper theatre, which we will speak about later, he is actually designated by a pithecanthropus' head. Interestingly, in Il'ia's flashback Matvei is never shown. The beginning of the flashback when Matvei enters the room is given from Matvei's optical POV. At the end of the sequence we see only his bare legs moving in the bed from Il'ia's POV and the boy's reaction to this. During the film we also hear several times his coughing and loud breathing, which overlap images of Il'ia or are heard when the camera moves in the corridors, as if he is still present there or as if Il'ia can still hear him.

Petr Prokof'evich is the investigator who has to solve the crime. This already connects him to Porfirii Petrovich, the detective of *Crime and Punishment*. The parallel becomes obvious on acquaintance when Il'ia hears his name and murmurs with a smile 'Porfir'evich', replying to the investigator's correction with 'All the same'. Il'ia seems to have expected that this character would appear in the story. In retrospect, when Il'ia is revealed as the author of a play, his excitement at meeting Petr Prokof'evich can be decoded as the author's joy at the appearance of a character so appropriate for his play. In one conversation he calls him 'our Porfirii Petrovich'. The relationship between Il'ia and the investigator is similar to that of Raskol'nikov and Porfirii Petrovich; they have long conversations about the murder and its psychological side; throughout the whole narrative, Il'ia's range of knowledge in these conversations is greater than the investigator's. In contrast to Porfirii in *Crime and Punishment*, Petr Prokof'evich fails to comprehend Il'ia's true role in the story. He rejects a psychological approach to the crime and insists constantly that it is a simple case with a clear and simple explanation. He

accepts every hypothesis of the murder that Il'ia offers him and each time reaches a deadlock. Gradually, he accepts Il'ia's point of view as he loses all his threads and becomes desperate to solve the case. Only in the last conversation with Il'ia does he accept Il'ia's idea that it is pure psychology and anyone in the damned apartment could have killed Matvei — he repeats these ideas word for word. Thus in these conversations the investigator assumes the role of a listener and a disciple to Il'ia. His role in the conversations, rational and subordinate at the same time, and his growing sympathy with Il'ia relates Petr Prokof'evich to Horatio in *Hamlet*.

This role of a confidant is confirmed in the final scene that can easily be compared to that in *Hamlet*. The investigator is also present in the room where Il'ia's body is lying. Similarly to Varvara, he is sitting with an apathetic and shocked look. In contrast to his silent passiveness, all the rest of his team and the journalists are actively moving in the room, doing their ordinary business in these circumstances: arresting Varvara, interviewing her, shooting a news report. Petr Prokof'evich even receives a clap on his shoulder from someone as a sign of encouragement. He now resembles more a relative or a friend to the murdered Il'ia than an investigator. He is shocked and perplexed and his face reveals personal sorrow. For Il'ia, he plays a complex role of accuser and tutor (Porfirii Petrovich) as well as of disciple and confidant (Horatio). All the others are actors, even puppets in this play, while he is the only viewer of the play that Il'ia is performing.

Prevalent in the film are Il'ia's inner soliloquies, which relate him to both Raskol'nikov and Hamlet. Raskol'nikov's and Hamlet's soliloquies are connected to their crimes and their reflections on the moral possibility of killing and taking revenge. Il'ia, instead, speaks mostly about his life as a freak. In his soliloquies he creates the impression of his imprisonment in the small world of his room and flat, which helps to arouse viewers' sympathy for him. The crime is revealed only in his last soliloquy, but those that precede it reveal Il'ia's motifs for it. These soliloquies, which open up the protagonist's inner world, and at the same time give us his range of knowledge only in the last episode, are dictated by the film's genre of a detective story. They leave room for suspense during the film and surprise at the end when we finally learn about Il'ia's real role in the crime. However, these soliloquies assimilate him to both proto-characters, Raskol'nikov and Hamlet.

The appearance of Sergey Bekhterev, the actor playing Il'ia, also fits well both for transforming him into the aristocratic and sickly pale prince, Hamlet, and into pale neurotic student, Raskol'nikov.

The costumes of some other characters as well as Il'ia's costume, look rather old-fashioned and even a little conventional: long scarfs, Varvara's fur

hat and black dress, Marina's hats and dresses with a floral design, Il'ia's cap and coat. Inside the apartment Il'ia always wears the same light-coloured shirt and a knitted waistcoat that contrasts to the dark clothes of the other characters. But in the climactic episode of the crime reconstruction (Il'ia's *Mousetrap*) he appears in a thin black sweater, which makes him almost unseen in the dark corridor so that the camera focuses on his face and hands.

The episode can be divided into two: with a first crime reconstruction led by Petr Prokof'evich and a second by Il'ia. The first part takes place in Matvei's unusually brightly illuminated room. Underlined by the constant hasty movements of the investigator and the suspect, and by unusually loud sound, the tempo gradually increases within this part of the episode. Petr Prokof'evich is almost screaming as he becomes more irritated. The other dialogues in the film are spoken in low tones and even in a whisper. In the second part the action is moved to the corridor where the apartment dwellers remain spectators. Illumination here is poor. Il'ia's voice is calm and steady. The second part is accompanied by a non-diegetic percussive melody. This part is the embodiment of the mousetrap that Il'ia has prepared for his neighbours. As a director, saying where to stay and what to do, he guides them all. Thus it is not by chance that, in this scene, he is wearing black which echoes Hamlet's black costume in Kozintsev's film.

An important motif that joins together the film narrative with *Crime and Punishment* and *Hamlet* is the rats. In the beginning of the film, rats are a direct, physical component of the narrative — they inhabit the flat and the building and represent a constant threat and source of fear and disgust to the people living there. Il'ia has a cat in order to defend himself against them. But as the story develops rats become a more and more explicit metaphor for all the lodgers of the apartment, and finally Il'ia directly compares people in the apartment to rats in several of his speeches.

On the one hand, this metaphor draws a parallel with Raskol'nikov's murder of a worthless and disgusting creature, the pawnbroker, for another's good. For Il'ia, his neighbours are not humans. He calls them rats and treats them like rats, feeling no regret for any of them. On the other hand, it constitutes an explicit connection to Hamlet and his *Mousetrap*. Like Hamlet, Il'ia plans his crime and all his further actions to provoke the other characters into taking ill-considered steps, thus arousing the investigator's suspicions. The episode of the crime reconstruction is the most explicit embodiment of this plan, which also has the most dramatic impact — the suicide of one of the lodgers, Platon Bryzgalin.

Hints of this rat-like existence and nature of the inhabitants are found in other details. In the first episode of the film, as the detective walks with his

team through the apartment, he opens the doors of various rooms and finds inside all the future characters of the film, whose nervous fussy reaction to his intrusion is reminiscent of the reaction of rats to danger: first they jump up or press themselves into their places with a scared look, but as the danger passes by they peep out of their holes to make sure that it is safe again. The only person in the episode who does not try to hide and who shows no panic in front of the investigator is Il'ia. He sits quietly in his wheelchair with a cat in his hands, smiling and nodding in welcome to the inspector, seeming almost to have been expecting his visit.

The impression of a rat hole is further enforced by multiple framings created by shooting the rooms and the corridor through the door openings, sometimes with angles allowing the viewer to see only a part of the mise-en-scene and thereby suggesting the action of someone peeping into the room or into the corridor. A couple of times this is indeed the case: aunt Varvara looks through a doorway at Matvei's body unnoticed by investigators, Ravil' looks at Marina and Il'ia in the darkness of the hallway through a grill. Only investigators walk loudly along the corridors of the apartment. All the lodgers sit in their rooms, hiding there, or stay quietly near doorways or squeeze into other rooms silently, like mice.

The images of rats, which at first appear in the film randomly, begin towards the end to serve as a commentary to the actions of the characters. A shot of rats fighting draws a parallel with the neighbours who start to report on each other. The episode when Ravil's wife is caught in Matvei's room by a militiaman, in her effort to steal some revealing documents, is preceded by a shot of a rat being trapped in a mousetrap in the kitchen of the apartment.

Il'ia's allusions to rats and his cat also become gradually more ambiguous. Towards the end, his reference to the cat can be decoded as a confession which, together with his allusion to a rat-trap, is made explicit in the episode when Il'ia and his aunt watch a *Tom and Jerry* cartoon on TV accompanied by a French lesson. Il'ia frantically repeats the phrases in French — 'The cat is catching the mouse. The mouse is fleeing from the cat' — as if trying to memorise them.

Apart from the narrative parallels the film contains intertextual references to Dostoevsky and to *Hamlet*. As the camera pans across the bookshelves in Il'ia's room, only the name Dostoevsky is legible. Il'ia watches with evident interest the episode of the *Mousetrap* rehearsal from Kozintsev's *Hamlet*. Moreover, he recites Hamlet's words about the actor's skills:

> В глазах слеза дрожит и блеет голос
> В чертах лица — отчаянье и ужас
> И весь состав его покоит мысли.

И все из-за чего? Из-за Гекубы![163]

Another quote from *Hamlet* that he murmurs to himself, as if trying to calm himself down, also regards the actor's skills: «Не пили воздух руками, будь умеренней. Среди потопа, бури и, так сказать, водоворота страсти ты должен сохранить умеренность.»[164]

A paper model of a theatre that Il'ia creates on his table also works as a reference to *Hamlet*, to the same episode of the *Mousetrap*. Il'ia uses the model to consider his own steps and to demonstrate to the investigator possible solutions of the crime and various nuances of the relationships between the victim and other neighbours. This small paper theatre serves him in the same way as the itinerant actors served Hamlet, as a model of the real action. Symptomatically he chooses it as a hiding place for the instrument of the crime, the pistol. If in *Hamlet* the vagrant theatre was an instrument of provocation, in *Arithmetic of a Murder* the vanished pistol becomes this instrument. Constructing this theatre, Il'ia begins to see himself as the author of the play, a puppeteer who pulls the strings of all the characters. Only at the very end does this illusion collapse, when his aunt (who he totally left out of account in his play) reveals all his plans and shoots him.

Interestingly, we see that some actions of the protagonist are duplicated, as if complying with the plot's double literary source. The murder of Matvei, a beast, a disgusting creature undeserving to live in Il'ia's opinion, is the provocation needed to trap all the other rats in the apartment. The paper theatre duplicates the crime reconstruction arranged by the investigator. In the latter, the lodgers play themselves and Il'ia really guides them as a theatre director. Il'ia's self-reference as to 'a monster', 'a freak', echoes his own words describing the other lodgers as rats. Finally, his plan's supreme object appears to be the demolition of his own disgusting cocoon of a freak. His physical monstrosity in the end becomes duplicated by his moral monstrosity. He wishes to get rid of both of them and death is the only way out for him.

It should be noted here that many episodes in the film are also duplicated. Among them are the almost identical opening and closing sequences arranged in reverse form, the episode of putting to bed paralleled with the episode after

[163] Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit; and all for nothing!
For Hecuba!
(Shakespeare 1934, p. 56).

[164] 'Nor do not saw the air too much with your hands thus, but use all gently, for in the very torrent, tempest, and as I may say whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness.' (Shakespeare 1934, p. 65)

Il'ia's death, two episodes of TV-watching, two promenades with the suspect neighbours, two crime reconstructions, etc.

The names of some characters and the manner of their speech seem to be stylised to associate them with Dostoevsky's characters, especially in the conversations of Il'ia with Platon, a writer, and with Petr Prokof'evich. The characters' stylised and stilted language (usage of «любезный», «милейший» (old-fashioned variants of 'dear') in addressing each other, usage of other old-fashioned and elevated expressions) clash with formal turns of speech and with slang expressions that are also frequent in the film. Among the names are many examples that are old-fashioned, uncommon or borrowed from literature. Platon Sergeevich, Matvei Ivanovich, Petr Prokof'evich and even Il'ia Il'ich in conjunction seem to be somewhat pretentious and unusual for contemporaries. Some surnames of the characters are also of interest. Similarly to some surnames in Dostoevsky's works, they are meaningful. Matvei, the victim, has the surname Briukhanov, which derives from 'briukho', a slang word for 'belly'. Half-dissident, half-profligate, Platon carries the surname Bryzgalin from 'bryzgat" — 'sputter' or 'spit'. But the most interesting in this sense is the name of the protagonist, Il'ia Muromtsev. It has the clear connotation of the Russian epic hero Il'ia Muromets, who before accomplishing his feat sat motionless (paralysed?) on a furnace for forty years. No doubt Il'ia too has been waiting all his life for an opportunity to take revenge on the small world he despises so much.

Connections with the two subtexts are created on various levels: visual, verbal, narrative, metaphoric. Some of them are hidden and complex, some are explicit and easy to find. It can be argued that this variety of patterns linking the film to *Crime and Punishment* and *Hamlet* is superfluous. However, this creates the very tense, tight and tangled plot of the film. Its originality results from the interaction of both works of art. Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is an important piece of the Petersburg text in literature; Grigorii Kozintsev's *Hamlet* is an essential component of the myth's development during the Soviet era.[165]

Arithmetic of a Murder is grounded in the traditions of the Petersburg text in literature and other arts. At the same time, it is a clear and definite example of the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s. Many recurrent functional elements discussed previously in this thesis, such as false anonymity of the city space, verbal exclusion of the city name combined with intima-

[165]Interestingly, a reference to Kozintsev's *Hamlet* can be found in another film of the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s, *Love is as Strong as Death*. In this film, references to Hamlet are paralleled by references to another work by Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*. For a detailed analysis of *Love is as Strong as Death* see Fiona Björling 'Exhausted Stereotypes' (Björling 1999, pp. 91–111).

tions unmistakably identifying the location of the story, appear in this film as well. The action is set in the backyards although the story takes place in the city centre. A transformation of a rubbish dump into Petersburg and back is one of the best examples of the city's carnivalised space. Similarly, the confused identity of the protagonist wearing several masks at one and the same time is symptomatic and fits well into the row of other Petersburg characters. Therefore, I would suggest that in this film the traditional plot-lines of the Petersburg text in literature are combined perfectly with the ideas of the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s and are developed and actualised in accordance with the myth's development in the 1990s. The fact that the same references to Kozintsev's *Hamlet* and to Dostoevsky were similarly combined in another film of the 1990s, *Love is as Strong as Death*, also discussed in this work, only confirms that *Arithmetic of a Murder* follows the thread of the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s, having the classical Petersburg text as its subtext.

6.1.2 *The Myth of Leonid*

The Myth of Leonid tells the story of Kirov's assassination based on the version offered by an NKVD general Aleksandr Orlov in his book *The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes* (Orlov 1991)[166]. This is the least political or the least politically oriented version of the assassination. It suggests that Kirov's assassin was a private person, Leonid Nikolaev, who committed this crime in a state of great desperation as revenge for Kirov's adultery with his wife Mil'da Draule. However, the book, as well as the film, includes a suggestion that Nikolaev was secretly instigated by some political forces to do it. The film gives no clear answer to the question as to whether someone else, and if so, who stood behind Nikolaev's back. On the contrary, the filmmakers try to avoid any speculations of that kind. They neither deny that somebody's will was imposed on Nikolaev nor do they speculate as to the concrete circumstances. The film is focused primarily on the futile rebellion of a small man against the state and its inexorable power, the rebellion which started a long chain of repressions and sufferings of many more small men. This story of a small man's uprising is a typical Petersburg story in accordance with Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* and Gogol's *The Overcoat*. We shall not discuss in this analysis whether this account of Kirov's assassination and its interpretation in the film has any historical value and how true to reality it is.

The use of Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* as a literary subtext for the

[166]In English, the book was published in 1953 shortly after Stalin's death. Its Russian edition appeared first in 1991.

plot of the film is of central significance. According to the film's director, Dmitrii Dolinin, the plot coincidence was intentional, although he avoided any direct point-blank references to the poem and its protagonist.[167] The purpose of my analysis of the film is precisely to pursue the correlation between the film and its literary subtext, and also between the film's characters and their proto-characters in the poem.

The title, *The Myth of Leonid*, already indicates that the film is not strictly historical. It is an interpretation of the events of 1934 neither proved nor denied, elevated to a myth based on these events.

> «Ссылка на миф уместна, коль скоро речь идет о сознательном апокрифе. Она как будто оговаривает сослагательную интонацию ретроспективы и меру свободы по отношению к темным истинам минувшего. Непреложен лишь факт: выстрел и бурые мозги «Мироныча», плеснувшие на тщательно оштукатуренную стену Смольного. От этой детали стоит вздрогнуть уже потому, что кровавобезусловный финал венчает фильм, полностью или почти полностью очищенный как от архивных, так и от физиологических подробностей.»[168]

The title reference to a myth seems to point to the myth of the city itself, which as we shall see is interwoven with the story of Leonid and leaves its imprint on all the events represented in the film. It makes this story a true Petersburg tale that can acquire value equal to that of the tale of Akakii Bashmachkin or the poor Evgenii of *The Bronze Horseman*.

In the first sequence of the film the city is immediately mapped. The first shots of the film expose the Smolny, the headquarters of the Leningrad Communist Party apparatus and the place where the dramatic event happened, with Kirov walking out of the building. No further easily recognisable sights of the city are shown. Following the same pattern as other films discussed in this thesis *The Myth of Leonid* avoids glossy images of the city. The film director claims that it is his own dislike for the grand side of the city that determined

[167] From my interview with Dmitrii Dolinin on 12.03.2009. In an interview by Elena Dobriakova Dolinin also characterised Nikolaev as a small man: «Ну, кто он такой — Николаев? Акакий Акакиевич своего времени или Евгений из *Медного всадника.*» (Dobriakova 2008) ('Who is this Nikolaev? Akakii Akakievich of his time or Evgenii from *The Bronze Horseman.*')

[168] Dobrotvorskii 2005, p. 103. ('The reference to the myth is appropriate only because it considers conscious apocrypha. It is as if this reference marks the subjunctive intonation of the retrospective and the measure of freedom in the approach to the dark truth of the past. One fact is indisputable: the shot and 'Mironych's' brown brain splashed on a carefully plastered wall in Smolny. This detail should make one start in one's seat at the very least, because this bloody and unconditional finale crowns a film in which any archival as well as physiological details are completely or almost completely washed away.')

the choice of settings.[169] However, Dolinin admitted that the last sequence of the film was anticipated by an image of the Bronze Horseman which was removed from the film as a too straightforward reference to Pushkin's work.[170]

There is one more specific recognisable sight of the city to be traced in the film, namely New Holland, which also appears in Burtsev's *The City*. Although here the images of New Holland are difficult to recognise since most of the shots are close-ups and one can see only pieces of dilapidated brick walls and pavements overgrown with grass, these contribute to the impression of desolation and neglect preserved in other episodes of the film featuring other places in the city. The part of the city where Nikolaev lives consists of backyards, tumble-down houses, narrow streets with rubbish, old wooden fences, cobbled roadways with grass and puddles, women selling from carriages, a blind pauper singing on the corner. It is an ideal fictive place that represents Nikolaev's depression. I make an exception here towards discussing historical facts in the case of Nikolaev's biography in order to examine devices used to achieve the artistic purposes. The places shown in the film have no relation to Nikolaev's actual last place of residence. The narrow Repin Street, in the centre of Vasil'evsky Island, is chosen as the street where Nikolaev's family was living, whereas in reality they lived in a three-room apartment in the newly built model district of Bateninskii on Vyborgskaia Side from 1931.[171]

The historical inconsistency concerns the apartment where Nikolaev and Mil'da live. In the film they live in a small room in a communal apartment, instead of the already mentioned brand new three-room apartment.[172] On

[169] Also from the interview on 12.03.2009.

[170] Ibid. According to Dolinin, he did so relying on a better awareness of the public than he faced in reality. He still regrets removing this image and considers the vagueness and incompleteness of the film's message as its major weakness.

[171] The actual address of Nikolaev figures in his court case. (Deviatov, Zhiliaev, Zosimov, Kolkutin, Sukharnikova 2005) Some photographs of Bateninskii district can be found on a website devoted to Soviet architecture `http://www.sovarch.ru/catalog/object/299/` (last visited 06.07.2013). The new buildings of this fashionable district and its wide clean streets do not accord with the Leningrad of the film, while the image of the city created in *The Myth of Leonid* is close to that of other films of the same period. This choice of set corroborates my point about the homogeneous text of the city created in the films of the 1990s.

[172] From the testimony of Maria Nikolaeva, Leonid's mother on December 11, 1934: «...В материальном положении семья моего сына Леонида Николаева не испытывала никаких затруднений. Они занимали отдельную квартиру из трех комнат в кооперативном доме, полученную в порядке выплаты кооперативного пая. Дети были также полностью обеспечены всем необходимым, включая молоко, масло, яйца, одежду и обувь. Последние 3–4 месяца Леонид был безработным, что несколько ухудшило обеспеченность его семьи, однако даже тогда они не испытывали особой нужды» (Zhukov 2007, pp. 49–50). ('Financially the family of my son, Leonid Nikolaev, had no difficulties. They occupied a separate three-room apart-

the one hand, this gives more opportunities to create the 1930s' atmosphere of mass spying. The neighbour in the apartment, who amazingly resembles another voluntary spy — Mil'da's colleague in Smolny — is the one who first attracts the provocateurs' attention to Nikolaev. On the other hand, a three-room apartment simply would not match with the figure of a small man. A small room crammed with furniture which makes it even smaller is a much more appropriate dwelling for the protagonist of a Petersburg tale. Material hardships are underlined in the film several times: Mil'da says that money is coming to an end and they need to raise a loan; in the beginning of the film when Nikolaev comes home they have a table overladen with festive food, but later in the film all they eat are boiled potatoes.

In the previous chapter we initiated a discussion about the triangle of carnival doubles formed by Nikolaev, his wife and Kirov in this film. The figure of Nikolaev takes shape in his interaction with the other two figures that contrast and ridicule him. To compare the film to its literary subtext we need to speak primarily about these three figures and their relationships within the film.

The first time we see Nikolaev and Mil'da they are outside the city. In a number of short idyllic scenes they are shown walking in a park along with other holidaymakers, boating on a lake and eating a watermelon. Nikolaev is playing the accordion while Mil'da is rowing. But these short scenes create a contrast to Kirov and his team, previously shown, who, dressed in dark, predominantly black clothes, with all their buttons done up, walk round the yard of Smolny in total silence to the accompaniment of restrained non-diegetic music. In contrast, the scene introducing Nikolaev and Mil'da is full of diegetic sounds: noises, laughing and jolly accordion music. Idle people in light summer clothes, and especially Leonid and Mil'da in their bathing suits, contrast with the sullen, firm of purpose Smolny men. The bucolic setting of this sequence is jammed between the laconic scene in front of Smolny and the credits, also accompanied by gloomy music. The non-diegetic music of both pieces overlaps the noises and sounds of the sequence with Nikolaev and Draule, as if threatening its idyll. Apart from this implied confrontation between Kirov and Nikolaev, another important accent is put across already in this sequence. In its final scene, the couple sit on duckboards over the lake; they squint, splash and smile. Their short, rather ridiculous conversation is filled with bliss and safety.

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ment in a cooperative house that they received, paying for the cooperative. The children were fully provided with all essential goods, including milk, butter, eggs, clothes and shoes. The last 3–4 months Leonid was unemployed, which made the family's welfare a bit worse, but even then they did not suffer from poverty'.)

Mil'da (squinting at the sun): Какое чудесное лето! / What a wonderful summer!

Nikolaev (looking at Mil'da with a smile): Существо жизни, Мильда, есть понятие... это живой факт. Проповедники божии представляют нам рай где-то на небе, а мы построим его на земле. / The essence of life, Mil'da, is an idea... this is a living fact. The preachers of God tell about heaven somewhere in the sky, but we shall build it on the earth.

Mil'da: Какой ты умный, Николаев! / How clever you are, Nikolaev!

Mil'da takes Nikolaev in her arms in jest and wades with him through the lake from the duckboards as he plays his accordion and dangles his legs. Their laughter becomes louder as we see them in close-up and in extreme close-ups, the motion slowing down, the laughter becomes non-diegetically loud and then the serious and anxious music of the opening credits overlaps the final takes of the episode. This sequence is their last happy and peaceful time and significant, in my opinion, is the fact that it takes place outside the city.

The next episode after the credits is set in Leningrad, in Nikolaev's room. It is already autumn and it is the day when he is fired from his work and excluded from the party. After this event, Mil'da's seemingly facetious, mother-like attitude to Nikolaev, as seen at the beginning, loses its joy and becomes serious and heartfelt. There are several episodes in which Mil'da's motherly care for Leonid is revealed and even reinforced. He is like a child to her. When she wakes up he is sleeping curled up by her feet. She tries to wake him up tickling and fitting an unfinished sock to his foot. From the bed he watches Mil'da dressing with the dreamy look of a boy, not a man. She leaves him a delicacy on the table as one might a child — bread and butter dipped in sugar. He stretches from the bed to reach his sugar sandwich and starts chewing it, still undressed, and sitting in the bed with his legs not reaching the floor. One of the final episodes repeats the scene of Mil'da taking Nikolaev in her arms. But this time the tone is different. It is not fun anymore: she takes him to soothe him, lulling and hushing him. The striking contrast to the opening episode makes it clear that no peace or safety is possible for the characters inside the city. In contrast to their open laughter and fooling around outside the city, in the flat they speak and laugh in low voices.

Their relationships of mother and child rather than of wife and husband are reinforced by their appearance. As mentioned above, Mil'da and Nikolaev can be seen as a carnival pair in which Mil'da is a ridiculing double to Nikolaev. She looks massive and dominating with tiny and fragile Nikolaev by her side. Even verbally, she is characterised in the film as 'a strong horse', a woman with the 'feet of a herdsman'. Yet historically she was no taller than Nikolaev himself. Another inconsistency with reality is also interesting in this

connection. Nikolaev and Draule's children are totally excluded from the film. In one of his interviews Dolinin said:

> «Мы исключили детей — непонятно было, как обыграть их присутствие. Мильда в жизни была не такая уж красавица — у нас она роскошная, большая, но так и было задумано — она должна была носить маленького, несчастного Николаева на руках. И в этом и проявлялось ее материнство. Николаев ведь до 11 лет очень болел, практически не ходил, отсюда его особенная уязвимость.» (Dobriakova 2008)[173]

By eliminating the children, Mil'da's motherly role is made even more distinct. The only child she has to care for is her husband. This is also stressed by his boyish appearance. His frail figure looks even frailer in an oversized A-shirt and boxers. Playing skittles with the boys in the yard he is at first sight indistinguishable from them.

Putting together his relationships with Mil'da Draule and his appearance, his own behaviour creates an impression of a literally small man, small both physically and mentally, vulnerable, easy to hurt and manipulate.

Mil'da is everything for Nikolaev: his love, his mother, his party. She embodies all his life. Mil'da's significance for Nikolaev is total; without her he collapses, just as does Akakii Akakievich without his overcoat. When he learns that he has possibly lost her and that the offender is Kirov, it becomes the last straw for him to make the fatal decision. Thus the most banal and vaudeville version of the assassination becomes the most tragic one.

Nikolaev's appearance changes throughout the film. The closer to the end, the less boyish his face becomes. Dark circles around his eyes, and a pale and emaciated face make him look like an old and wretched person. Even his clothes are changed from a white shirt with a tie to a black kosovorotka[174] which reinforces his moral and physical exhaustion. Towards the end he is frequently filmed from behind, as if revealing the optical POV of his followers who are sometimes visible in the episode, sometimes not. On several occasions the sound becomes exaggeratedly loud and overlapping like, for example, the sound of drops of a medicine that Nikolaev is putting into his glass, the sound of Kirov's car overlapping with all the other street sounds for a moment, or a non-diegetic sound of drops anticipating his breaking of Kirov's portrait.

[173] 'We excluded the children — it was unclear how to put their presence to good effect. In reality, Mil'da was not a real beauty — we made her luxurious, great, but this was the point — she had to carry the small, poor Nikolaev in her arms. This is how her maternity was expressed. Nikolaev was very ill up to the age of eleven, he could barely walk, this is the reason for his particular vulnerability.'

[174] A traditional Russian shirt, predominantly used by peasants and workers with several buttons at the collar positioned to one side.

Leonid's speeches change in the course of the film. From loud, hysterical, accusing in the beginning his speeches become whispering, begging and weirdly metaphysical: «Сгнившие гробы не чинят, а душа в воздухе не летает, память же об усопших остается навсегда.» / 'Decayed coffins are not to be repaired and the soul does not fly in the sky, but memories about the dead stay forever.' This changed tone and the topic of his speeches might be the most evident indication of his gradual assumption of the role of the small man and of his awareness of this role in the end.

There is only one verbal reference to the Petersburg text in literature in the film. In the beginning, when Nikolaev returns home with sad news about his discharge, his threats and complaints about it are interrupted by Roman, his wife's brother-in-law: «Есть только одна премудрость — не высовываться... Ты кто? Крыса ты канцелярская, Акакий Акакиевич. Купил себе шинель, так и держись за нее всеми лапками, чтоб не стащили. » / 'There is but one wisdom: do not stick your neck out... Who are you? A pen pusher, Akakii Akakievich. You have bought your overcoat, so hold it with all your legs so that no one drags it off you.'

Otherwise, as we have shown, Nikolaev's belonging to 'small people' is shown indirectly — primarily through his relationships with Mil'da, his appearance, his neurotic efforts to prove his own significance.

«Они еще не знают моей силы, как я могу бороться!» / 'They don't know my power yet, how I can fight!' «Не пропаду... Найдутся, заступятся, вспомните еще Николаева!» / 'I won't get lost... There will be someone, someone to stand up for me, you will recall Nikolaev once again!' «Не для того я рожден, поймите вы все!» / 'This is not what I am born for, try to get it!' — speaking about his unwillingness to go to work at a plant. He is an insignificant person thrown by the wayside. All the most important characteristics of a small man in literature are represented in the film. Nikolaev is a person of low social standing — he is not only fired from his work; much more important for his lowered social status is the fact that he is expelled from the party.

Nikolaev's misery and nonentity are underlined in several episodes. Here his moral sufferings are degraded and humiliated by extremely physiological details or the comments of other characters. Through these episodes his role as a small man is emphasised. He is deprived of the right to suffer and to have a real drama. When he comes home after being fired and expelled, his hysterical state is commented on ironically by Roman, who sees him drinking water one glass after another: «Описаешься, Леонид.» / 'You'll wet yourself, Leonid.' Getting drunk in despair, he vomits immediately after coming out of the canteen and falls off his bike. His bicycle is stolen from him by kids. This

last example adds to the idea of the whole world having turned against him. The world's hostility and cruelty to the small man become apparent in every event of his life, not only in the conspiracies of the provocateurs and Mil'da's infidelity.

Another pattern important for creating *The Bronze Horseman* inspired story is, of course, the confrontation of Nikolaev and Kirov. Their confrontation is composed in the first place on the cinematographic level. Nikolaev's true feelings for Kirov and their development are never exposed explicitly. We know from his confused speeches that he blames the party elite for his hardships. We are shown the anonymous letters about Mil'da's and Kirov's love affair that Leonid receives, but his decisive conversation with the provocateurs remains off-screen. When he breaks Kirov's portrait in despair, we can only guess, that this was the last straw in shifting his accusations from the elite as a whole («буржуи коммунистические» / 'communist bourgeoisie' as he calls them) onto Kirov personally.

In the striking difference of the two opening episodes Kirov, the victim, and Nikolaev, the assassin, are introduced to the viewer. The confrontation between them as well as their confused roles of victim and assassin respectively are implied from the beginning in the contrast between the gloomy, anxious music of the Kirov episode overlapping with the cheerful music of the Nikolaev episode. Already here, Kirov's firm figure is in some sense threatening, while Nikolaev fooling around innocently on the lake suggests his future role as victim.

In the film, Kirov is always shown at a distance. We never see his face in a close-up. Neither do we hear him speaking. The scenes featuring Kirov resemble more some archive newsreel than staged episodes. Kirov is shown graphically in the film, often framed in profile, always in long or medium-long shots as opposed to the recurrent close-ups and extreme close-ups of Nikolaev. In his black leather coat and forage cape his figure looks more like a monument to Kirov than a living person. In his article on the film, Kovalov underlines that, in *The Myth of Leonid*, Kirov demonstratively resembles his own statue erected in Leningrad in 1938 by Tomskii and Trotskii. (Kovalov 2004, p. 601)

Long shots and medium long shots may be interpreted as an optical POV of the crowd that always follows Kirov in the city and of Nikolaev who never obtains the possibility of approaching him, apart from the single occasion which turns out to be fatal for both of them. But even in this last episode we are not given the opportunity to see Kirov in close-up. The camera frames only his back as he moves along the corridor, followed by Leonid. When he is killed, his face is not shown, while Nikolaev is shown in close-up, while the moment when he pulls out his Nagant and shoots is repeated several times.

Uniquely, it is the only example of temporal discontinuity editing in the film.

Kirov is always shown in some official setting: with workers on some construction, in front of Smolny. He is always surrounded by people, always in the centre of a crowd. His adultery with Mil'da is implied in several short episodes, but he himself never figures in them. In one episode Mil'da steps outside an office in Smolny and straightens her underskirt. This shot is followed by a phone conversation in which her Smolny colleague informs the provocateurs about 'the concert that was a success'. In another episode she walks from a car to catch her tram, apparently late in the evening since the tram is empty. And the last hint at adultery are the anonymous letters in which Kirov actually figures but in a very interesting way. One of the letters includes a childlike drawing of a woman representing Mil'da in bed. A man lies over her with Kirov's photo glued to his body. His photo in profile is apparently taken from some newspaper and a fragment of an article is visible beside his head. The angle of his head is almost the same as on the photo in Nikolaev's room. Together these details make the Kirov in the film an extremely schematic figure devoid of any human features, a speechless monument that for Nikolaev starts to embody all the injustice of the surrounding world towards him. This is probably why, in the last episode when he is shot, we do not see Kirov's face, nor any human reaction, any human suffering, whereas all the emotions of Nikolaev can be traced in his close-ups. The only human thing about Kirov in the film is his brain splashed on the wall. Probably without this disgustingly physiological detail, the assassination as shown in the film would resemble shaking a finger at a lifeless monument, as was the case with Evgenii in *The Bronze Horseman*. Nikolaev's shaking of the finger at the statue turns out instead to have the most cruel and irretrievable consequences in the history both of the city and of the country.

The ways of moving in the city that were discussed in Chapter 4 create recurrent and important motifs in this film as well. In *The Myth of Leonid*, these functional elements follow the same pattern as in other films of the Petersburg text, forming an antithesis to each other. First of all, cars appear as a symbol of constant threat and persecution. Most often they are seen as lights in the dark, moving towards the camera and creating a threatening effect. Closer to the end, Nikolaev is often filmed from the optical POV of his followers in a car or on a motorbike. His bicycle contrasts with the cars and motorbikes. It is a slower means of transport and can be totally controlled by his persecutors. The contrast functions as an indicator of Nikolaev's low social status. But the cars' malicious role in the film is manifested more diversely than simply as a means of spying. Cars are used by the provocateurs, who most possibly belong to the NKVD, during the arrests. A car is, furthermore,

the indispensable attribute of Kirov, who appears in public only in a car that moves slowly through the city streets, accompanied by enthusiastic shouts and waving from the crowd. His car detaches him both from this enthusiastic crowd and from Nikolaev. Kirov's car also figures in an episode implying the love affair between him and Mil'da Draule. She is given a lift by this car to the tram station late in the evening. Earlier in the film, she is shown coming home by tram hemmed in by the crowd. The tram is an attribute of the 1930s when it was the only public transport for citizens, but like a bicycle it is also a social attribute that is so evidently opposed to the higher status and the repressive power of those hidden behind car windows.

Tram rails appear in the film as a separate motif, initially when Kirov is shown in public speaking to the workers who construct rails. Meanwhile Nikolaev is trying for the first time to fight his way to Kirov with his appeal. This he fails to do and is beaten by Kirov's guards. The same unfinished railway is shown a second time as the closing take of the film. Now the place looks abandoned and desolated and is covered with a thick layer of snow. The scene is accompanied by the credits that reveal the further destinies of the characters: of Nikolaev, Mil'da, her sister and of many other people who were affected by this event. «Казнят, казнят, казнят. Тела и души... Прошлое и будущее...» / 'They execute, execute, execute. Bodies and souls... Past and future...' (Figure 6.2). This last shot of the unfinished tram rails is open to various interpretations, but one thing is certain: cut rails that lead nowhere are an expression of pure despair and hopelessness and symbolise the violently ruined lives of thousands and thousands of small men.

Figure 6.2: The closing sequence of *The Myth of Leonid*.

If most of the facts shown in the film are imagined, interpreted in a way or

even distorted for the sake of artistic effect and alienation from any political version, the sequence that tightly connects this mythopoeic story to reality is the one of Kirov's assassination. It is significant that the episode of assassination repeats very strictly, almost step-by-step, the testimony of Nikolaev himself.[175] The filmmakers try to avoid any clear and unequivocal answers, leaving enough space to complete the story according to any of the existing versions. But, unlike the rest of the film, in the sequence of the assassination an exact compliance with the historical testimony is shown that links the myth back to reality. Possibly this is why the episode is sustained in a tranquil tone, in contrast to the previous scene. It finishes with Marusia's (another pawn in the provocateurs' game) heart-rending scream in the mental asylum which overlaps the shot of Nikolaev's briefcase shown in close-up as he walks to Smolny. This final sequence also contrasts with the rest of the film, with snow shown for the first time. Snow, in my opinion, tranquilises and smooths this last and most important episode of the film, as if implying

[175] From Nikolaev's testimony on December 3 and 9, 1934: «...По истечении часа вновь зашел в Смольный, вошел в уборную. Выйдя оттуда, увидел Кирова, направлявшегося в свой кабинет. Это было на третьем этаже здания, было примерно 4 часа 30 минут вечера...». «Выйдя из уборной, я увидел, что навстречу мне, по правой стороне коридора, идет С. М. Киров на расстоянии от меня 15–20 шагов. Я остановился и отвернулся к нему задом, так что когда он прошел мимо меня, я смотрел ему вслед в спину. Пропустив Кирова от себя шагов на 10–15, я заметил, что на большом расстоянии от нас никого нет. Тогда я пошел за Кировым вслед, постепенно нагоняя его. Когда Киров завернул за угол налево к своему кабинету, расположение которого мне было хорошо известно, вся половина коридора была пуста — я побежал шагов за пять, вынув наган на бегу из кармана, навел дуло на голову Кирова и сделал один выстрел в затылок. Киров мгновенно упал лицом вниз. Я повернул назад, чтобы предотвратить нападение на себя сзади, взвел курок и сделал выстрел, имея намерение попасть себе в висок. В момент взвода курка из кабинета напротив вышел человек в форме ГПУ, и я поторопился выстрелить в себя. Я почувствовал удар в голову и свалился...» (Zhukov 2007, p. 43). 'In one hour I came back into Smolny, I went to the lavatory. When I came out, I saw Kirov who was on the way to his office. It was on the second floor, it was about 4.30 pm...' 'When I came out of the lavatory I saw that from the right side of the corridor Kirov was approaching at a distance of 15–20 steps from me. I stopped and turned my back to him, so when he passed me by I was watching his back. I let him go 10–15 steps forward, I noticed that there was nobody for a big distance around us. So I followed him, slowly coming closer. When Kirov turned around the corner to the left towards his office, I knew very well where it was located, the whole part of the corridor was empty — I started running, being five steps from him, took the Nagant out of my pocket, pointed it at Kirov's head and shot once in the back of his head. Kirov fell face down immediately. I turned back to avoid any attack from the back, pulled the trigger and made a shot in order to shoot my temple. At the moment when I was pulling the trigger, a man in GPU (The State Politcal Directorate) uniform walked out of the room across the corridor, so I rushed to shoot myself. I felt a punch on my head and fell down...'

that we have reached the only invariable and solid piece of the puzzle. The music when Nikolaev follows Kirov in the Smolny corridor does not imply any suspense. A waltz accompanies Nikolaev when he pulls out his Nagant and it is substituted with another non-diegetic accompaniment: sounds of drops that were used in one of the previous scenes, illustrating Nikolaev's despair and perplexity. When Nikolaev faints after failing to shoot himself, pieces of plaster falling down from the ceiling also resemble the snow, rhyming the end of the sequence with its beginning. The finger is shaken and the myth is complete; now history gets back its rights.

Of all the films studied in this work, *The Myth of Leonid* is the only one based on historical events. At the same time, it is one of the few films that in such a large measure use a piece of the Petersburg text in Russian literature as their plot. In my opinion, the story of Kirov's assassination would have turned into just another piece of speculative pulp fiction if deprived of its mythopoeic pivot. This combination of a historically based plot with a mythical embodiment illustrates the major point of my thesis. It allows the film to be interpreted as a major contribution to the ongoing myth of the city, which is alive and active not only in contemporary film but in all forms of art.

6.2 Other Traditional Patterns

6.2.1 Intertextual References

The films discussed above, in which works belonging to the Petersburg text in literature are adapted and updated, may be regarded as examples of the most explicit and the strongest connection of the cinematic Petersburg text with its predecessors in literature. In many of the films studied, intertextual references are made in the form of recited poems, music and even graphic similarities with pieces of the Petersburg text in other kinds of art. These references can be regarded as a conscious effort by the filmmakers to establish continuity with the works generally reckoned to belong to the Petersburg text. The following analysis will not examine all the intertextual references in detail, but concentrate on examples from three films.

1. One of the most interesting examples of intertextual references, in my opinion, is the opening scene of *The Stairway*, since it represents a combination of graphic and narrative references. In Chapter 4, an association of this film to Dostoevsky's *White Nights* was mentioned. Here I will consider this statement more thoroughly. Similarly to the protagonist of *White Nights*, Piroshnikov meets a young woman, Alia, during his midnight walk and they feel drawn to each other. Although the

(a) Dobuzhinskii. Illustration to Dostoevsky's *White Nights*

(b) A shot from the opening sequence of *The Stairway*.

Figure 6.3: Intertextual reference in *The Stairway*.

story develops completely differently in comparison to that of *White Nights*, this opening scene implies from the very beginning that Alia, no less than Piroshnikov himself, is unhappy and needs a good and understanding friend. This idea is confirmed later in the film, although rather unclearly. Without this initial implication it would probably be even harder to understand Alia's motivation in bringing Piroshnikov to her house. Piroshnikov, the protagonist, walks through the city in a piercing wind, passing its bridges and embankments in a drizzling fog. He is dressed in a loose black coat and his figure is framed in long shots on a bridge and on the embankment, outlined by the light of street lamps. The mise-en-scene of these shots bears a strong resemblance to Mstislav Dobuzhinskii's illustrations for Dostoevsky's *White Nights* (Figure 6.3(a)). This is how Volkov, in his book on Petersburg culture, depicts these engravings by Dobuzhinskii: «...черный, как будто залитый тушью купол северного неба, под которым угрюмые, сердитые и промокшие прохожие исчезают в туманной перспективе петербургской улицы, освещенной слабо мерцающими в сырой мгле фонарями» (Волков 2005, p. 74)[176]. This description might well be applied to the city in the opening sequence of *The Stairway* (Figure 6.4(b)).

2. Another interesting example of intertextual references can be found in *Window to Paris*. The title itself sends us immediately to the literary

[176]'The inky black vault of the northern sky, beneath which grim, angry, and soaked passersby vanish in the foggy distance of a Petersburg street, illuminated by weakly flickering lights.' (Volkov and Bouis 1997, p. 44)

Petersburg text as it plays up the well-known words from *The Bronze Horseman* about Petersburg as 'a window to Europe'. Later in the film, this title acquires a slightly different meaning which is similar to Dostoevsky's interpretation of the phrase. In his opinion, Petersburg is a window through which Russians perceive the wrong ideas about Europe.[177]

Indeed, Paris in the film is a city composed of stereotypes. This gives an insight into how Russians viewed Western life in the beginning of the 1990s, rather than a real city. Paris acts as an antithesis to the gloomy and miserable existence of Russians, as a symbol of the Western way of life. This perception of Paris is demonstrated in one of its first images in the film: walking through Paris, Gorokhov, the protagonist's neighbour, draws Nikolai Chizhov's attention to shelves in Parisian shops crammed with food and goods and idle Parisians pleased with their carefree lives. In the conversation with a French woman, Nicole, who is living near the 'window', anything she says in an aggressive and wicked manner is interpreted by Gorokhov as the flirting of a sexy French nymphomaniac — what else can a French woman desire, in his opinion, if not sex? We observe Paris with the eyes of its Russian 'conquerors' and the key elements of this image are prosperity and romance, sin and the bohemian lifestyle. Due to these stereotypes, Paris turns into a view through a window. Most of these stereotypes originate from the Russian domestic problems of the film's characters. In Paris they find a twisted reflection of their home city in every detail. In his nightmares, Nikolai Chizhov, the protagonist, visually assimilates Paris to the portrayal of Petersburg given in the film. Paris transforms into a line of dilapidated facades with empty black window openings and rubbish heaps and dumps. It is populated with drunkards and vagabonds in grey with no sign of a smile on their faces but the gloomy imprint of everyday problems, the same as on the faces of Petersburgians in the film. His rather typical perception of Paris as a city of clochards, prostitutes and frogs' legs juxtaposes with images of his native city. The image of Paris from Chizhov's nightmare matches the opening sequence of the film already mentioned in Chapter 4 (Figure 4.1). Summing up, a reference to the Petersburg text in the film's title, which initially seems to be simply an allusion to the transdimensional window, can help in giving the narrative

[177] «Это именно окно, говорит Достоевский, в которое русская элита посматривает на Запад, да видит там вовсе не то, что нужно» (Volkov 2005, p. 84). ('It was a window, Dostoyevsky said, through which the Russian elite looked at the West and saw all the wrong things.' (Volkov and Bouis 1997, p. 53))

deeper sociocultural nuances.

Another intertextual reference to be found in *Window to Paris* is a combined reference to *The Queen of Spades*, both the literary work and the opera.[178] First, there is a direct reference when Nikolai Chizhov is shown reading a passage from Pushkin's novel to his pupils to the accompaniment of Tchaikovsky's opera music. The episode relates the appearance of the countess to Hermann. Later in the film this episode is parodied as the old proprietress of the room appears to Nikolai, Gorokhov and their companions. To reinforce the episode's comical effect, it is also accompanied by Tchaikovsky's music from the opera *The Queen of Spades*. This scene, as in the original literary work, becomes the moment when a great secret is revealed to the protagonist — this time it is the secret of the portal between Petersburg and Paris. The episode explicitly ridicules the original piece of the Petersburg text. The fact that the secret is revealed to a company of drunk men, who do not realise the value of the secret, lowers and ridicules the cited episode. At the same time, it is an easily readable reference to the Petersburg text that links the film to the existing tradition.

3. One more example of a complex intertextual reference is the final episode of *Mister Designer*. Here, the assassination of Platon is commented on by a non-diegetic reciting of Blok's poem from 1910–1912, *The Commander's Footsteps*. It is a scratchy old recording of the poem recited by Eduard Bagritskii[179].

   While not belonging to Blok's Petersburg poetry, this poem is nevertheless indirectly an important piece of the Petersburg text. *The Commander's Footsteps* is frequently referred to in one of the most Petersburgian

[178] A good survey of Petersburg's musical culture and its connection to the Petersburg myth is given by Solomon Volkov (Volkov 2005). In his work on cultural history of Petersburg, along with traditionally examined literary and art works, he analyses from the position of myth the musical compositions of Glinka, Mussorgskii and other members of The Five, Stravinskii, Shostakovich as well the famous opera, ballet and drama performances staged in the Petersburg's theatres. Volkov does not single out performances and works explicitly belonging to the Petersburg theme, but he embraces even Borodin's *Prince Igor* or Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* that at first sight seem to be far from the Petersburg myth. Among all the composers and musical compositions Volkov ranks Tchaikovsky first with his opera *The Queen of Spades*. According to Volkov, this opera can be considered one of the major works of the Petersburg text on a par with Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* and works by Dostoevsky. In Volkov's consideration, *The Queen of Spades* played an important, even a decisive role in transforming and updating the myth at the moment of the fading of public interest in it. Volkov calls it the most Petersburg of all Tchaikovsky's operas. (Volkov 2005, pp. 153–6)

[179] Eduard Bagritskii (1895–1934) — Soviet poet and playwright.

of poems by Anna Akhmatova — *The Poem without a Hero*[180], which functions as a conclusion to the film. Not only is the name of Don Juan's beloved the same — Anna — but his cry for her could belong to Platon: «Дева Света! Где ты, донна Анна? Анна! Анна! — Тишина.» ('Lady of the Light! Where are you, donna Anna? Anna! Anna! — Silence.') Moreover, in Blok's poem the approach of the Commander is expressed by the image of an approaching automobile, an automobile which served as a lethal weapon in *Mister Designer*. «Пролетает, брызнув в ночь огнями, черный, тихий, как сова, мотор...» ('It passes rapidly, sprinkling its sparks into the night, a motor, as black and silent as an owl...'). In the film, when the car approaches Platon only its lights are visible, it is barely shown. The moment when it crashes into the designer it is not shown at all. The scene is shown from the optical point of view of the driver — the mannequin. We see Platon falling down in the headlights of the automobile which resembles the lines of the poem. No sound of the car is heard, it is actually 'as black and silent as an owl'. Instead, a loud and nervous non-diegetic solo from Kurekhin's *Donna Anna* opera conceals all the sounds of the scene.

A link to Blok's poetry is given at the very beginning of the film. The opening sequence of *Mister Designer* represents a staging of passages from Blok's *Buffoon*. The play is not recited, but mimed on stage, again to the accompaniment of Kurekhin's music. Harlequin jumping out of a drawn window is probably the most recognisable moment of the poem shown in the film. But if we recall the whole poem, especially its beginning, this functions as a comment or an introduction to the film. Pierrot is waiting for his fair lady, the charming Columbine, which is also accompanied by the remarks of the Mystics that an important event is on its way, and of the Author explaining that the action takes place in winter in Petersburg. When Columbine arrives, pale and beautiful, she turns out to be Death. Thus this episode foretells the appearance of the malicious and beautiful double in the story and the story's tragic ending. At the same time, it prepares the viewer to treat the story as a fiction, as something staged and unreal, like Pierrot's tears painted on his face or like the fake window that Harlequin rips as he jumps through it. Later in the film, a photo of Blok together with Platon is seen in the protagonist's room. Finally, Blok's *The Commander's Footsteps*, recited at the end, sums up the whole narrative and gives a resultant evaluation

[180]For a scrupulous and captivating comparison of Blok's *The Commander's Footsteps* with Akhmatova's works, including first of all *The Poem Without a Hero*, see Toporov 2003, pp. 372–480.

of it. The traced links with Blok and his poetry bring the story closer to the Petersburg text and to the Petersburg of the beginning of the century. At the same time they link it to another important piece of the contemporary Petersburg text — music and performances arranged by Sergei Kurekhin during the 1980s–1990s.

The examples given above from three films illustrate the way that intertextual references to the Petersburg text in the studied films do not limit themselves simply to a recited poem or to an accompanying melody. These references tend to be much deeper; they combine several pieces of the Petersburg text, as was shown above. They also help to create an ambiguous or a more defined meaning of an episode or of the whole story. More examples of the Petersburg text from other kinds of art cited can be found in practically every one of the nineteen films. This leads us to a discussion as to how consciously filmmakers were using these references and how consciously they were ascribing their own works to the Petersburg text and myth. Whatever would be its conclusions, the possibility itself of having such a discussion gives another proof of the topicality of the Petersburg text and myth in contemporary art, particularly film art.

6.2.2 Pseudo-Plagiarisms

Apart from intertextual references that can be strictly attributed to a definite work of art belonging to the Petersburg text, we can distinguish another extensive category. To this category should be assigned cases when a pattern or theme in one film repeats, with significant similarities, a pattern or theme in another film or a different works of art also belonging to the Petersburg text. This peculiarity was first underlined by Toporov (Toporov 1995, p. 261). In comparison to the intertextual references discussed above where a quotation is explicit and can be traced to its source also belonging to the Petersburg text, in this case the source cannot, or barely can be singled out, especially speaking of works produced at almost the same time.

According to Toporov, the resemblance of motifs and epithets became an almost obligatory part of the Petersburg text in literature since different authors portrayed the city in the same way.[181] For Toporov, these recurrent epithets and details, on the verge of plagiarism, are one of the main elements that link different pieces of the Petersburg text into an integral text:

> «...автор или вообще не задумывается, «совпадает» ли он с кем-нибудь еще в своем описании Петербурга, или же вполне сознательно

[181] In the words of Antsiferov, it is the soul of Petersburg that speaks through their works and speaks, therefore, often with the same words and epithets. (Antsiferov 1990, p. 36)

> пользуется языком описания, уже сложившимся в Петербургском тексте, целыми блоками его, не считая это плагиатом, но всего лишь использованием элементов парадигмы неких общих мест, клише, штампов, формул, которые не могут быть заподозрены в акте плагиирования.» (Toporov 1995, p. 261).[182]

According to Dolgopolov, Blok also noted this phenomenon of the works dedicated to Petersburg. Speaking of Bely's *Petersburg* he wrote: «Не странно ли все-таки, что об одном и том же думали русские люди двадцатых, тридцатых, сороковых, девяностых годов и первого десятилетия нашего века?»[183]. Dolgopolov explains this in the following way:

> «Смысл этой близости между двадцатыми–сороковыми и девяностыми–девятисотыми годами состоит, согласно Блоку, в том, что и Петербург остался «все тот же», и писатели этих эпох, глядя на него, думали «об одном и том же».» (Dolgopolov 1985 a, p. 162)[184]

Toporov and Dolgopolov, however, do not coin any definite concept to denote this curious phenomenon. Let us label these clichéd epithets and common motifs as *pseudo-plagiarisms*. In fact, this kind of intertextual reference is no less recurrent in the films discussed than examples of explicit quotations from other works of art.

Among the films studied we find one very typical example of pseudo-plagiarism between two films. These films, *White Monday* and *Nicotine*, closely resemble each other in one scene, namely the scene of the chase, already mentioned in Chapter 4 in the discussion of roofs as a way of escape from the city. Note that these two films were produced within a comparatively short interval of three years and by two separate teams of filmmakers, no key

[182]'...the author either does not reflect at all on whether he 'coincides' with anybody else in his description of Petersburg or uses the already established language of the Petersburg text quite consciously, applying the whole blocks of the text and not seeing it as plagiarism, rather as using elements of the same paradigm of some common places, cliches, stock phrases and formulas that cannot be suspected of plagiarism.' Toporov even offers a kind of dictionary or list of the most frequent cliches and stock phrases existing in Petersburg works by Dostoevsky, grouping these into parts of speech (Toporov 1995, pp. 313–5).

[183]Quoted after Dolgopolov 1985 a, p. 162. ('Isn't that strange that Russians of the 20s, 30s, 40s, 90s and the first decade of our century were thinking of the same things?')

[184]'The meaning of this closeness between the 20s–40s and 90s–1900s, according to Blok, depends on the fact that Petersburg too remained 'just the same' and that writers of different epochs were thinking of 'just the same'.'

names being repeated for both films. The stories carry some similarities. The protagonists of both films are persecuted by mysterious villains for no less mysterious purposes.

The Petersburg adventures of Ivan Khristoforov in *White Monday* occupy a modest piece of the whole story but show a similar attitude towards the city space as do most of the films of the cinematic Petersburg text. The escape from the city and the reasons for it are very similar to those in *Nicotine*, a tribute to Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* (1960).[185] *Nicotine's* story is extremely tangled and unclear and any causal explanations are easier to find in the source film than in the tribute. *Nicotine* is more focused on stylistics than narration. Too many blank spots in the story unite it with *White Monday*.

In *Nicotine*, the nameless protagonist is followed by mysterious gangsters eager to kill him without any clear reason. In *White Monday*, the protagonist's magic gift of exploding objects with his voice makes him (and all related Khristoforovs that possibly own the same gift)[186] the target of some military forces. They hunt him across the city with snipers and helicopters. He escapes from his persecutors by jumping from a roof into another dimension. In the case of Khristoforov, it is a spatial dimension, not time, that he overcomes. He finds himself on a roof in Paris. The city is unmistakably mapped by including in the shot an obligatory image of the Eiffel Tower. Khristoforov enjoys this new place and finds it more welcoming than his home country. We see him singing and dancing ecstatically with a group of street musicians. He falls into a trance again, but his voice has lost its dangerous talent here and no explosion happens. Yet he still prefers to return to his native village, only to confront a chain of new possible deaths.

In *Nicotine*, the protagonist jumps from the roof, also in an effort to escape from gangsters. He seems to have jumped into another dimension, not only spatially but also temporally. There he observes a scene, improbable for

[185] Godard was one of the first directors to start intentional representation of an anonymous city. Yet *Breathless* still belongs to the category of films where the specificity of the city and its importance for the narrative are noticed by spectators. In the words of Pierre Sorlin, who noted this tendency of making a city anonymous, here on the contrary 'the town is self-evident, it is as solid as its stones, as evident as the regular design of its streets. It is also alive and glamorous enough to add some supplementary meaning to the story, to characterise the protagonists and to provide the public with the joy of discovering new monuments or hidden aspects of well-known surroundings' (Sorlin 1991, pp. 131–2).

Petersburg, of Nazi troops occupying a courtyard. In contrast to the scene with Khristoforov, this dimension does not suit the protagonist of *Nicotine*, who prefers to return to the city space, to stay and joyfully meet his death there.

Whether conscious or not, the repetition of this awkward and unrealistic escape from villains by jumping from a roof into another dimension appears, remarkably, in both *Nicotine* and *White Monday*. One more example of such a clear pseudo-plagiarism, in my opinion, is the reference to Kozintsev's *Hamlet* in both *Arithmetic of a Murder* and *Love is as Strong as Death*. It is not the reference itself that can be coined as a case of pseudo-plagiarism, but the fact that the two films produced within a short time use the same source as a subtext for their narratives.

However, more often a pseudo-plagiarism links together several works of the Petersburg text and is not brought so much to the surface. Below, more examples of pseudo-plagiarisms that connect films to the Petersburg text in other kinds of art are given. They are grouped according to the subject.

City on the Brink of Reality and Unreality. A profusion of dreams, hallucinations and visions in the films studied can be observed as an illustration of Dostoevsky's famous phrase about Petersburg as the most intentional city on earth («самый умышленный город в мире»). In *The Adolescent*, Dostoevsky wrote:

> «Вот они все здесь кидаются и мечутся, а почем знать, может быть, всё это чей-нибудь сон, и ни одного-то человека здесь нет настоящего, истинного, ни одного поступка действительного? Кто-нибудь вдруг проснется, кому всё это грезится, — и всё вдруг исчезнет». (Dostoevsky 1990, p. 170)[187]

Andrei Bely, in *Petersburg*, echoed this idea, writing about the illusory nature of Petersburg's streets: «Петербургские улицы обладают несомненнейшим свойством: превращают в тени прохожих; тени же петербургские улицы

[186]Khristoforov, the family name, means 'belonging to Khristofor', a name that derives from Greek, Christopher — Christ bearer (Uspenskii 1962, p. 629). The name of the hero, Ivan, perhaps the most well-known Russian name, derives from ancient Hebrew and means 'gift of God' (Ibid, p. 613–4).

[187]'Here they all are rushing and throwing themselves about, and who knows, maybe it's all somebody's dream, and there's not a single true, genuine person here, not a single real act? The somebody whose dream it is will suddenly wake up — and everything will suddenly vanish.' (Dostoevsky 2003, 135).

превращают в людей» (Bely 1981, p. 36).[188]

A person in Petersburg subsists on the brink between reality and unreality, of wakefulness and dream. In film, with its visual medium, dreams and hallucinations are sometimes difficult to distinguish from reality. At the same time, or probably even due to this difficulty, they seem to be the best way to illustrate this borderline condition between reality and unreality.

In *Arithmetic of a Murder*, the backyard and the apartment often suggest a dream by means of the colouring, camera angles and slow-motion of these episodes which differ from the rest of the film. Unreality is driven to its maximum in the opening and closing sequences of the film when a rubbish dump is transformed into the city and vice versa.

In some films, an impression of a dream or hallucination is reached by means of blurred images, as in *The Stairway*, or animation as in *The Body Will Be Buried...*

The extreme example is *Lyubov and Other Nightmares* where the whole story starts with the narrator's explanation: «Итак, мне снилось... мне снилось, что я опаздываю на встречу с девушкой со странным именем Программа, которая помогает мне в работе над одним проектом, имеющим отношение к снам, то есть даже не к самим снам, а к способу их перевода в объективное видимое изображение.» / 'So I was dreaming... I dreamt that I was late for a date with a girl with the strange name Programme, who helped me with my work on a project having to do with dreams. Not even so much with dreams as such, but with the way they are decoded into objectively seen images.' Thus the borderline position of the story between reality and dream is justified from the beginning by this declaration and right up to the film's end we can only guess as to whether the screen shows a dream or an objective reality. But since the story continues even after the narrator's death, it would seem to outgrow the dream.

Similarly, in other films where we find examples of dreams and hallucinations, it is hard to decide whether they are dreams, visions, flashbacks, hallucinations or objective reality inside the narrative.

[188] 'Petersburg streets possess one indubitable quality: they transform passersby into shadows*, transforming shadows into passersby at the same time.*' (used Bely 1978, p. 22, with my insertion given in italics.) For more on the confrontation of the reality and unreality of the city in Bely see Dolgopolov 1985 a, pp. 180–1.

Petersburg as a Theatrical Decoration. Another example of pseudo-plagiarism is observed in the representation of Petersburg as a theatrical decoration. In our discussion of traditional patterns traced in the films, it is important to underline that the idea of Petersburg as an enormous theatre in the open air was present already in literary works.

Writing about Bely's *Petersburg*, Dolgopolov notes that some episodes of the novel, such as Christ's appearance to Sofiia Petrovna Likhutina, include rather explicit elements of theatralisation (Dolgopolov 1985 b, p. 235). Akhmatova, in a conversation with Lidiia Chukovskaia, refers to the city through an allusion to opera:

> «Ленинград вообще необыкновенно приспособлен для катастрофы... Эта холодная река, над которой всегда тяжелые тучи, эти угрожающие закаты, эта оперная страшная луна... Черная вода с желтыми отблесками света... Все страшно. Я не представляю себе, как выглядят катастрофы и беды в Москве: там ведь нет всего этого» (Chukovskaia 1989, p. 21)[189].

And, in fact, in Akhmatova's poems the city sometimes acts as a stage, more than anywhere else in her extremely theatrical *The Poem without a Hero*.

In cinema, the city becomes a theatrical decoration in a more material sense. It serves practically as a superb decoration for plots that exploit different epochs, genres and literary works. The city's architecture, with its immense squares and wide panoramas, makes a unique and magnificent film set and attracts even those filmmakers who have no ambitions to depict the mythopoeic spirit of the city and use this cityscape simply to add more picturesqueness to their films. In the films belonging to the cinematic Petersburg text, theatricality influences the narrative intentionally. The protagonist's vulnerability inside the city is predetermined by it. He or she becomes a puppet manipulated in these theatrical decorations according to the play staged in them.

We have already mentioned *Of Freaks and Men* in this vein. The film's empty streets give no escape for the characters from Iogann and his gang, but they also assimilate the story to Gogol's *Overcoat* where, as was remarked by Toporov, the robbery takes place in a square. Thus it is the broad streets and squares of the city that make one feel unsafe (Toporov 1995, p. 333–4). In other films, such as *Nicotine* or *The Body Will Be Buried...*, the action sometimes turns into a pure game or a theatre play that explicitly shows the

[189] 'Leningrad is unbelievably well adapted for a catastrophe... This cold river with heavy clouds that are always over it, these threatening sunsets, this opera-like frightening moon... Black water with yellow glimpses of light... It is all scary. I cannot imagine how catastrophes look like in Moscow: it lacks all this, after all'.

viewer that this is only a performance. The acting of the characters in both films is rather intentional and ostentatious in some moments, as are some of the dialogues.

In *Nicotine*, the impression of the city as a huge decoration is reinforced by the fact that Petersburg plays at being Paris. The city is a stage where different decorations are mixed together in chaotic disorder namely: the Paris-like geometry of the streets, the war scenes, the enigmatic mafiosi as if taken from some American movie, the mockumentary interview with Godard (played by Oleg Kovalov, a film critic).

In *The Stairway*, the idea of a play performed is conveyed by including the figure of the writer in the story. He is also a dweller in the house. He types out Piroshnikov's actions simultaneously with the protagonist acting them and it is hard to decide whether he describes what he sees or whether he represents the actual script-writer of the story.

In some films, the idea of Petersburg as theatre can be caught in non-diegetic insertions into the body of the narrative, such as the musical video with the chambermaid in *The Body Will Be Buried...* or the opening sequence of *Mister Designer* which represents a staging of Blok's *Buffoon*.

The Motif of a House-Ship. Another phenomenon to be discussed in this section on pseudo-plagiarisms is that of the house that in some moment of a narrative acquires, metaphorically and even physically, the traits of a ship, which can be called *a house-ship*. This transformation of a house into a ship is present in only a few films. It signifies adherence to the tradition of the Petersburg text in literature. The literary precursors of this tradition are few, but they belong to one and the same period and also to a crucial moment in the city's history, the 1920s, when the city was gradually losing its status, its name, its importance and its citizens.

In *Mamai*, written in 1920, Evgenii Zamiatin introduced a house in Petersburg by way of a metaphor as a huge ship which conveys its inhabitants every night through the troubles and dangers of the revolutionary city seized with terror and panic.

> «По вечерам и по ночам домов в Петербурге больше нет: есть шестиэтажные каменные корабли. Одиноким шестиэтажным миром несется корабль по каменным волнам среди других одиноких шестиэтажных миров; огнями бесчисленных кают сверкает корабль в разбунтовавшийся каменный океан улиц. И, конечно, в каютах не жильцы: там — пассажиры. По-корабельному просто все незнакомо-знакомы друг с другом, все — граждане осажденной ночным океаном шестиэтажной республики» (Zamiatin 1988, p. 199).

> «Корабль № 40 благополучно пронесся сквозь шторм и пристал к утренней пристани. Пассажиры торопливо вытаскивали деловые портфели, корзиночки для провизии и мимо Осиповых очков спешили на берег: корабль у пристани — только до вечера, а там — опять в океан.» (Ibid., p. 204)[190]

The home would seem to be the only familiar place in the changed and alien city. However, even this last shelter proves to be sinister and might soon be conquered by the unknown and dangerous city.

A similar perception of the city can be found in Olga Forsh's novel from 1930, *Crazy Ship* (Forsh 1990). Here the city is also represented as a stormy sea. Meanwhile, the house, described in the novel as hosting artists, writers and poets, is compared to a ship in this stormy sea. The novel was divided into waves instead of chapters, the last of which was the fatal ninth. The house, that serves as a prototype for the novel together with its notorious inhabitants is *Dom iskusstv* (*the House of Arts*) situated on the Moika. In his memoirs, Kozintsev described the House of Arts as some kind of Noah's Ark:

> «...тут было все, кроме обычного. Здесь в коридорах можно было увидеть запросто такой маскарад, какой не мог присниться и самому Эрнсту Теодору Гофману: могла появиться фигура в изысканной визитке, сшитой лучшим портным императорской столицы, и в валенках; из-под шубы виднелась грязная ночная рубаха, голое тело; а у кого-то — солдатская шинель и черная профессорская ермолка.» (Kozintsev 1981, p. 30)[191]

In this very same Dom Iskusstv, in 1920, Aleksandr Grin was writing his famous novel *Scarlet Sails*, a novel characterised by another dweller in Dom

[190] 'No more houses are there in Petersburg when the evening and the night comes. There are six-storeyed stone ships. A ship drifts in the stone waves as a lonely six-storeyed world amidst other lonely six-storeyed worlds; it shines with lights of innumerable cabins in the rebellious stone ocean of the streets. And, of course, inside the cabins are not dwellers; there are passengers. As it is usual on board a ship everybody is unfamiliarly familiar to each other, everybody is a citizen of a six-storeyed republic under siege by the night ocean.' 'The ship number 40 has safely drifted through the storm and has moored to the morning wharf. The passengers hastily took their brief cases and food baskets and hurried to the shore past Osip's spectacles: the ship is moored only till the evening, then it goes back to the ocean.'

[191] '...here one could find anything but the ordinary. In these corridors you could easily find a masquerade that wouldn't be possible to be dreamt of even by Ernst Theodor Hoffmann himself: somebody wearing an elegant morning coat, made by the best tailor of imperial Petersburg, and valenki [winter boots made of felt] could show up; a dirty night gown or naked body could be seen underneath a fur coat; somebody could wear a military greatcoat and a doctor's skull-cap'. See also Volkov 2005, pp. 434–5, for more on the House of Arts.

(a) The image of a flooded Petersburg street...

(b) ...transforms into a childish drawing with a boat added and an explanation 'This is me'.

Figure 6.4: The final sequence of *Happy Days*.

Iskusstv, Viktor Shklovskii, as a ship that transported the freight of hope into tomorrow.[192]

This image of a house-ship or of a ship that serves as the last refuge in the stormy sea of revolution becomes even more significant and symbolic when connected to the Petersburg myth where sea and water play an important eschatological role. Representations of a house-ship become a logical continuation of the myth of the city in the Petersburg text. A home becomes the last refuge for a citizen, his ship in the stormy sea of a city torn apart by political turmoil that embodies here the flood, the main destructive force in the Petersburg myth. Thus Noah's Ark transforms into a house-ship and it is not surprising that this image has been grasped by some films of the 1990s.

The tradition of representing a Petersburg house as a ship or perhaps as Noah's Ark is clear in the final episode of *Happy Days*. The only shelter the protagonist finally finds in the city is an old decayed boat in a backyard. At first, it seems to play the role of a coffin that is destined to become the last refuge of the strange protagonist banished by everybody. But in the two final absurdist shots the boat actually becomes the only means of salvation in the sinking city, the Noah's Ark of the protagonist (Figure 6.4).

The Stairway, too, contains images of a house-ship. Here a house is almost literally transformed into a ship. There are several episodes in the film in which the house graphically turns into a ship. The floor of the room starts rocking drastically like a ship's deck during a storm to prevent Piroshnikov's escape from the house. In another episode, Piroshnikov and Alia's son, Serezha, play

[192]Quoted after Sandler 1971, p. 7.

at being sailors and the house seems to join in the game, providing sound (voices of the crew, seagulls' shouts, sounds of the sea), movement (wind blowing, light rocking) and even visuals (the view out of the window turns into sea and icebergs). In addition to these episodes, there are pictures of ships in Alia's living-room and a chalk drawing of a ship on the stairway. At the end of the film this picture suggests to Piroshnikov how he can escape — by the roof (or is it a sun deck of the house-ship?). As in the literary precursors, the house sails through the city-sea. But in the film the passenger is not seeking shelter. He comes by chance and stays against his will. The whole voyage of this ship is made solely for him. Other characters can come in and out of the house freely, but at the end of the film, when Piroshnikov and Serezha are making their way to the roof, the house prevents other characters from following.

In *Smile*, the isolation and seclusion from the outer world provided by a lunatic asylum, making it impossible for its residents to abandon it, allows us to regard it as another example of a house-ship among the studied films. [193]

[193] In connection with the idea of a house-ship, it is relevant to remember *The Fountain* by Iurii Mamin, which has been mentioned in the discussion of the *carnivalesque* films in Chapter 3. The house is the main protagonist of the film. Like Noah's Ark, it is inhabited by a variety of social masks from the time: an honest but passive intellectual, a cunning sneaky supplier, an artist. There are workers, indifferent but ready to do anything for a bottle of vodka, an old devoted communist and his antagonistic son-in-law — an entrepreneur growing flowers in his own apartment and many others. But, unlike Noah's Ark, the house is associated with a ship about to be swallowed by the surrounding chaos since the chaos has already penetrated it. The shipwreck starts from the inside, no rocks are needed. The house gradually becomes unsuitable for living and finally it becomes absolutely impossible for the inhabitants to stay inside. They all walk out into the cold night where they finally reunite around a fire like prehistoric people, singing songs and forgetting their problems and misfortunes. In a way, this final scene of the film is, of course, a pure carnival. All the characters of the film gather around the fire, overcoming all their previous conflicts. Hence we find here not only adherence to the tradition of representing a house as a ship in the waves of a rough ocean, but also the carnivalisation of the home and street that I find characteristic in regard to the representation of space in the cinematic Petersburg text. Here again, the house or home represents a threatening dangerous element. The street in this film, instead, happens to be a much safer and friendlier space for the protagonists. They can be united here after all the quarrels and misunderstandings they had inside the house, in a big happy tribe. This differentiates the film from the films of the Petersburg text where such a universal unity inside the city is impossible. Still, many points of contact between this film and the cinematic Petersburg text can be found. In my opinion, *The Fountain* can be considered a bridge to the Petersburg theme developed by Mamin later in *Window to Paris*. Not least the use of the motif of a house-ship in this film speaks in favour of this view.

* * *

In the majority of the films studied in this thesis, the traditions established by the Petersburg text in literature and other kinds of arts can be traced more or less clearly. In some cases, the connection to the canonical Petersburg text is restricted to a verbal or visual reference to it. An interesting and obvious way of tracing the tradition would be to study film adaptations of the literary Petersburg text. However, it is important to note that, at least among the films chosen for this thesis, there are no direct adaptations of literary originals. Instead, these adaptations actualise the original and bring it up to date. *Crime and Punishment* in *Arithmetic of a Murder* as well as *The Idiot* in *Love is as Strong as Death* are transferred into the 1990s. Meanwhile, *The Bronze Horseman* transforms into the story of Kirov's assassin. Apart from adaptations there are also a number of complex intertextual references and pseudo-plagiarisms. The latter, noted as a phenomenon by Toporov, clearly serve to reveal a homogeneous Petersburg text in literature, music and film. Usage of almost clichéd epithets and motifs allows the scholars of the Petersburg text to speak of a special language in which the Petersburg text was, and still is, created.

In this chapter we have only touched upon the tradition of the canonical Petersburg text followed in the films studied. Many other examples can be found and those that are mentioned in this chapter can be discussed in much greater depth. However, this short overview helps to give an idea of the tradition followed by contemporary films. It shows that, consciously or not, filmmakers rely upon the existing tradition. It also helps to stress the idea of the homogeneity of the cinematic Petersburg text and to prove its existence in contemporary Russian film art.

Chapter 7

Time Preferences

In this chapter, the years of production of the films studied and the choice of time period represented in these films will be considered. No other temporal parameters of the films, such as screen duration, event duration or the relationship between the two, will be discussed in this chapter. These tend to characterise the genre and style of the films and have little to do with the Petersburg text as such.

Concerning the year of production of the films in question, we note once again that all the films studied in this thesis were produced between 1988 and 2001. The peak years of production during this period were between 1990 and 1993 (see Table 7.1). Half of the films were produced during these years. This, of course, can be considered a matter of selection of the films represented in this study. Yet looking at the films listed in the Filmography for further study we will find there a similar situation: the years 1991–1993 were the most fruitful concerning the production of films that can be ascribed to the Petersburg text. I find it logical that the years of growing public interest in the city's fate, its name and its myth coincided with the surge of filmmakers' interest in this subject. It is even fairer to say that this increasing public interest could not but help influence art and be reflected in it. Closer to the end of the period studied the amount of Petersburg-oriented films per year declined. A new boom could be observed closer to Petersburg's tercentenary, but this period will be discussed in Part IV of this thesis. This statistical observation, while accepted with some reservation, allows us to speak of the 1990s as of a complete stage in development of the cinematic Petersburg text.

Apart from the year of production I find it interesting and reasonable to speak of time inside the narratives as referring to epochs and also seasons chosen for different films.

Table 7.1: Time Preferences in the Cinematic Petersburg Text of the 1990s.

Title	**Year of production**	**Epoch/year of the story**	**Season**
Mister Designer	1988	Beginning of the twentieth century, 1908 and 1914	Autumn, summer
The Stairway	1989	Contemporary to the production	Winter
The New Scheherazade	1990	Contemporary to the production	Summer, autumn, winter
The City	1990	Contemporary to the production	Winter or late autumn
White Monday	1990	Contemporary to the production	Autumn or spring
Dude Water Winner	1991	Contemporary to the production	Autumn or spring or summer
Arithmetic of a Murder	1991	Contemporary to the production	Late autumn or early spring
The Myth of Leonid	1991	1934	One summer day and autumn
Smile	1991	Contemporary to the production	Autumn or winter
Happy Days	1991	Unclear	Late autumn or winter and early spring
Nicotine	1993	Unclear	Summer
Window to Paris	1993	Contemporary to the production	Autumn or spring
Love, the Presage of Sorrow	1994	Contemporary to the production	Summer
Music for December	1995	Contemporary to the production	Summer
Love is as Strong as Death	1997	Contemporary to the production	Late autumn or winter
Brother	1997	Contemporary to the production	Late autumn
Of Freaks and Men	1998	Beginning of the twentieth century	Autumn and winter
The Body Will Be Buried...	1998	Contemporary to the production	Autumn
Lyubov and Other Nightmares	2001	Contemporary to the production	Autumn or winter

In the table above we see that an overwhelming majority of the films are set in a time contemporaneous to the time of the film's production. I

find this choice of the period that dominates the films of the Petersburg text symptomatic. The political and social turmoil could not go unnoticed by the filmmakers. Putting aside any other possible reasons that dictated this choice, we can state with confidence that active public interest in Petersburg's destiny, and in the changing political, social and cultural life of the country, were among the reasons for this. The myth of the city standing on the crossroads between its imperial and Soviet past had to be revised and re-actualised. Numerous discussions about the city's future and the story of the name change (and let us not forget that along with the city's name other local names: streets, squares, etc. were also changed by that time) were also efforts to revise the myth of the city in accordance with the present day. It is the present of the city and its correlation with the myth that attracts the keenest interest of the filmmakers in the studied works.

In this connection it is important to note that very often the films of the perestroika period were set in the city streets and natural surroundings, without involving professional actors for crowd scenes. This connects the films of the 1990s with Italian neorealist films and the French New Wave as well as Soviet Thaw films. All these movements focused too on fixing the truth of life, the rapid changes that their creators were witnessing. The use of natural locations, non-professional actors and unstaged events taken from real life helped filmmakers to create the genuine atmosphere of their present. These devices related the films more closely to documentaries than to feature films. The desire to speak about the surrounding world that is changing so drastically concerns in particular the films of the Petersburg text. The films discussed here were often set in natural locations outside studios, in the streets, in the midst of the real crowd, in private apartments. Of course, it should be neither denied nor forgotten that filmmakers had serious economic reasons for doing so as well. Natural locations provided a possibility of cutting the costs of a film production, as did the filmmakers' preference for films set in the present over historical and otherwise technically complicated pictures. The use of other stylistic choices suggests, however, that the motivation for natural locations was not merely financial.

Although the use of non-professional actors, concerning not solely extras but character roles as well, is an exception rather than the norm in these films, one interesting feature is common to many of the films studied. Significant personalities of that time often showed up in these films acting as themselves or even playing cameos and even characters. Use of real historical personalities of the period in the films also helped to bridge the gap between fiction and a chronicle of Petersburg in the 1990s. Some of the period's celebrities, such as Dmitrii Shagin, Iurii Shevchuk and Sergei Kurekhin, appear in several films

playing themselves or in the lead roles (Shevchuk as Ivan Khristoforov in *White Monday*, Kurekhin as Gorelikov in *Dude Water Winner*).

Furthermore, the insertion of seemingly documentary episodes gives the impression of a newsreel rather than fiction, as though the camera just chanced to record them. The examples are many.

The last sequence of *Arithmetic of a Murder* is shown as though filmed by news reporters. In *Smile*, the story alternates with short insertions of two women singing in a crowded place.[194] Similar examples can be found in *Dude Water Winner*, *Window to Paris*, textitMusic for December, *Brother*.

Among the films we find those that are set in periods different from the time of the film's production. Although they are few, they can be categorised into several groups quite characteristic of the Petersburg myth.

The Myth of Leonid pertains to a defined period and even a defined date. This is uncommon among the films studied. Usually no exact year or date is given by the credits or by any other means. In *The Myth of Leonid*, the date is revealed through the historical events alluded to in the film. The story starts in the summer of 1934 and ends with Kirov's assassination on December 1, 1934.

This is the only film addressed in this thesis in which the story is set in the Soviet period. Yet it can be argued that Kirov's assassination was among the key events of the twentieth century to form the city myth. With this event and its bloody consequences the image of Leningrad began to be firmly established as a centre of opposition and as a martyr.

In this regard, it is also interesting to note that there is one key event in the twentieth century history of the city almost totally neglected in the 1990s films, namely the siege of Leningrad. In fact, among the films analysed in this work we have no example of a story set in Leningrad during the Second World War. In my opinion, the reasons for this neglect are deeply psychological. The siege of Leningrad, an acknowledged traumatic public memory to this very day, has become consolidated in a myth of its own. Any attempt to re-evaluate this deeply mythologised event from an unusual angle will risk offending public memory and be considered an infringement of the sacred.[195] Even among the

[194] Although the singers are professional actors, they perform to an unprepared audience unaware of being filmed.

[195] This idea has been expressed by Toporov as well in his work on the Petersburg text: «самый страшный голод — вплоть до каннибализма — был во время блокады. О нем есть ряд ценных источников, но эта трагедия все еще не только не осмыслена во всей ее глубине и ее последствиях, но и — приходится признать — не описана

films offered in the appendix for further study there is only one film that deals with this delicate subject, *Krasnyi streptotsid* (*Red Streptocide*, Chiginskii, 2002), produced later than the films studied in this thesis.[196]

Another important period for the Petersburg myth, namely the beginning of the twentieth century, is represented in this work by two films. The films set in this period are Teptsov's *Mister Designer* and Balabanov's *Of Freaks and Men*.

Mister Designer is, furthermore, one of the two films apart from *The Myth of Leonid*, that has exact dating indicated in the credits ('Saint Petersburg 1908' and 'Saint Petersburg 1914'). It is interesting to note that the novel by Grin on which the film is based was written in 1925, much later than the time in which the film is set. This intentional disparity in the time setting points to the filmmaker's specific interest in this period of Petersburg's history. As stated in the credits, Saint Petersburg is the place of action instead of the novel's fictitious city of Alambo. The years 1908 and 1914, which feature in the film, mark the beginning of one of the most dramatic episodes of the city's

с той полнотой, которой она заслуживает. Вся правда о нем еще не сказана, и ее последствия, живо ощущаемые и сегодня, несомненно, продолжатся и в следующем веке (уместно напомнить, что трехсполовиноймилионный город к сентябрю 1945 г., уже после возвращения значительной части эвакуированных, насчитывал лишь 36,6% прежнего населения и даже десять лет спустя, несмотря на все преимущества «сытого» Ленинграда перед голодной провинцией, население составляло лишь 85% от довоенного) [...] «Я поняла, — пишет в *Петербургских дневниках* З. Гиппиус, — что холод хуже голода, а тьма хуже и того и другого вместе. Но и голод, и холод, и тьма — вздор! Пустяки! Ничто — перед одним, еще худшим, непереносимым, кажется в самом деле не-вы-носимым... Но нельзя, не могу, потом! после!»». (Toporov 1995, p. 287) ('...the most terrible famine, including even cannibalism, was during the siege. About this there is an amount of valuable sources but this tragedy is not yet completely realised to its depth, neither its consequences, however, and this is to be admitted, neither is it described as completely as it deserves. All the truth about it is not revealed yet, and its consequences that are perceived today will proceed into the next century (it is appropriate to remind ourselves that September 1945, when most of the evacuated citizens had already returned, the city of three and a half million counted not more than 36,6% of its former population and even ten years later, notwithstanding all the benefits of the 'replete' Leningrad if compared to the hungry province, the population of the city was only 85% of its pre-war count) [...] 'I understood', as Zinaida Gippius writes in her *Petersburg Diaries*, 'that cold is worse than hunger, and darkness is worse than both together. But hunger, cold and darkness are nothing! A trifle! Nonsense in the face of of something worse, unbearable, probably in-suffer-able... But no, I can't, later! after!'.').

[196] In addition to this feature film we also mention *Leningrad* (Buravskii) from 2007, a clichéd and pompous TV series about the siege of Leningrad. This film was screened outside Russia in 2009 under the title *Attack on Leningrad*.

history and not least of its myth. 1914, the year of the main events in the story, was also the year when Petersburg lost its name for the first time.

The second decade of the twentieth century is the time when Petersburg appears to be on the verge of death and devastation, both physically and metaphysically. This period is considered by the majority of scholars and writers as the end of the city myth and the time when the curse was fulfilled (see Chapter 2).

The dramatic events of the beginning of the century also parallel the events of the 1990s and many details in the city's history of the beginning and end of the century echo each other. In the first place it marks, of course, a radical turn in the country's political life. Events at the end of the century move in the reverse order compared to the beginning of the century — the return of the original name to the city, the revelation of forgotten and forbidden names of emigrants and disgraced figures of the Petersburg–Leningrad culture. But although the movement of the historical events seemed to rewind, its perception by the public was just as anxious revealing a similar feeling of uncertainty, an awareness of chaos and an ambiguous response of both shame and admiration. Thus it is not accidental that the city of the beginning of the twentieth century appears in some films.

No less accidental is the appearance of metaphors used at the beginning of the century and recurring again in the films of the 1990s. Among them is the house-ship in the storming sea of the city already mentioned. Other recurrent visualisations of Petersburg in the films echoing the metaphors of the beginning of the century, such as a deserted city and a city transformed into a theatre backdrop, also reoccur. In both *Mister Designer* and *Of Freaks and Men*, Petersburg is represented as a dead, devastated city, a perfect illustration to the beginning of the century as it is represented in fiction and in the memoirs of the time. Looking at this dead city, one sometimes cannot even guess whether it is day or night, spring, autumn or winter. It is an abandoned and ruined Petersburg; rare figures framed by the camera are all included in the action. The city is mostly filmed from its backyards, showing its seedy unattractive side. Not only the streets but even the insides of the public buildings (such as a theatre where Platon has a meeting in *Mister Designer*) remain deserted.[197]

[197] Compare the Petersburg of the two films to Vasilii Zhukovsky's utterance about the citizens in a letter to his friend and niece Kireevskaia in 1817, as of mummies surrounded by grand pyramids whose grandeur is not created for these mummies (cited after Toporov 1995, p. 265). The description coincides perfectly with the city and the citizens as if it

In *Mister Designer* the idea of the decline of the city is traced in the plot itself. Platon's story is that of Frankenstein demolished by his own murderous creation. Even more important is that Platon proclaims an idea of competing with the Creator and it is this sinful idea that ruins him in the end. Petersburg is no less an embodiment of the same idea of competing with God and therefore its ruin is also logical and expected. This parallel of the city and the protagonist is reinforced by the last episode showing the old, ruined and abandoned house where the doll once lived.

One more group can be formed concerning the time the story is set in. It includes such films as *Happy Days* and *Nicotine*. As with the rest of the films, here we can map the stories as set in Petersburg owing to various hints. But in both these films it is difficult to define precisely the time when the stories occur. The choice of props, costumes and even separate scenes and visual details creates a kind of a temporal jumble that deludes the viewer and prevents him/her from placing the narrative in a specific period.

Happy Days seems initially to be set early in the twentieth century, probably in the 1930s. Both the costumes and the song *Too Many Tears* can be ascribed to this period. But costumes attributed to the 1930s are combined with props and settings that can be ascribed to other decades and even to other centuries. These are, for example, a modern tram and the rather modern milieu of the hospital; while Anna's costumes represent in each scene a different period involving even a late eighteenth century-inspired costume with a high wig. According to film critic Plakhov, Petersburg in this film, with its emptiness, reminds us of a siege and evacuation time (Plakhov 2008, p. 10). It is important to note here also that Balabanov is famous for a captious and rigorous attitude to costumes, settings and props in his films.[198]His other films, where there every small detail is verified with the period filmed, confirm this statement. This is why the mishmash of *Happy Days* cannot be considered fortuitous and inadvertent.

A similar time confusion is found in *Nicotine*, a tribute to Godard's *Breathless*. Here a contemporary Petersburg soon becomes a mixture of different decades, including the 1960s, the time when Godard's film was produced, and the 1940s in the war scenes. They are put together with no apparent logical reason and create an impression of some Godard-inspired phantasmagoria, a

was taken as a principle for creating the city space and its interaction with the characters in both films.

dream about Paris in Petersburg.

In my opinion, time blending in these two films constitutes an interesting and typical example of time choice for a Petersburg story. On the one hand, this helps to create an illusory and imaginative place out of Petersburg while still staying inside its recognisable material reality. On the other, a probable explanation is that Petersburg is crammed with history and mythology. Walking the city streets one constantly runs into small reminders of historical events from different epochs presented in a time confusion similar to that shown in the films discussed here. Toporov speaks of this as of 'a symbolic oversaturation of the city' («знаковая перенасыщенность города» (Toporov 1995, pp. 287–8)).

Speaking about time in the films of the Petersburg text a few words should also be said about the season chosen in the films. One of the directors of the films studied in this work, Dmitrii Dolinin, wrote in his book that season choice can have a decisive influence on the overall emotional colouring of a film (Dolinin 2009, pp. 46–7). He completes his discussion of the seasons in films with a passionate exclamation: «Нет ничего скучнее стандартного калифорнийского лета!» (Ibid., p. 47)[199]. This statement speaks of the filmmaker himself as of a representative of the cinematic Petersburg text and suggests the quintessence for the situation with season choice in the films belonging to it. Indeed, summer is the least popular season to figure in the studied films. Although we may count six films where the season represented is all but indisputably summer, in three of these it is combined with other seasons. In all these cases, episodes filmed in summer are contrasted in their placid and tranquil spirit to the rest of the story.

[198] This is, for example, how one of Balabanov's leading actors, Sergei Makovetskii, describes this trait: «Никогда не вспылит, не закричит на актера — хотя может устроить дикий скандал, если какая-то мелочь его не устраивает. Как он обживает пространство!.. Каждую вещичку перетрогает, перепроверит, чтоб все было на своих местах — и тарелочка, и скляночка, и салфеточка... Язычок у колокольчика на дверях должен ударять не влево, а почему-то именно вправо, и ручка дверная должна быть вот такой, а не другой, и паровозик за окном должен дымить вот так... В этом весь Балабанов» (Makovetskii 2007). ('He can never get furious, nor shout at an actor — yet it can can drive him wild if some tiny detail does not suit him. How he lives himself into the space!.. He touches every object, checks it, so that everything is in its place: every little plate, phial, table napkin... A bell's clapper has to clap not to the left but only to the right for some reason, a door-handle has to be like that, not any other, a locomotive behind the window has to smoke this way... This is what makes him Balabanov'.)

[199] 'There is nothing more boring than a standard Californian summer!'

In *The Myth of Leonid*, a summer day outside the city opens the film. Its peaceful atmosphere is in stark contrast to the oppressive, gloomy autumn in Leningrad, so fateful for Nikolaev. Yet in the last episode a real snowy winter is shown as if to make a distinction between the disputable story, preceding the assassination offered in the film, and the pure historical facts of the day of the assassination. It also puts a full stop to Nikolaev's morbid inconstancy in autumn, showing his clear, fatal decision taken on this white snowy day.

In *Mister Designer*, summer is the time when Platon becomes acquainted with his mannequin while unaware of her true identity and gradually falls in love with her. As soon as he becomes suspicious, summer changes back to the autumn that figures in the first part in which the mannequin is created.

In *The New Scheherazade*, summer is shown in the first film sequence. It is the southern summer of the protagonist's short holiday romance with her Prince Charming from Leningrad. Later on she will leave to find him there, but will instead meet many hardships . Summer will appear again in the film in her fake flashbacks about her relationship with this man. Leningrad instead, during the whole film, is plunged into a mixture of autumn and winter.

Other seasons have no dominant role in the films. Roughly speaking we have three winters, six autumns and one spring. Probably it can be said that autumn is prevalent. However, the season that really keeps the leading position in the films discussed is an unclear mixture of autumn, winter and spring when it is impossible to define the season for sure. This inter-seasonal weather appears in nine of the studied films. It can, of course, be ascribed to the peculiarities of the Petersburg climate in which autumn lasts all the year round. This indefinite inter-season concurs well with the general atmosphere that we have discussed previously. For the Petersburg myth in a zero moment of its development, there cannot be a more suitable weather than this indefinite blending of autumn, winter, spring and summer mixed together. This inter-season inside the city is often confronted with a clear and usually sunny season elsewhere.

In *The City*, slushy Petersburg is contrasted with the white snowy landscapes of the protagonist's native town. In the closing sequence, however, snowy white winter comes to the city as well. On the one hand, it can simply reflect the passing of time. On the other, the white winter coincides with the story's happy ending which signifies the artist's reunion with the city, his spiritual balance and inspiration finally obtained in this city.

Similarly, in *Window to Paris*, summer appears in the episodes featuring Paris. In contrast to sunny and warm Paris, Petersburg is constantly dull and cloudy with people warmly and drably clothed in grey and no greenery in the streets.

In the same way a change of season from an indefinite autumn-spring coincides in other films with characters' exit from the city or with significant moments in the narrative, usually towards its end. Among these films are, for example, *The Stairway*, *Dude Water Winner*, *Brother*.

To sum up, it can be said that there is a very limited choice of eras shown in the films of the 1990s, no doubt because the myth of the city called for its revision at exactly the moment the filmmakers were living in. This is why the majority of the films are set in the present and even Petersburg of the beginning of the century in many ways is an echo of the 1990s city . The no-time or out-of-time Petersburg is an interesting and symbolical choice for revising the myth. Speaking of the season choice in the films we saw that preference in most of the films is given to an indefinite inter-season, a mixture of autumn, winter and spring. It is in fact very characteristic of the Petersburg climate, but also coincides with the city's unwelcoming nature frequently mentioned in the Petersburg text. This is also consonant with the conception of the chaotised Petersburg in the films of the 1990s in which the myth can be developed in both directions, to its definitive ruin or to its final resurrection.

Part IV

THE MYTH AFTER THE TERCENTENARY ANNIVERSARY OF THE CITY

Chapter 8

Tradition and New Developments

8.1 Presentation of Films Revised

We have studied several aspects which, in my opinion, unite the films of the 1990s set in Petersburg into a homogeneous Petersburg text similar to that studied by Vladimir Toporov in literature. But before we come to any conclusions, I will say some words about the further development of this subject in Russian cinema. The filmographies at the end of this work and the Table 7.1 introduced in Chapter 7 show that, at the end of the 1990s, the amount of films belonging to the Petersburg text decreased. This signifies a reduction in the filmmakers' interest in the Petersburg myth at this time. It is for this reason that I consider it legitimate to speak of this time as concluding an entire period in the development of the cinematic Petersburg text. Its start is marked by the beginning of perestroika and its emphasis results from the change of the city name in 1991 from Leningrad back to Saint Petersburg. This event seemed to express the ambition towards integrating and reconciling Petersburg's imperial past with its Soviet history within the city's mythology. It is then logical and also grounded in figures that, by the end of the 1990s, the interest in the city myth began to fade slowly. This allows us to observe the decade of the 1990s as a separate and complete period in terms of the myth's development.

However, an important event that brings back interest in the myth of the city and introduces drastic changes into the vision of the myth in film is the tercentennial anniversary of the city.

In this part I present a short survey of the films created on the threshold of this event and soon after it and try to compare them to the films discussed

previously. The number of films is more restricted this time. I have chosen only a few examples that are interesting from my point of view, both as a general viewer and as a researcher of the Petersburg text after the city's tercentennial anniversary. The films chosen for this part are:

Russkii kovcheg (*Russian Ark*, 2002, Aleksandr Sokurov)
Peterburg (*Petersburg*, 2003, Irina Evteeva)
Progulka (*The Stroll*, 2003, Aleksei Uchitel')
Gorod bez solntsa(*Sunless City*, 2005, Sergei Potemkin)
Piter FM (2006, Oksana Bychkova)
Mne ne bol'no (*It Doesn't Hurt Me*, 2006, Aleksei Balabanov)

Of these I distinguish the first group of films, consisting of Evteeva's *Petersburg* and Sokurov's *Russian Ark*, both of which seem to have the function of summarising the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s. Secondly, the final four films on the list form another group showing changes in the cinematic Petersburg text and designating changes in the myth that occur after the tercentenary anniversary.

8.2 *Russian Ark* and *Petersburg*

Both *Russian Ark* and *Petersburg* use pioneering cinematic techniques for their production. As is well-known, *Russian Ark* was the first long feature film ever made in one single continuous shot with no editing. The technique used in all Evteeva's works differs but is also unique. It stands on the border between live-action and animation. She juxtaposes filmed actors with animation by projecting images on glass and painting over them without recourse to digital techniques.[200]

[200] This is how Irina Evteeva describes her own technique: «Я не традиционный мультипликатор. Сначала я снимаю фильм с актерами, а всю анимацию делаю уже с кинопленки. Кадр проецируется на большое стекло. Но если на прозрачное — на нем не будет видно, а вот если в каком-то месте намазать краской, тут изображение будет. Установлено несколько проекторов, с одного может пойти изображение человека, с другого — фон, и так далее. У нас также есть множество лампочек, которые тоже имеют цветность, светность, разный накал — ими можно манипулировать. Каждый кадр мы с оператором Генрихом Мараджяном выстраиваем, сочиняем, я рисую на стекле, ставим свет, если утвердили — снимаем. В день делаем в среднем 40 анимационных картинок, используя 120 кинокадров. В анимации меня больше всего интересует взаимопроникновение киноизображений» (Petrova 2002). ('I am not a traditional cartoon maker. First I make a film with actors, all the animation is added afterwards on the celluloid. A take is projected to a large sheet of glass. Where it remains transparent, nothing will be visible; where paint is added, the image will appear. Several projectors are assembled, one might give an image of an actor, another — of the background and so on. We have a variety of lamps that have their gradation of colour, light, different heat level; they also can be manipulated.

Another similarity between the two films is found on the narrative level. Neither of the films has any salient protagonist. Although there is the marquise de Custine and the voice of another person that remains unnamed and offscreen in Sokurov's *Russian Ark* and a projectionist in Evteeva's *Petersburg*, they can all be regarded as story-tellers or even observers rather than as protagonists. Neither of the stories has any salient plot. They consist of a myriad of scenes quoting or interpreting the city's history and its myth. *Russian Ark* presents different scenes from the history of Russia all taking place inside the Hermitage. In Evteeva's *Petersburg* an artificially constructed space of Petersburg is represented. The protagonist is a traveller, an observer of pieces of the Petersburg text performed in front of him. Petersburg here is represented by a confusion of various symbols, details, images, and characters that belong to the Petersburg text in literature and in film. Along with the images of the actors filmed especially for *Petersburg*, Evteeva frequently uses episodes from films undoubtedly ascribed to the cinematic Petersburg text.[201] These are *Stachka* (*Strike*, 1924, Sergei Eisenstein), *Petr Pervyi* (*Peter the First*, 1937 (part 1), 1938 (part 2), Vladimir Petrov), *Maskarad* (textitMasquerade, 1941, Sergei Gerasimov), *Pikovaia dama*(*Queen of Spades*, 1960, film-opera, Roman Tikhomirov), *Shinel'* (textitThe Overcoat, 1959, Aleksei Batalov), *S. v. d.* (*The Club of the Big Deed*, 1927, Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg). Andrei Bely's poems, recited by Sergei Dreiden (the actor who by coincidence plays the marquise de Custine in *Russian Ark*), provide a comment on the chosen episodes and become a pivot uniting them. The film exists in two versions, the shorter one lasting 26 and the longer 52 minutes. The longer version also includes episodes with a contemporary Petersburg family. The protagonist-narrator is a member of this family. He is lost inside the Petersburg text. In the longer version his role of narrator is more profiled than in the shorter one.[202]

We, the operator Genrikh Maradzhan and I, build and compose every single shot, then I paint on the glass, we fix lights, and shoot it if we both approve it. We can make about 40 animated pictures per day using 120 film takes. In animation I am most interested in the mutual penetration of film images.')

An example of Evteeva's work can be found among the films studied in the previous chapters. In 'The Body Will Be Buried...' the episodes of the protagonist's dreams and hallucinations are produced by Irina Evteeva in her recognisable manner.

[201] Some of them are mentioned by Muratov in his works on Petersburg in film. See section 2.3 in Chapter 2.

[202] Unfortunately, I have only had the opportunity to see the shorter version of the film. Information about the longer one is taken from various interviews with Evteeva:

«*Петербург* существует в двух версиях: 52-минутной и 26-минутной. Короткий метр и тот, основной, что взят в конкурс, — это два разных фильма. Картина по изначальному замыслу должна была состоять из трех новелл. Но история

Another similarity between the two films is directly connected to the Petersburg text and exists on a philosophical level, so to speak. Both films may be designated as conscious efforts to survey the myth and history of Petersburg in its entirety. Awareness of these efforts can be corroborated with the fact that both directors have a scientific and historical background. Sokurov's first university degree is in history, whereas Irina Evteeva is a professor of art history. Even though it can be said that *Russian Ark* is more focused on history and *Petersburg* on myth, a blending of both are nevertheless present in each film.

In *Petersburg* it is easy to note the dominance of images that belong to the Silver Age and especially to works by Andrei Bely. Apart from poems by Bely recited in the film there are images of the Red Domino and other masks, as well as the film's title itself that sends us straight to Bely's major work about the city. Still, along with these easily recognisable quotes from Bely's *Petersburg*, other quotes too link the film to other pieces of the Petersburg text and myth and to its history. Images of Peter the Great and soldiers of different epochs (from Peter's time to the revolution) inundate the city streets as a literal flood. The full title of the film that appears in the opening credits is *Petersburg or a trip of the hero within a whirlpool of visions evoked by the dissolving shadows*

выстроилась иначе.

Весь фильм — это сочинение некоего человека, который попадает в кинопространство. Оно-то и есть некая материя, объясняющая, куда он попал. Герой работает с материалом от моего имени и замкнут в изображение, и то, что с ним происходит, — это воспоминание, воскрешение образов, связанных с определенной питерской семьей, некоторые реминисценции по отношению к детству.

Это — современная часть картины. Если она изымается, то получается фильм без актеров по стихам Андрея Белого, возникают ассоциации на тему фильмов о Петербурге и Серебряного века, поэзии того времени и всяких мороков, которые наполняют жизнь' (Khokhriakova 2003).

('There are two versions of *Petersburg*: one is 52 minutes long, the other is 26. The short and the other, the main one, that has been submitted to the contest, are two different films. According to the initial idea the film was to include three novels. But the story developed differently.

The whole movie is a composition of a person who lands up in film space. This is a kind of substance that explains to him where he happened to get to. The protagonist works with this substance on my behalf and is shut inside the image, all that is happening to him are memories, a reanimation of images that are connected to a certain Petersburg family, some reminiscences of the childhood.

This is the contemporary part of the film. If it is taken out, then we have a film without actors based on poems by Andrei Bely, that gives rise to associations regarding Petersburg and the Silver Age, poetry of that epoch and all kinds of ghosts that saturate life'.)

of the city[203]. In my opinion, this title works equally well as a definition of *Russian Ark*. In fact, in *Russian Ark* different historical personalities appear as shadows or ghosts that play their usual roles. Sometimes they interact with the travellers, de Custine and his off-screen companion, but mostly they seem not to notice their observers. Yet even though *Russian Ark* tends itself more to an overview of Petersburg (and, speaking more generally, Russian) history, we can also trace the myth in it. Like *The Stairway* and *The Fountain* it includes a distinct image of a house-ship. Moreover, as in these films and in the literary works preceding them, this is the basic story-building concept for this film. The film's title already points to this metaphor. The Hermitage transforms into a Noah's Ark for Russian culture and history and keeps it safe through the storms of wars, revolutions and tyrannies. In the film's last episode, however, the entire nobility walks down the Jordan Staircase after a ball and heads for the exit, carrying with them de Custine. And the only thing the camera shows outside the palace is the grey and impenetrable fog over the Neva. It is obscure, threatening and frightening.

Like the episodes from *Strike* and *Peter the Great*, representing the running and shouting masses cited in *Petersburg*, the fog of *The Russian Ark* symbolises both revolution and flood, the two real threats to the city's existence. In *Petersburg* this mass is also shown in the form of a flowing movement penetrating every nook and cranny. It is symbolic, then, that the last episode of *Russian Ark*, before the image of the foggy and ominous river, is devoted to a ball at Nicholas II's court, the last Great Royal Ball held in the Winter Palace in 1913. The fact that the participants of this ball walk down the staircase towards the open doors of the palace confirms the idea of a combined image of flood and revolution.

This combined image appearing in both films can be regarded as the authors' attempt at drawing a line under the myth of Petersburg. I believe, however, that this is in fact an indication of one of the most important aspects of the myth, namely a constant feeling of doom, the sword of Damocles, which enters practically every work of the Petersburg text. The existence of this feeling of damnation is of key importance for one who tries to understand and overview the Petersburg myth.

It is further important to note that both stories lack any indication of time. Instead we see a row of interpolating and interacting epochs. As noted in the previous chapter, this approach to time in the cinematic Petersburg text is not new. *Happy Days* and *Nicotine* also represent a mixture of epochs

[203] *Peterburg ili puteshestvie geroia v vodovorote videnii, naveiannykh tumannymi teniami goroda.* The English translation of the title is given in the film's opening credits together with the Russian one.

within one story. This conforms with the intent of showing an overview of the Petersburg myth and history.

An important detail in this case is that in both films the protagonist-observer who moves inside all the epochs of Petersburg's history is our contemporary. In *Russian Ark* he is present as a voice behind the camera which further reinforces the junction of the protagonist with the viewer. The voice belongs to Aleksandr Sokurov, which, however, is uncredited in the film. Both films present the view of a contemporary person towards the myth and the history of Petersburg, thus linking the present of the city to the three hundred years of its history and mythmaking. This is also the reason why I find it possible to regard the image of revolution and flood not as an indication as to the city's and the myth's decline but as an integral and significant part of the myth itself.

Interestingly, both films were also the fruit of long plans and preparations by their authors. Sokurov had planned to make such a film for 15 years before the idea was finally realised (Tuchinskaia). Irina Evteeva started to work on her project in 1997 (Khokhriakova 2003). Both films were eventually introduced to the public on the threshold of Saint Petersburg's anniversary in 2003. This is not a simple coincidence. Both films can be understood as summarising three hundred years of the Petersburg myth and history rather than narrating a clear story. Furthermore, they seem to draw a line under and close the post-perestroika period of the cinematic Petersburg text. This confirms the idea of this thesis, that the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s should be regarded as a complete phase in the development of the cinematic Petersburg text, while films produced after 2003 already belong to a new phase and should be distinguished from their predecessors of the previous decade.

8.3 The Myth in the Cinema after the Tercentenary Anniversary of the City

The films *The Stroll*, *Sunless City*, *Piter FM* and *It Doesn't Hurt Me* can be grouped as films of the cinematic Petersburg text produced after 2003. I shall give a brief overview of these four films using the same structure as for the films in the main body of the thesis. Thus I will look at how space is organised in the films and consider which recurrent functional elements previously discussed can be identified, to what extent these remain unchanged, and to what extent they differ from the previous period. Similarly, I will consider the protagonists of these films, the traditional story lines and details of the Petersburg text in literature and finally the time choices made. I limit my analysis to only four films since to make a detailed comparison with a similar amount of films

would be a task for another thesis. I choose four films produced after 2003 that indisputably constitute manifest pieces of the Petersburg text. All the four films were acknowledged by both critics and audiences. No premeditated criteria were given for the films chosen for the main analysis. The choice was dictated first of all by their accessibility. This time my choice was more deliberate since there were alternatives to it which are represented in the Filmography for Further Study given in the appendix to this thesis.

Two of the directors of the films I chose made their debuts with the films discussed here. *Piter FM* was the first feature film by Oksana Bychkova and *Sunless City* was a debut for Sergei Potemkin as a film director. Both directors were involved in writing the script for their films. The films of these two young directors differ from the films of their predecessors. It could be argued that the main reason for these differences is that a new generation of filmmakers appeared that have a different perspective on the city and its myth. To redress the balance, the other two films chosen for this chapter belong to acknowledged cinematographic masters and, much more importantly, directors who have already made a significant contribution to the creation of the cinematic Petersburg text.

Aleksei Balabanov, the director of *It Doesn't Hurt Me*, has repeatedly been mentioned in Part III. His earlier films *Happy Days*, *Of Freaks and Men*, *Brother* and *Trofim* (not taken into consideration in this work since it is a short film) may all be considered fundamental for the Petersburg text. Balabanov is indisputably one of the most eminent creators of the Petersburg text in film and it is remarkable that his last Petersburg film differs from his other works and can easily be grouped with other films produced after 2003.

Another mature director is Aleksei Uchitel'. His *The Stroll* is also chosen for this short analysis. His earlier films were not discussed in the previous part since those films that can be identified as pieces of the Petersburg text are documentaries.[204] Among these are his films about the Leningrad–Petersburg underground culture, such as *Rok* (*Rock*, 1987), *Ely-paly ili 'Mit'ki' v Evrope* (*Ely-paly or Mit'ki in Europe*, 1990), *Rok v Rossii* (*Rock in Russia*, 1991), *Poslednii geroi* (*The Last Hero*, 1992). By way of an example I shall briefly analyse one film that clearly characterises Uchitel' as an author of the Petersburg text, namely *Obvodnyi kanal* (*Obvodnyi Canal*), a documentary from 1990. In brief, this film can be described as a film–promenade, a film–freak panopticon. Uchitel' shows a variety of underground, bizarre, freaky and deviant members of society. The places visited in the film are all situated along the Obvodnyi Canal in Petersburg. There is a dirty, cheap pub with

[204] The exception is Uchitel's feature film *Maniia Zhizeli* (*Gisele's Mania*, 1995) which was unfortunately inaccessible for me during the work on this thesis.

its regulars and a rude, unattractive waitress; a shabby mental asylum with its patients; a pair of twins shown in a 'Palace of Culture'; the Mit'ki group fooling around in a private apartment, etc. Together, these episodes give an impression of life on the brink where it is impossible to distinguish which of the characters belong where; who is normal and who is insane.[205] Since they all seem to be interchangeable, an impression of a carnival and chaos is created. In between episodes the camera shows us a person walking along the canal: namely, the easily recognisable figure of Viktor Krivulin, a Leningrad poet. He does not utter one word in the film, but his lameness and tousled beard concur with the rest of the characters. He acts as a guide in this world on the verge between normality and insanity. It should be pointed out that at the end of the nineteenth century the Obvodnyi Canal marked the city's borderline. Accordingly, walking this borderline is equivalent to walking a liminal carnivalised space, but it also provides a background space for the city. Most of the functional elements discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 can be recognised in this short description. In its main idea this documentary is very close to *Smile*, a film about the patients of a lunatic asylum, which, by the way, is also situated on the Obvodnyi Canal.

By taking two films by debutant directors and two by established authors of the Petersburg text, in order to give examples of the cinematic Petersburg text after 2003, we can prove that the changes that occurred not only reflect the ideas of the rising generation but also the relevant changes in the city's social, cultural and political life as reflected in the new films.

[205] This is how Uchitel' himself described *Obvodnyi Canal* in an interview: «...самой моей любимой картиной был *Обводный канал.* Вы знаете, что Обводный канал — это прорытый в центре Ленинграда пятикилометровый путь, и когда я по нему проезжал, то обратил внимание на то, что на его берегах находятся три сумасшедших дома, духовная семинария, какие-то дворцы культуры имени Карла Маркса и еще кого-то, пивная... Мысль фильма была простая: неизвестно за какой стеной сумасшедший дом. Фильм мне близок, он практически бессловесный, без всяких комментариев. *Канал* завоевал несколько международных премий. Да, очень характерный фильм, отразивший состояние моих мозгов в то время» (Nuzov 2004). ('... *Obvodnyi Canal* was my favorite picture. You know, the Obvodnyi Canal is a 5 kilometres long way excavated in the centre of Leningrad and when I drove along this way, I happened to notice that there are three lunatic asylums, a theological seminary, some palaces of culture named in honor of Karl Marx and somebody else, a pub all built on its embankment... The idea was simple: you never know behind which wall you find a lunatic asylum. This film is close to me, it is almost wordless, without any commentary. *Canal* won several international prizes. Yes, it is a very typical film that reflects the state of my mind at that time'.)

8.3.1 Space

It has been noted repeatedly in the previous chapters that, in the films of the Petersburg text of the 1990s, action is usually moved from any recognisable and attractive site in the city to its backyards and outskirts. Films after 2003 seem to be more unrestricted and confident in using the city's gala spaces. In each of the four films we find various gala tourist places of Petersburg that easily enable the viewer to map the place of action. There is no more hidden or implied mapping destined only for initiated viewers. Petersburg is usually identified early in the film and in an obvious way.

The Stroll, for example, starts at Nevsky Prospect and leads the viewer through the centre of the city and several of the city's major places of interest.

Moreover, usage of the city name becomes free and easy-going in these films. The verbal taboo seems to have been forgotten.

In *Piter FM* the name of the city is given in the film's title, notwithstanding that Piter is the city's unofficial name, nowadays often perceived as young people's way of referring to the city. Yet it is one of the oldest of the city's names which can be found in folklore of the beginning of the eighteenth century, soon after the city's foundation.

The Stroll also had as a working title the city's name included in it, *Petersburg online*, merging together the old-new name of the city implying ultra modern and youthful trends to be associated with the city's renewal. Yet in the film's final version this title was substituted with *The Stroll* which, in my opinion, alerts us to Uchitel's earlier stroll filmed in the city — *Obvodnyi Canal*.

In *It Doesn't Hurt Me* and *Sunless City*, Petersburg is directly referred to several times.

Thus the timidity and embarrassment observed in the films of the 1990s in using the city's name (any of the names) and its tourist attractions has now disappeared. The name, Petersburg or Piter, is frequently used together with the city's gala spaces. Yet there are some nuances in each of the discussed films that do not allow us to speak of a total change in visualising the city space. Even though gala spaces are filmed more freely and openly they are still given a secondary position and never become the main object of filming.

In *The Stroll* and *Piter FM* we see much of parade Petersburg, but this is usually filmed in a whirlpool, hasty, slipshod manner.

The Stroll is shot almost completely with a mobile camera that follows the protagonists during their one-day walk through the city centre. This technical choice creates a dizzy and unclear picture in which it is hard to distinguish the surroundings; it creates the impression that the viewer too is walking across the city together with the protagonists. Their promenade starts in the very centre of the city, on the Nevsky Prospect, but neither camera nor protagonists pay much attention to the architectural attractions of the city centre. Instead our attention is riveted on the people in the streets. We see not only the protagonists, whose continuous and even somewhat irritating dialogue distracts us from any sights in their background, but some short episodes focus instead on people in the streets. These episodes are inserted into the film as if to give the viewer a rest from the joyful and never-ending, buzzing dialogue of the protagonists and the camera's whirlpool movement. These short scenes are filmed with an immobile camera. During these episodes the protagonists remain out of sight for several minutes. The constant switch between the main story and these short insertions recalls the gaze of an idler or a flâneur, as though the camera represents the point of view of a flâneur distracted from observing the protagonists by other chance episodes of city life. Among them are, for example, excursion touts, restoration workers in front of the Hermitage with an amusing critical comment on Peter I's choice of the place for his city, people in historical costumes posing for tourist photos, Petersburg football team's fans, etc. This manner of photographing the city reflects the viewpoint of a native citizen used to its tourist attractions and rarely paying attention to them. This is portrayed in the episode that takes place up the colonnade of St. Isaac's Cathedral, a traditional tourist observation point where the protagonists linger to talk, not about the city, but about themselves and their personal places of interest.

In *Piter FM* we find a similarly hurried manner of filming the city. Various episodes of the film are separated from each other by views of Petersburg consisting of short flickering clips sporadically combined together. As in *The Stroll*, it is impossible to identify any clear picture of the city in these insertions. They are accompanied by the sound of a tuned radio. The combination of Petersburg's sights flashing to a tuning sound makes the city resemble a huge radio receiver with countless waves into which different people are tuned. The polyphony of different tunes directed at different people captures an individual's solitude in a megalopolis. The title of the film,*Piter FM*, already implies this metaphor. In fact, the protagonists of the film may be regarded as two citizens who were fortunate enough to be tuned into the same wave-length and to come across each other on account of a lost mobile phone.

In *It Doesn't Hurt Me* and *Sunless City* we again find more of the gala side of Petersburg than in the films of the 1990s, but it still does not occupy an important place in the narratives. Interestingly, the authors of *Sunless City* expressly state that the film shows Petersburg from an unexpectedly alluring perspective beyond any tourist paths,[206] as if trying to stay attached to the tradition of the 1990s Petersburg visualisation in film.

Significantly, on the official websites of two films discussed here, *Piter FM* and *Sunless City* , Petersburg is openly proclaimed a film character.

Altogether we can see that the city centre with its attraction for tourists is no longer deliberately avoided by the filmmakers. This is true on the verbal level as well: the name of the city is now spoken freely by the characters and may even be used for the film titles (*Petersburg*, *Piter FM*, the working title of *The Stroll — Petersburg on-line*). This means that no hidden hints are needed anymore to identify the place of action, it may be confirmed often at the very beginning of the film if not by the title itself. Backyards and outskirts are no longer shown as gloomy, dirty and unattractive places. The manner of shooting the city space is frequently hectic and focused on people in the streets, not on the architecture. Still the city is openly admired by the filmmakers. There is no tension between admiring and hating, no explicit ridiculing present as in the films of the 1990s. Admiration is found on the visual level as well as on the narrative level of the films. Generally speaking, we can say that in these films Petersburg seems to flourish again, resurrected and refreshed. This reflects the influence of the city's anniversary and the huge restoration work that started on the threshold of this event. In these films it is acknowledged that, in comparison to other big European and Russian cities, the city is young. At the same time, this is also a city with an enormous historical and cultural heritage. It is no wonder then that the protagonists of these films are young people in their twenties.

Interestingly, we find traces of restoration and rebuilding in virtually every film discussed here.

In *The Stroll*, one of the inserted episodes is focused on workers at the Palace Square and the promenade on the whole is set in the very centre of the city where restoration work is clearly visible in different scenes. In *It Doesn't Hurt Me* and *Piter FM* the protagonists of the films themselves work in areas connected to reconstruction. Misha in *It Doesn't Hurt Me* is a young designer who rebuilds the interiors of well-to-do people's apartments situated mainly in old buildings. Maxim in *Piter FM* is an architect who lands a job in Germany

[206]From the film's official website (see the official website of *Sunless CitySunless City*).

but on a ridiculous pretext prefers to stay in the city he admires. In both films we find short episodes that include actual restoration work in the streets.

Although the city is often shown in these films as beautiful, prosperous, young and flourishing anew, a hidden threat and instability is always sensed beneath the joyful surface. The person coming into interaction with the city is still extremely vulnerable.

We have already mentioned that in *Piter FM* Petersburg is likened to a huge radio receiver. Inside it, everybody is lonely and isolated from each other and it is hard to find someone else tuned to your wave. Masha, the female protagonist, comments on this idea in the following way: «Статистики утверждают, что в нашем городе 6 миллионов, я лично видела сегодня целых 18, так много людей, а тот, кто нужен, один-единственный, он опять потерялся.» / 'Statistics claim that we have a population of 6 million, I have personally seen all of 18 today, but someone you need, the one and only, is lost again'. A recurrent detail implying this idea of the person's loneliness is that all the characters, including the protagonists, constantly bump into each other, not knowing, of course, that they have any connection to each other. The personal life of the protagonists reflects the city's opposition between its shining surface and its gloomy depths. Both protagonists are unsatisfied with their seemingly successful lives: Masha with her forthcoming marriage, more routine than an act of love, Maxim with his chance to go abroad and work there in his profession instead of being a yard cleaner in Petersburg. Even though the final episode of the film implies their probable meeting in the future, these personal problems remain unsolved and will hardly be solved after they meet.

In *The Stroll* , the joyful promenade of the protagonists during which Lesha and Petr fall in love with their new acquaintance, turns out to be a cruel practical joke played by Olia. Her desire to prove to her fiancé that she can manage long walks during their honeymoon is the reason for her long walk with the boys cast as two unwitting witnesses of her act. Thus every single word she tells them and all her feelings turn out at the end to be a bluff.

The plots of *It Doesn't Hurt Me* and *Sunless City* are similar to each other. A young man meets an extraordinary woman he falls in love without knowing her sorrowful secret which will change his life as well. In *Sunless City*, Lucy is a young actress who is a drug addict and Egor, a well-to-do young engineer, has to reveal the wrong side of life and make a tough choice

to be able to save her. The female protagonist of *It Doesn't Hurt Me*, Tata, is an irresistibly attractive and bizarre woman whose life seems to be fun. She makes Misha's life easy and joyful, helping him and his friends to find rich clients and enter high society. But underneath this surface Tata is a deeply unfortunate person and her fatal disease is simply an accompaniment to her loneliness and unhappiness.

The discordance of the city's welfare and the protagonists' inner problems and conflicts is sometimes shown in an explicit visual contradiction.

In *Piter FM* the scene of Masha's break-up with her fiancé is shown in front of a huge window. Outside this window, as a background to the action, we see workers doing reconstruction work. The noise of their work overlaps at moments the sounds of the quarrel as the camera's angle is switched and the scene is shown from outside the window. This episode makes the idea of the simultaneity of the city's external resurrection and the characters' discomfort there clear and literal.

Similarly, in *It Doesn't Hurt Me* Tata's apartment is situated in a house that has been reconstructed and through her windows we can see workers doing their job, thereby ruining any privacy of her private space. In the episode when Tata's and Misha's intimate relations begin we see workers busy outside Tata's windows. They are able to observe everything that takes place inside the apartment. We are shown only the conversation of the protagonists, which presumably ends up in a bedroom scene. With the workers outside the windows any privacy of this presumed scene seems to be impossible from the beginning and this in turn hints at the love triangle later to be revealed in the film.

The confrontation of the city's busy and prosperous surface with a person's vulnerability imprisoned within is deeply rooted in the myth of Petersburg. This is the traditional picture of Petersburg's ambivalent nature that we find in each of the films discussed. The *I love*-theme of the city noted by Toporov first in Pushkin's poetry (Toporov 1995, p. 261) is always interwoven with the individual's uneasiness and solitude inside this space.

This conflict was present in the films of the 1990s as well, but there the *I love*-theme was less salient and mixed with some kind of awkwardness or fear. In the films of the 1990s the finale of most films represents an open ending which can be interpreted in either a happy or a tragic vein. Other films of this period contain a clearly sad end and the death of the protagonist. In contrast,

the films discussed in the present part have a more definite and, importantly, a more definitely happy ending.

The Stroll is probably the only film that has an open ending — the two boys leave the girl with her rich fiancé, notwithstanding her attempts to stop them. But the other films end happily and even the finale of *It Doesn't Hurt Me*, with its melancholy joy, can be considered happy.

With the exception of *It Doesn't Hurt Me*, the tonality of these films is more joyful than that of the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s. We shall speak more about this when considering time in these films.[207]

Before we come to the next criterion we should also pay attention to space in detail. One of the important recurrent elements of the previous period was streets turned into squares and devoid of their normal functionality. In the films after 2003 this chaotised state of the city space disappears. The streets, albeit heavily crowded, no longer resemble market squares. People rush around, but the whirlpool of people is colourful and showy (as, for example, in the episodes with the crowd in *The Stroll* and *Piter FM*). In addition, the protagonists usually appear as flâneurs inside the city space. They observe the rushing crowd as the camera reflects their manner of idle observation.

This is especially obvious in the episode of Maxim's waiting for Masha in *Piter FM* when he has nothing else to do but observe people passing by.

An important aspect that distinguishes these films from the previous period is an obvious, even obtrusive, effort to show Petersburg as a European city. This concerns the space, the characters and many smaller details of the films. This westernising point of view is not evident in the films discussed previously. Instead, in *Window to Paris*, *White Monday* but also *The City*, *Music for December*, Petersburg was openly contrasted with Europe rather than assimilated into it. This change as well as an open admiration of the city

[207] This view of Petersburg as prosperous and doing well on the surface but dangerous and threatening underneath this surface is traditional for the Petersburg text in literature. It can be found in many works starting with *The Bronze Horseman* by Pushkin which actually starts with the admiring and delighted *I love...* passage and finishes with Evgenii's tragedy. Interestingly this confrontation was characterised by Dolgopolov in his discussion of Bunin's novel *Loopy Ears* in terms very similar to those concerning the period after 2003: «Это уже буржуазный Петербург, во всей «прелести» своего призрачного и фальшивого благополучия» (Dolgopolov 1985 a, p. 175). ('This is now a bourgeoisie Peteresburg, in full the 'charm' of its illusory and fake well-being'.)

in the films after 2003 is important in inclining the balance inside the myth towards its positive aspect. The filmmakers now have more confidence in discussing the myth of the city and making a more definite choice concerning its perspectives.

The situation with inner space in the post 2003 films has much in common with the previous period. The idea of a threatening and hostile inner space is maintained in the films discussed here, although it is expressed differently in each of the films.

The Stroll has almost no inner space. The whole story takes place in the streets of Petersburg. But the final scene that puts an end to the romantic and joyful day of the trio is filmed indoors, in a fancy night club.

In *Sunless City* the idea of hostile inner space is evident, but it becomes most explicit in the episode of the death of one of the characters. Alex, Lucy's brother, is dying of AIDS. As a photographer, he decides to make a performance of his own death. He locks himself in a room with windows blocked out with photos and makes pictures of his death moment by moment. Finally, he tears the pictures off the windows as though trying to let real life, the city, into the room and then he dies.

Similarly, an apartment is a jail for the female protagonist of *It Doesn't Hurt Me*. Tata's apartment, paid for with the money of her rich boyfriend, is also guarded by his bodyguards and by cameras so that the boyfriend can watch her every step and control her. The workers seen in some episodes on scaffolding outside her windows also deprive her apartment of any privacy and tranquility.

An interesting example of inner space is offered by *Piter FM*. Inner space here is not explicitly hostile but simply reduced to a minimum. Usually the main motifs in the protagonists' apartments, as well as in Masha's office at the radio station, are the huge windows and the city outside. The apartments seem to be attached to these huge windows and the characters are frequently filmed seated by or even on the window sills. In one conversation, Masha is sitting with her legs outside; Maxim uses his window as a door outside, onto the roof. One of the characters climbs into the window of the radio station, literally using it as a door.

There are almost no deviant and liminal spaces in the films addressed in this chapter. This might be the result of the limited amount of films chosen. Even in the films studied in the main body of the thesis, liminal spaces and ways of escape from the city do not appear in every film. Besides this, they vary extensively from film to film and from filmmaker to filmmaker. Yet we

do find some examples in post 2003 films as well.

As we have just mentioned, Maxim's apartment in *Piter FM* seems to be a supplement to the space outside on the roof where he and his guests spend most of their time.

In *Sunless City*, Alex, Lucy's brother, also prefers the roofs of the city when he takes pictures of it.

Another place that can be regarded as liminal in these films is, for example, a hospital.

In *It Doesn't Hurt Me* and in *Sunless City* the female protagonists are enclosed in hospitals, away from the city and from the troubles and sorrows that followed them in Petersburg. In *Sunless City*, liminal space is provided by a theatre that helps Lucy to escape her addiction, and at the same time helps another character, the director of this semi-professional theatre, to preserve his kindness and naivety in the changing world.

Interestingly, the idea of a pure carnival possible only outside the city is present in post 2003 films as well.

In *Sunless City* a carnival concludes the film and serves as a happy ending for the story. All of a sudden the realistic action of the film transforms into a theatrical carnival: Lucy recovers after her suicide attempt, as she together with Egor leave the city for a better life. The protagonists make peace and again show affection towards each other. All this is shown as a joyful performance: the hospital ward transforms into a stage, the walls simply fall down to give place to the actors and puppets, confetti starts falling down and Semen, the theatre director, acts now as the good genius of the tale (confronting Alex, the evil genius). The sequence is cut to a shot of a minibus on a snowy road somewhere in the country. Both the protagonists and Semen are visible through the window. Thus the carnival takes place in a transitional area. It belongs not to the city but to the road, which in itself can be regarded as a carnivalised space.[208]

[208] Bakhtin speaks of roads, among other things, as of possible substitutes for the action, behaviour and relationships of the carnival (Bakhtin 2002, p. 75).

The episode in *It Doesn't Hurt Me*, when Misha, Tata and Misha's friends go to the country and take a walk there also resembles a pure, light-hearted carnival where everybody is laughing and free of their everyday troubles and conflicts.

Yet in *The Stroll* this kind of a total unity of people and happiness occurs inside the city. I refer to the episode of the march of the *Zenit* football team fans through the city. The protagonist trio joins it for a while.

In *Piter FM* a seemingly pure carnival in Maxim's apartment inside the city is destroyed by his aggressive attack on his friends after which he leaves the party. This discordance between the total joy of the participants of the party and Maxim's aggression implies his hesitations and discomfort amidst the revelry.[209]

Finally, concerning the means of moving through the city as one of the functional elements, we find no great differences in comparison to the previous period. The most recurrent way of moving through the city for the protagonists is still walking. However, while for the protagonists and characters of the previous period walking the city needed to have some pretext (lack of home or occupation, etc.), now the protagonists do not need any reasons for their flâneurie. Flâneurie itself becomes their reason.

This regards first of all the protagonists of *The Stroll* as indicated in the title. Although it might be argued that the female protagonist has her personal hidden reasons for this promenade, there are no such reasons for the male protagonists.

Similarly, in *Piter FM*, Maxim is walking through Petersburg, having as a possible reason his wish to say farewell to the city before his departure. But this reason is not articulated clearly, which allows Maxim to function explicitly as a flâneur. In *Piter FM*, moving through the city is important for the story and is used profusely. The characters walk, run and even bike through the city. The film offers a bicycle as a new way of moving through Petersburg. Previously we found a bike only in *The Myth of Leonid* where its use was

[209] An effort of performing a pure carnival, that appears often in carnivalesque films, fails in the films of the Petersburg text when performed inside the city. Here we can consider both *Piter FM* and *The Stroll* as a failed pure carnival. At the end of the story the true intentions and feelings of the female protagonist are revealed contradicting her sincere spiritual community with the other participants of the procession. In literature we can take as an example of such a failed pure carnival Lermontov's *Masquerade* (1835) where a masquerade serves as a false cover for the mean and deceitful acts of the characters.

historically motivated. Here instead it is a way of modernising the city space and its flâneur. It makes him more mobile, active and youthful (which we will speak more about in the next section).

In *Sunless City*, walking is also pure flâneurie for the protagonists, while for Alex, for example, it is his job as a photographer that makes him a flâneur.

In *It Doesn't Hurt Me*, on the other hand, flâneurie is a forced choice for the protagonists who have a chance to stay together and unnoticed only outside the apartments, in the streets. Here, as well, another recurrent functional element of the previous period is present. Staying by the water of the canals and moving by water, Tata is able for the first time to confide some of her secrets to Misha.

In some of these films cars carry malicious traits similar to those in the films of the 1990s.

In *The Stroll* the story begins with a car that brings Olia to Nevsky Prospect and leaves her there. The driver of the car stays off-screen until the end of the story when we discover that this was in fact Olia's fiancé. This introduces suspense from the very beginning into the story that otherwise would be joyful and light-hearted. During the film we hear the stranger of the first episode calling her on the phone. His car scares the protagonists when he almost runs them over.

In other films discussed in this part, the malicious role of cars is not so explicit and significant, yet it can be traced in *Piter FM* and in *It Doesn't Hurt Me* as well.

Summing up the observations of the post 2003 films discussed here it can be said that this new period may be considered as a stabilisation period for the myth. The myth's ambiguity and duality are in balance in these films. The duality seems to be accepted and recognised by the authors and, more importantly, this is usually consciously acknowledged. The prosperous and shining surface of Petersburg is always accompanied by the protagonists' loneliness and sufferings apparently unavoidable inside the city. Comparing this to the earlier period of the cinematic Petersburg text we can say that the confused and puzzled attitude to the city's myth in those films is transformed into acceptance and recognition of its entirety. The idea that the stories are set in Petersburg and not any other Russian or European city becomes consciously important for the filmmakers, a fact frequently underlined in their interviews and on the films' official websites. At the same time many traits, obtained by

the cinematic Petersburg text during the 1990s, are maintained in these films as well-established and even canonical.

8.3.2 Protagonist

Probably the most manifest change of the cinematic Petersburg text after 2003 concerns to the protagonist. The protagonists become essentially younger in post 2003 films. In the films discussed the protagonists are younger than 30 or even 25, which was rare in the films of the 1990s. It can also be pointed out that an architect, a designer, generally speaking a person that is closely connected in his work to the city's architecture and reconstruction, figures in two of the four films.

Young people as the protagonists of the films echo, in my opinion, the city's own youth. This youth is further underlined in the style: *The Stroll* is a real time movie, showing the city and all its changes in an *on-line* mode. It is exploited in the films' subjects as well where we note europeanised names (Lucy, Alex), drug addiction and AIDS in *Sunless City*, the choice between a career abroad and staying at home with no clear perspectives in *Piter FM*. I would claim that the phenomenon of the Europeanisation of Petersburg becomes explicit in these films and this is connected to visualising its youth and the youth of the protagonists.

We have already pointed out that the protagonists of these films are often flâneurs, meaning that the narratives no longer need an excuse for making the protagonists roam in the city. They walk the city, enjoy it and meet people by accident. Flâneurie becomes a way of living in the city. But even we viewers become flâneurs.

This happens in *The Stroll* where, due to the camera work, we become almost voyeuristic observers of the trio and of the city. In *Piter FM* the camera frequently takes Maxim's optical POV angle as he walks the city. Usually it is a low-angle framing as he looks up at the buildings and even takes pictures of them.

Another detail to be noted when speaking of the protagonist is that in these films the female protagonist becomes equally important and focused. In fact all four films present a couple as the film's protagonists, a male and a female; in *The Stroll*, it is a trio in which Olia still has a leading role. In *It Doesn't Hurt Me* Tata also has the leading role, since it is her story told by Misha who functions then rather as a protagonist-narrator.

The background of the protagonists varies from film to film and it is hard to find any clear coincidences and regularity here. However, a table with the protagonists' personal details gives some general comprehension of their backgrounds (see Table 4). There are no anonymous protagonists about whom we have no information at all. Many of the protagonists are newcomers to the city, which follows the traditional path both for the characters and for the creators of the Petersburg text. Concerning citizens presumed native to the city, this information is usually less clear and definite, in which case it is usually marked as 'not clear' in the table ('NC'). If information is not given at all it is marked as 'unclear' ('U') in the table. Usually the protagonists have an occupation or a profession, a home or a family. We may note some interesting nuances concerning each of these aspects.

Table 8.1: The Protagonist in Post 2003 Films.

Film	**Nr**	**Sex**	**Name**	**Age**	**Profession**	**Origins**	**Past**	**Family**	**Home**	**In the end**
The Stroll	3	F	+	Over 20	No, a kept woman	U	Every thing told is fake, truth is revealed at the end	Fiancé	NC	Unclear if she stays with her fiancé or not
		M	+	Over 20	Student?	U	U	U	NC	NC, leaves
		M	+	Over 20	Student?	U	U	U	NC	NC, leaves
Piter FM	2	M	+	Over 20	Architect	NC, a newcomer	Some details revealed in conversations	No	Rented	NC
		F	+	Over 20	Radio DJ	Native citizen	Some details revealed in conversations	Parents (off-screen), fiancé	+	NC
It Doesn't	2	M	+	26	Designer	NC, a newcomer	Some details revealed	–	Rented	NC

Table 8.1: The Protagonist in Post 2003 Films.

Film	**Nr**	**Sex**	**Name**	**Age**	**Profession**	**Origins**	**Past**	**Family**	**Home**	**In the end**
Hurt Me		F	+	27	No, a kept woman	NC, a new-comer	Past told by herself and her doctor	–	Belongs to her rich boyfriend	Dies
Sunless City	2	M	+	Over 25	Engi-neer	NC	NC	–	+	Leaves the city with F
		F	+	Over 20	Semi-pro-fessio-nal ac-tress	NC	Past told by herself	Bro-ther	–	Leaves the city with M

The criminal occupations frequently characterising the protagonists in the 1990s are no longer in evidence. There are many artistic professions and occupations, which is not new for the Petersburg text on the whole and for the cinematic Petersburg text as well. Among other characters in the majority of the films after 2003 discussed there are many belonging to artistic professions. The friends of the protagonists in both *Piter FM* and textitIt Doesn't Hurt Me are their professional colleagues, architects and designers. In *Sunless City*, secondary characters also have artistic professions. Many of the protagonists are new in their professions indicating their young age.

Maxim in *Piter FM* has newly graduated and not yet found a job so he is working as a cleaner which provides him with a place to live. At the beginning of *It Doesn't Hurt Me*, Misha is starting his business with his friends and Tata's apartment is their first order. Lucy in *Sunless City* has no job yet and spends her time in a semi-professional theatre working for fun rather than for money. Lesha and Petr in *The Stroll* are presumably students, although there are no clear indications of this.

An 'occupation' that appears after 2003 for women, if it is possible to refer to it as such, is that of being a kept woman. This concerns not only Tata in *It Doesn't Hurt Me*. Olia in *The Stroll* can be characterised in similar terms, although she depends not on her lover but on her fiancé who controls and manipulates her during the story. In some episodes in *Piter FM* Masha also gives the impression of a kept woman when she interacts with her fiancé. This female occupation might be ascribed to the female protagonists in *Music for December* of the previous period. It is a feature that betrays the city's gloomy dark inner face beneath its superficial wealth and prosperity.

Although most of the protagonists have a home, a rented or shared apartment or room is a usual choice for the newcomers (*Piter FM*, *It Doesn't Hurt Me*, *Sunless City*). Yet, in contrast to the films of the 1990s, there is not a single example of a communal apartment shown in these films. This might also be an indication of Petersburg's new image after 2003 as a prosperous and outwardly problem-free city.

Even though the protagonists of the films after 2003 lack some personal information or their background remains unclear, there are no more lost identities in these films, at least among the protagonists. On the contrary, these are usually stable personalities who have their aims in life and their principles that they follow and that take shape during the narrative in their confrontation with various difficulties and trials. Some form of a trial can be found in every film, but remarkably in each of them the protagonist (or the protagonists) becomes a winner due to his/her inner pivot, his/her will power. In some films we do find examples of a lost identity that were frequent in the films of the 1990s, but these are always found among the secondary characters of the films.

In *It Doesn't Hurt Me* Tata's rich lover, Sergei Sergeevich, is wealthy and successful, but he is not satisfied with his life and seeks satisfaction in Tata's sympathy and compassion. The golden cage he has built for Tata is the one he himself is living in. But, unlike him, Tata is able to abandon this golden cage, even though it will cost her her life.

In *Sunless City* we also find secondary characters who may be identified as lost personalities. Alex' self-confidence as a villain and evil genius is the mask of a lost and confused person. This is best expressed in the episode of his neatly planned death ritual which he ruins by tearing the cover off his windows in order once again to see the light and real life. Semen, an older theatre director, also seems to be confused and lost in the changing world from which the theatre is his only shelter.

Unlike these secondary characters, the protagonists are more self-confident, ready to sacrifice, but not to betray, their principles and beliefs. They are not afraid to change their lives, even if this will cause them unclear or even negative consequences. This holds true for the majority of the protagonists of post 2003 films. In my opinion, this means that the protagonist wins in the trial that Petersburg traditionally offers to an individual in the Petersburg text.

Moreover, in *Sunless City* the idea of the individual as responsible for winning or losing the trial is expressed explicitly. Whereas Alex calls his photo exhibition about Petersburg *Sunless City*, which gives the title to the whole film, Semen, as if arguing with him, says that it is not the city's fault if an individual is unable to see the sun in the city but the individual's.

Although the protagonists are changed drastically in the films after 2003, some functional elements that concern the protagonist of the cinematic Petersburg text follow the traditions of the 1990s. One of these is masked personalities discussed in Chapter 5. Among the protagonists of the films after 2003 we find two clear examples of masked personalities. It is noteworthy that both of them are female.

In *The Stroll*, Olia wears a mask throughout the story, removing it only in the last episode and even then reluctantly. Everything she says about herself is a lie as she plays with Lesha's and Petr's feelings, pretending that she is falling in love with each of them. But at the end she seems to become the victim of her own mask. When they meet her fiancé in the film's last episode, Olia no longer enjoys the game. Seva, the fiancé, speaks for her instead. When the boys retire she runs after them and it is doubtful if she will stay now with Seva. Olia, deceived by her own mask like Il'ia in *Arithmetic of a Murder*, starts to believe in the feelings she has simulated to the boys.

Another example of a masked identity is Tata in *It Doesn't Hurt Me*. Her awkward clothes and luxuriant red wig make her look like a clown hiding her sorrows and troubles behind an eccentric mask. A serious difference from Olia in *The Stroll* is that for Tata her mask remains only a mask. At the end of the film when she reunites with Misha she no longer needs it. In fact, her appearance is much changed by the end of the story, which reflects not only the progress of her disease but her rejection of the mask. Her hair is cut short. She uses no make-up and is dressed modestly. She seems to be an actor who has washed off her make-up when leaving the stage. In this episode she is

about to leave the stage forever and this is no doubt why she no longer needs to pretend and wear any mask.

As we can see, the protagonist is drastically changed in the films of the Petersburg text after 2003. However, similarly to the space representations there are some elements that these films inherit from the previous period and from the Petersburg text as a whole.

8.3.3 Time

The action of all the four films takes place in contemporary Petersburg. In *The Stroll* it is underlined that the time of production coincides completely with the time in the narrative. This is one day in *real time* (as the film's annotations claim) from the city's life on the threshold of its anniversary. The illusion of a real-time broadcast is supported by filming with a portable camera. A similar illusion is created also in another film addressed here, textitPiter FM. The female protagonist, Masha, is a radio DJ and during the film her radio broadcasts frequently comment upon her own life and the life of the city here and now.

There is one significant element that is changed in these films, namely the season in the narratives. While the majority of the films in the 1990s are set in inter-season, that is gloomy and depressing without sun or snow, in three of the four later films the story takes place in summer.

In *The Stroll* and *Piter FM* the entire story is performed in an uncommonly bright and sunny Petersburg. Even rain in these two films is shown as joyful and refreshing, with none of the usual dull and grey rain that figures in the Petersburg text. It brings some catharsis and pacification to the protagonists in both films. Despite the title of the film in textitSunless City a part of the story takes place in summer when it is bright and sunny.

The tradition of an inter-seasonal wet city is maintained only in *It Doesn't Hurt Me*.

In my opinion, the change in the choice of season is dictated by the generally changed vision of the city as young and resurrecting.

8.3.4 Following the Tradition

As in the films of the previous period we find a variety of ways in which the filmmakers follow and use the traditional and canonical features of the Petersburg text. We have already made some comparison of the cinematic Petersburg text before and after 2003. Clearly some of the functional elements

that were used widely in the films of the 1990s for the first time were adopted as traditional by the filmmakers after 2003. This concerns some chaotisation of space in representing the city, the use of roofs and unexpected locations inside the city as ways of escaping from it, the use of masked identities, etc. Apart from these examples of following the tradition mentioned above, we can trace in these films all the ways of following the traditional patterns that were discussed in Chapter 6. In the four films analysed in this chapter we find the plots of the Petersburg text being adopted, as well as a variety of intertextual references and pseudo-plagiarisms. We shall not discuss all the examples met in these films, but raise only the most remarkable and curious ones.

Adopted plots. A striking example of a film with an adopted plot is *The Stroll*. In my opinion, its narrative is an explicit contemporary interpretation of one of Gogol's *Petersburg tales*, *Nevsky Prospect* (1833–1834). The two male protagonists of this tale follow two beautiful women they have met during their stroll on Nevsky Prospect and each finds disappointment. The romantic protagonist, a painter, finds a prostitute, rude and vulgar, instead of a fair lady. He cuts his throat when he realises that his illusion is dashed. His realistic foil, an officer, chooses as the object of his love a woman who turns out to be a respectable petty bourgeois lady and not a woman of easy virtue. He is beaten by her husband and finds consolation in pastries and dancing. The tale is framed with the narrator's observations of Nevsky Prospect, which are exaggeratedly complimentary at the beginning of the tale and ironically menacing at the end.

The narrative of *The Stroll* repeats several of the tale's plotlines. In the film there are also two male protagonists who stand in a similar counterbalance to each other. Lesha is a romantic, emotional personality while Petr — firm, realistic and even a little cynical — is his direct opposite. Their contrast is shown in every single aspect: in their manners (talkative Lesha versus silent Petr), in their physical appearance (frail Lesha versus muscular Petr), even in their attitude towards Olia (Lesha's infatuation at first sight versus Petr's distrust at first and gradual increase in admiration). Yet, unlike in *Nevsky Prospect* where each of the characters finds his own object of affection and his own destiny, here one and the same girl wins the affection of the two friends so dissimilar to each other, thus turning them into rivals. It should be mentioned that, in contrast to the tale, in the film Petr is not a ridiculing or contrasting foil character for Lesha. He is no less important and appealing than Lesha is and he plays an equal role in this trio. His masculinity and realism, in my opinion, are even more impressive, both for Olia and for the viewer, than Lesha's romanticism and enthusiasm. As in the tale, the protagonists also meet Olia on Nevsky Prospect and become attracted to her, and the image

they fall in love with turns out to be only an illusion at the end. The words that Gogol' addresses to the reader at the end of his tale can be equally well addressed to the viewer of this film:

> «О, не верьте этому Невскому проспекту! Я всегда закутываюсь покрепче плащом своим, когда иду по нему, и стараюсь вовсе не глядеть на встречающиеся предметы. Всё обман, всё мечта, всё не то, чем кажется! [...] Вы думаете, что эти дамы... но дамам меньше всего верьте. [...] Но боже вас сохрани заглядывать дамам под шляпки! Как ни развевайся вдали плащ красавицы, я ни за что не пойду за нею любопытствовать. Далее, ради бога, далее от фонаря! И скорее, сколько можно скорее, проходите мимо. Это счастие еще, если отделаетесь тем, что он зальет щегольской сюртук ваш вонючим своим маслом. Но и кроме фонаря, все дышит обманом. Он лжет во всякое время, этот Невский проспект, но более всего тогда, когда ночь сгущенною массою наляжет на него и отделит белые и палевые стены домов, когда весь город превратится в гром и блеск, мириады карет валятся с мостов, форейторы кричат и прыгают на лошадях и когда сам демон зажигает лампы для того только, чтобы показать все не в настоящем виде.» (Gogol' 2002, p. 301)[210]

In contrast to the tale, the film has an open ending that may be interpreted in different ways. It is unclear if Olia will stay with her fiancé or not. Concerning the boys, we know only that they leave, but we can guess how important this incident might be for their future lives.

The tone of the film also seems to echo the tone in the tale. The tale opens with a superfluous admiring and exaggeratedly frivolous description of Nevsky Prospect given by the narrator. In the film, this manner of description is repeated by the hectic, superfluous and exaggeratedly joyful dialogues of the protagonists at the beginning of the story. The small scenes showing a

[210] 'Oh, do not trust that Nevsky Prospekt! I always wrap myself more closely in my cloak when I pass along it and try not to look at the objects which meet me. Everything is a cheat, everything is a dream, everything is other than it seems! [...] You imagine those ladies... but ladies are least of all to be trusted. Do not look into the shop windows; the trifles exhibited in them are delightful but they have an odor of money about them. But God save you from peeping under the ladies' hats! However attractively in the evening a fair lady's cloak may flutter in the distance, nothing would induce me to follow her and try to get a closer view. Keep your distance, for God's sake, keep your distance from the street lamp! and pass by it quickly, as quickly as you can! It is a happy escape if you get off with nothing worse than some of its stinking oil on your foppish coat. But even apart from the street lamp, everything breathes deception. It deceives at all hours, the Nevsky Prospekt does, but most of all when night falls in masses of shadow on it, throwing into relief the white and dun-colored walls of the houses, when all the town is transformed into noise and brilliance, when myriads of carriages roll off bridges, postilions shout and jump up on their horses, and when the devil himself lights the street lamps to show everything in false colors.' (Gogol' 1985, 238).

glimpse of an accidental passerby also remind us of Gogol's manner of interrupting a story with a short anecdote or a sketch. Usually they have a very indirect connection to the story itself. Interestingly, the abrupt phrases and images used in the tale in the passage, where Piskarev follows the object of his admiration, seem to be assimilated by the hectic and dizzy camera movement used in the film:

> «Тротуар несся под ним, кареты со скачущими лошадьми казались недвижимы, мост растягивался и ломался на своей арке, дом стоял крышею вниз, будка валилась к нему навстречу, и алебарда часового вместе с золотыми словами вывески и нарисованными ножницами блестела, казалось, на самой реснице его глаз[...]Он даже не заметил, как вдруг возвысился перед ним четырехэтажный дом, все четыре ряда окон, светившиеся огнем, глянули на него разом, и перилы у подъезда противупоставили ему железный толчок свой»(Gogol' 2002, pp. 287–8).[211]

This description seems to be highly cinematographic, as if anticipating the camera's motion in the film. Even if this is a coincidence rather than a deliberate compliance of the film with the tale's style, it reinforces the conscious resemblance that exists between these two works of the Petersburg text.

Among the four films discussed in this part this is the only example of such a general adoption of a plot considered canonical in the Petersburg text in literature. But there are numerous examples of intertextual references that can be found in the studied films.

Intertextual references and pseudo-plagiarisms. As was pointed out in Chapter 6, intertextual references can be explicit and easy to note, or implicit, or possibly accidental and unintentional. The four films discussed in this chapter include a variety of references to the Petersburg text in literature, film and other forms of art. We shall not enumerate all of them. It is nevertheless important to note that using these references filmmakers create a conscious or semiconscious link between their work and pieces of the Petersburg text created earlier.

The films that are saturated with various kinds of references are *Piter FM* and *Sunless City*. We have already spoken about *The Stroll* and will therefore focus now on other films.

[211] 'The pavement seemed to be moving under his feet, carriages drawn by trotting horses seemed to stand still, the bridge stretched out and seemed broken in the centre, the houses were upside down, a sentry box seemed to be reeling toward him, and the sentry's halberd and the gilt letters of the signboard and the scissors painted on it, all seemed to be flashing across his very eyelash[...]He did not even notice a four-storied house that loomed before him; four rows of windows, all lighted up, burst upon him all at once, and he was brought to a sudden stop by striking against the iron railing of the entrance.' (Gogol' 1985, pp. 215–6).

Speaking of references in *Piter FM* it should be noted that this is probably the first film after perestroika so easily and playfully to refer to the component of revolution in the myth. For the creators of the contemporary Petersburg text this part of the myth, together with the siege of Leningrad, has, in my opinion, up to now been the hardest to revise and revitalise. These two themes were usually avoided in the films of the 1990s.

In *Piter FM*, on the contrary, we have two intertextual references to revolution as part of the city myth. In this particular film revolution seems to be re-joined with the rest of the myth. All the characters of the film hum, sing, murmur or whistle the melody of *Cruiser Aurora*, a song about the legendary ship that is claimed to have started the revolt. This melody is the only thing that they all have in common, a kind of a common denominator of all the film's characters.

In addition, there is another more veiled reference that equates revolution with other components of the myth. When Maxim decides to refuse the foreign job offer he looks for the most ridiculous pretext. He says that he is not sure about one issue in the contract concerning force majeure circumstances. All the explanations of the employer are rejected with an ironical listing of all the troubles that actually threaten the city: tsunami, earthquake and revolution, and summing up this list Maxim says that it is all too serious for him. A tsunami can be decoded as the flood in the terms of the city myth. An earthquake can be interpreted as revolution. There is in fact a prophecy announced by Bely in his *Petersburg* about the city's fall by way of an earthquake: «...рассечется земля; самые горы обрушатся от великого труса; а родные равнины от труса изойдут повсюду горбом. На горбах окажется Нижний, Владимир и Углич. Петербург же опустится» (Bely 1981, p. 99).[212]Even though this is only a joke in Maxim's statement it consolidates all the mythical and real dangers that in different times have threatened the city and were able to cause its fall. Therefore, for a Petersburg citizen acquainted with the myth and with the city's history there is a true word spoken in this joke about the seriousness of such risks.

Apart from these curious and unusual references to the myth, there are others that sometimes border on pseudo-plagiarisms. Among these we can name references to Dostoevsky's works. First of all this concerns the image

[212]'The earth shall be cleft. The very mountains shall be thrown down by the cataclysmic earthquake, and because of that earthquake our native plains everywhere come forth humped. Nizhny, Vladimir, and Uglich will find themselves on humps.' (Bely 1978, p. 65).

of the dreamer as a typical Petersburg character that we find in several of his works. This image fits both protagonists of the film, Masha and Maxim. As dreamers they share the same attributes as Dostoevsky's characters. One of the most important attributes in this concern is the clear division into day life and night life of the protagonists and of the city. A description of such a division as spoken by Arkadii Dolgorukii is given in Dostoevsky's *The Adolescent*:

> «Не знаю почему, но раннее деловое петербургское утро, несмотря на чрезвычайно скверный свой вид, мне всегда нравится, и весь этот спешащий по своим делам, эгоистический и всегда задумчивый люд имеет для меня, в восьмом часу, нечто особенно привлекательное[...]Всякое раннее утро имеет на природу человека отрезвляющее действие. Иная пламенная ночная мечта, вместе с утренним светом и холодом, совершенно даже испаряется, и мне самому случалось иногда припоминать по утрам иные свои ночные, только что минувшие грезы, а иногда и поступки, с укоризною и стыдом» (Dostoevsky 1990, p. 269).

The impression of the city's day and night that we can get from *Piter FM* is similar to the one in these quotations. In the film the day of the protagonists is a continuous fussing around the city. Each time they try to meet each other, they fail. Many takes of the day city are devoted to the crowd, to the people in the streets who are also busy doing something, moving somewhere. The day-part of the film is accompanied by active, joyful and rhythmic music, most of it in the style of reggae. The hectic and quick tempo of the day episodes is further enhanced by rapid shots and extensive editing.

In the film, in comparison to the day time, during the night time the tempo is significantly slowed down. The takes are longer and little editing is used in each sequence. Contrasting the day time, when the protagonists constantly fail to meet each other, the night time consists of long telephone conversations in which they seem to comprehend each other well and start getting to know each other. These conversations are also shown as long takes. In one and the same shot we see both Masha staying in her apartment and

[212] 'I don't know why, but I don't like the busy early morning in Petersburg, despite its extremely nasty look, and all these egoistic and ever-pensive folk, hurrying about their business around eight in the morning, have some special attraction for me [...]Any early morning, a Petersburg one included, has a sobering effect on man's nature. Some flaming night's dream even evaporates completely with the coming of morning's light and cold, and I myself have happened of a morning to recall some of my night's only just-passed reveries, and sometimes also acts, with reproach and shame' (Dostoevsky 2003, pp. 134–5).

Maxim in his apartment or in the street. The editing that is done inside one such conversation, transporting us from one interlocutor to another, is almost unnoticeable.

Apart from these telephone conversations that give the viewer a deeper comprehension of the two protagonists, the night-part of the film is also the time when they move around the city without haste. Masha, walking in the city, leans on a garden gate that answers her with a melodious squeaking. A passerby with a double bass looks at her 'playing the gate' with understanding and sympathy. Night is also the time when the protagonists can calmly think over their lives and make up their minds. In the night episodes, non-diegetic music differs from the cheerful day music of the film, which is quite often diegetic since broadcasted by radio DJ Masha. At night these are slow melodious tunes with vocals but no lyrics. They resemble the tunes used in the films of the 1960s, both in Soviet and European cinema. This resemblance is not accidental as we shall consider later.

In his work about the Petersburg text Toporov also points out this division into day and night Petersburg described by Dostoevsky. This division can be applied to *Piter FM*:

> «Бодрость физическая, телесная, сообщительность и деловитость — действительно, поутру. Но бодрость духовная, живость мысли, жар мечтаний, переходящих в горячечные грезы, — это по ночам, после того как физическая бодрость уже ушла, и высвобождающаяся от дремоты рефлексия ума, как бы переняв эстафету бодрости, начинает раскручивать обороты, пока глубокой ночью она не выводит мысль близко к предельным для нее возможностям, где она сама уже не гарантирована от рискованных ходов и перехлестов, которых поутру приходится стыдиться »(Toporov 1995, p. 302).[213]
>
> «В Петербурге ночью мечтатели бодрствовали, но каждый сам по себе, и разгорячиться можно было только от жара мыслей или чувств. Таким был один из первых мечтателей Петербургского текста, герой *Белых ночей*: жизнь мысли и чувства приходилась на ночь, и счет этой жизни шел по ночам» (Toporov 1995, pp. 302–3).[214]

[213]'The physical, bodily vivacity, communicativity and efficiency really do belong morning. Meanwhile the spiritual vivacity, liveliness of thoughts, heat of dreams that become feverous reveries, happen at night when the physical vivacity is gone and the mind's reflexion, released from its drowsiness and as if taking over the baton of vivacity, starts to increase in turnover, till the moment when, deep at night, it brings the thought close to the limits of its capacity where it is not safe any longer from the risky paths and lashings which one shall be ashamed of in the daylight.'

[214]'Dreamers of Petersburg were awake by night, but each on his own, and one could be heated with the heat of one's own thoughts and emotions alone. So was one of the first

This division into day and night time Petersburg that we see both in Dostoevsky's works and in *Piter FM* is closer to a pseudo-plagiarism than to an intentional intertextual reference. In fact, it is to be found in other literary works (in Gogol's *Nevsky Prospect*, Bely's *Petersburg*, Akhmatova's *Poem without a Hero*, etc.) as well as in other films (in *The Stairway*, *The City*, *Dude Water Winner*). A protagonist-dreamer figures in these works. His time of spiritual activity is during the night. Yet by day he remains a dreamer, even when occupied with routine everyday problems and tasks.

If it is hard to define whether division into active day and dreamers' night is an intertextual reference or a pseudo-plagiarism, then there is another link to a dreamer's image in the film that is more likely to constitute an intertextual reference. In a conversation with Masha, Maxim mentions his affection for one house in the city that he finds special and interesting. He says: «У меня с домами особые отношения» / 'I have special relationships with houses' and elsewhere «Дома как люди — родные и близкие» / 'Houses are like people: they are family and friends'. Maxim's attitude to Petersburg houses expressed in these short phrases echoes the attitude of Dostoevsky's dreamer of *White Nights*.[215]This reference, in my opinion, consolidates the image of Maxim as a dreamer and links him to one of his major predecessors in literature.

dreamers of the Petersburg text, the protagonist of *White Nights*: the life of his thought and senses came at night, and the account of his life happened during the nights.'

Toporov notes also a similar day and night division of the city life in Lev Krasavin's *Noctes Petropolitanae.*

[215]Compare it to the following quote from *White Nights*: «Мне тоже и дома знакомы. Когда я иду, каждый как будто забегает вперед меня на улицу, глядит на меня во все окна и чуть не говорит: «Здравствуйте; как ваше здоровье? И я, слава богу, здоров, а ко мне в мае прибавят этаж». Или: «Я чуть не сгорел и притом испугался» и т.д. Из них у меня есть любимцы, есть короткие приятели; один из них намерен лечиться это лето у архитектора. Нарочно буду заходить каждый день, чтоб не залечили как-нибудь, сохрани его господи!.. Но никогда не забуду истории с одним светло-розовым прехорошеньким домиком. Это был такой миленький каменный домик, так приветливо смотрел на меня, так горделиво смотрел на своих неуклюжих соседей, что мое сердце радовалось, когда мне случалось проходить мимо. Вдруг, на прошлой неделе, я прохожу по улице и, как посмотрел на приятеля — слышу жалобный крик: «А меня красят в желтую краску!» Злодеи! варвары! они не пощадили ничего: ни колонн, ни карнизов, и мой приятель пожелтел, как канарейка. У меня чуть не разлилась желчь по этому случаю, и я еще до сих пор не в силах был повидаться с изуродованным моим бедняком, которого раскрасили под цвет поднебесной империи. Итак, вы понимаете, читатель, каким образом я знаком со всем Петербургом» (Достоевский 1988, p. 153).

Remarkable in this film is the reference to a nearby piece of the Petersburg text, *The Stroll*. I would claim that this indicates that *The Stroll* has within three years become recognised as a salient example of the Petersburg theme, or using the terminology of this thesis, as a piece of the Petersburg text. Maxim's role in *Piter FM* is played by Evgenii Tsyganov who acted as Petr in *The Stroll*.

In the episode of Maxim's first unsuccessful meeting with Masha, his former partner and rival from *The Stroll*, Pavel Barshak (Lesha), also appears in an episodic role. For a very short time he becomes a ridiculing double of Maxim. He is also waiting for a girl at the same place. He is clothed similarly to Maxim, which is notably discomforting for the protagonist, and he is also waiting for a girl who is late. For a while even their movements become identical and almost simultaneous. Finally, the double meets his girl also in a red jacket (the object that served as a guideline for Maxim in recognising Masha) and walks away, greeted by Maxim's silent gesture.

Let us now move to *Sunless City*. The first intertextual reference in this film is denoted by the title. Alex and Semen, two secondary antagonistic characters, discuss the idea that the perception of Petersburg as a sunless city might be determined simply by the way of seeing the city and not by the city's nature itself. However, the film's title is a clear reference to a song cycle by Modest Musorgskii named *Bez solntsa* (*Sunless*, 1874, lyrics by Arsenii Golenishchev–Kutuzov). This consists of six song-soliloquies of a man who feels lonely in the heart of the big city, as in a desert. All his efforts to communicate with the world, his love and friendship remain in the past.

(The very houses are known to me. When I am walking along, each of them seems to slip out into the street ahead and look at me, all windows, as if to say: 'Good day; how are you keeping? I'm quite well for my part, praise be, in fact I'm having a new storey added in May.' Or again: 'I almost burned down, what a fright I got!' and so on. I have my favorites among them, indeed intimate friends; one of them intends to have treatment from an architect this summer. I'll make a point of dropping by every day to make sure he doesn't overdo things, Lord preferve it... I'll never forget what happened to one ever so pretty rose-pin cottage. It was such a sweet little stone cottage and it looked so benignly at me and so proudly at its ungainly neighbours that my heart positively rejoiced whenever I chanced to pass by. Then all of a sudden, last week, as I was walking along the street and glancing over at my friend, I heard a plaintive cry: 'They're painting me yellow!' Villains! Barbarians! They spared nothing, neither column nor cornice, and my friend turned as yellow as a canary. The incident fairly sickened me and ever since then I've not felt up to seeing my poor, disfigured friend, now painted the color of the celestial empire. So now you understand, dear reader, in what way I am acquainted to all Petersburg' (Dostoevsky 1999, pp. 4–5).)

One white Petersburg night he is sitting in his small room, similar to that of Raskol'nikov in *Crime and Punishment*, and summing up his lonely and joyless existence. The last song of the cycle makes it clear that the protagonist has no way out but suicide. The city rejects this crushed creature and he himself is prepared to disappear without any pathos or scandal, calmly and silently (Volkov 2005, pp. 118–9).

A parallel between Alex, Lucy's brother, and Musorgskii's protagonist is obvious here. Like the main character of the song cycle, Alex has no way out other than to die. He dies from AIDS, wishing to create a piece of art out of his own death. This episode links us not only to the song cycle *Sunless* but to Musorgskii's biography and to the famous portrait of him painted by Repin a few days before the composer's death (Fedorov–Davydov 1989, p. 42). The portrait, considered one of Repin's masterpieces, represents Musorgskii in his hospital gown with the swollen, ill face of an alcoholic. At the same time his bright passionate eyes give the impression of a bright and creative personality. It is claimed that Musorgskii's death was virtually suicide, since he consumed alcohol after a stroke despite all the doctors' warnings and prohibitions, and this turned out to be fatal (Volkov 2005, p. 119). In the same way, for Alex in *Sunless City*, drug addiction is shown to be a conscious choice that leads him to death. The viewpoint of Petersburg as a sunless and hopeless place becomes a trap for Alex. He ruins himself because of it. Lucy, instead, believes in her happiness and survives for it.

Among other intertextual references in *Sunless City* we can mention Mandelstam's and Kharms' poetry.[216] These two Petersburg poets and their poetic world become attributed to two film characters, Alex and Semen. Alex recites Mandelstam during his performance in *Sunless City*. Semen stages Kharms' non-childish play for children, with Lucy playing Elizaveta Bam.

Pseudo-Plagiarisms. I have already given one example of pseudo-plagiarism referring to the dreamer's image in *Piter FM*. This phenomenon has been indicated by Toporov in the Petersburg text in literature. Among the post 2003 films we find more examples of this interesting phenomenon characteristic of the Petersburg text. Let us remember that it is difficult and sometimes impossible to separate an intertextual reference from a pseudo-plagiarism. Possibly pseudo-plagiarisms can be distinguished from the inter-

[216] In 1995 a film was produced based on some works by Kharms that can without a doubt be ascribed to the Petersburg text. The film's title is *Kontsert dlia krysy* (*Concert for a Rat*, Oleg Kovalov).

textual references as linking a work of art to more than one work that is already established as a piece of the Petersburg text.

Another example of pseudo-plagiarism to be found among the films discussed in this chapter also pertains to *Piter FM*. It is a conventional manipulation of space in the city. Even if the director does not aim to create an unknown and imaginary space in a film, space is manipulated and changed. This is especially noticeable for a viewer acquainted with the city space.

The characters in *Piter FM* are filmed moving through the space of the city without paying any attention to the true location of its streets and buildings. They make impossible shortcuts and detours, for example, to get from Liteinyi Prospect to Gor'kovskaia underground station, or inexplicably reach New Holland directly from the Chkalovskaia underground station. Apart from these and more examples of mistakes in creating the city space we have already mentioned the insertions that include dozens of shots of the city in illogical combinations. Although this attitude to space is easy to ascribe to cinematographic voluntarism first proclaimed by Lev Kuleshov's experiments, we also find its roots in an eminent example of the Petersburg text in literature. In his essay about Bely's *Petersburg* Dolgopolov notes the same feature in his representation of Petersburg. Bely mixes spaces on purpose as he describes his characters moving through the city in topographically impossible ways.[217]

In *Piter FM* this seemingly nonchalant space representation is significant not only as an example of pseudo-plagiarism. It achieves another aim important in revising and re-creating all the nuances of the city myth: it produces a kaleidoscopic whole of the most characteristic features of mythopoeic Petersburg, including the city's backyards and well-yards, the wide open spaces of Neva, areas attached to different underground stations (half-streets, half-flea markets), rusty roofs and old unrenovated houses. This whirlpool of incon-

[217] «В одном из писем Иванову–Разумнику (декабрь 1913) Белый прямо утверждал, что Петербург в его романе — условный город, созданный воображением в целях реализации «мысленных форм»...» (Долгополов 1985 c, p. 240). ('In one of his letters addressed to Ivanov–Razumnik (December 1913) Bely stated explicitly that Petersburg of his novel is a conditional city, created with his imagination with the purpose of realisation to construct his 'forms of mind'...')
«Белый создает лишь «иллюзию подлинности»» (Ibid., p. 247). ('Bely creates only an 'illusion of authenticity".)
«...объединяя разные детали и черты, но мало заботясь об общей бытовой достоверности, Белый создает условно-символический образ города» (Ibid., pp. 251–2). ('...by combining various details and traits but not caring much about general daily reliability, Bely creates a conditional-symbolic image of the city'.)

gruous images of Petersburg gives the impression of a picturesque, varied, colourful, vivid and, above all, homogeneous space.

Another example of pseudo-plagiarism links together three films belonging to the cinematic Petersburg text after 2003. These are *Petersburg*, *Russian Ark* and *The Stroll*. We have already pointed out similarities between the first two films that I define as pseudo-plagiarisms: the choice of subject, and the out-of-time and out-of-plot narrative of both films. *The Stroll* was produced in 2003, the same year as the other two films and the year of the city's anniversary. It has no evident parallels with *Petersburg* but, in my opinion, there are some features that unite it with Sokurov's *Russian Ark* in a pseudo-plagiarist manner. First of all, this concerns the technical choices of both films. Like *Russian Ark*, *The Stroll* is filmed with a mobile camera that follows almost every step of the protagonists. In *Russian Ark* the camera lingers several times on a picture or secondary characters, just as does *The Stroll*, following for a moment short street scenes. The idea of a *one-day* film is significant for both films. *Russian Ark*, consisting of a single take, was an ambitious one-day shooting inside the Hermitage Museum with only one long take. *The Stroll*, in its turn, is claimed to be a one-day non-stop trip through Petersburg in real-time. Thus both films play up in different ways the impalpability of time caught by a camera. Both were formed as a one-day promenade, in one case through the city's main museum and the city itself in the other. Produced in the same year, these two films seem to be plagiarising one another. This confirms Toporov's idea that the Petersburg text is so integral that when two different authors write it they write it very similarly, sometimes so that it resembles plagiarism.

* * *

One more note should be made concerning the post 2003 films and their background. Some of the films discussed in this chapter are related explicitly to the 'Thaw' films. In fact, *The Stroll* can be regarded as an updated story of Daneliia's *Walking the Streets of Moscow* from 1964. *Piter FM* in its turn echoes Khutsiev's *July Rain* from 1966. There are many references in the narrative that refer the viewer unmistakably to this film. Moreover, at the end of the film a dedication is made to the filmmakers' parents. Most of the filmmakers of *Piter FM* (the scriptwriter, the director and the producer included) would appear to be children of the so-called *shestidesiatniki*, the generation active in the 1960s Thaw period.

We have already spoken of the 1960s films with regard to the films of the 1990s, comparing the technical choices of the two periods as well as their interest in the city and its present in a quickly changing world. Yet if, when

speaking of the 1990s, we could assume that the similarity with the 1960s films was due to similar political circumstances, then the similarity of the post 2003 films appears to be much more deliberate. Entire plot-lines of the 1960s films are used as a basis for their updated remakes after 2003. Another important feature that has been picked up from the 1960s films is their specific focus on the city. Similarly to *Walking the Streets of Moscow* and *July Rain*, in both *The Stroll* and *Piter FM* much of the film narrative is devoted to the city and to sketches from its everyday life. But while the 1960s films were focused on Moscow, in post 2003 films the focus has moved to Petersburg. Just as Moscow was admired and worshiped in the films of the Thaw, so now Petersburg is admired and filmed in intimate close-up, so to speak. This is actually the main discontent that film critics express in their reviews of both films, namely that there is no clear story in either of them and they look more like a travelogue or a sketch of Petersburg life. Similar complaints could be addressed to the creators of *Walking the Streets of Moscow*, *July Rain* and some other films of the Thaw that put the city and not the protagonists and their stories in focus. On the other hand, the stories of the protagonists look like randomly chosen stories of the citizens that walk the city streets. This statement is true, in my opinion, both in regard to the 1960s films and to their post 2003 remakes.

Admiration for the city refers us back to an aspect of the Petersburg text that was defined by Toporov, citing Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* introduction as an *I love*–fragment of the text. In these films the *I love*–mood is explicit and well articulated. It dominates the narratives of the films. *The Stroll* and *Piter FM*, however, have a more light-hearted mood in general compared to that of Pushkin's poem. Still, they both contain their small tragedies offered to the protagonists by the city, even while comprising two songs of praise for contemporary Petersburg.

* * *

We have examined only a few films in this part. But I suggest that even these few analyses prove that Petersburg's anniversary and the city's economic growth and superficial prosperity have had an important effect on the image of the city in film. Much has changed in the perception of Petersburg, turning it into a more joyful, glamorous, well-to-do and, generally speaking, comfortable place to live in, particularly as regards the younger generation. Yet many traits that we discussed earlier in this thesis as characteristics of the cinematic Petersburg of the 1990s have become accepted in these later films as canonical. To sum up, in this last part of the thesis I cite once again the words of Semen from *Sunless City*. In my opinion, they give the best definition of on-screen Petersburg after 2003:

Semen: «Да нет, я люблю этот город. В большом городе легче затеряться... А если кому-то солнца не хватает, то тут не город виноват. Их лечить надо. Сейчас ведь врачи все лечат. » / 'No, I love this city. It is easier to disappear in a big city... And if someone lacks sun, this is not the city's fault. Such people need to be cured. Nowadays doctors can cure anything. '

In other words, the myth in which the city is perceived as a dangerous and harmful space for human beings is not forgotten, but it is disputed. Though the negative aspect of the myth cannot be completely denied and overcome in the later films, it is still more solidly counterbalanced by an admiring and enthusiastic picture of Petersburg, sunny, young and flourishing anew.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This thesis is devoted to a single film character that unifies the films studied into one and the same group or text. This character is Petersburg. Its presence is noticeable in all the films discussed. Although it is arguable whether or not the city is the protagonist or one of the film's characters, it is indisputably important and influential in all the narratives represented. The place, that Petersburg occupies in the films, differs from one film to another and at the same time stays central concerning the cinematic Petersburg text.

During the twentieth century, the vitality and actuality of the Petersburg myth was questioned several times both in literature and in theoretical works. However, this thesis proves that the Petersburg myth and text have not lost their topicality. The text of the city is still developing in contemporary art, in particular in film art. It is being revised and re-actualised in accordance with the changing political and social life of the city and its citizens.

Films of the perestroika and post-perestroika periods, referred to in this thesis as the 1990s period for short, were chosen as empirical material for the research. It turned out to be possible not only to prove that the myth of the city is still exploited in film art during this period. Films of the 1990s set in Petersburg appear to form the cinematic Petersburg text of the chosen period. The films discussed in this thesis can be ascribed to this text not only due to being located in one and the same city, Petersburg. The city plays an important role in each of the narratives. Moreover, these films share with each other the same functional elements that concern representation of space, time and protagonist (more generally speaking, character) in them. These functional elements work like building blocks in forming the narratives of the films, just as symbols do in a myth. Just like in mythology where these blocks allow us to ascribe it to one or another type of myth, functional elements help us to trace the homogeneous cinematic Petersburg text out of a variety of films of different genres, styles, schools and years. Apart from these functional elements that were singled out in the films discussed, in most we found canonical elements and even whole stories of the universally recognised Petersburg text studied

and described by such researchers as Toporov, Antsiferov, Clark, Bethea, etc. The presence of pseudo-plagiarisms in the films of the 1990s, both in relation to the earlier works of the Petersburg text and to each other, also helps to ascribe these films to the Petersburg text.

The key concept in creating the cinematic Petersburg during the 1990s turned out to be carnivalisation and chaotisation that coincides well with Bakhtin's original ideas of carnivalisation and its role in literature and in culture as a whole. The cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s degrades the city to the level of a chaotised and carnivalised space. In my opinion, this is dictated primarily by the time of interregnum that perestroika and the time after proved to be for the Petersburg myth. The myth was caught between the city's Soviet past and its indefinite future. It needed to be actualised and modified in accordance with this unclear position.

Although the same instruments are claimed by film critics (Horton and Brashinsky, Mazierska and Rascaroli, Lawton) for other filmmakers of the period, there are several essential differences between the carnivalesque films and the films of the cinematic Petersburg text. First of all, the place of action in the carnivalesque films is always a generalised one, which helps it to work as a metaphor for the whole country. In the films of the Petersburg text, a light hint is always given to map the story as a Petersburg one. The genre of the carnivalesque films is unmixed. These are comedies in which carnivalisation is exhibited through their grotesque and rich style. The films of the Petersburg text are diverse in genre and many of them can even be called inter-genre films. At the same time, the carnivalisation of space, characters and events can be traced in all of them, irrespective of their genre. Therefore, their carnivalisation is first of all a strategy that subverts all the properties, ridiculing all the meanings of the city space and degrading it to total chaos, the chaos which in the mythopoeics of Petersburg serves as both its initial and final point. A pure liberating carnival never takes place inside the city in the films of the Petersburg text, unlike the pure carnival of the carnivalesque films, where it usually stays inside the limits of the ordinary place of action.

Altogether it can be concluded that, even though carnivalesque films and the films of the Petersburg text use the same mechanisms, the mechanisms of carnivalisation, they cannot be considered as belonging to one and the same group. They are two different groups that can be interpreted using similar instruments, the instruments of carnivalisation and grotesque realism.

Chaos functions in the films of the Petersburg text as a zero countdown point for the city myth. A resurrection of the myth and of the city can be restarted from this point, but it can also be observed as the final point of the myth. As we have shown at the beginning of this work, chaos plays

an important role in both aspects of the Petersburg dual myth. It is a key element both for the eschatological and for the cosmogonic aspects of the myth. Therefore, when the films of the 1990s transform the whole city into chaos or, one might say, mask it in chaos, this can be interpreted as a victory of each of the myth's aspects, keeping at the same time a balance of the myth's ambiguous nature. The city's chaotisation allows us to leave the question of the myth's future open — one can interpret it in both directions in these films. Petersburg can often be observed as dying and becoming a ruin and at the same time as ready for resurrection and rebirth. This is why the concept of chaosmos, an amalgam of chaos and cosmos, introduced by Umberto Eco is well applicable to the chastised city space of the analysed films.

This is probably why most of the films analysed in this work have an open ending that offers the viewers a chance to decide on their own a happy or unhappy continuation of the story, both for the protagonist and for the city. Petersburg in these films resembles the body in Bakhtin's carnival theory. Its space, being chaotised and mixed up, seems to be unaccomplished, unfinished, ready for new transformations. So is the grotesque body in Bakhtin's carnival theory.

> «[Оно] не замкнуто, не завершено, не готово, перерастает себя самого, выходит за свои пределы[...] Это — вечно неготовое, вечно творимое и творящее тело, это — звено в цепи родового развития, точнее — два звена, показанные там, где они соединяются, входят друг в друга» (Bakhtin 1990, p. 33). [218]

In the same words we can describe Petersburg in the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s. It is under construction, under revision and is able to follow any direction of the myth, the positive or the negative one.

From its beginning the myth of the city has a precondition for turning into Bakhtin's grotesque body. It is the myth's duality, its ambivalent nature in which the positive and the negative, the cosmogonic and the eschatological side of the myth coexist. In the films of the 1990s they become confused and mixed together, which turns Petersburg into a chaotised space. I believe that this chaos is not destructive for the myth. On the contrary, it is a productive nutrient medium for it. It offers a pause from revising and rethinking the myth and ways of its development in the cinematic Petersburg text.

In the last part of the thesis an attempt was made to show one of the possible ways of the myth's development after 2003, the year that became

[218] 'It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, it outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits[...]This is the ever unfinished, ever creating body, the link in the chain of genetic development, or more correctly speaking, two links shown at the point where they enter into each other' (Bakhtin 1984, p. 26).

crucial for the city's myth and text. The films discussed in this last chapter differ in some functional elements from the films of the 1990s. But at the same time they use some of the functional elements that we attributed in this work to the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s as already canonical.

The theory of myth and mythmaking and in particular the history of the Petersburg myth prove that myths draw more attention and become revised and re-estimated most actively during the periods of turmoil for a community. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that an active phase of the myth's re-estimation in the Petersburg text is now over, since we find ourselves in a period of stagnation. Therefore, it is comprehensible from this point of view that the Petersburg text is becoming less innovative and openly re-creative today. After 2003, we could see how much more smooth and balanced it became with the examples of the six films from this period.

Yet I presume that it is still too early to draw any final conclusions and to make a final differentiation of the periods, since the period discussed above is probably not complete yet. Moreover, I would prefer to leave under question the proposed division into two periods: perestroika/post-perestroika and after-anniversary films of the Petersburg text (i.e. the 1990s films and post 2003 films). Probably from a greater temporal distance they will merge into one and the same period, or divide into more subperiods.

However, existence of a general text unifying films by different filmmakers and of opposite genres produced in Petersburg in the last decade of the twentieth century and the first of the twenty-first century is beyond doubt. This fact proves the topicality of the Petersburg myth and text and their vitality in contemporary art. They have not been completed in the turmoil of the 1920s and not been sunk into oblivion during the Soviet period. The Petersburg text is still being created, and this thesis is only a short overview of the contemporary text of the city and of its creators.

* * *

In order to show the homogeneity of the cinematic Petersburg text of the 1990s only the most significant details, moments and episodes in each film were highlighted. Each of these films deserves a long and serious discussion of its own. It should also be pointed out that many films that should be ascribed to the cinematic Petersburg text have not been included in this work to avoid too diffuse and superfluous an analysis. These films are listed in the Filmography for Further Study at the end of the book. They point to possibilities for further research into the Petersburg text in contemporary film art.

It should also be noted that in these films, as well as in the films that are examined in this thesis, more aspects and strata of the Petersburg text can

be revealed. Among them is, for example, an important theme of everlasting confrontation between Petersburg and Moscow or else between Petersburg and Europe. This constituent part of the myth is barely discussed in the thesis due to its breadth. Making an analysis of rivalry between the two capitals demands a separate study of cinematic Moscow of the 1990s. Similarly, an exploration of the relationship between Petersburg and Europe in film has to include an analysis of European films set in Petersburg and of Russian films in which the story is shifted between Petersburg and Western Europe. Yet we have viewed shortly this latter confrontation speaking of such films as *Window to Paris*, *White Monday* and *Nicotine* where Paris figures as Petersburg's double.

Another layer of the cinematic Petersburg text especially significant for the 1990s and not discussed on these pages is bandit Petersburg. This epithet was given to the city by journalists due to some celebrated criminal cases and assassinations that took place in Saint Petersburg during this time. In my opinion, this perception of Petersburg has been superimposed over the already developed theme of the Petersburg text that is usually referred to as Dostoevskian Petersburg and mixed with it consonantly. Among the films that can serve as a perfect source for the study of bandit Petersburg are, without doubt, *The Body Will Be Buried...*, *Brother* and *Music for December*.

Another interesting field of study in this topic would be a study of the so-called necrorealistic films by Evgenii Iufit and his associates[219] and of the parodic mockumentary films by Maksim Pezhemskii and by Sergei Debizhev[220]. Their resemblance to carnival grotesque, although not usually set in Petersburg, is striking and could also be a subject of further study of the Petersburg theme in cinema.

Apart from film art, which offers a vast field for research in this subject, we should not ignore other kinds of art where the Petersburg text is also being developed and modified significantly. These are, of course, traditional fields for studying the Petersburg text: literature, painting, music[221]. But besides them it can be traced in TV-films, series and programmes[222], in cartoons, in

[219]For more on necrorealism, see Dobrotvorskii 2005, pp. 28–36, 40–3, 82–4, Kovalov 2006.

[220]Pezhemskii's debut film was a mockumentary called *Perekhod tovarishcha Chkalova cherez Severnyi polius* (*Comrade Chkalov's March over the North Pole*1990) and was a comic mixture of different historical facts and reels. Debizhev's *Dva kapitana-2* (*Two Captains-2*) is a similar work that gives a mystifying and ridiculing interpretation to the events of the First World War and revolution in Russia involving as an actor one of the most brilliant mystificators, Sergei Kurekhin. His own TV-programme revealing Lenin as a mushroom can also be included in this list.

[221]For an analysis of the Peterburg text in contemporary music see Logacheva's *Lyrics of Russian Rock-Poetry and the Petersburg Myth: the Aspects of Tradition of the New Poetical Genre* (Logacheva).

[222]On the latter see, for example, Stephen Hutchings' article 'St Petersburg 300: Television

photography and even on the global net, i.e. in the way that Petersburg is being represented on various official and private websites.

The music used in the films can also be the subject of a separate discussion on the Petersburg text. In this work we have hardly touched on this wide and interesting subject, but almost every film discussed has a soundtrack that is variegated and noteworthy. An analysis of filmmakers' choices of music for their Petersburg films could help to form a deeper understanding of today's Petersburg text.

Speaking of music and the Petersburg text, I cannot help mentioning an interesting example of the Petersburg text in music. This is, in my opinion, the music of a group named *Billy's Band*. It concerns not only separate compositions by the group, such as *Kupchino*, *Veselyi poselok*,[223] etc. This is also true of their stage decorations, music videos (which, by the way, include mostly outskirts and backyards of the city) and of the band's conception as a whole. The group's full name is 'the graveyard Dixieland with an endless happy ending' («похоронный диксиленд с бесконечным хэппи-эндом»)[224]. The group claims that its target audience are losers, outsiders and the scum of society and the so-called black intelligentsia, so generally speaking it is following the tradition of observing the city as an outsider and in opposition to the official culture which is today replaced by pop-culture or what might be called 'glamour culture'.

The Petersburg myth and text are inseparable parts of Russian culture and. Analysing the myth's and the text's development in the contemporary film art helps to disprove the assertion that this part of the culture is not actual any longer. It shows that there are strong links and a legacy between the contemporary representations of Petersburg in film and the Petersburg text in literature and other arts of the previous centuries . At the same time it proves that the contemporary cinematic Petersburg is not simply a copy of the predecessors' works of art. It is a vital and developing phenomenon that today — just as before — attracts authors' keen interest and gives them inspiration.

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and the Invention of a Russian (Media) Tradition' (Hutchings 2008).

[223] These song titles name some of the city's outskirts and suburbs. Moreover, in *Kupchino*, for example, the refrain states that Kupchino is the centre of the world and in the other song the name of the outskirt is being ridiculed as follows: «Веселый поселок, а радости нет» / 'Jolly Village but without any joy' (literal translation of Veselyi Poselok into English is Jolly Village).

[224] The exact wording in both Russian and English is taken from the group's official website `www.billysband.ru` (last visited 17.07.2013) but it is often used in their interviews and in articles on the group.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Films of Cinematic Petersburg Text (in chronological order)

Gospodin oformitel' = *Господин оформитель* (*Mister Designer*), 1988 (2nd edition, 1st 1986). Lenfilm Studio. Directed by Oleg Teptsov. Script by Iurii Arabov after the novel *The Grey Automobile* by Aleksander Grin. Photographed by Anatolii Lapshov. Edited by Irina Gorokhovskaia. Music composed by Sergei Kurekhin. With Viktor Avilov, Anna Demyanenko, Mikhail Kozakov, Ivan Krasko. Horror, drama, mysticism. 100 min.

Lestnitsa = *Лестница* (*The Stairway*). 1989. Mosfilm Studio. Directed by Aleksei Sakharov. Script by Aleksandr Zhitinskii after his novel of the same name. Photographed by Nikolai Nemoliaev. Edited by Antonina Zimina. Music composed by Vladimir Komarov. With Oleg Menshikov, Elena Iakovleva, Leonid Kuravlev, Svetlana Amanova, Sergei Artsybashev. Drama with elements of sci-fi. 114 min.

Novaia Shakherezada = *Новая Шахерезада* (*The New Scheherazade*[225]). 1990. Petropol Film Studio. Directed by Mikhail Nikitin. Script by Valentin Popov. Photographed by Fedor Tokmakov. Edited by Ol'ga Amosova. Music composed by Igor' Tsvetkov. With Nadezhda Rezon, Vladimir Baranov, Aleksandr Slastin, Natal'ia Vilkina, Igor' Erelt. Drama. 126 min.

Gorod = *Город* (*The City*[226]). 1990. Interdet Film Studio. Directed by Aleksandr Burtsev. Script by Viktor Tikhomirov, Vladimir Shinkarev.

[225] My translation.
[226] My translation.

Photographed by Sergei Nekrasov. Edited by Anna Babushkina, Irina Gorokhovskaia. Music composed by Boris Grebenshchikov, Diusha Romanov. With Igor Ageev, Elena Kovaleva, Dmitrii Shagin. Drama with elements of comedy. 78 min.

Dukhov den' = *Духов день* (*White Monday*). 1990. Lenfilm Studio, Golos with participation of Goskino USSR. Directed by Sergei Sel'ianov. Script by Mikhail Konoval'chuk, Sergei Sel'ianov. Photographed by Sergei Astakhov. Edited by Ol'ga Amosova. Music composed by Iurii Shevchuk. With Iurii Shevchuk, Boris Goliatkin, Gennadii Garbuk, Anzhelika Nevolina, Oleg Korchikov, Vladimir Golovin, Bolot Beishenaliev. Sci-fi, drama. 117 min.

Lokh — pobeditel' vody = *Лох — победитель воды* (*Dude Water Winner*). 1990. Troitskii Most Film Studio. Directed by Arkadii Tigai. Script by Arkadii Tigai. Photographed by Iurii Veksler. Edited by Raisa Lisova. Music composed by Sergei Kurekhin. With Sergei Kurekhin, Larisa Borodina, Oleg Kosavnenko, Andrei Alekseev, Anatolii Vasil'ev. Crime, thriller with elements of comedy. 117 min.

Arifmetika ubiistva = *Арифметика убийства* (*Arithmetic of a Murder*). 1991. Lenfilm Studio. Directed by Dmitrii Svetozarov. Script by Mikhail Popov, Dmitrii Svetozarov after the novel *Let us talk!* by Mikhail Popov. Photographed by Sergei Astakhov. Edited by Ol'ga Amosova. Music composed by Aleksandr Kutikov, Andrei Makarevich, Aleksandr Zaitsev. With Sergei Bekhterev, Zinaida Sharko, Iurii Kuznetsov, Lev Borisov, Ol'ga Samoshina, Vladimir Kashpur. Crime. 102 min.

Mif o Leonide = *Миф о Леониде* (*The Myth of Leonid*). 1991. Lenfilm Studio. Directed by Dmitrii Dolinin. Script by Pavel Finn. Photographed by Lev Kolganov. Edited by Anna Babushkina. Music composed by Gennadii Banshchikov. With Sergei Gamov, Niiole Narmontaite, Anzhelika Nevolina, Boris Birman, Ol'ga Tarasenko, Valerii Kravchenko. Drama. 117 min.

Ulybka = *Улыбка* (*Smile*[227]). 1991. SPiEF. Directed by Sergei Popov. Script by Dmitrii Lazarev, Sergei Popov. Photographed by Iurii Vorotsov. Edited by E. Vereshchagina. Music composed by Arkadii Gagulashvili. With Natal'ia L'vova, Galina Zakhurdaeva, Nadezhda Zharikova, Petr

[227] My translation.

Kozhevnikov, Igor' Nikitin, Dmitrii Bul'ba, Dmitrii Shagin. Phantasmagoria with elements of comedy. 97 min.

Shchastlivye dni = Счастливые дни (*Happy Days*). 1991. SPiEF. Directed by Aleksei Balabanov. Script by Aleksei Balabanov after the works by Samuel Beckett. Photographed by Sergei Astakhov. Edited by R. Izakson, G. Kornilova. With Viktor Sukhorukov, Anzhelika Nevolina, Evgenii Merkur'ev, Georgii Teikh, N. Il'iukhina. Drama. 86 min.

Nikotin = Никотин (*Nicotine*). 1992. Lenfilm Studio. Directed by Evgenii Ivanov. Script by Sergei Dobrotvorskii, Maksim Pezhemskii. Photographed by Valerii Martynov. Edited by Galina Kornilova. Music composed by Sergei Kurekhin. With Igor' Chernevich, Nataliia Fisson. Drama, phantasmagoria. 117 min.

Okno v Parizh = Окно в Париж (*Window to Paris*). 1993. Troitskii Most Film Studio. Directed by Iurii Mamin (with participance of Arkadii Tigai). Script by Iurii Mamin, Arkadii Tigai, Vladimir Vardunas. Photographed by Anatolii Lapshov. Edited by Ol'ga Andrianova, Jo'ele Van Effenterre. Music composed by Iurii Mamin, Aleksei Zalivalov. With Agnès Soral, Sergei Dreiden, Viktor Mikhailov, Nina Usatova, Andrei Urgant, Kira Kreilis-Petrova, Natal'ia Ipatova. Comedy with elements of sci-fi. 87 min.

Liubov', predvestie pechali = Любовь, предвестие печали (*Love, the Presage of Sorrow*[228]). 1994. Lenfilm Studio. Directed by Viktor Sergeev. Script by Vladimir Eremin. Photographed by Iurii Shaigardanov. Edited by Liudmila Obrazumova. Music composed by Sergei Kurekhin. With Ol'ga Drozdova, Iurii Balabanov, Irina Metlitskaia, Andrei Sokolov, Ol'ga Samoshina. Drama. 96 min.

Muzyka dlia dekabria = Музыка для декабря (*Music for December*). 1995. Tsekh Film Studio. Directed by Ivan Dykhovichnyi. Script by Ivan Dykhovichnyi, Marina Sheptunova. Photographed by Sergei Kozlov. Edited by Eleonora Belova. Music composed by Anton Batagov. With Elena Safonova, Grigorii Gladii, Nikolai Chindiaikin, Dmitrii Dykhovichnyi, Natal'ia Zhukova. Drama. 92 min.

Sil'na kak smert' liubov' = Сильна как смерть любовь (*Love is as Strong as Death*). 1996. Lenfilm Studio, RA Films. Directed by Andrei Nekrasov. Script by Andrei Nekrasov. Photographed by Sergei Iurizditskii. Edited

[228] My translation.

by Leda Semenova. Music composed by Andrei Sigle. With Zoia Buriak, Sergei Vlasov, Vladimir Eremin, Tat'iana Koroleva, Aleksandr Slastin, Aleksandr Cherednik. Drama. 100 min.

Brat = *Брат* (*Brother*). 1997. CTB Film Company. Directed by Aleksei Balabanov. Script by Aleksei Balabanov. Photographed by Sergei Astakhov. Edited by Marina Lipartiia. Music composed by Viacheslav Butusov. With Sergei Bodrov Jr., Viktor Sukhorukov, Svetlana Pis'michenko, Iurii Kuznetsov, Mariia Zhukova. Drama, crime. 96 min.

Pro urodov i liudei = *Про уродов и людей* (*Of Freaks and Men*). 1998 CTB Film Company. Directed by Aleksei Balabanov. Script by Aleksei Balabanov. Photographed by Sergei Astakhov. Edited by Marina Lipartiia. Music composed by Sergei Prokof'ev. With Sergei Makovetskii, Viktor Sukhorukov, Anzhelika Nevolina, Dina Drukarova, Vadim Prokhorov. Drama. 93 min.

Telo budet predano zemle. A starshii michman budet pet' = *Тело будет предано земле. А старший мичман будет петь* (*The Body Will Be Buried. And the Senior Midshipman Will Be Singing*[229]). 1998. Gorky Film Studio. Directed by Il'ia Makarov, Irina Evteeva (animation). Script by Konstantin Murzenko, Il'ia Makarov. Photographed by Valerii Martynov, Genrikh Marandzhan (animation). Edited by Ol'ga Andrianova. Music composed by Valerii Alakhov, Evgenii Fedorov. With Aleksandr Lazarev Jr., Evgeniia Igumnova, Andrei Barilo, Aleksandr Stroev, Liliia Azarkina. Criminal comedy with elements of phantasmagoria. 101 min.

Liubov' i drugie koshmary = *Любовь и другие кошмары* (*Lyubov and Other Nightmares*). 2001. Dreamscanner. Directed by Andrei Nekrasov. Script by Andrei Nekrasov. Photographed by Michael Gobel, Anatolii Lapshov. Edited by Kai Badenhausen, Ol'ga Konskaia. Music composed by Gaetano Cari, Aleksandr Marchenko. With Ol'ga Konskaia, Ekaterina Urvantseva, Andrei Nekrasov, Anzhelika Nevolina, Kseniia Nazarova. Drama. 97 min.

Russkii kovcheg = *Русский ковчег* (*Russian Ark*). 2002. Fora Film. Directed by Aleksandr Sokurov. Script by Aleksandr Sokurov. Photographed by Tilman B́uttner. Edited by Stefan Ciupek, Sergei Ivanov, Betina Kuntzsch. Music composed by Sergei Evtushenko. With

[229] My translation.

Sergei Dreiden, Aleksandr Sokurov (voice, uncredited), Leonid Mozgovoi, Mariia Kuznetsova, Mikhail Piotrovkii, Tamara Kurenkova. Historical phantasmagoria. 99 min.

Peterburg = Петербург (*Petersburg*). 2003. Lenfilm Studio. Directed by Irina Evteeva. Script by Irina Evteeva, Andrei Chernykh, Iurii Kravtsov. Photographed by Genrikh Maradzhan. Edited by Tamara Denisova. Music composed by Gennadii Banshchikov. With Aleksandr Cherednik, Semen Strugachev, Svetlana Svirko, Sergei Dreiden (voice). Animated phantasmagoria. 52 min.

Progulka = Прогулка (*The Stroll*). 2003. Rok Film Studio. Directed by Aleksei Uchitel'. Script by Avdot'ia Smirnova. Photographed by Iurii Klimenko, Pavel Kostomarov. Edited by Elena Andreeva. With Irina Pegova, Pavel Barshak, Evgenii Tsyganov, Evgenii Grishkovets, Polina Kutepova, Kirill Pirogov. Drama with elements of comedy. 90 min.

Gorod bez solntsa = Город без солнца (*Sunless City*). 2005. Kino Plus. Directed by Sergei Potemkin. Script by Igor' Gertsev, Serei Potemkin. Photographed by Sergei Iurizditskii. Edited by Leda Semenova. Music composed by Sergei Shurakov. With Iuliia Mavrina, Maksim Averin, Sergei Bezrukov, Semen Furman. Drama. 101 min.

Piter FM = Питер FM (*Piter FM*). 2006. STS. Directed by Ol'ga Bychkova. Script by Ol'ga Bychkova, Nana Grinshtein. Photographed by Ivan Gudkov. Edited by Aleksandr Chupakov, Svetlana Ivanova. Music composed by Kirill Pirogov. With Ekaterina Fedulova, Evgenii Tsyganov, Aleksei Barabash, Irina Rakhmanova, Oleg Dolin. Drama with elements of comedy. 86 min.

Mne ne bol'no = Мне не больно (*It Doesn't Hurt Me*). 2006. CTB Film Company. Directed by Aleksei Balabanov. Script by Valerii Mnatsakanov. Photographed by Sergei Astakhov. Edited by Tat'iana Kuzmicheva. Music composed by Vadim Samoilov. With Renata Litvinova, Aleksandr Iatsenko, Dmitrii Diuzhev, Nikita Mikhalkov, Inga Strelkova-Oboldina, Sergei Makovetskii. Drama. 104 min.

Appendix B

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Appendix C

Filmography for Further Studies (in chronological order)

Vzlomshchik = *Взломщик* (*The Burglar*, 1987, Valerii Ogorodnikov)

Pervaia vstrecha — posledniaia vstrecha = *Первая встреча — последняя встреча* (*First Encounter — Last Encounter*, 1987, Vitalii Mel'nikov)

Petrogradskie Gavroshi = *Петроградские Гавроши* (*The Gavroches of Petrograd*, 1987, Sergei Snezhkin)

Bumazhnye glaza Prishvina = *Бумажные глаза Пришвина* (*Prishvin's Paper Eyes*, 1989, Valerii Ogorodnikov)

Posviashchennyi = *Посвященный* (*Initiated*, 1989, Oleg Teptsov)

Kogda sviatye marshiruiut = *Когда святые маршируют* (*When the Saints Go Marchening*, 1990, Vladimir Vorob'ev)

Genii = *Гений* (*Genius*, 1991, Viktor Sergeev)

Dom na peske = *Дом на песке* (*The House Built on Sand*, 1991, Niiole Adomenaite)

Zhertva dlia imperatora = *Жертва для императора* (*A Sacrifice for the Emperor*, 1991, Rosa Orynbasarova)

Kol'tso = *Кольцо* (*The Ring*, 1991, Valerii Martynov)

Belye nochi = *Белые ночи* (*Whita Nights*, 1992, Leonid Kvinikhidze)

Zal ozhidaniia = *Зал ожидания* (*Waiting Room*, 1992, Rosa Orynbasarova)

Mit'ki nikogo ne hotiat pobedit' ili Mit'kimayer = Митьки никого не хотят победить или Митьмайер (*Mit'ki Do Not Wish To Defeat Anyone, Or Mitkimayer*,1992, Anatolii Vasil'ev)

Nevesta iz Parizha = Невеста из Парижа (*The Bride from Paris*, 1992, Otar Dugladze)

Dva kapitana-2 = Два капитана-2 (*Two Captains-2*, 1992, Sergei Debizhev)

Strannye muzhchiny Semenovoi Ekateriny = Странные мужчины Семеновой Екатерины (*Strange Men of Semenova Ekaterina*,1992, Viktor Sergeev)

Viva, Castro! = Вива, Кастро! (*Viva, Castro!*, 1993, Boris Frumin)

Zhizn' s idiotom = Жизнь с идиотом (*Living with an Idiot*, 1993, Aleksandr Rogozhkin)

Nad temnoi vodoi = Над темной водой (*Over the Dark Water*, 1993, Dmitrii Meskhiev)

Sikimoku = Сикимоку (*Sikimoku*, 1993, Ol'ga Zhukova)

Schastlivyi neudachnik = Счастливый неудачник (*A Lucky Unlucky Man*1993, Valerii Bychenkov)

Ty u menia odna = Ты у меня одна (*You Are My Only Love*, 1993, Dmitrii Astrakhan)

Tiuremnyi romans = Тюремный романс (*A Jail Romance*, 1993, Evgenii Tatarskii)

Tango na Dvortsovoi ploshchadi = Танго на Дворцовой площади (*Tango on the Palace Square*, 1993, Ol'ga Zhukova)

Akt = Акт (*Act*, 1993, Aleksandr Rogozhkin)

Kontsert dlia krysy = Концерт для крысы (*A Concert for a Rat*, 1995, Oleg Kovalov)

Maniia Zhizeli = Мания Жизели (*Giselle's Mania*, 1995, Aleksei Uchitel')

Mama, ne goriui! = Мама, не горюй! (*Don't cry Mommy!*, 1997, Maksim Pezhemskii)

Ia pervyi tebia uvidel = Я первый тебя увидел (*I Was the First to See You*,1998, Valerii Bychenkov)

Boldinskaia osen' = *Болдинская осень* (*Boldino Fall*, 1999, Aleksandr Rogozhkin)

Misterii = *Мистерии* (*Mysteries*, 2000, Mikhail Kalatozishvili)

Lunoi byl polon sad = *Луной был полон сад* (*The Garden Was Full of Moon*, 2000, Vitalii Melnikov)

Osechka = *Осечка* (*A Misfire*, 2000, Viktor Makarov)

Chernyi fraier = *Черный фраер* (*Dark Frayer*, 2001, Gleb Mikhailov)

Sestry = *Сестры* (*Sisters*, 2001, Sergei Bodrov)

Krasnyi streptotsid = *Красный стрептоцид* (*Red Streptocide*, 2002, Valerii Chiginskii)

Lunnye poliany = *Лунные поляны* (*Moon Lawns*, 2002, Igor' Minaev)

Cheliabumbiia = *Челябумбия* (*Cheliabumbia*, 2002, Valerii Bychenkov)

Bednyi, bednyi Pavel = *Бедный, бедный Павел* (*Poor, Poor Pavel*, 2003, Vitalii Melnikov)

Ne delaite biskvity v plokhom nastroenii = *Не делайте бисквиты в плохом настроении* (*Do not Make Biscuits in a Bad Mood*, 2003, Grigorii Nikulin)

Zalozhnik = *Заложник* (*The Hostage*, 2004, Aleksandr Borisoglebskii, Valerii Khomiakov)

Izgnannik = *Изгнанник* (*An Outcast*, 2004, Nikolai Lebedev)

Tantsuiut vse! = *Танцуют все!* (*Everybody Dancing!*, 2005, Pavel Parkhomenko)

Garpastum = *Гарпастум* (*Garpastum*, 2005, Aleksei German Jr.)

Sviaz' = *Связь* (*Affair*, 2006, Avdot'ia Smirnova)

Ne dumai pro belykh obez'ian = *Не думай про белых обезьян* (*Do not Think of White Monkeys*, 2006, Iurii Mamin)

Prostye veshchi = *Простые вещи* (*Simple Things*, 2007, Aleksei Popogrebskii)

Vse mogut koroli = *Все могут короли* (*Kings Can Do Anything*, 2008, Aleksandr Cherniaev)

Poltory komnaty ili sentimental'noe vozvrashchenie na rodinu = *Полторы комнаты или сентиментальное возвращение на родину* (*One Room and a Half or a Sentimental Return Home*, 2008, Andrei Khrzhanovskii)

ETC.

Figure 4.3 (a–f), 6.1 From *Arithmetic of a Murder*. By courtesy of Lenfilm Studio.

Figure 4.5, 6.4 (a, b) From *Happy Days*. By courtesy of CTB film company.

Figure 4.6 (a–c) From *Dude Water Winner*. By courtesy of Troitskii Most Film Studio.

Figure 4.7 From *Love, the Presage of Sorrow*. By courtesy of Lenfilm Studio.

Figure 4.9 From *Of Freaks and Men*. By courtesy of CTB Film Company.

Figure 5.1 From *Mister Designer*. By courtesy of Lenfilm Studio.

Figure 6.2 From *The Myth of Leonid*. By courtesy of Lenfilm Studio.

Figure 6.3 (b) From *The Stairway*. By courtesy of Mosfilm Studio.

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