

Across the Russian Border

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Adaptation, the process by which texts are transformed to suit them to new media (novels made into films) or historical periods (updated theatrical versions of *The Seagull*) or languages (translations from Russian to English or English to Russian), is essentially a metaphorical concept that is defined and understood, though often without acknowledgment, with reference to the biological processes whereby organisms and species survive by adapting to new environments. The metaphorical valence of the term has only been intensified by the range of synonyms commentators have offered to help understand it. Robert Stam has suggested that we can think about “adaptation as reading, rewriting, critique, translation, transmutation, metamorphosis, recreation, transvocalization, resuscitation, transfiguration, actualization, transmodalization, signifying, performance, dialogization, cannibalization, reinvisioning, incarnation, or reaccentuation.”¹ Julie Sanders’s list of ways of thinking about adaptation, published the following year, overlaps with Stam’s remarkably little: “version, variation, interpretation, continuation, transformation, imitation, pastiche, parody, forgery, travesty, transposition, revaluation, revision, rewriting, echo.”²

Hollywood adaptations of Russian literature suggest still another metaphor that is especially pregnant: border crossing. Some film adaptations, like Joe Wright’s 2012 version of *Anna Karenina*, cross national borders; others cross intermedial borders between literary and cinematic modes of presentation; and all of them cross what might be called ideational borders, as adapters wrestle the actions, characters, and thematic motifs associated with one author, culture, historical period, and audience into new frames in order to suit them for a new market. “Market” may seem a crass word to drop into a discussion of adapting what are often classic novels, but a medium as capital-intensive as cinema demands consideration of the implications of this kind of border crossing as well: the crossover from the relatively personal, low-risk medium

of fiction or drama to the high-stakes medium of film, where millions of rubles are routinely gambled on a single adaptation.

Basing her analysis on Hans-Georg Gadamer's account of the horizon of expectations that frames all human understanding, Cristina Della Coletta has compared the ways that audience members cross national and cultural borders when they travel geographically to the ways they cross hermeneutical borders whenever they encounter an adaptation of any sort:

Understanding a different horizon does not involve crossing over into alien worlds unconnected in any way with our own but, rather, achieving that fusion of horizons that allows us to see the world from a larger perspective. A *knowing* audience enters the adaptive process with a varied set of experiences, memories, competencies, biases, emotional as well as conceptual presuppositions, namely with a "horizon of expectations." By entering into play with the adapting work, all these expectations undergo transformative changes while interpreting (and thus modifying) both the adapting and the adapted work—thus the horizon evolves and challenges fixed notions of priority, originality, univocity, and stability of meaning.³

Reading or hearing or viewing adaptations can be just as broadening as geographical travel, and in much the same ways, because crossing borders encourages travelers both to explore new horizons and to consider their accustomed horizons more critically.

A significant benefit of Della Coletta's metaphor is that it provides a way of theorizing a broader range of adaptations than any of the metaphors on the expansive lists of Stam or Sanders. Recent work in adaptation studies has attempted to broaden the field of adaptations to a wider range of intertextual relations than films based on novels or plays or stories. Led by Deborah Cartmell, Imelda Whelehan, Robert Stam, and Linda Hutcheon, adaptation scholars have turned their attention away from cinema to consider dramatizations of novels, novelizations of films, films based on video games, franchises, mashups, wikis, and fan fiction as adaptations.

The distinctive power of Della Coletta's metaphorical focus on the hermeneutics of intertextual border crossing depends on its literal referent, the considerably more fraught phenomenon of crossing political borders. In the first instance, Della Coletta calls the travels characters undertake within their fictional worlds "the objective correlative of narrativity itself"⁴ as they cue, invite, and model the metaphorical travels of audience members. In addition, adaptations and their readers or viewers or listeners inevitably cross metaphorical borders in the course of expressing, communicating, understanding, and interpreting their views on the worlds they present. The borders that citizens, visitors, tourists, and refugees cross from one country to another may be

equally virtual, but the often stark political differences they mark make them far less metaphorical. The process of border crossing means different things to different travelers, from the nuisance tourists may feel in obtaining the appropriate immunizations and visas to political refugees' fight for survival as they struggle to escape persecution in their native lands.

Most intertextual border crossings, of course, are far less challenging. Like all border crossings, they have significant consequences, but these are likely to be limited in their scope, impact, and exigency. Thousands of books cross national, linguistic, intermedial, and ideational borders without any incident except the presumed edification of new audiences on the other side of the borders they cross. From time to time, however, intertextual border crossings become just as problematic as political border crossings. A particularly notorious case is Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*, whose allegedly blasphemous portrayal of the prophet Mohammed led to demands that the book be banned from publication, paperback reprinting, or translation, and bans on its importation into India, Pakistan, and South Africa even before Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a fatwa calling for Rushdie's death, which the Iranian government publicly supported for ten years.

As its title suggests, this chapter focuses on a series of films that seek to cross a virtual border that is barely less fraught: the border between the United States, or more generally the Western world represented by Hollywood or internationally co-produced movies, and the Soviet Union. Like Della Coletta's book, it is interested in cinematic adaptations of literature as a special case of border crossing within the larger context of political and cultural border crossing, an activity that often plays out in films that are cross-cultural explorations rather than literary adaptations. So it will approach American adaptations (and one British adaptation) of Russian novels only gradually, through a consideration of other, broader kinds of border crossing.

The traffic across the US-USSR border—the legal and ideological border between the two nations and their cultures rather than the geographical border between Big Diomed Island in the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug and Little Diomed Island two miles away in Alaska—is two-way, and a great deal has been written about Soviet adaptations of Western literature.⁵ Crossing the border in the opposite direction, from Soviet Russia to the West, is if anything even more difficult. The obvious test case is *Doctor Zhivago*, the portrait of post-revolutionary Russia on which the poet Boris Pasternak toiled for twenty years. Pasternak's novel examined the personal costs of revolution in insuring the progress of social collectivism. Not surprisingly, it was refused publication in the USSR, and Pasternak agreed to have the manuscript smuggled to Milan, where it was published in Italian translation in 1957. The following year, the author was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, enraging his country's Communist Party, which forced him to decline the prize. In the meantime, his

novel, translated into English in 1958, spent twenty-six weeks atop the *New York Times* bestseller list. It was a remarkable success story for a novel whose border crossing amounted to a defection that had been universally condemned in its native land, which had in effect annulled its citizenship.

Doctor Zhivago's defection to the West represents an extreme case of illegal border crossing, a crossing that was not legally sanctioned by both nations involved and went legally unrecognized in one of them. The circumstances of its publication helped make the novel a literary *cause célèbre*. It was not only Pasternak's criticism of the Soviet Revolution that made his novel appealing to Western readers but also its negative imprimatur as a strenuously unauthorized importation of Russia itself to the West. Like so many of Della Coletta's examples, Pasternak's novel crossed a border not by adapting a foreign text but by appropriating a quasi-text, post-revolutionary Russia itself, that was never explicitly identified as a text. The drama of its publication history and its resourcefulness in surviving by crossing a border suggest not only new ways of considering Hollywood adaptations of Russian novels but also a wider range of ways to think about exactly what the Soviet authorities at the time feared: the West's appropriation or colonization of Russia, which Hollywood filmmakers in particular approach as a variously tantalizing, alluring, and obscure master text to be grasped, interpreted, and marketed to American audiences.

The conflict between Russia and the West is rarely as sharp as Pasternak's example would indicate. From time to time it has been presented in terms of sportive conquest, as when the nations' teams have competed against each other in the Olympic Games, or when Oprah Winfrey announced *Anna Karenina* as the summer 2004 selection of Oprah's Book Club. "I've never, ever chosen a novel that I had not personally read," Oprah told her television audience. "It's been on my list for years but I didn't do it because I was scared. Now I'm going to team up with all of you and read it together." A newsreel charting Tolstoi's subsequent rise on bestseller lists included a shot of Book Club members in matching T-shirts labeled "I'm not scared," rebranding *Anna Karenina* as an Everest Oprah and her fellow readers would climb together.⁶ Perhaps the clearest examples of adaptations that grow out of this sportive attitude are Stanley Kubrick's *Lolita*, marketed under the tagline, "How did they ever make a movie of *Lolita*?" and Woody Allen's *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex *But Were Afraid to Ask* ("If you want to know how this man made a movie out of this book, you'll have to see the movie!"). But even if they are not as white-hot as the relations between Downing Street and Tehran at the height of the Rushdie affair, the relations between Hollywood and Russia are always fraught, especially during the twenty-year period of the Cold War following World War II.

In the years before the war, the approach American films most often adopt in relation to Russia is to regard it as the Other, sometimes quaint, sometimes

barbaric, but always exotic. *Rasputin and the Empress* and *The Scarlet Empress* delve into recent or distant history to present Russia as the ultimate Gothic tourist destination, a place riven by picturesque, wildly overheated conflicts between poverty and material splendor, religion and sin, suffocating protocol and the kind of heroic passions that can only lead to chaos, all of it whipped up, most recently, by the Russian Revolution. *Tovarich* and *Ninotchka* present a comic version of this exoticism, as Russians abroad struggle to come to terms with the demands of life in the West. In *Tovarich*, two impoverished members of the royal family (Claudette Colbert and Charles Boyer), exiled by the Bolshevik Revolution, make their living as a housemaid and butler to a Parisian couple (Anita Louise and Melville Cooper) until their recognition leads to new problems. *Rasputin and the Empress* and *The Scarlet Empress* both invite their audiences to cross the Russian border using tourist visas that allow them access to a studio-built Mother Russia whose spectacular and menacing strangeness draws shivers and gasps from them before the closing credits return them safely to their homeland. In *Tovarich* and *Ninotchka*, by contrast, it is the lead characters themselves who cross the border from Russia to the West, allowing audiences to savor the familiar pleasures of Hollywood's Paris, from opulent dining to stock shots of the Eiffel Tower, while marveling at the novelty these pleasures hold for the innocents abroad.

The case of *Ninotchka* is notable because Nina Ivanovna Yakushova (Greta Garbo)—the Envoy Extraordinary sent from Moscow to take control of negotiations over the sale of the jewels the Bolsheviks confiscated from the Grand Duchess Swana (Ina Claire) after Buljanoff (Felix Bressart), Iranoff (Sig Rumann), and Kopalski (Alexander Granach), the three trade delegates originally tasked with the sale, are bamboozled into a stalemate by the Grand Duchess's lover, Count Leon d'Algout (Melvyn Douglas)—at first finds Paris and the Western values it represents anything but attractive. The film's programmatic defense of Western values requires Leon to awaken Ninotchka's appetite for the pleasures that mark Paris's advantage over Moscow: beauty, glamour, freedom, license, fashion, romance, laughter, love, and conspicuous consumption. Ninotchka initially resists every one of these blandishments, from the saucy hat she sees on display in a window to the jokes Leon tells her at a proletarian café; it is not until, angry and impatient, he falls off his chair that Garbo laughs. This pivotal scene, which allows both leads to surrender to each other without either losing face, poses a new model for border crossing. If historical epics like *Rasputin and the Empress* and *The Scarlet Empress* adopt a tourist's viewpoint toward a Russia figured as impossibly exotic and foreign and *Tovarich* shows its leading couple crossing the border as refugees and succeeding professionally as the world's best domestics, *Ninotchka* figures border crossing as seduction. Leon seduces everyone who crosses the border from Moscow to Paris, first the three trade delegates who are only too ready to give

up their reservation in the bare-bones Hotel Terminus to hole up in the Royal Suite of the opulent Hotel Clarence and use their telephone to summon a parade of cigarette girls while Leon tangles their attempt to sell their country's jewels in the Grand Duchess's lawsuit, then Nina Ivanovna, who, sent to grab the reins from them, falls for Paris even harder than they have done. Unlike the Grand Duchess herself, these Russian visitors have come to Paris in a professional capacity but are swiftly seduced into remaining in quite a different capacity. They learn to live on Western terms by surrendering their national principles and personal scruples, Ninotchka to Leon's charm, the envoys to the high-end consumer lifestyle he represents.

The film, released shortly after the outbreak of World War II but set, as an opening title announces, during the period when "if a Frenchman turned out the light it was not on account of an air raid!," consistently satirizes pre-war Russia as a place of iron control and material deprivation. On first meeting her, Leon tells Ninotchka, "I love Russians. Comrade, I've been fascinated by your Five-Year Plan for the past fifteen years." Ninotchka herself, asked how things are back in Moscow, replies, "The last mass trials were a great success. There are going to be fewer but better Russians." Back in her flat in Moscow, Ninotchka's friend Anna (Tamara Shayne) worries about their silently menacing neighbor Gurganov (Harry Semels): "You never know whether he's on his way to the washroom or the Secret Police." For her part, Ninotchka, on learning that Leon does not work and does nothing for mankind, tells him, "You are something we do not have in Russia ... That's why I believe in the future of my country." In general, however, Paris gets much the better in this exchange of satiric thrusts. Watching the swallows outside her hotel window, Ninotchka ruefully reflects, "We have the high ideals, but they have the climate." When she asks of the offensive hat, "How can such a civilization survive which permits their women to put things like that on their heads?" or admits, "I do not deny [Paris's] beauty, but it's a waste of electricity," the film's target audience groans sympathetically at her limited appetite for the pleasures of Parisian life and waits for her to open her mind, fall in love with the City of Lights, and purchase that hat.

After the Grand Duchess blackmails Ninotchka into returning to Moscow, the film takes pains to distinguish the Stalinist regime it satirizes as harsh, categorically rule-bound, and impoverished, and traditional Russian values represented by sharing food and clothing, singing, and playing the balalaika. It is this Russia—"The Russia of borscht, the Russia of boeuf stroganoff, the Russia of blinis and sour cream"—that the three envoys plan to keep alive in the expatriate restaurant they end up opening in Constantinople, an evocation of a Russian exotica safely removed from the Russia of 1939. The final joke that ends the film, a shot of one of the envoys picketing the restaurant with the sign "BULJANOFF AND IRANOFF UNFAIR TO KOPALSKI" as a snatch of

the “Song of the Volga Boatmen” plays, implies still another model of border crossing: complete assimilation from the old ideology to the new, as Kopalski, for all his identification with a Russian restaurant, has grown Western enough to call a one-man labor strike. Like *Ninotchka* herself, Kopalski has been repoliticized but not deracinated.

Ninotchka is in many ways a textbook case of Della Coletta’s Gadamerian border crosser. In crossing the border from Moscow to Paris, she opens herself to new experiences and perspectives that remain with her when she returns home, opening more critical new perspectives on the experiences she had formerly taken for granted back in Moscow. What is crucial in *Ninotchka*, however, is that the heroine is a reactive border crosser; she does not choose to cross any borders on her own. She is dispatched to Paris by her superiors, opened to the magic of Paris by Leon, and forced to return home by the Grand Duchess. Even her final trip to Constantinople is undertaken unwillingly and unaware that Leon has connived with Buljanoff, Iranoff, and Kopalski to arrange her escape from Soviet Russia. *Ninotchka* is repeatedly manipulated by other people to cross borders and persuaded by Leon into choosing Western over Soviet values. Her film complicates Della Coletta’s model by presenting at least three alternatives to the freely undertaken journey that model assumes and the smuggling operation Pasternak represents. Characters in *Ninotchka* cross national and cultural borders through satiric critique from outside (the film ridicules the Soviet Union from a safe position in the West), political assimilation that preserves ethnic identity (Kopalski calls a strike against his fellow Russian restaurateurs), and their own enthusiastic responses to seduction (the three envoys open the film by succumbing to the blandishments of a grand Parisian hotel, and *Ninotchka* ends it by adopting Western values under Leon’s example, tutelage, and sexual charisma).

The alliance between Russia and the US during World War II presents Hollywood with the occasion for quite a different kind of border crossing, with humanist universalism replacing both exotic tourism and seduction by the other side. Instead of presenting Russia as a strange foreign land where anything could happen and Russians as gargoyles like Lionel Barrymore’s Rasputin or Sam Jaffe’s Grand Duke Peter or vulnerable innocents abroad like *Ninotchka*, films like *Mission to Moscow*, *The North Star*, and *Song of Russia* announce to American filmgoers the comforting news that crossing the Russian border involves no fundamental realignment or re-examination of one’s world view because Russians are just like them. It is hardly surprising that these films would have shared such a universalist attitude. The Soviet Union was an important war ally, and public opinion polls consistently showed that Americans trusted it significantly less than the UK or France. The various fictionalized propaganda films Samuel Goldwyn, MGM, and Warner Bros. contributed to the war effort follow different paths to the same goal:

indicating that Soviet leaders, when they are represented or mentioned at all, are motivated by exactly the same sentiments as American leaders and that Russian citizens are indistinguishable from Americans, only with more picturesque costumes and music.

The North Star shows how readily exoticism and universalism can be combined. Unlike the relatively realistic Washington social scene disrupted by the war in the contemporaneous *Watch on the Rhine*, the everyday life of the villagers in *The North Star* seems to consist entirely of singing and dancing to pastoral quasi-Russian tunes actually written by Ira Gershwin and Aaron Copland and falling in love with other young Russians played by American performers. When the village of North Star is shadowed by war, the approach of the Germans is signaled by villagers on horseback riding to warn their friends, "The Germans are coming!," presenting Russian civil defense in 1941 as indistinguishable from Paul Revere's ride in 1775. The cast includes rising all-Americans like Dana Andrews, Farley Granger, and Anne Baxter supported by equally non-ethnic veterans Walter Huston and Walter Brennan in heavy makeup. Only Austrian-born Erich von Stroheim, as the German physician and military officer Dr. von Harden, is cast according to his customary ethnic stereotype.

Such casting suggests another attitude Hollywood adopts toward Russia: the impulse to colonize it with recognizably American types. This colonization never amounts to conquest, not only because the United States never conquered the Soviet Union, but also because American movies never show the nation conquering anyone; the closest it comes is in the successful defensive operations many years later of *Red Dawn*. Instead, just as *Ninotchka* had shown the most dedicated Russian civil servant imaginable falling prey to the seductive wiles of a Parisian boulevardier, *The North Star* presents a Mother Russia colonized by American performers: Evidently no one of Russian extraction lives there anymore. The result is to present the village as quaintly exotic until the moment it is threatened by the German army, at which point it becomes deracinated and universalized, if not downright American. By staying on a local level, the film can ignore the ideological specifics of Soviet politics in favor of a universalized Russian culture.

Song of Russia develops still more stylized versions of these universalizing tropes. The film's opening sequence, in which a shot of John Meredith (Robert Taylor), a conductor leading a concert performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in America for Soviet war relief, dissolves into a shot of a responsive Russian crowd with a Soviet flag displayed prominently above their heads, wastes no time in establishing the equivalence and interchangeability of Americans and Russians. The main theme from Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto, already transformed into the American hit song "Tonight We Love," unites the two nations on a global level but foreshadows Meredith's

blooming romance with Nadya Stepanova (Susan Peters). When Meredith accepts Nadya's invitation to come to her Russian village and lead concerts there, he finds that both urban life in Moscow and rural life in her village strikingly resemble their counterparts in America. On Meredith's tour of a peasant farm, his host, whose cottage is equipped with a radio and a telephone, proudly displays his modern tractor but neglects to mention that it belongs to the collective, not to him. When war breaks out, Meredith, who has now married Nadya in a church wedding, urges her to return to America with him, but she insists that she must stay: "I have a great responsibility to my family, to my village, and to the way I have lived," carefully substituting in that last phrase a statement about lifestyle for one about nation, party, or ideology. Meredith's manager Hank Higgins (Robert Benchley) tells her, "You are a fool, but a lot of fools like you died on the village green at Lexington," explicitly equating the Soviet response to Hitler's violation of the Non-Aggression Pact he had signed with Stalin to the American Revolution. Small wonder, then, that in 1947 the House Un-American Affairs Committee explicitly held up the film as evidence of the Communist infiltration of Hollywood, prompting Robert Taylor's appearance before HUAC as a friendly witness.

Mission to Moscow, which was clearly undertaken at Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "agreeing—or urging—that a pro-Soviet feature film be made,"⁷ addresses Soviet politics more directly by suggesting still another approach to border crossing: the affirmation of a strong political alliance that seeks to reduce the severity of the borders in question. In filming Ambassador Joseph E. Davies's memoir of his service in Russia during 1936–8, Warner Bros. could hardly have avoided dealing with Joseph Stalin's conduct of the Moscow Trials that condemned so many former revolutionaries as conspirators plotting to restore Russian capitalism. In view of the script control Davies's contract with Warner Bros. gave him, it is hardly surprising that the film uncritically presents what Davies's spoken prologue describes as "the integrity and the honesty of the Soviet leaders," whose people were "devoted to world peace."⁸ John Dewey, who had headed an independent commission that had denounced the Moscow Trials as a wholesale party purge, wrote an outraged letter to the *New York Times* describing the film as "the first instance in our country of totalitarian propaganda for mass consumption—a propaganda which falsifies history through distortion, omission or pure invention of facts."⁹ An open letter signed by Edmund Wilson, Dwight Macdonald, James T. Farrell, and a dozen other activists and intellectuals, accused the film of rewriting past history to produce "a deliberate confusion of Soviet and American policy, so that critics of the one at any time in the past few years are presented as necessarily opposing the other."¹⁰ These charges could well be dismissed as highly partisan if a response urging public defense of the film had not tacitly conceded them by describing the film as presenting "a close-up of

Russia's fight for industrialization and a modern and mechanized agriculture" that included "authentic newsreel shots" that helped make it "an instrument for understanding and friendship between the Allies," "a picture of truth" that is being "attacked by some whose hatred of the Soviet Union is greater than their desire to win the war."¹¹ The market and history took swift revenge on the film, which lost an estimated \$500,000 before, reading the writing on HUAC's walls, "the company ordered all existing prints destroyed in a notice sent to every exchange in October 1947."¹²

All these approaches to border crossing—tourist exoticism, universalism, seduction, defection—persisted after the war. But the coming of the Cold War gave them a new edge. The foreign publication of *Doctor Zhivago*, the awarding of the Nobel Prize to its author, and his refusal of the prize under pressure from Soviet authorities amounted to a public relations coup for the West, which feted his defecting novel as a refugee that had escaped certain destruction and oblivion (condemned in the Soviet Union to an unofficial existence in samizdat—underground self-publishing) only by crossing the Russian border. Ten years earlier, State Department official George Kennan's anonymously published essay "The Sources of Soviet Conflict" had outlined a strategy of containing the Soviet Union that amounted to prolonged seduction of the Russian Other from a position of military and diplomatic strength, "recommend[ing] that American foreign policy imitate the proverbial boss trying to extract sexual favors from his proverbial secretary by exploiting the advantages that accrue to his physical, financial, and educational superiority, in order to thwart or reward her material desires."¹³ The process by which Leon had so effortlessly seduced Ninotchka became more tangled and two-way in *Jet Pilot*, in which Colonel Jim Shannon (John Wayne), tasked with interviewing Lieutenant Anna Marladovna (Janet Leigh), a Soviet military pilot apparently defecting to the United States, falls in love with her, marries her, and follows her back to her homeland, where she has schemed to lead him all along. Only Shannon's success in outwitting his bride at her own game vindicates American national and military honor. Josef von Sternberg, directing his final film, was a past master of the game of mutual seduction. But now, with the geopolitical stakes raised far beyond the playfully exotic games of seduction in *Morocco*, *Blonde Venus*, *Shanghai Express*, or even *The Scarlet Empress*, on which the only empires at stake had long since passed from the scene, the film, completed in 1949, languished in RKO's vaults for eight years before it was finally released in 1957. In the meantime, *Never Let Me Go* had resolved the dilemma of its hero, American correspondent Philip Sutherland (Clark Gable), who had married Russian ballerina Marya Lamarkina (Gene Tierney) while stationed in Moscow, when Soviet officials forbade her from emigrating to the United States with him, in even more simplified terms: Sutherland kidnapped his bride and spirited her over the border illegally.

As these cross-cultural defections, seductions, and abductions indicate, Hollywood's Cold War appropriation of Russia proceeded apace, but political tensions with the enemy state were displaced by more familiar narratives of crime, romance, and domestic melodrama. As Irina Sandomirskaja has pointed out in her analysis of *The Third Man* and *North by Northwest*, the most distinctive feature of Russia in American movies of the period is its absence: "[T]here was no Russia to be found, but instead Russia's non-being, a shadow, a ghost, a negative presence."¹⁴ The systematic non-representation of Russia comports oddly with the anti-Communist fervor sweeping the nation, a rabidly Red-baiting tendency that landed especially hard in Hollywood. The McCarthy hearings, the jailing of the Hollywood Ten, and the blacklist that ended the careers of hundreds of Communists, ex-Communists, suspected Communists, and fellow-travelers were complemented by a spate of rabidly anti-Communist movies released between 1948 and 1953: *The Iron Curtain*, *The Suckle or the Cross*, *The Red Danube*, *The Red Menace*, *I Married a Communist* (aka *The Woman on Pier 13*), *I Was a Communist for the FBI*, *Big Jim McLain*, *My Son John*, *Invasion USA*, and *Pickup on South Street*. To their number might be added roughly contemporaneous anti-Communist (or perhaps anti-McCarthyite) allegories like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*; movies like *Strangers on a Train* that feature "hysteria over the possibility that the federal government had been infiltrated by Communists, homosexuals, and lesbians" and identify "individual conformity to the political and sexual norms sanctioned by the state as an act of supreme patriotism";¹⁵ and finally spy films like *From Russia with Love* that designate James Bond to defend not only queen and country but also the world as we know it from an escalating series of threats to global security.

Just because Hollywood studios churned out anti-Communist potboilers like *The Red Menace* and A-list embarrassments like *My Son John*, however, did not mean they had become anti-Russian. Indeed, the single most consistent and remarkable feature of these films is their apparent determination to avoid adopting *any* attitude toward Russia, even to the point of acknowledging its existence. Whether it was to comply with government directives that forbade anti-Russian propaganda, to avoid embarrassing ethnically Russian stars or executives, to protect European markets for these and other films, or simply to allow the studios room to deny accusations of anti-Russian xenophobia, these films take extraordinary pains to avoid mentioning Russia at all.

Beginning with its very title, displayed over the background of a globe-bestriding octopus, *The Red Menace* is typical in combining Red-baiting with an extreme reluctance to identify the insidious menace it is warning against. Borrowing a durable narrative trope from contemporaneous film noir, the film frames its story as a series of flashbacks that make the missteps of ex-GI Bill Jones (Robert Rockwell) as he drifts toward involvement with Communism

far more obvious to the audience than they are to him from the beginning. Although an aggressive journalist's voiceover narration refers to "the worldwide Marxist racket," the film sedulously avoids mentioning Russia. When Bill falls victim to the federal government's bureaucratic injustices against veterans, an apparently sympathetic recruiter tells him, "Somebody's doing something about it." "Who?" asks Bill. "Oh, some friends of mine," says his new acquaintance. It is only reasonable, of course, that Communists seeking to recruit Americans to their cause would be more eager to show them sympathy than reveal their own true colors. But the film declines to identify its enemy even once its hero has fallen into its clutches. Even when Bill realizes from perusing the titles on her library shelves that his new friend Mollie O'Flaherty (Barbra Fuller) is a Communist, she speaks only of "the Party," though he obviously knows which party she means. As the film frames a poster at a Party meeting that reads, "STALIN says—Dictatorship means unlimited power, resting solely on violence, and not on law," a voiceover identifies him as "the world's foremost Marxist," though not as Russian, or even by his first name.

Big Jim McLain, intent on rescuing HUAC members and agents from unfair attacks, more forthrightly mentions Communism and Moscow several times in its opening sequence, a Congressional hearing that ignores the fact that membership of the Party is legal. From that point on, however, it adopts a don't-ask-don't-tell attitude toward its targets, even among the Communists. Sturak (Alan Napier), one of the leaders of the Hawaiian cell Jim McLain (John Wayne) and Mal Baxter (James Arness) have been sent to investigate, testily tells one of his underlings, "For security reasons, don't call me Comrade," even though the two of them are alone. The film has its cake and eats it too by identifying both men as Reds but insisting that it will not consistently name them as such. Instead of confronting Reds in the American heartland, McLain and Baxter travel to Hawaii, an exotic American colony that just happens to confirm the traditional American values of beauty, romance, marriage, and religion, while presenting a landscape that could scarcely be more different from the Soviet Union's. And the fist fight that provides the film's climax is provoked by an imprudently incendiary remark by one of the Communists—"No, I'm from the country club set. Chopping cotton is for white trash and niggers"—that indicates fissures within the United States, not global conflicts. The film turns out to be a celebration and anatomy of America, with no room for Russia except as an unspecified Other.

The disavowal of the Soviet Union as America's enemy reaches a climax in the ultra-low-budget *Invasion USA*, which unfolds a nightmare scenario of America invaded by a foreign power. When Hollywood gossip columnist Hedda Hopper announced after a preview screening, "It will scare the pants off you!," American Pictures promptly adopted her description as the tag line for the film's publicity. Yet the film never identifies the invading nation.

When military flights arrive over the Pacific and attack Washington State, it is obvious where they have come from, but they carry no identifying insignia, presumably because so many of the film's aerial shots are stock footage, and close-ups inside the planes show the fliers' faces mostly obscured by radio gear. In these scenes and elsewhere, the invaders speak only briefly, though with obvious foreign accents, and they dress as American military personnel for the purposes of the invasion. Even the American president, going on TV and radio to promise nuclear retaliation, speaks only of taking the battle to "the enemy's homeland." He assures his listeners that England and France have declared war on "our enemy" and that all members of "the Atlantic alliance" support the United States. When the invaders finally do get around to delivering complete sentences, they sound at least as much German as Russian, for example when one officer smirks that from now on, an industrial plant will be building tanks for "the People's Army." As in *The Red Menace*, the feature most of these periphrases share is not ambiguity or obfuscation but deniability, since their referents are so easily recognized that they could not possibly be misunderstood. In acting consistently as if they are reminding rather than informing audiences of what they already know about a mortal enemy, both films, like *Big Jim McLain*, present themselves as arguing an anti-Communist position they already take for granted.

The determination to indict Soviet Russia as an enemy without identifying it gives the domestic melodrama *My Son John* a hushed tone whose systematic periphrases, like the strategies Hollywood had developed for telegraphing sexual information under the Production Code, fetishizes Russia by presenting it as the ultimate taboo, the country that dare not speak its name. Once he returns home from a foreign trip, the film presents the behavior of John Jefferson (Robert Walker) as suspicious not because of what he is doing but because of what he is not. He no longer accompanies his parents to church; he seems to have grown more distant from his brothers Chuck (Richard Jaeckel) and Ben (James Young), who serve in the military; and his mother Lucy (Helen Hayes) senses that his exaggerated, intermittent expressions of affection for her have been assumed to lull her suspicions. John's father Dan (Dean Jagger), a member of the American Legion who preaches "alertness," is worried that John is "one of the guys we have to be alert about." Telling Lucy that his father thinks that their shared belief in the brotherhood of man makes them "leftists—Communists—subversives," John duly swears on his mother's Bible: "I have never been a member of the Communist Party." But Dan rejects this ritual: "If you were a—if you were a—then this wouldn't mean anything." After speaking to Chuck and Ben on the phone, John expresses hope for "a lasting peace," another Communist code phrase. Even when Dan shows Lucy a headline—"RUTH CARLIN SENTENCED"—that refers to a woman the Jeffersons believe has been involved in the mysterious meetings

that have stolen their son from them, the accompanying news story makes no visible mention of the USSR.

The film complements its reluctance to identify the Soviet Union as the enemy by an even stranger omission: the government agency that employs John. When Stedman (Van Heflin), the Communist-chasing federal agent whose persistent interest in John has taken him into the heart of the Jefferson household, hears that Lucy, who has never before been on an airplane, has taken flight to Washington, DC, he tells a fellow agent: "She's either coming to see me, or going to—that other place." When John receives a telegram announcing that he has been awarded an honorary doctorate of laws, only the word "BUILDING" appears in the internal address; the preceding word is obscured by his hand. The film declines to identify not only Mother Russia but the State Department, where John presumably works, because it must disavow the possibility that the State Department could be infiltrated by a Communist.

After John is killed in a police chase, his posthumous taped commencement address does finally mention Russia by name—"Even now the eyes of Soviet agents are upon some of you. They have observed your abilities and seen qualities that I once possessed"—but concludes with a more oblique confession: "I am a traitor. I am a native American Communist spy" working for "a foreign power." What is most salient is not that John is a Communist, but that he is not a true-blue American. The result of the film's persistently negative characterization of John's perfidy is an overarching and unintentional irony. Like Henry James's novel *The Princess Casamassima*, *My Son John* works by *not* saying things about taboo subjects. Yet the overpointed dialogue and performances make its import as shriekingly obvious as the sexual references in many another film produced under the Code.

Even though Red-baiting movies rarely mention Russia by name, there are any number of other Cold War films that are less inhibited. One of the most surprising examples is Sam Fuller's *Pickup on South Street*, which uses the conventions of film noir rather than action or family drama to frame its political parable. Like anti-Communist films from *The Red Menace* to *My Son John*, it avoids mentioning Russia in its tale of Skip McCoy (Richard Widmark), a pickpocket who dips his hand into the purse of Candy (Jean Peters), a prostitute turned courier, and inadvertently winds up with a roll of microfilm full of government secrets. Federal agent Zara (Willis Bouchey) tells NYPD Capt. Dan Tiger (Murvyn Vye) that Mr. Big, to whom Candy was delivering the microfilm, is connected to some "foreign power"; as soon as he gets the secret design, it will go instantly "across the ocean," without further specifying its destination.

All these elisions are straight out of Hollywood's playbook: Point a finger at Russia without naming names in order to maintain deniability. For all its

obvious anti-Communist fervor, however, *Pickup on South Street* turns out to be more interested in a critique of capitalism. Joey (Richard Kiley), the ex-boyfriend who gave Candy the microfilm to pass on before it was stolen, insists that he is involved in nothing more than the sort of industrial espionage that is as American as apple pie: "How many times do I have to tell you we're not criminals? This is big business. Cutthroat business." Moe Williams (Thelma Ritter), the small-time informant who fingers Skip to Tiger, provides a sad parody of capitalism as she haggles over the cost of her information: "When the price of living goes up, my prices go up. When the price of living goes down ..." When Tiger refuses to pay her off, Moe makes a new offer concerning the pickpocket: "I'll bet you \$38.50 your cannon is on that list [of eight names]." The big investment for which Moe is feeding her kitty is a burial plot and stone on Long Island so that she will not have to be buried in Potter's Field. As Skip and Tiger cross swords, their conversation turns on political and economic threats. Tiger announces that he is going to put Skip away for life; Skip schemes to get Tiger suspended from the force for a full year, not just six months. Adding his latest acquisition to the stash of stolen items he keeps in a chest sunk beneath the waters that lap the sides of his shack at the tip of South Street, Skip looks like nothing so much as a parody of a banker with his safe deposit box photographed against the background of the skyline of New York, the financial capital of the world.

Although the film attacks Communism at every turn, its strictures against Communism are as vague as *Invasion USA's* identification of the invaders' nationality or *My Son John's* references to the Soviet Union and the State Department. When Zara talks about "a top Red" who's going to get "classified military information," Skip retorts: "Are you wavin' the flag at me? I'm just tryin' to keep my hands in my own pockets." When Zara asks furiously, "Do you know what treason is?," Skip responds, "Who cares?" Candy, who believes Joey's protestations that he is engaged in nothing worse than industrial espionage, is outraged when Skip accuses her of being "a Commie" and adds, "I'll do business with a Red, but I don't have to trust one." Warned by Candy not to give up Skip to Joey, Moe tells her, "What do you think I am, an informer?," even though that is exactly what she is. Moe finds it hard to forgive Skip for being "mixed up with Reds"; as she tells Candy, "Even in our crummy line of work, you have to draw the line somewhere." And when Joey, about to kill Moe because she knows his true colors, tells her, "You just talked yourself into an early grave. What else do you know?," she famously replies: "About Commies? Nothing. I just know I don't like them."

What is most surprising about *Pickup on South Street*, then, is that in addition to its impassioned but characteristically unspecific denunciation of Communism, it is equally skeptical about capitalism, which it frames in a much more specific series of metaphors. The film's relentless focus on the

seamy side of New York prevents its audience from ever seeing capitalism operating normally in the nation's financial capital. Instead, it is figured through a series of parodic metaphors. For Joey, capitalism is a cutthroat business. For Tiger and Zara, it is a horse trade of leniency for the information they want to extract from Skip. For Moe and Candy, it is a series of gambles, from Moe's disingenuous bet with Tiger over whether she has placed Skip's picture in the photo array she has assembled to Candy's breezy closing response to Tiger's prediction, "I'll give you thirty days before I pick you up with your hand in somebody else's pocket": "You wanna bet?" For Skip, it is a prospector's search for resources, as when he tells Candy after she comes to his shack looking for the microfilm and he crushes her mouth in a brutal kiss: "Sometimes you look for oil, you hit a gusher." Capitalism is linked to the dead end of the grave for Moe, who is selling neckties and information in order to avoid Potter's Field, and for Skip, who holes up in a picturesque but dangerously located shack at the very end of South Street. The film's leading metaphor for capitalism, however, is pickpocketing, which involves an endless series of generally criminal seizures of items whose intrinsic value is less than their exchange value. The microfilm Skip illicitly lifts from Candy was Joey's, not hers to begin with. But it was not really Joey's either, and he has not stolen the information for the reason he gives Candy, nor is it the same information he tells her it is. So the film, framed as a denunciation of Communism, is equally and much more specifically a critique of capitalism as well.

By the 1960s, the time of *The Ugly American*, *From Russia with Love*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *Fail-Safe*, and *The Russians Are Coming the Russians Are Coming*, Russia is freely named and stigmatized by the characters, but not nearly so much by the movies themselves. As in *Pickup on South Street*, Americans and Americanism come in for as searching criticism as Russians in all these films. The leading critique of Americans in *The Ugly American*, in which Harrison Carter MacWhite (Marlon Brando) allows his old friendship with local agitator Deong (Eiji Okada) to cloud the political judgment he must display as the unpopular new ambassador to the Southeast Asian country of Sarkan, and *Fail-Safe*, in which a well-meaning American president (Henry Fonda) struggles in vain to recall Colonel Grady (Edward Binns), an Air Force pilot who has mistakenly been ordered to drop a nuclear bomb on Moscow, is that they are idealistically categorical and paranoid, unable to see the world in any terms but those of a black-and-white arena of American good and foreign evil. The same criticism is echoed in variously comic registers in *Dr. Strangelove*, which reworks the apocalyptic plot of *Fail-Safe* as pitch-black farce, and *The Russians Are Coming the Russians Are Coming*, an altogether gentler film showing the comical panic that sweeps across an island of Connecticut summer vacationers when a Soviet submarine staffed by an unthreatening captain (Theodore Bikel) and a crew headed by the adorable Lieutenant Rozanov (Alan Arkin) makes a

forced landing offshore. Americans in these films are satirized for their persistence in seeing Russian plots everywhere, even when, as in *The Ugly American* and *Dr. Strangelove*, they happen to be correct.

The early installments in the James Bond franchise reveal the perils of crossing the Russian border even as they downplay the stark economic and ideological differences that have made that border so fraught. *From Russia with Love*, the second of the Bond films and the one most explicitly concerned with border crossing, revolves around the uneasy partnership between Bond (Sean Connery) and Tanya Romanova (Daniela Bianchi), a Russian clerk who has offered to steal a Lektor decoding machine from her Istanbul mission if Bond will arrange to receive it personally. What is surprising here is the identity of the dark powers who have manipulated the principals in the hope of profiting financially and diplomatically from their theft. In Ian Fleming's 1957 novel, this power is the explicitly Soviet organization SMERSH, which takes its name from the Russian "*smiert shpionam*" (death to spies). But although the film mentions SMERSH in passing, it has been replaced as the chief villain, as it is in all the Bond films except *Goldfinger* through 1971, by SPECTRE, a freelance cabal whose name, an acronym for Special Executive for Counterintelligence, Terrorism, Revenge, and Extortion, accurately indicates its non-aligned brief and its intent of equally victimizing the spies from the US and the USSR. Predictably, Tanya and Bond, each determined to seduce the other, fall in love, outwit the powers who have manipulated them into their roles, and survive in a curious update of *Ninotchka*.

The most extended and revealing echo of *Ninotchka*, however, is *Silk Stockings*. Despite its Cold War setting, the film, the last feature director Rouben Mamoulian completed, and the one based on Cole Porter's final musical, has a curiously retrospective tone, and not simply because it is a musical remake of *Ninotchka*. The film, following Porter's musical, departs from *Ninotchka* in any number of ways, dropping the Grand Duchess Swana, changing its hero from a kept man to a Hollywood filmmaker and the prize over which both sides are fighting from a jewelry collection to a Russian-born composer, and eliminating all financial pressures on its Russian characters. Perhaps its single most strikingly updated feature, however, is its constant references to the Soviet Union. Even more than *Ninotchka*, *Silk Stockings* mentions Russia early and often, making constant jokes about political suppression there. Seeking information about one Comrade Yoschenko, incoming Commissioner of Arts Vassili Markovitch (George Tobias, who had been cast as a passport clerk in *Ninotchka*), asks a subordinate, "Does this office have a copy of *Who's Still Who?*" Hollywood producer Steve Canfield (Fred Astaire), pressing the three Soviet commissars Brankov (Peter Lorre), Bibinski (Jules Munshin), and Ivanov (Joseph Buloff) to allow "French citizen [Peter Ilyitch] Boroff" (Wim Sonnefeld) to stay in Paris and write the score to his new

musical, urges them: "The Iron Curtain dissolved by music! What a goodwill gesture—and what *propaganda*." They respond by wondering whether they will receive the Order of Lenin and singing "Too bad we can't go back to Moscow."

In general, the film seems much less interested in Khrushchev or Stalin than in Lenin, whose portrait hangs in Markovitch's Moscow office, most of its head quietly cut off by the upper frame line. The scene in Markovitch's office echoes a similar moment in *Ninotchka* in which Ninotchka pleads so earnestly with Lenin's photo for understanding that it smiles at her. Both films' determination to identify the Soviet Union with its pioneering revolutionary rather than its contemporaneous leader suggest that both of them, especially *Silk Stockings*, identify the West with modernity and the USSR with an earlier period, the 1920s or 1930s.

Silk Stockings uses musical numbers to stage rapprochements of East and West. As Steve reprises "Paris Loves Lovers," Nina Yoschenko, the commissar who has been dispatched to retrieve Boroff after her three junior colleagues have failed, interpolates a dour but rhythmically precise counterpoint, pronouncing his encomiums "capitalistic," "characteristic," "sensualistic," "imperialistic," and "anti-Communistic," and adding that the lovers who find the city "heaven above," as Steve has claimed, "should be atheistic." Two minutes after Yoschenko says of Astaire's dancing, "Go, go, go, but you don't get anywhere," he has her dancing to "I Love the Look of You," then kissing. Since the film is based on a well-known musical comedy and Yoschenko is played by Cyd Charisse, the audience confidently awaits her metamorphosis into a musical star. The film Steve plans to make is *War and Peace* ("we'll have to change that title," he muses). The film satirizes Russia for producing the stodgy masterpieces of state-sanctioned culture and Hollywood for its shallow obsession with glitz. "Glorious Technicolor, Breathtaking CinemaScope, and Stereophonic Sound," the song in which his star Peggy Dayton (Janis Paige) describes contemporary films, paves the way for accord between Russia and Hollywood even as it ridicules Hollywood excess. And of course *Silk Stockings* is itself presented in glorious Metrocolor, breathtaking CinemaScope, and four-track stereo.

The film's central conflict is more accurately described as "Russia versus Paris" or "Russia versus Hollywood" than "Russia versus the United States" because it localizes the two Western cities but generalizes the Eastern power it constantly invokes. Since the only Russian locations the film ever shows are in Moscow, the city becomes a synecdoche for the Russian government rather than a place with its own individual identity. By contrast, Hollywood and Paris, the two locations with which *Silk Stockings* is most concerned, are synecdoches for Western culture. By localizing Hollywood and Paris but not Russia, the film pits Paris and Hollywood against all of Russia.

Like *Ninotchka*, the film generally frames the debate between Paris and Russia as if it were non-ideological. In a line recycled from the earlier film, Yoschenko reflects, "We have the high ideals, but they have the climate." Ideological debates are repeatedly raised only to be defused, as when Boroff tells Yoschenko at a fashion atelier, "You can utter dissenting ideas in a very loud voice. The views here are different. Very different," as a nightgown-clad model emerges in a run-up to Peggy's "Satin and Silk" seduction number. Brankov chides Bibinski, "'Maybe, maybe, maybe.' Don't sound so Russian." By writing the Grand Duchess Swana out of the story, *Silk Stockings* internalizes Yoschenko's conflict and makes the climactic plot complications less sharp, ideological, and materialistic, and more ritualistic. Yoschenko is no longer forced to leave Paris but chooses to leave on her own after recoiling from Peggy's *War and Peace* number as Josephine, which she calls "the most insulting travesty on Russian culture that ever existed," and turning on Steve as its producer. The conflict between East and West turns this time on cultural values, not the Depression-era hunger for rubles that motivated the commissars in *Ninotchka* or the ideological differences audiences might have expected from a Cold War adaptation. And different cultural mores represent a far more permeable border to cross.

As Steve's ludicrous attempt to adapt *War and Peace* to the conventions of musical comedy shows, adapting Russian literary masterpieces to Hollywood can be just as challenging for Cold War producers as adapting the Soviet Union itself. How can American movies trade on the prestige of Russian classics without presenting themselves as soft on Russia? The obvious answer is to stick to nineteenth-century classics that can be celebrated as examples of a glorious heritage that has withered under the Soviets. But different adaptations spin this strategy in surprisingly different ways. *The Inspector General*, whose credits identify it as "inspired by the play by Nikolai Gogol," represents the simplest solution: evacuate all Russian content from the adaptation. In Philip Rapp and Harry Kurnitz's screenplay, Gogol's farce, which is Russian to its core, no longer seems to take place in Russia. Brodny, the town in which it is set, is never located in a particular country. The military costumes look more French than Russian. The ultimate authority for all civic power, duly attested by numerous documents, is "the great Napoleon." And the real Inspector General (Rhys Williams), when he finally arrives, pronounces the imposter Georgi (Danny Kaye) "the first honest man I've met since I left Budapest." The result is to uproot the story from Russia, placing it in an underspecified middle-European Ruritania—an especially ironic development for its star, who was born David Daniel Kaminski to Ukrainian immigrants who had settled in Brooklyn.

Russia is engaged in more strategic terms in London Films' 1948 *Anna Karenina*. This British film partly follows the lead of MGM's better-known 1935 adaptation in treating Russia as a site of exotic tourism but

partly complicates it by suggesting through its musical score, which mingles nineteenth-century Russian and European classics, Russia's own cultural acquisitiveness. Julien Duvivier's film makes no attempt to suggest that its star, Vivien Leigh, is Russian, but it gives both her husband Karenin (Ralph Richardson) and her lover Vronskii (Kieron Moore) distinctively Russian tropisms. Dry, pinched Karenin is identified with the Russian political bureaucracy, Vronskii with the Russian military and the Russian people, who, as in Hollywood's wartime films, are sharply distinguished from the government. The film clearly presents Karenin as neglecting Anna in favor of a more active engagement in statecraft but cuts away from the speech he makes on the legislative floor before he can identify the important new measure he is proposing. Politics is hypostasized here as an anti-emotional, anti-human force irrespective of any specific ideology. By making Karenin more sympathetic than Basil Rathbone's coldly monstrous villain in the MGM adaptation, Richardson seems to plead with the politically unaligned Anna for a truce beyond her power to offer. Instead of depoliticizing Russia, the film splits its Russia into variously sympathetic parties already at war with each other.

The most Russian of all Hollywood Cold War adaptations of canonical Russian novels is *The Brothers Karamazov*, which meticulously labels each shift in place (e.g., "Ryevsk, a small town in Tsarist Russia, 1870") even when it is departing from Dostoevskii, whose novel is set in 1866. Richard Brooks's Russia, which seeks to out-Russia the real thing, brings on gypsies, who after all are not native to Russia, and calls on an original score by house composer Bronislau Kaper whenever it wants to turn up the Russian-seeming heat. Katia (Claire Bloom) pointedly tells Dmitrii Karamazov (Yul Brynner): "You're like Russia herself. Too strong, too excitable, too unpredictable." When Dmitrii is arrested for the murder of his father (Lee J. Cobb), however, the case is labeled "Russia vs. Karamazov," suggesting, like the 1948 *Anna Karenina*, another split within the country and its culture. The film follows Dostoevskii's novel in making the three Karamazov brothers three images of Russia. Dmitrii, his impulsive and sensual father's son who frequently calls for folk music, represents Tsarist Russia. Alesha (William Shatner), pious and withdrawn, represents Orthodox Russia. Ivan (Richard Basehart), the analytical atheist, represents Communist Russia. Not surprisingly, this last identification is the most understated of the three, making Ivan apparently the least prominent agent of the three brothers until the film reveals that his ideas have inflamed his bastard half-brother Smerdiakov (Albert Salmi), the actual killer of their father. Audiences wondering what sort of Russia Salmi's Smerdiakov represents need only listen to his voice, for of all the Karamazovs, he alone speaks with anything like a Russian accent, one that recalls countless Hollywood portrayals of KGB thugs. Out of all Hollywood Cold War adaptations, this *Karamazov* provides the most complex and nuanced view of Russia through a divide-and-conquer

strategy that allows it to present multiple Russias without deciding which is most authentic, or even weighing them against each other.

The Brothers Karamazov, based on a comfortably pre-Soviet novel, sharpens the approach of typical Cold War Hollywood adaptations of Russian literature—celebrate traditional Russian culture, ignore the political realities of the present-day Soviet Union—by valorizing the old Russia of Dmitrii Karamazov while criticizing the new Russia of Ivan and especially Smerdiakov. The situation is much trickier for David Lean's 1965 adaptation of *Doctor Zhivago* because it is based on a celebrated contemporary novel, one whose subject is announced by General Evgraf Zhivago (Alec Guinness), the eponymous hero's half-brother, in the film's opening scene: "We've come very far, very fast. But do you know at what cost?" This line, which could serve as a motto for the entire film, goes far to explain its banning in the USSR until 1994. An equally pervasive motto is iconographic: the prominence of the color red, which first appears in a star in this opening scene. In a film that runs well over three hours, red, associated with both the revolution and the balalaika Iurii Zhivago (Omar Sharif) inherits from his mother, is the only saturated color for long stretches, especially in nighttime scenes. The persistence of red is relieved in the film's long middle section by the green of the countryside, representing a politically unaligned retreat.

The film's expansive production design, emphasizing striking long shots of scenes filmed in Portugal, Finland, Canada, and (mostly) Spain, presents a sweepingly scenic view of Russia's post-revolutionary history. In Pasternak's novel, this history, which Pasha (Tom Courtenay) experiences as an ideological struggle and General Zhivago as material for mordant reflection, is filtered through Iurii's consciousness as raw material, not just for the poetry he writes, but for the poetic sensibility that dominates Pasternak's narrative, which subordinates sharply delineated characters, clear psychological and political motivations, and linear sequence to the exploration of that sensibility. In Lean's international co-production, by contrast, Iurii experiences history as a purely exteriorized pageant, a backdrop for a romantic triangle involving Iurii, his wife Tonia (Geraldine Chaplin), and Pasha's wife Lara (Julie Christie), the lover who bears Iurii's daughter. The film, whose original advertising posters feature a dominating double portrait of the lovers and a smaller image of Tonia against a much smaller background showing the minarets of Moscow on one side and a cavalry charge on the other, recalls the poster for *Gone with the Wind*. So does the emphasis of *Doctor Zhivago*'s publicity tagline: "A love caught in the fire of revolution." The deepest insult the film offers the Soviet Union is not its view of individual characters but its view of history as either an external spectacle whose decisive events happen off-camera or raw material whose interpretation depends on the way it is filtered through a sensitive individual consciousness in the manner of Henry James.

The possibility of meaningful border crossings within the film is precluded by the fact that there are no meaningful borders to cross. A number of key scenes in the film involve traveling. Iurii first spots Lara on a tram whose sparks represent the kindling of his love. Tonia is introduced, like Anna Karenina, arriving home on a train. Most notably, the film's long central sequence brings Zhivago, Tonia, and her father Alexander (Ralph Richardson) from Moscow to the far-off countryside on a harrowing ride aboard a freight train. Yet no one, certainly not Iurii, ever acts in a way that constitutes a true border crossing because the characters' journeys from red worlds to green never take them anywhere except to different scenery. In the film's most decisive elision of history, Iurii, who has departed to war service from a Tsarist culture, returns years later to a post-revolutionary culture that has taken root in his absence. Instead of crossing borders, he finds that revolutionary borders have changed profoundly without his moving or doing anything except remaining always himself.

Pasha's dismissive description of Zhivago's poetry as too personal—"The personal life is dead in Russia; the Revolution killed it"—reveals the film's central conflict between personal and political values. Yet this pronouncement does nothing to change the situation. Pasha dismisses "lucky" Zhivago as no collaborator with counterrevolutionary Whites, and their confrontation leads to nothing except more thematic conflict, not any particular action. In reviewing the film, Pauline Kael observed that "neither the contemplative Zhivago nor the flux of events is intelligible, and what is worse, they seem unrelated to each other."¹⁶ Robert Bolt's screenplay follows what Michael A. Anderegg has called Pasternak's "highbrow potboiler"¹⁷ in presenting Iurii as a passive register of history rather than an active participant in it but, following the long-established model of Hollywood films about writers, keeps his poetic sensibility at such a distance that he seems to have nothing to do in the film except take in the pageantry and commit swooning adultery. For the hero of an epic historical film, Iurii has remarkably little dialogue. Instead, the film develops his character almost exclusively by reaction shots to social and historical spectacles more interesting than he is. By projecting static images of different Russias onto different characters and relegating history to a backdrop, the film consistently emphasizes not how the characters act in decisive historical moments but how they react intellectually and emotionally to "an excess of simplified history"¹⁸ in which they have no part, a history whose only connection to them is that of a malign and irrational power. Even Zhivago's opposite number, the amoral Komarovskii (Rod Steiger), survives the Revolution not because he has the right political sympathies but because he has none at all; as Zhivago's medical professor (Geoffrey Keen) says, he is "in with the government, in with the liberals, in with everybody," and he is willing to do whatever it takes to survive.

If Cold War propaganda features like *The Red Menace* and *Invasion USA* show the paramount importance of disavowal in naming the enemy the movies are engaging, Cold War adaptations of Russian literary works like *The Inspector General*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and *Doctor Zhivago* show an equally cagey desire either to disavow or to multiply the Russias that are being depicted, dividing them into the good, the bad, and the ugly. The primary strategies these adaptations use to cross the Russian border are to dilute the Russia in which their literary progenitors were set to the point of non-existence, to emphasize pre-revolutionary historical settings, to colonize the Soviet Union by presenting Russians in universalistic terms, to detach contemporary characters from the historical agency and necessity that would serve a Marxist, materialist view of history, and to suggest that because the characters do not cross national or ideological borders—those borders, in Iurii Zhivago's case, have crossed them while their attention was directed elsewhere—the audience does not need to cross them either.

This refusal to engage the Soviet Union in ideological or material terms is Cold War Hollywood's most distinctive attitude toward Russian literature. A Soviet analyst might assert that it marks Hollywood's failure ever to cross the Russian border. But it seems more judicious to conclude that it illustrates the many ways texts can cross borders, cross them partially, cross them while not crossing them, and not cross them at all.

NOTES

1. Stam, "Introduction," 25.
2. Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 18.
3. Della Coletta, *When Stories Travel*, 14.
4. *Ibid.*, 22.
5. See for instance Woll, *Real Images*; Gillespie, "Adapting Foreign Classics"; and Nepomnyashchy, "'Imperially'."
6. Collins, *Bring on the Books*, 90, 92.
7. Culbert, *Mission to Moscow*, 17.
8. *Ibid.*, 226.
9. *Ibid.*, 31.
10. *Ibid.*, 259.
11. *Ibid.*, 260.
12. *Ibid.*, 34.
13. Nadel, *Containment Culture*, 31.
14. Sandomirskaja, "Cinema," 130.
15. Corber, *In the Name*, 3, 69.
16. Kael, *5001 Nights*, 195.
17. Anderegg, *David Lean*, 122.
18. Silver and Ursini, *David Lean*, 170.