ERASMUS MUNDUS MASTER

IN WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

Representation of the Mother-Daughter Relationship in

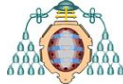# Post-Soviet Women's Cinema

M. A. Thesis

Author: Kateryna Iaremenko

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Support Supervisor: Sandra Ponzanesi – Universiteit Utrecht

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TITLE: Representation of the Mother-Daughter Relationship in Post-Soviet Women's Cinema

KEY WORDS: motherhood, mother/daughter dyad, women's genealogy, good/bad mother figure, representation, Soviet cinema, post-Soviet women's cinema, maternal space.

MAIN SUPERVISOR: Esther Álvarez López

1. Spanish summary

Esta Tesis de Máster gira en torno al concepto díada madre-hija en el pensamiento feminista, así como a la representación de las relaciones madre-hija en un espacio socio-cultural específico. El objetivo es revelar los aspectos de construcción y deconstrucción de la maternidad y de la relación madre-hija a través de una perspectiva femenina en el cine post-soviético. El trabajo creativo de las directoras de cine post-soviéticas Kira Muratova y Renata Litvinova sirve como ejemplo y objeto de análisis.

2. English summary

This MA thesis focuses on the concepts of the mother/daughter dyad in feminist thought and on the representations of mother-daughter relationships in a specific socio-cultural space. The aim is to reveal the aspects of construction and deconstruction of motherhood and the mother-daughter relationship from a female perspective in Post-Soviet cinema. The creative work of post-Soviet movie directors Kira Muratova and Renata Litvinova is taken as an example and object of the analysis.

Approval signature

MAIN SUPERVISOR   AUTHOR

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Introduction

This Master's thesis deals with the aspects of representation of the mother-daughter relationship in the movies of post-Soviet women directors. The idea for this work first appeared when I became familiar with the creative work of Ukrainian and Russian directors Kira Muratova and Renata Litvinova. My attention focuses on the female protagonists, their uneasy relationship with their mothers, and sometimes their impossibility to construct a mother-daughter bond in the movies of the directors mentioned above. When I started to analyze the reasons of the conflicts and the uneasy relationships of mothers and daughters represented in the range of post-Soviet movies, I realized the necessity of an integrated approach to this problematic. In order to reveal any trajectory in the development of mother-daughter relationship beginning with the early Soviet times and ending with the present-day situation in the post-Soviet space, the researcher should take into account the following aspects: first of all, such an investigation is impossible without relying on psychoanalysis and a specific articulation of the mother-daughter bond in it; second, we need to understand that the post-Soviet space is inseparable from the Soviet past, and that the representations of motherhood and the mother-daughter dyad need to be analyzed taking into account the tradition of the representation of motherhood in this geographic space; finally, the definition of women's cinema concerns specific aesthetics which enquires subversion, as well as the deconstruction of the old and the construction of a new subject. Thus, I would like to make an emphasis on the interdisciplinary approach of the present work, which is located at the crossroads of feminist theory, psychoanalysis, and film theory.

Among the questions which appear when we speak about mother-daughter relationships and their representation are the following: What makes mother-daughter relationship important for the analysis? What role does the mother-daughter bond play in the

process of development of the female subject? What cultural myths follow the issue of motherhood and mother-child relationship? At the moment when we place the mother-daughter relationship in a definite geographical and socio-cultural space (in our case post-Soviet), we need to take into account the role played by this space in the process of representation of the mother-daughter dyad, as well as the kind of transformations that take place with the representation of the mother-daughter relationship in different periods of the Soviet past. The dimension of the female gaze in the post-Soviet space, in turn, will be crucial in order to answer what aspects feminist film theory brings to the discussion around narrative and what kind of mother-daughter relationship is represented by female directors; finally, it will be important to analyze how the Soviet/post-Soviet split is articulated in the movies of post-Soviet directors Kira Muratova and Renata Litvinova. All the above questions are aimed to reveal the aspects of construction and deconstruction of motherhood and the mother-daughter relationship through a female perspective in a concrete socio-cultural space.

The thesis is structured in three sections: the first one, in accordance with the questions posed, aims at throwing light on psychoanalytical theories about the mother-daughter relationship, as well as on the representation of motherhood and the mother-daughter dyad in our culture. In this sense Maggie Humm contends: "What psychoanalysis offers is a reading of the feminine rooted neither entirely in the social construction of femininity (which nevertheless organizes the feminine) not entirely in biology […]" (1997: 15). For our research both the social and the biological construction of motherhood and the mother-daughter relationship in feminist psychoanalytical thought are equally important. Consequently, in this section I will refer to the theoretical framework of Luce Irigaray and the issue of the development of the mother-daughter bond in her analysis of female subject formation. Key notions for our investigation are the ones of female genealogy and the "motherline". I will draw mainly on the definition of maternity in the theoretical framework of Julia Kristeva and

on the good/bad mother figure in the analysis of Nancy Chodorow. It is also important to outline the notion of motherhood as an object of representation and its psychoanalytical and socio-cultural readings.

The second section concerns the representation of mothers and daughters in Soviet movies. In this section my aim is to figure out the trajectory of development of the mother-daughter relationship on the Soviet screen up to the collapse of the Soviet Union. As the Soviet cinema was subordinated to the State, ideology played a big role in the process of representation. Thus, I attempt to see how ideology influenced representational language in Soviet cinematography. As an object of my analysis, I will take three periods of Soviet cinema, which, to my mind, reflect on the screen the shifts in representation of mothers and daughters and of their relationships. The movies I will use are part of mainstream Soviet cinema, with the exception of *The Mirror,* by Andrei Tarkovsky.

In the third part I analyze Kira Muratova's *Ophelia,* and *Goddess: How I Fell in Love* by Renata Litvinova. The object of my interest is the mother-daughter relationship in the creative work of these female auteurs. To better understand the idea of women's cinema I intend to use the theory of Laura Mulvey, Teresa de Lauretis, and Claire Johnson. In the feminist film theories of these authors the female gaze is directed to produce a new subject of vision and, as a result, to change the dominant trajectory of looking/knowing/existing.

I will apply a psychoanalytical framework as well as a semiotic and socio-cultural one in my analysis of the movies. I will also pay attention to the dialogues between the female protagonists and their mothers, which open up the dimension of the disconnection of the two generations of women. In the center of my attention will be the Soviet/post-Soviet split and the way in which it is reflected in the artistic work of women's filmmakers.

Other useful theoretical frameworks are the theory of difference and nomadic thinking of Rosi Braidotti; the works of Suzanna Walters and Ann Kaplan on the issue of the

representation of motherhood and of mother-daughter relationship in popular culture, as well as the ideas of motherhood expressed by Adrienne Rich and Paulina Palmer.

Ultimately, in my research the mother-daughter relationship is not just an issue which organizes the discursive field in feminist theory, psychoanalysis, or film theory, but should be seen as a history of every separate subject in a specific socio-cultural space, where the figure of the mother/woman both translates the experiences of the past and draws a projection into the future. In the figure of the mother I see the reflection of Walter Benjamin's angel in the picture of *Angelus Novus* (1920), by Paul Klee, upon which the author writes:

> His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (1940)

The figure of the mother, who is also somebody's daughter, forms a link between past and future, a history of generations. The analysis of the representation of the mother-daughter dyad offers the clue to better understand the patriarchal consistency of our culture as well as it gives the trajectory of struggle with it.

1. The issues of motherhood and the mother-daughter dyad in feminist thought

In this chapter I would like to turn my attention to the theories that deal with the issue of motherhood and specifically of the mother-daughter dyad in our culture. Our present-day understanding of motherhood and the mother-daughter relationship is constructed by discourses, which in various periods defined the role of the mother and the mother-child bond differently. In order to analyze motherhood and the mother-daughter relationship we need to pay attention both to the psychoanalytical dimension as well as to the socio-cultural one. In psychoanalysis, motherhood plays an important role, as it influences the processes of individuation and formation of the child's ego; at the same time, the socio-cultural dimension of motherhood emphasizes the subordination of maternity (thus of mothers) in accordance to social and cultural prescriptions.

Discussions around motherhood concern important issues of woman's biological ability to give birth and her social and cultural responsibilities in the role of mother. In *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Adrienne Rich distinguishes two meanings of motherhood: "the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the institution, which aims at ensuring that that potential – and all women – shall remain under male control" (1986: 13). As a result, theorists of motherhood are trying to answer questions such as, what kind of power does the motherhood endow woman with and why has such a powerful weapon as "reproductive ability" become a tool for woman's oppression in patriarchal hands?

I will not focus my attention on detailed explanations of ideas on subject formation and female sexuality as studied by classical psychoanalysis as these issues are beyond the scope of my research. What I am interested in is the feminist rereading of classical psychoanalytical theory in relation to motherhood and the mother-daughter dyad, as well as

contributions made by feminist theorists in psychoanalytical understanding of the mother figure and her relationships with the child/daughter. Thus, in this chapter I aim to deal with the feminist transformation of Sigmund Freud's and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis. I shall refer to the theories of Luce Irigaray, who in her works insists on the invention of a new language between all women and underlines the importance of the mother-daughter dyad, which was left out and replaced by the mother-son relationship in classical psychoanalysis. Another significant theorist of the psychoanalysis of motherhood is Julia Kristeva, who brought into psychoanalytical theory the notions of chora, phallic mother, abject and sacred, which are essential for a feminist understanding of the mother figure and the issue of maternity.

As mentioned before, I am also interested in the socio-cultural and emotional aspects of motherhood as well as in the theory of representation of motherhood and the mother-daughter dyad. Thus, the theories of Nancy Chodorow, Melanie Klein and Adrienne Rich can be useful to find out the specificity of the psychological and emotional connectedness of the mother and the child, and also of other phallocentric speculations in this field. As to the representation of motherhood and the mother-daughter bond in our culture, I will draw on the analyses of Ann Kaplan and Suzana Walters. The objects of interest of both authors are representations of motherhood and the mother-daughter bond in popular culture, particularly, in movies.

1.1. Psychoanalysis and the mother-daughter relationship: the case of Luce Irigaray

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". These biblical words that each of us has heard at least once in our life represent the first and most powerful logocentric dogma that lies at the core of classical psychoanalysis. Jacques

Lacan would later on deduce the formula according to which the unconscious is structured like language. Language in Lacan's theory becomes the necessary tool for the human being to enter the symbolic order and to become a subject. One more important prescription of Lacan's psychoanalysis is that language belongs to man and "the woman doesn't exist". However, the feminist theorists try to undermine such a conclusion and to prove the existence of the woman.

If Luce Irigaray could write the first words of the Bible, she would do so in the following way: "In the beginning was the Womb, and the Womb was with Mother, and the Womb was Mother". The figure of the mother plays a central role in Irigaray's theory. In "Body Against Body: In Relation to the Mother", Irigaray writes:

> The phallus becomes the organizer of the world through the man-father at the very place where the umbilical cord, that primal link to the mother, once gave birth to man and woman. All that had taken place within an originary womb, the first nourishing earth, first waters, first sheaths, first membranes in which the whole child was held, as well as the whole mother, through the mediation of her blood. (1980: 14)

Luce Irigaray points out that the womb in our culture has been replaced with the matrix of the father's language. Such replacement has made the figure of woman/mother silent and invisible. As a result, there is no proper representation of the maternal place or, in Irigaray's words, of the "first home" in our culture. All representations are grounded in the father's language/gaze. This absence in the field of representation has produced fears and a twisted vision of maternity, making the maternal body a source of monstrosity. In her writings on motherhood, Irigaray replaces the fact of primary castration with the primary scene of the cutting of the cord: "When the father or the mother threaten Oedipus with scissors or knife, they forget that the cord, already, has been cut and that all that is needed is to take cognizance of that fact" (1980: 16).

All the theoretical framework of Luce Irigaray is aimed at changing the rule invented by the phallocentric order, in which men produce/create (in the sphere of the mind) and women reproduce (in the sphere of the body). Irigaray considers that the way to give back the life to the original/primary mother, who stands at the birth of our culture, is through the recognition and articulation of the genealogy of women or mother-daughter relationship:

> Each of us has a female family tree: we have a mother, a maternal grandmother and great-grandmother, we have daughters.[…]Let us try to situate ourselves within that female genealogy so that we can win and hold on to our identity. Let us not forget, moreover, that we already have a history, that certain women, despite all the cultural obstacles, have made their mark upon history and all too often have been forgotten by us. (1980: 19)

Irigaray also sees a liberation potential for female sexuality in the articulation of female genealogy. In classical psychoanalysis, which has its roots in Freud's theory, female sexuality is suppressed by the male and described through the idea of "penis envy". Such a position of classical psychoanalysis as regards female sexuality and formation of female subjectivity provoked a lot of debates from the side of feminist theorists. Feminist authors, in their turn, question the meaning of maternity outside the issue of "penis envy" and reproduction. In *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Luce Irigaray observes:

> The "sexual function", for Freud, is above all the reproductive function. It is as such that it brings all the instincts together and subjects them to the primacy of procreation. The woman has to be induced to privilege this "sexual function"; the capstone of her libidinal evolution must be the desire to give birth. In "penis envy" we find, once again, the motive force behind this progression. (1985: 41)

Thus, in Freudian psychoanalysis the desire of woman to have a child is directly connected with her desire to obtain a penis. Luce Irigaray goes on to say that, according to Freud in "Femininity", the most desirable child for woman is a boy, into whom she transfers "all the ambition which she has been obliged to suppress in herself" (quoted in Irigaray, 1985:

42). According to Freud, then, woman realizes her femininity through giving birth to a male child.

Classical psychoanalysis gives the detailed description of the relationship of mother and son, but remains silent about the mother-daughter relationship. Irigaray argues that contrary to the figure of the son, the girl child doesn't enter society as a father's child and remains outside culture, "kept as a natural body good only for procreation" (1993: 46). To give to the girl the possibility of spirit and soul is the way for her to get out of the patriarchal order and obtain a subjective status. Thus, the task of the mother is to help her daughter to become a subject. Irigaray gives a list of prescriptions about how mother-daughter relations can and should be developed. The list of the prescriptions aims at creating a unique language between mothers and daughters and at establishing their own outer space. She also underlines the importance of a valid representation of women's genealogy, which is "an essential condition for the constitution of their identity" (1993: 48).

Close to the concept of Irigaray's mother/daughter relationship is the notion of 'motherline' created by Naomy Lowinsky in order to describe the connection between different generations of women. As Irigaray, Naomi Lowinsky emphasizes the importance of rendering the female experience from one generation of women to another. She calls the connection between different generations of women the 'motherline', which is embodied in stories that women receive from their mothers and tell to the children. The author refers to the lack of such stories and the inability to hear them in our society: "We don't hear them because our perception is shaped by a culture that trivializes 'women's talk' and devalues the passing down of female lore and wisdom" (2000: 228).

Just like Irigaray, Naomi Lowinsky uses the image of a cord in order to describe the connection that ties generations of women. However, the notions of 'motherline' and Irigaray's development of mother-daughter relations are not as coincident as it seems at first

sight. The difference between Lowinsky and Irigaray is that the latter makes an emphasis on a new space for the feminine and the importance of invention of a common language between all women, starting from the development of mother/daughter relationship. Lowinsky's 'motherline' doesn't imply a new language. Motherline stories, as Andrea O'Reilly states "made available to daughters through the female oral tradition, reunion mothers and daughters and reconnect them to their motherline thus making possible the mother-daughter bond needed to effect change in the home and in the larger patriarchal culture" (2000: 146). The "motherline" is therefore placed in the larger patriarchal culture. However, without the subversive mechanisms that Irigaray implies by inventing a new language, the female oral tradition comes down to repeating once more the cultural and patriarchal devalued image of maternity. As Elizabeth Grosz contends:

> Maternity under patriarchy curtails the mother's possibilities of expression; it also 'exiles' the daughter from the origins and her potential development as a woman. She has no woman with whom to identify. She is introduced to the sociocultural cycle of reproduction when she takes the mother's place, replacing her, symbolically 'murdering' her. (1990: 187)

For Luce Irigaray, maternity, which is thought in phallocentric definitions, cannot be liberating for women or empower them. Empowerment can be achieved only in the case of producing a common language between mothers and daughters and thus, between all women.

The mother-daughter relationship in Irigaray's writing is a strategy to produce a new discourse about motherhood/womanhood instead of the old patriarchal. Irigaray wipes off the boundaries between mother and daughter figures in order to produce a kind of sisterhood between all women. In the theoretical works of Irigaray the figures of the daughter and of the mother coincide. Jane Gallop argues that the difference between the two is not stable in Irigaray's writing. Irigaray's language in describing the mother-daughter relationship is very poetic. In "When Our Lips Speak Together", she writes:

Between our lips, yours and mine, several voices, several ways of speaking resound endlessly, back and forth. One is never separable from the other. You/I: we are always several at once. And how could one dominate the other? Impose her voice, her tone, her meaning? One cannot be distinguished from the other; which does not mean that they are indistinct. (1985: 209)

Adrienne Rich, whose approach differs from Irigaray's, appeals to her own experience of being a mother and of her emotional encounter with motherhood. In *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution,* she contends that the cathexis between mother and daughter is "the great unwritten story" (1986: 225). She writes the story of mother-daughter relationship in deep connection with bodily sameness of two women. In Rich's work, knowledge flows between two alike bodies, thus language is already prescribed in the body and the ability to give birth becomes the source of empowerment: "Mothers and daughters have always exchanged with each other—beyond the verbally transmitted lore of female survival—a knowledge that is subliminal, subversive, preverbal: the knowledge flowing between two alike bodies, one of which has spent nine months inside the other" (1986: 220). Such an emphasis on the biological ability to give birth makes Rich's approach rooted in women's biology and thus, makes her sound essentialist.

1.2. Maternity in the theory of Julia Kristeva

In "Motherhood Today", Julia Kristeva deals with aspects of motherhood from the position of mother and psychoanalyst at the same time. She describes the relation of the mother to the child through the feeling of passion. According to Kristeva, the fact that passion is not a function but a feeling (or a kind of emotional state) of mothers prevents philosophers and psychoanalysts from detailed theoretical analyses of the phenomenon of motherhood. As a result, the lack of a complex approach to the problematic of motherhood is obvious for our present day discourse. Maternal passion, which Julia Kristeva characterizes as "pregnant with

madness and sublimity" (2005), becomes a stumbling block for such a discourse. In "Motherhood Today" Kristeva writes:

> All this begins with the pregnant woman's passion for herself, a "herself" reflecting a reinforced and destabilized narcissism: the pregnant woman is losing her identity, for, in the wake of the lover-father's intervention, she splits in two, harboring an unknown third person, a shapeless pre-object. In other words, though dominated by narcissism, this initial maternal passion remains triangular ; nevertheless the absent or inward looking gaze of the *Madonnas with child* of the Italian Renaissance, such as those by Giovanni Bellini, openly show what many of us know: that the pregnant woman "looks" without "seeing" the father and the world; she is elsewhere. (2005)

The woman, who "looks" without "seeing" becomes for Kristeva a kind of formula for the description of maternity. In Julia Kristeva's theory, the maternal itself has no particular relation to woman or the female body. Elizabeth Grosz argues that for Kristeva the subject of maternity exists no-where and becoming a mother is "both the culmination of femininity and the abnegation and denial of any female identity" (1990: 161).

Understanding Julia Kristeva's theory of maternity is impossible without explaining the notions of 'chora' and 'phallic mother'. For Kristeva the notion of 'chora' is similar to Lacan's imaginary and Freud's pre-Oedipal; what is different is that the chora is a feminine phase dominated by the figure of the mother, who is considered phallic. The phallic mother can be characterized as a male construct, a kind of fantasy of maternity, rather than "women's lived experience of maternity" (Grosz, 1990: 151).

Feminist discourse on the issue of motherhood is crowned by the assumption that motherhood is always not that which it represents. As was mentioned before, Luce Irigaray underlines the monstrosity and fears that follow the figure of the mother in our culture. Kristeva, in her turn, underlines both sides of maternity: abjection and sacredness.

In "Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection", Kristeva deals with maternal abjection. The abject is for her neither subject nor object, and has only one quality of the object – that of

being opposed to I. Julia Kristeva writes about the abject: "It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (1982: 4). The same as with the issue of maternity, the abject appears in the place where meaning collapses. Moreover, in Kristeva's theory the maternal body is abject itself. The child needs to reject the abject (maternal body) in order to become individualized or in order to enter language. The separation from the maternal body is a necessary stage of subject formation.

From another point of view, Julia Kristeva also speaks about maternity as a form of sacredness. The sacred is, according to her, a both-side formation, and should be analyzed as one of the consistencies of abjection. Thus, another dimension of maternity is the sacred one. Kristeva refers to the Christian representation of motherhood, which produced the most sacred figure of the mother – the Virgin Mary. Elizabeth Grosz in the analysis of Kristeva's theory on maternity states: "The Virgin Mary is, for her, both the tamed, symbolic representation of a femininity bonded to maternity; and, at the same time, an 'enigmatic sublimation', a precondition for all artistic production" (1990: 163). In "Motherhood Today", we can find the passage in which Kristeva defines maternal passion as a cleft between the mother's hold over her child and sublimation. She continues that this division runs the risk of madness but at the same time this very risk offers a perpetual chance for culture. She also finds the example of this division in biblical myths, where "the woman is a "hole" (such is the meaning of the word "woman" - nekayva - in Hebrew) and a queen; the Virgin is a "hole" in the Christian trinity father/son/holy ghost and a Queen of the Church" (2005).

Julia Kristeva's theoretical framework has been questioned by many feminists as well. The figure of the phallic mother has been seen as a kind of substitution for the figure of the Father. Jane Galop in *Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* writes:

The idyllic space of women together is supposed to exclude the phallus. The assumption that the 'phallus' is male expects that the exclusion of males be sufficient to make a non-phallic space. The threat represented by the mother to this feminine idyll might be understood through the notion that Mother, though female, is none the less phallic. So, as an afterthought, not only men, but Mother must be expelled from the innocent, non-phallic paradise. (1982: 118)

According to Gallop, Julia Kristeva places herself in the position of the mother while Irigaray is speaking from the position of the daughter, who undermines the language of the Father or Phallic Mother. Elizabeth Grosz also assumes that Kristeva remains the dutiful daughter of classical psychoanalysis as she reproduces the traditional roles for women of passivity and subordination.

1.3.   Nancy Chodorow: towards the myth of the perfect mother

In the center of socio-cultural approach are mothers and the issues they face in the process of motherhood. Mothers play an important role in the process of socialization of their daughters, but, at the same time, their role is shaped by social prescriptions of motherhood in a male-dominant society. There are a lot of myths about motherhood and mothers, which influences the mother-daughter relationship. Psychoanalytical theory plays an important role both in the process of creating these myths and in undermining them.

Nancy Chodorow writes about the existence of two tendencies towards mothers in modern society: they are either blamed or idealized. According to Chodorow, "belief in the all-powerful mother spawns a recurrent tendency to blame the mother on the one hand, and fantasy of maternal perfectibility on the other" (1989: 80). Paula Caplan also argues that "there are myths about mothers that allow us to take anything a mother might do and turn it into evidence of something "bad" about her". She figures out "Good Mother Myths" and "Bad Mother Myths". For Caplan, the Good Mother Myths set standards that no human being could ever match (2000: 128-139).

The ideas of Chodorow and Caplan are not original in themselves but appear for the first time in the psychoanalytical theory of Melanie Klein. The figures of the good and the bad mother are central for the description of object relations between the child and the mother. Melanie Klein points out that the infant has a deep emotional connection with the mother. This connection appears in the process of feeding. In this early experience, the child distinguishes "good" (gives the milk) and "bad" (takes away the milk) breast of the mother. Such dependence of the child on the mother contributes to the blaming and idealization of mothers in the theory of Nancy Chodorow and Paula Caplan. According to Chodorow, the "blaming mother" approach is called to control the institution of motherhood and to make mothers powerless instead of powerful.

Another myth, which aims to control mothers, concerns the issue of isolation of the mother/child dyad – the separation makes the mother feel responsible for every move of the child. The illusion of isolation is grounded in the biological perspective of maternity and pregnancy, when the child emotionally and physically is connected to the mother's body. The figure of the mother becomes most important in the identity formation of the child as she is the first object the child deals with:

> This state consists first in the persistence of primary identification with the mother: the child doesn't differentiate herself or himself from her or his mother but experiences a sense of oneness with her. (It is important to distinguish this from later forms of identification, from "secondary identification," which presupposes at least some degree of experienced separateness by the person who identifies.) Second, it includes an oral-incorporative mode of relationship to the world, leading, because of the infant's total helplessness, to a strong attachment to and dependence upon whoever nurses and carries her or him. (Chodorow, 1989: 47)

The aspect of isolation of the mother/child bond is also followed by the idea of fusion/oneness of mother and child. The theories of oneness of mother and child go in confrontation with feminist thoughts that insist on a valid division of the mother's body from

the infant. Moreover, the discourse of fusion of two organisms furthers the "blaming mother" theories, in which mother and pregnant woman occupy a 'non-subject' position. The theories of fusion also contribute to the myth that the mother-daughter closeness is sick. Caplan explains this myth through the idea that such a relationship points that the daughters are not individuated or not achieved autonomy from their mothers. According to Caplan, daughters in the situation of closeness with their mothers are afraid to be treated as enmeshed or symbiotically fused with their mothers. Caplan's point here is that anything associated with mothers becomes devalued and pathologized (2000: 239).

To undermine the isolation and fusion aspects, Chodorow emphasizes the process of exchange of body material between mother and child. Luce Irigaray in *Je, tu, nous* also underlines the necessity of separation of the two organisms. She points out that maternal placenta plays an important role in the understanding of the process of separation and should be taken into account in feminist analysis of motherhood.

Maternal sexuality is one more aspect of motherhood raised by Nancy Chodorow in *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*. Chodorow sees two opposite trends in relation to motherhood and sexuality in feminist theories. The first one (Shulamith Firestone, Nancy Friday) emphasizes the non connectedness of motherhood and sexuality. Thus, sexual individuality is opposed to motherhood, and womanhood is seen as non-maternal (hetero) sexuality. Chodorow writes that such suppressed sexual identity of mothers influences the relationships between mothers and daughters, and between women generally, making them entirely negative. According to Chodorow, "From early childhood, little girls try to do one another in. Sexual relationships with men offer the only positive direction and the best thing a mother can do for her daughter is to promote her heterosexuality" (1989: 84). Chodorow sees the oppositional reading of the mother's sexuality in the theory of Adrienne Rich, who identifies motherhood with sexuality and locates it in the center of liberation and fulfillment

in the process of repossession of the maternal body. The perfect mother myth depends on the aspect of mother's sexuality as well. The perfect mother in our culture appears as an asexual being and the most striking example can be found in the figure of the Virgin Mary. Meanwhile, connection of motherhood and sexuality contributes to the blaming mother tendency.

By analyzing different aspects of motherhood and the cultural discourse on the issue of motherhood, Chodorow assumes that psychological theory and cultural ideology have focused on the harm that mothers can do to their children. She sees the first step in transformation of women's lives in moving beyond the myths and misconceptions embodied in the fantasy of the perfect mother (1989: 96).

1.4.   Motherhood as an object of representation

> In elaborating the social construction of the mother/daughter relationship, the question of representation immediately emerges as central, for the relationship of mother and daughter does not simply materialize onto the social field, nor is it produced only through the machinations of explicit social policies and social theories. (Walters, 1992: 5)

In the part devoted to psychoanalysis I mention the cultural representations of motherhood which are connected to the pre-Oedipal phase of subject formation. However, in contemporary culture knowing the psychoanalytical origins of the patriarchal imaginary of motherhood is not enough to understand the existing discourses around motherhood. Contemporary culture produces a lot of images of motherhood and mother-daughter relationship that in the end construct our vision and perception of this phenomenon. In *Lives*

Together/Worlds apart: Mother-Daughter Relationship in Popular Culture, Suzana Walters

asserts:

> The mother/daughter relationship is formed, at least in part, by the cultural images that give it meaning. Indeed, when we go to the movies, read a novel, see a television sitcom, or open the pages of a women's magazine, we are presented with vivid and often contradictory images that provide us with a variety of messages concerning our behavior and self-image as mothers and daughters. (1992: 5)

Walters' analysis is based on the mother-daughter relationship and the representation of the mother-daughter dyad in popular culture. After analyzing Hollywood movies, she points out that representations of the mother/daughter dyad have survived many permutations and arrived at the classic juncture of blame and guilt, which in its turn correlates with the assumption of Nancy Chodorow.

The same as woman (as male construct/design) loses the opportunity to be represented as "the woman" (particular woman), the mother under the patriarchal order loses the opportunity to be represented adequately. From this position we can feel the work of ideology in the creation of fixed meanings, which differ from real subjects. We become individuals through ideology, by recognizing ourselves in society's dominant images. The gap appears when we recognize that dominant images are far from real people. The same situation is described by Rosi Braidotti (1994) when she speaks about the hiatus between "Woman" and real woman. In this passage she refers to Teresa de Lauretis, who has defined this moment as the recognition of an "essential difference" between woman as representation ("Woman" as cultural imago) and woman as experience (real woman as agents of change). She continues that the recognition of the hiatus between Woman and woman is crucial, as is the determination to seek for adequate representation, both politically and symbolically (Braidotti, 1994: 164). Representations, in their turn, produce myths. In the introduction to *The Different Faces of Motherhood,* Beverly Birns and Dale Hay assert that myths of

motherhood, which are produced by our culture, usually don't correspond to the actual experience of mothers, which, consequently, has a power to affect women's lives. According to the authors, "when the myth bears no resemblance to reality, when the advice fails, mothers feel anxiety, guilt, and sometimes despair, which in turn powerfully affects their experience of motherhood" (1988: 3-4). They also point out that myths about mothers and children differ from culture to culture and depend on the social and historical context. Thus, to analyze critically the cultural representations of motherhood means to undermine the existing myths surrounding it.

In the center of Ann Caplan's attention are such female genres as the sentimental women's novel, theatre, and film melodrama. According to Kaplan, the figure of the mother in such film genres as the western, the gangster film, film noir, the war film, epics, is not as clearly depicted as in traditional women's genres, which are focused on mothers and women's home lives.

After analyzing a good number of movies in the mentioned genres, Ann Kaplan reveals two typical representations of motherhood: the first one can be described as "a subservient mother" and the second one as "a resisting mother":

> Some texts accepted that the mother was a figure necessarily subservient to a dominant patriarchal order although the narrative positioned itself within the mother's point of view and showed her suffering and often unjust treatment. Other texts offered stories that challenged female and maternal subservience, and showed mothers achieving independence, having sex outside of marriage, and finding enough autonomy to leave home, even. I called these the "resisting" texts to indicate that they questioned ruling discursive norms. (2005)

In spite of these two representations, which are typical of women's genres, Kaplan singles out three predominant mother paradigms, the appearance of which the author connects to the industrial revolution and bourgeois culture. According to Kaplan, they are the "angel in the house", or saintly and self-sacrificing mother, the over-indulgent and over-protective

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mother, and the last one, – the phallic or evil mother, who is jealous of or tries to harm her children (2005). All three paradigms proposed by Kaplan find their prototypes and can be seen through the pre-Oedipal psychoanalytical concepts of motherhood described before. Thus, the "angel in the house" correlates with the mother as a holy and sacred figure; the over-protective mother reflects the trends of isolation and oneness of mother and child, which were widely criticized by Chodorow; and the definition of the "phallic mother" refers to the child's fear of the mother who is seen as a source of power. However, Kaplan points out that such a classification cannot be all-embracing in relation to present-day representations of mothers as postmodern theories introduce the concept of flexible identities which concerns the representations of mothers as well.

2. Politics of representation of motherhood and the mother/daughter dyad in Soviet times

Before analyzing women's cinema and representations of the mother/daughter relationship in post-Soviet space, I will deal with the tradition of the representation of motherhood and the mother/daughter dyad in Soviet times. Rosemarie Buikema and Marta Zarzycka in "Visual Cultures: Feminist Perspectives" write about the importance of understanding the context and the visual traditions of any kind of representation:

> Yet in an image-overloaded era, certain visual conventions have become self-evident, unquestioned and easily consumed. To be able to look at them more consciously, we need to think about the visual traditions as well as the social practices and power relations in which they are embedded. That is to say, we need to place them in the broader context of their cultural, historical and geopolitical significance. (2011: 119)

Such an analysis will help us to better outline the specificity of post-Soviet space and the tradition of representation of the figures of the mother, the daughter, and their relationship. In Suzanna Walters' *Lives Together/Worlds Apart: Mothers and Daughters in Popular Culture,* the author contends that the mother/daughter dyad needs to be described, understood, and analyzed in fully social and historical terms. She underlines that the ideas of mothers, daughters, and their relationship that we have at present did not always exist. Walters argues that "ideas about 'good' mother/daughter relationships have changed throughout history, and it is important not only to recognize those changes but to see how those different ideas relate to significant shifts and developments in the society at large" (1992: 11).

In this chapter I aim to describe the shifts in representation of motherhood and the construction of the mother/daughter dyad in Soviet times and how these shifts are connected to Soviet ideology. The objective of this chapter is to show that the representation of

motherhood as well as the representation of the figures of mother and daughter in Soviet cinema were not rigid and depended on social changes and transformation. This analysis will help us to see how representations of mothers and mother-daughter relationship in the Soviet Union conform to definite historical periods.

From the very beginning, Soviet cinema was predominantly male. At the same time, it was totally subordinated to the existing ideology in Soviet times. As a result, female figures in the movies were constructed by both the male gaze and the ideology of the Soviet party. In such conditions, the representations of motherhood and the mother/daughter dyad played an ideological role in the formation of sexual politics towards women. But, at the same time, existing sexual politics defined particular representations. Thus, the representation of mothers, daughters, and their relationship on the screen should be seen as a reflection of certain ideologies in society, on the one hand, and as a construction and a product of those ideologies, on the other.

In order to make my analysis, I will consider three periods of Soviet cinema: the early Soviet period, the post-Stalinist cinema or the late Soviet period, and the cinema of the times of Perestroika (Restructuring), known as "chernuha" (black cinema). I will concentrate on the symbolic image of the mother figure and motherhood in early Soviet movies, the representation of the concept of 'motherline' and the mother-daughter dyad in late Soviet cinema, and the problematic figure of the daughter in the period of Perestroika. I will also pay attention to the figure of Soviet director Andrei Tarkovsky (1932-1986), whose representation of the mother figure and motherhood is very poetic and subjective, which is not typical in Soviet cinema in general. Nevertheless, an analysis of Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* seems important for our better understanding of the representation of motherhood in a traditional patriarchal culture.

2.1. The symbolic figure of the mother in early Soviet cinema

As already mentioned, the representations of women in Soviet movies were deeply rooted in Soviet sexual politics towards women and their role in the society. In the Soviet Union, women and men were implicitly equal. According to Marxist ideology, equality of men and women was defined first of all by class; sex equality was one of the consequences of class liberation. Mieke Meurs, in "Imagined and Imagining Equality in East Central Europe: Gender and Ethnic Differences in the Economic Transformation of Bulgaria", defines such equality as 'imaginary': on the one hand, women had the same opportunities for education and employment as men, but, on the other hand, they had to fulfill women's duties, such as to take care of the house and children (1998). Thus, the same as men, women in the Soviet Union represented the working class, but they were also called to represent the idea of motherhood and to be 'good mothers'. The function of 'a good mother' was emphasized to the same degree as the function of "a good comrade and worker".

Motherhood was encouraged by the state in every possible way. In 1945, as Alexandra Kollontai (1946) writes, more than ten thousand women in the RSFSR had been awarded the title of 'Mother-Heroine'. Also the orders of 'Maternal Glory' and 'Medal of Motherhood' had been given to 1, 1000 thousand [sic] of women. Thus, motherhood became woman's social obligation before the State. That allowed the government to interfere in the private lives of women and family and led to the politics of compulsory maternity. Eli Zaretsky writes about politics toward women after the Bolshevik Revolution:

> Revolution through economic development left intact a major part of women's oppression. The psychosocial heritage of male supremacy was scarcely challenged by the entry of women into industry; while the strengthening of the family encouraged a resurgence of traditional patriarchal ideas, such as the exaltation of motherhood. (quoted in Rich, 1986 : 112)

The film industry was also affected by this Soviet ideology in relation to motherhood. As a result, in early Soviet movies emphasis was placed on the mother as a symbol of revolution and fertility. The figure of the daughter was absent from the screen. She becomes evident only in the late periods of Soviet cinematography. The mother/child dyad was usually represented by the mother-son relationship – the mother who gives birth to the son who, in turn, initiates revolution. The mother in such mother-son dyadic relationships was a passive link of revolution raised to a symbol. Adrienne Rich notes that "even under the pressures of a growing, worldwide, women's consciousness, the overwhelming bias of socialist and revolutionary movements is male, and reflects a wish to have a social revolution which would leave male leadership and control essentially untouched (1986: 112).

Irina Tartakovskaya (2000), specialist in gender issues and history of the feminist movement at the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, argues that contrary to the stereotypical image of the western woman whose partner was only man, the partner of Soviet woman was not just a man, but also the State, with which woman intensively interacted in order to maintain successfully the role of "builder of Communism" and "keeper of the family hearth". Thus, such a formulation corresponds to what Spivak calls "double colonization" – when women are colonized by both the male gaze and by the gaze of the colonizer.

Two movies that I will analyze – *Mother* (1926), by Vsevolod Pudovkin, and *Lullaby* (1937), by Dziga Vertov, are good examples of the ideological representation of motherhood in early Soviet times. In these movies the figure of the mother is raised to symbol of either fertility (*Lullaby*) or revolution (*Mother*). These movies served as a tool of propaganda that aimed at creating strong and healthy generations of working class citizens.

In Pudovkin's version of Maxim Gorky's novel *Mother*, the figure of the mother is closely linked to the idea of homeland, which, in turn, becomes a place of revolution. The plot

of the movie is based on the story of the mother of a young revolutionary. Ideology is deeply implemented in the structure of the movie. With the help of such cinematic techniques as the play of high and low angles, Pudovkin emphasizes the connection between the mother and revolution, and shows the way of the female protagonist (mother) to revolutionary consciousness. Throughout the movie the figure of the mother is shown from a high-angle. In *Anatomy of the Movie,* Bernard F. Dick describes the role of the high angle shot, in which the camera is positioned above, or sometimes "high above", the subject. This is occasionally referred to as a 'God's eye shot' or 'bird's eye shot' (2010: 54). In *Mother* the high-angle shot plays an ideological role: it makes the figure of the mother appear small, miserable, and oppressed. Dick also mentions that a high angle shot can convey a feeling of frustration to the viewer. However, in the episode of the demonstration the high-angle shot is changed to the low-angle one. The latter serves the opposite function of the high-angle shot, in the sense that it makes the subject appear larger than it actually is. Such a shot can suggest domination or power (2010: 55). Thus, the low-angle shot makes the figure of the mother monumental and symbolic. In Pudovkin's film version of the novel, the mother becomes a symbol of revolution.

The example of an early cinematic representation of the mother as a symbol of fertility is Dziga Vertov's documentary movie *Lullaby*. In it we can see how the early Soviet message about motherhood was created and how femininity was perceived in early Soviet times. The movie reflects and recreates the Soviet message about the main mission of women in Soviet society. It gives an answer to the question, "What does happiness mean for women?" The movie starts with the written text: "In every part of the Soviet State emancipated women are singing lullabies about happiness to their children". The text is followed by the image of a sleeping child and the title of the movie − *Lullaby*. The visual image is permanently

interrupted by the written texts with a clear propagandist message. On the movie screen appears the following text:

> You were asked – what does happiness mean?
>
> You have been thinking for a long time,
>
> Now you have the answer:
>
> The red ray in the dark night,
>
> Sleep my little girl, sleep.[1]

In this message motherhood is connected to revolution as well. The main feature that distinguishes propaganda movies from ordinary narrative movies are the ready-made answers, which these movies provide for viewers. In the case of *Lullaby,* the issue of motherhood becomes central and an unquestionable way for women's happiness.

As a result of such propagandist messages, femininity in Soviet society came to be defined as motherhood. In *Contemporary Women's Fiction: Narrative Practice and Feminist Theory*, Paulina Palmer speaks about the dichotomy between maternal power/female powerlessness. She refers to the central argument of Dorothy Dinnerstein in *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*, and claims:

> It is […] the immense power which mothers wield over their children in the private sphere of the home which accounts, paradoxically, for the subordinate role assigned to women in other areas of life. The patriarchal social order responds to the threat which maternal power represents by imposing strict control on women's activity and restricting their access to the public sphere. (1989: 100)

Palmer contends that for such feminist authors as Adrienne Rich who deals with the theme of motherhood, the latter is not only a core human relationship but a political institution, a keystone to the domination of women by men in every sphere. Socialist feminist Ann Oakley likewise emphasizes that the way in which "reproduction is managed and

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[1]All the texts from the Russian are my translation unless specified otherwise.

controlled is inseparable from how women are managed and controlled" (quoted in Palmer, 1989: 99).

Lullaby gives the answer that the way to women's happiness is in motherhood. To represent mothers, Dziga Vertov uses close-up shots in order to emphasize and express moments of intense emotion. The emotion of happiness is highlighted by means of close-ups of smiling faces of mothers, as well as of extreme close-ups of lips and eyes. In *Lullaby* we can see women's world through the prism of the political vision of female destination and happiness.

2.2. Intergenerational relationship: the cinematic representation of the mother/daughter dyad in late Soviet movies

The death of Stalin put an end to socialist realism in cinema and opened the door to new possibilities of representations in the movies. Here we should mention such works as Eldar Ryazanov's *The Irony of Destiny* (1975), which continues to be one of the most popular movies even after the collapse of the Soviet Union; *Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears* (1980), by Vladimir Menshov, which won an Oscar as best foreign movie; movies about school love such as *You Wouldn't Even Dream It…* (1981), by Ilia Frez, and *Chuchelo* (1983), by Roman Bykov.

The central theme in movies of that period is the importance of family in women's lives. In early Soviet cinematography the figure of the mother had value in itself (in *Lullaby* the source of happiness for women is motherhood; the family is not in the focus of the camera). In late Soviet movies, on the contrary, the family as an institution becomes important. As was said before, cinematic representation was in many ways dependent on sexual politics towards women. In early Soviet times, the family was perceived as a structure

which favored individualization rather than collectivization. Quoting radical early Soviet party member A. Slepkov:

> Similar to the way in which, together with the disappearance of the classes, together with the annihilation of class contradictions, the State will disappear, similarly to that,…together with the strengthening of the socialist economy, together with the growth of socialist relationships, together with the overcoming of earlier pre-socialist forms, the family will also die out. The family is already setting out on the road to a merging with socialist society, to a dissolution with it. (Slepkov 1962, quoted in Geiger 1968: 45)

As a result of such family politics in early Soviet times, the family was not so widely depicted on the screen. In early Soviet cinematography motherhood was clearly separated from the family issue. The politics toward the family changed as soon as the 'antifamily' politics gave negative results – the number of illegitimate and left children increased as did the cases of venereal diseases. In the forties Stalin started a new politics directed toward strengthening the family as institution, which continued until the period of Perestroika.

In *Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears, The Irony of Destiny,* and *You Wouldn't Even Dream It…,* the emphasis is made on the representation of women inside and outside marriage/family. The theme of loneliness, the way to overcome it, marriage and family focus the movie directors' attention in the late Soviet period. The aim of this representation was to stress the importance of the family as social institution and its importance for women's happiness. As a result, in late Soviet cinematography happiness and family life coincide. At this time, the mother-daughter dyad as well as the representation of the relationship/interconnection between different women appears on the screen.

The typical female character in the movies of this period is a woman of over thirty five years of age, successful in her career, but unhappy in private life. The figure of an old mother, who usually doesn't intervene in the private life of her daughter, is featured in the movies of this period as well. There is always a respectful distance in the relationships of mothers and

daughters. For example, in *The Irony of Destiny,* the mother only observes, she doesn't make any judgments. In *You Wouldn't Even Dream It…,* there are interesting dialogues between mother and daughter, in which the mother tries to help her daughter with advice about marriage. In *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* we meet the old mother of one of the characters. She is quiet and speechless. In all these movies we can see two or three generations of women. Interestingly, two different figures of mothers are represented: an old mother, on the one hand, and a young one, on the other, who is at the same time a daughter. The relationship between the old mother and the young mother is usually very respectful. The old mother is represented as a wise woman, who can share her experiences with her daughter but never gets involved in her business.

Naomy Lowinsky, whose notion of 'motherline' attempts to describe the connection between different generations of women, gives the example of her own memories about being walking on the beach with her mother and two daughters:

> I walk between them, linking generations… I can't remember what we are talking about. But I do remember a surge of feeling that goes beyond words, of overarching connection, of the present moment holding within it the seeds of both past and future, and all of it held in the bodies of these four women of three generations. (2000: 229)

According to Lowinsky, motherline gives women power and a better understanding of female nature. However, we should be very careful with such readings of motherline, because female experience differs and very often depends on the historical and social conditions in which women exist. Thus, female experience can empower women or make them powerless.

The movies described above not only depict the mother-daughter dyad, but they also deal with friendship among different women. All the female characters are connected by a thin thread of sadness, because none of them has family happiness. In *Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears,* female characters are bound by a strong friendship. All three of them go through difficulties and happiness in their lives together, helping and supporting each other.

Central in the movie is the story of Katerina, who goes to Moscow at the age of seventeen with the aim to enter university. In the capital she is seduced by a young man who finally leaves her with a small daughter. The movie is divided into two parts: the first one concentrates on the life of the female characters in their youth, when they have just arrived in Moscow; the second shows the same heroines after twenty years in the capital. The stress is made on the second part of the movie, making the phrase "life begins after the age of forty" one of the famous catchphrases in the Soviet space. At the age of forty, Katerina raises a beautiful daughter, Alexandra, and becomes the director of a huge factory; however, she doesn't find happiness as she is a lonely woman. Katerina achieves her moment of happiness just at the end of the movie when she meets a man.

There is no father figure in any of these movies. We can just suppose that the daughter is a mirror reflection of the mother, who raises her daughter by herself. The young generation (by 'young generation' I mean the daughters of young mothers) are depicted as being more independent than their mothers. But the main stress is never put on the new generation. It is secondary, except for the movies about school love, such as *You Wouldn't Even Dream It…* or *Chuchelo.* In these movies the deep connection of the old and new generations, which is based on respect, is present. At the end of *Chuchelo*, the grandfather of the main heroine brings to the school a picture of her great grandmother, who has the face of the main heroine, Chuchelo. In this gesture I see one of the last attempts to connect the past with the present by means of a respectful attitude to tradition. In the period known as Perestroika, which I will discuss later on, we won't find any respectful attitude to the traditions or values of the past. Though *Chuchelo* is located on the threshold of the aesthetics of Restructuring, the episode at the very end of the movie still aims to idealize the past and its values.

As described above, the picture of the great grandmother connects the past, the present and the future. The past in this case becomes the force which gives the main heroine the

strength to resist the decline of morality she faced in her school. The picture of the great grandmother with the face of the main heroine not only represents the echo of the past in the present, but is also a powerful moment of catharsis. When Chuchelo's classmates see the portrait they are silent, somebody begins to cry, children are very sorry for their actions toward Chuchelo. In short, they receive a powerful lesson of what is good and what is bad. The following decade of Soviet cinematography won't give any lessons or formulas of happiness, but an extreme rejection towards the past and its traditions.

2.3. The figure of the daughter in the movies of Perestroika (Restructuring)

The late eighties and early nineties in Soviet history are defined as the period of the removing of the Iron Curtain from the capitalist west. Things which were prohibited in the Soviet Union became the center of public attention and interest. This time is known for the revolutionary moods and protests in society. Cinema became an arena of protest as well. The cinema of the period of Perestroika is known as 'chernuha', which means black cinema. Movies of that period depicted mostly the dark side of the human being and of everyday life. Having a small budget, directors concentrated on the ins and outs of daily routine. The most famous movies of the late eighties are *ASSA* (1987), *"Avaria" the Daughter of a Policeman* (1989), and *Little Vera* (1988). The female protagonist in all these movies is a young girl who is in conflict with reality.

ASSA, shot in 1987 by Sergey Soloviev, became a cult movie for the young generation of the late eighties and early nineties. In the center of the plot is a young heroine, Alika, who arrives at the Ukrainian city of Yalta to visit her lover, head of a band. In Yalta, Alika meets a young man, Bananan, who represents the collective image of underground culture in the late Soviet period. Their friendship becomes a reason of jealousy for Alika's lover, who murders

the guy. To take vengeance on the murder of her friend, Alika shoots her lover. The plot of the movie recalls crime drama; however, the aesthetics of the movie is close to auteur cinema.

Important for our analysis is the gap in intergenerational relationships, which appear in the lack of communication between Alika and her mother. The figure of the mother, who had been so important in early Soviet movies, and emphasized intergenerational communication in the movies of the seventies, disappear. In *ASSA,* viewers become witness to telephone dialogues between the young heroine and her mother, which evidence that the telephone connection is really bad. We cannot hear the voice of the mother; we can only hear the daughter's responses: "I don't hear you. Everything is alright. Everything is alright". The telephone talks become a symbol of the gap between the old and the new generations. This gap becomes a tragedy not only for a particular family, but reflects the social reality of the late Soviet period in which old values become the target of ridicule. The disappearance of the mother figure is tightly connected to the beginning of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The mother's disappearance from the screen opens one more dimension of loss which concerns female loss. To Adrienne Rich, "the loss of the daughter to the mother, the mother to the daughter, is the essential female tragedy" (1998: 237). In "I come from a long line of Uppity Irate Black Women": African-American Feminist Thought on Motherhood, the Motherline, and the Mother-Daughter Relationship", Andrea O'Reilly contends that for Anglo-American feminist theorists of the nineties, a strong mother-daughter connection is what makes a strong female self possible:

> Recent feminist attention to maternal narrative may be attributed to the realization among writers on girls' empowerment that girls need to hear their mothers' stories in order to forge a strong female bond and to construct a female-defined identity. The motherline, likewise, enables daughters to derive strength from their identities as women. (2000: 145)

However, mothers' stories can be the means of empowerment for their daughters only in the case that they "themselves liv[e] lives of agency, authority, and autonomy" (2000: 146).

Unlike *ASSA*, which partly belongs to the genre of auteur cinema, *"Avaria" the Daughter of a Policeman* and *Little Vera* belong to the genre of 'chernuha' or black cinema. In both movies we observe young and very aggressive female protagonists. There are also mothers who are on the verge of a nervous breakdown. The mothers don't know how to communicate with and influence their young and uncontrollable daughters. The relationships inside the family become very tense; there is no understanding among its members. In comparison with the movies of the seventies, the family loses its significance. In *Little Vera,* the heroine laughs when she receives a book about family life as a present for her future marriage (which won't come true). The feeling of sadness in the movies of the seventies and early eighties is replaced by the feeling of boredom. Little Vera is not sad, but bored with life; she is not searching for happiness in family life because she sees the unhappy example of her mother's marriage. Mothers are not an example for young daughters any more. If boredom is the feeling that forces Vera to act, then in the case of Avaria, the female protagonist of *"Avaria", the Daughter of a Policeman,* this feeling can be defined as protest and disagreement. Communication with her mother is full of aggression on both sides. There is a feeling of deep disrespect and rejection between the women.

All the movies of the period of Perestroika mentioned above have symbolic titles. The name Vera from the Russian can be translated as hope; "Avaria" means accident, and ASSA refers to USSR (a play with the letters 'SS' in the title). These movies speak about revolution in the minds of the young generation. The shift in the political system in the Soviet Union at the beginning of its collapse is very well reflected in the movies of those days. The relationship between the old and the new generations is one of conflict. The tendency described by Nancy Chodorow that goes from idealization of the mother to blaming the

mother takes place in the movies of Perestroika, where the central figure in the mother-daughter relationship is the figure of the daughter, aggressive and uncontrollable, whereas the mother, the same as the state, loses her power and control.

2.4. *The Mirror*: analysis of the representation of the mother in the movies of Andrei Tarkovsky

Andrei Tarkovsky's movies never speak about social issues; his characters are the product of his inner world and connected to his own past. Tarkovsky was one of the first filmmakers who started to work in the genre of auteur cinema in the Soviet space. In his movies the figure of the mother plays a central role. While Riazanov's and Menshov's movies reflect and construct the late Soviet reality, Tarkovsky tries to create a never ending space of motherhood in his masterpieces. His figure of the mother has no connection to late Soviet ideology. The mother (as well as the mother/child dyad) is located in the nostalgic space of the author's own memories and represented through the prism of his own nostalgia.

By way of illustration, I will analyze *The Mirror,* shot by Tarkovsky in 1974. The movie begins with the episode of the session of hypnosis of a teenager who has a problem with diction (hard stammering). After having done her job, the doctor says: "Now you will speak, loud and clear. If you speak now, then you will speak till the end of your life". Such an introductory episode has a symbolic nature as it places us into the discourse of the creator and his creation: the ability to speak and to be heard and, consequently, the ability to be visible. The female doctor/male patient dichotomy corresponds to Luce Irigaray's notion that man can build and dwell in the world in patriarchal culture only on the basis of materiality and nurturance of women (Irigaray, 1980). In *The Mirror* the female doctor gives the power to speak/narrate to the male protagonist.

Thus, the figure of the mother in the movie is a product of the male voice. In Tarkovsky's film, the mother is a young woman and always appears in front of the house (home), as the mother figure and the image of home are tightly connected. According to Irigaray, in the idea of "home" man projects onto woman the nostalgic longing for the lost wholeness of the original mother. To fix and keep hold of his identity, man makes a house, puts things in it, and there he confines his woman, who reflects his identity to him. The price she pays for supporting his subjectivity, however, is dereliction, having no self of her own (Irigaray, 1980).

Tarkovsky widely uses the images of water in the movie. Water appears in the form of rain, lake, or puddle. Very often water appears inside the house, leaking from the ceiling. The film director also permanently uses the image of spilled milk. The figure of the mother in connection with the images of the leaking water and spilled milk refer to the idea of femininity, fluidity and changeability.

For Tarkovsky the mother is a sacred figure – both magnetic and frightening at the same time. She can contain some mystic features. Her image can frighten us as in the episode of the killing of the cock, in which Tarkovsky uses freeze frame, a form of stopped motion that suggests stasis (Dick, 2010: 63). In this episode the figure of the woman stands still with an uncanny expression on her face: we cannot see her eyes properly, we cannot define the nature of her smile either. The same uncanny feeling is aroused by the image of the home – a house in the depth of the forest. The nature depicted by Tarkovsky is never calm – the wind is always blowing and shaking the tops of the trees. To emphasize the movement of nature Tarkovsky uses the effect of slow motion. The objects which used to be familiar and friendly for the author appear in the frame as frightening and mysterious. In *Uncanny,* Sigmund Freud analyzes the etymological transformation of the word 'unheimlich' and its, at first sight, antonym 'heimlich' (homely, native):

What interests us most in this long extract is to find that among its different shades of meaning the word '*heimlich''* exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, '*unheirnlich'*. What is *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich.* (Cf. the quotation from Gutzkow: 'We call it *"unheimlich"*; you call it *"heimlich"*.') In general we are reminded that the word '*heimlich'* is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which, without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight. (Freud, 1919)

Thus, 'heimlich' has the following trajectory of transformation of its meaning: *heimliche*-familiar-friendly-intimate-hidden-secret-mysterious-*unheimlich*.

Tarkovsky's sacred mother appears at the moment when opposite meanings overcome their oppositional nature and coincide. Interestingly, in *The Mirror* the figure of the mother coincides with the figure of the wife of the protagonist. In his memories mother and wife have the same face: "When I remember my mother, she appears in my memory always with your face". Thus, present and past coincide as well. The feeling provoked by this coincidence has an affective nature that makes the movies of Tarkovsky difficult for analysis.

Although Soviet ideology is absent from the frame of the movie, the author's views on motherhood follow the patriarchal conception of femininity. At its core, the movie represents the culture/nature split – beginning with the episode of the female doctor and the male patient, and concluding with the traditional representation of the female character in connection with nature and child bearing. In *Feminism and Film,* Maggie Humm asserts that cultural and gendered binaries – man/woman, culture/nature – always made 'woman' inferior, and ignored women's fluid identity as well as the semiotic world of mother/infant bonding (1997: 7).

Thus, Tarkovsky unconsciously repeats patriarchal concepts and fears about femininity in his movie. Dutch movie director Lars von Trier took Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* as a prototype and brought to the extreme the culture/nature split in his movie *Antichrist*, which he devoted to the memory of Tarkovsky. The aesthetics of *Antichrist* have a lot of in

common with Tarkovsky's masterpiece. In his movie, von Trier shows the relationship between a husband and his wife, who has a mental disorder because of the death of their son. The husband is also a psychoanalyst and tries to help his wife to overcome this difficult period. The couple sets out in the thick of forest where their house "Eden" is located. The representation of nature and its metaphorical connection with the female protagonist are similar in both movies. But if in the case of Tarkovsky's movie, the woman is the one who gives birth and creates new life, in the case of Lars von Trier's, the woman, by contrast, destroys life (the child dies at the beginning of the movie). In his interpretation of *The Mirror* Lars von Trier opens new dimensions and possibilities of rereading Tarkovsky's creative work. The 'unheimlich' feeling provoked by the images of *The Mirror* contrasts with the feeling of horror provoked by the images of *Antichrist*. In *Antichrist* the woman must be killed in order for culture to appear.

3.   The female gaze: women's cinema in the post-Soviet space

This part is devoted to the representation of the mother/daughter dyad in the movies of women filmmakers in the post-Soviet space. The collapse of the Soviet Union marked not only a new geographical space, but also defined new roles for women and a new representational language of motherhood and the mother-daughter dyad. The predominant male gaze on women's issues began to be diluted with female representations. Before analyzing the content of the movies, I will turn my attention to the notion of women's cinema in the theoretical works of Laura Mulvey, Teresa de Lauretis, and Alison Butler. They consider the female gaze one of the main forces to subvert phallocentric reality and allow the female subject to appear.

In this chapter my analysis will be concentrated on the movies of two popular post-Soviet directors: Kira Muratova and Renata Litvinova. Both are important figures in the post-Soviet cinematographic space as they subvert Soviet patriarchal modes of representation and form new images of women, motherhood, and the mother-daughter dyad. Kira Muratova and Renata Litvinova undermine, in different ways, stereotypical visions of women which have their roots in the Soviet tradition of representing women as symbolical figures of fertility, placing them inside/outside of marriage and family relations. They create a new female space of representation, making the mother-daughter relationship central in their movies.

3.1. Women's cinema as counter cinema

In "Aesthetic and Feminist Theory: Rethinking Women's Cinema", Teresa de Lauretis relies on the ideas of J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis (1973) and writes that for women who have never before represented themselves as subjects, and whose images and subjectivities have not been theirs to shape, to portray, or to create, it must be all the more important,

theoretically and politically, to subvert dominant representation and challenge its hegemony (1985: 157).

There are different points of view on how women's cinema should subvert the patriarchal representation of women, but there is no strict definition for it. Should women's cinema be narrative or not? How can it be political if it doesn't follow the principles of narrative? Is it possible to combine narrative with a new visual language? It is a small list of raised questions, the answers to which feminist film theorists try to find.

Alison Butler (2002) highlights three names which are important to understand the aims and ideas of women's cinema: Laura Mulvey, Claire Johnson, and Teresa de Lauretis. All three are inseparable from the discussions around narrative, in particular its construction and deconstruction. In *Feminism and Film*, Maggie Humm asserts that film processes can encourage the viewer/subject to take on particular subjectivities. She refers to "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" and compares narrative with a needle, which seamlessly stitches subject to screen. Humm also argues that film's stylistic agency comes from its narrative strategies which claim individuals as subjects (1997: 24) Thus, to destroy traditional narrative means to confront subjectivity.

According to Butler, Mulvey sees the resistance potential in experimental cinema. For Mulvey, avant-garde movies should serve as a prototype for women's cinema. She appeals to the historic left avant-garde tradition and to the films of Jean-Luc Godard, in whose movies "the spectator's very position is no longer one of pseudo-dominance; rather, it is given as critical and contradictory" (quoted in de Lauretis, 1984: 162). That places Mulvey in the position of a feminist modernist, for whom feminist practice can only be negative, leaving in the "woman" something that cannot be represented.

Claire Johnson, author of *Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema*, for example, sees the effectiveness of women's cinema in the rewriting of already existing cinematic language.

Johnson says about women who create movies: "These women do not sweep aside the existing order and found a new, female, order of language. Rather, they assert their own discourse in the face of the male one, by breaking it up, subverting it and, in a sense, rewriting it" (quoted in Butler, 2002: 11).

The vision of women's cinema articulated by Teresa de Lauretis, in some sense, contains both Mulvey's and Johnson's points of view. For de Lauretis narrative is essential, as subjectivity is engaged in its codes (1984). Alison Butler writes that narrative produces not just hegemonic ideology, but it is also a way to coherence and meaning. She refers to Teresa de Lauretis, who emphasizes that women's cinema should work with and against narrative and the latter, in its turn, should be deployed strategically and tactically in the effort to construct other forms of coherence, to shift the terms of representation:

> The project of women's cinema, therefore, is no longer that of destroying or disrupting man-centered vision by representing its blind spots, its gaps or its repressed. The effort and challenge now are how to affect another vision: to construct other objects and subjects of vision, and to formulate the conditions of representability of another social subject. (De Lauretis, 1985: 163)

Teresa de Lauretis (1985) contends that women's cinema is the one which addresses the spectator as female. For her, such a cinema is created, first of all, for women and by women. Thus, women's cinema is aimed at creating such a visual language that it will open an access to visual pleasure to women, which in traditional mainstream movies has always been on the side of men.

The two movies that I will analyze further are an example of exploration of the gaze and the production of a new kind of female subject through the construction and deconstruction of the traditional mother-daughter narrative. With the help of cinematic language they aim to articulate the disorders in mother-daughter relationship that appeared in

post-Soviet society after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Both movies belong to the genre of not mainstream auteur cinema.

3.2. Kira Muratova: Mother-daughter relationship in *Ophelia*

> The intention of Kira Muratova is to discredit big narrative, to show its artificial nature, absurdity, but, at the same time, she makes her movies entertaining and holds the attention of viewers till the end. (Mantsov, 2004)

Kira Muratova is a Ukrainian film director, known for her original and recognizable style. Her aesthetics is very often located between realism and absurdity, which in the very end becomes a good tool to show the world exempted from any stereotypes or any kind of ideological commitment. Commenting on her own artistic vision, Kira Muratova states: "You should be tolerant and not follow the stereotypes: that a naked body is bad, that a ficus is a symbol of the lower middle classes, or a tattoo on the body is vulgar. I want to show the viewer that a ficus is nothing more but a plant and a tattoo is nothing more but a painting on the body. I intend to omit any kind of symbolisms in my movies" (Muratova, quoted in Yampolsky 2009).

Kira Muratova's career as a director started in the Soviet Union in 1962 when she shot her first short movie, *Near the Steep Bank*. However, her movies did not receive as much recognition among the Soviet public as the ones made by Ryazanov or Tarkovsky. Kira Muratova's relationship with the Soviet government was not easy because she was twice a minoritarian figure in Soviet cinematography: as a woman and as an auteur. In an interview she says that politics of the government was deadly for her as she was not allowed to shoot (Interview by Kolodizhner, Seans, no. 9). The same concerned all the movies that were

considered as not appropriate from the point of view of Soviet ideology. Thus, until the times of Perestroika, Kira Muratova's movies were on the margins of Soviet cinema. The situation changed only in 1989 when she shot *Asthenic Syndrome*, which became her calling card and brought fame and respect to the author in the circles of directors.

I want to pay attention to Kira Muratova's movie *Three Stories* (1997), which is important for our analysis because of its specificity of the mother/daughter relationship represented in it. As its name indicates, the movie consists of three different short films. There is no evident connection between the three stories, except for the theme of murder in each. I will focus on the second short film, titled *Ophelia*. The movie tells the unusual story of young nurse, Opha (short of Ophelia), who works in the archive of the maternity department in a hospital. The plot unfolds around her mother's traumatizing refusal of her. Thus, Opha traces mothers, who reject their children and murders them. Her aim is to find her own mother. The role of the nurse is played by Russian actress Renata Litvinova, who is also the scriptwriter of the movie.

3.2.1. The dimension of madness and abjection

The first episodes of the movie take place in the hospital where Opha works. The movie starts with Opha, who enters the ward and begins to speak with a patient – another young woman named Tanya. The nurse wants to know whether the young woman has decided to keep or leave her newborn baby. After that, the viewers see another episode of Opha's dialogue with a young doctor. The dialogue is happening on the background of the mother and child picture. The young doctor asks Opha about her favorite literature hero. The nurse answers that, among all heroes, she loves Ophelia the most. Then she adds, "There is no one more beautiful and pure than her".

The character of Ophelia is not a random choice. Ophelia is not just a character from Shakespeare's play; the image of Ophelia is intimately associated with female madness (malady) as well. Elaine Showalter writes that in Victorian asylums the image of Ophelia was very popular, to the extent that it became the prototype of the young female asylum patient. Elaine Showalter takes the example from the work *Study of Hamlet* by nineteenth-century psychiatrist John Conolly, who noted that even casual visitors to mental institutions could recognize Ophelia in the wards: "The same young years, the same faded beauty, the same fantastic dress and interrupted song" (Showalter, 1985: 90).

A parallel can be drawn between the asylum and the maternity department of the hospital in the movie, where young mothers look like mad women. In one of the episodes, Tanya walks along the corridors singing a song with an otherworldly look. Thus, motherhood is represented through its connection with the female madness. In "Body Against Body: In Relation to the Mother", Irigaray brings up the notions of madness and desire in the relation to the mother figure. She contends: "The relation to the mother is a mad desire, because it is the 'dark continent' par excellence. It remains in the shadow of our culture, it is night and hell" (1980: 10). The connection of madness and motherhood, in its turn, creates the space prescribed by patriarchal culture, according to which woman as mother "remains locked within a mute, rhythmic, spasmic, potentially hysterical – and thus speechless – body […]" (Grosz, 1990: 163).

Together with the dimension of madness, abjection takes place in the movie. In one of the following episodes we find out that Tanya has rejected her child. She has been discharged from the hospital. Opha is following her when she's heading home. On her way, Tanya passes by a dump where she sees a broken doll and the corpse of a bird. She sits down to pee. When the nurse catches up with Tanya, the two women have a small conversation. After that, they enter an old building and Opha commands Tanya to turn her face. Meanwhile she takes off

her stockings and finally strangles the woman with them. While in this act, Opha repeats several times with a mild voice: "It is not painful".

Tanya's way home (the dump, the broken doll, the corpse of a bird, excrements) can well illustrate Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection. According to Kristeva, the abject doesn't respect borders, positions, and rules; but marks the situations which are 'in-between'. The abject includes excrements, corpse, food, or any crime that "doesn't draw attention to the fragility of the low" (1982: 4). Together with system and order, abjection disturbs identity and subjectivity. In other words, abjection and madness are tightly connected as they both place the figure of mother outside the subject position.

3.2.2. The subversive image of Opha: the power of the gaze

At the beginning of the movie Opha is an ordinary nurse in the hospital. However, in one of the next episodes she receives the key of the archive; from then on, Opha's role in the hospital will be to keep information about all the patients. In cultural tradition the key is the symbol of knowledge. The myth of Pandora's box and the fairytale *Bluebeard* serve as a prohibition to women to open closed doors, to see and, consequently, to know. The key in the case of Opha means the power to decide who is guilty as well as the power to punish. In one of the short dialogues between Opha and a visitor of the archive, the nurse says: "I don't touch children. I even don't have such education – to take them from the womb. I only touch documents". In another situation after having spent a night with a young doctor, Opha says:

> I am so inexperienced, and maybe I became pregnant today. So, does it mean that I should bear your fetus now? But I don't want to bear you fetus inside of me. I need to make a career […] I've got a place in the archive. I will be in charge of all the secrets of the archive – all the data with the names and addresses of the women who rejected their children. Destiny doesn't give such a chance to everyone.

In all these situations, Opha figures out the documents/children dichotomy which correlates with the productive/reproductive or mind/body one. Thereby, by keeping the key and choosing documents instead of children, Opha subverts the mind/body dichotomy. From this very moment the viewer feels that there is something wrong with Opha. One of the critics of the movie has mentioned that the image of Opha reminds us of a snake – just as cold and slippery (Yanumian, 2003).

The subversive nature of Opha's character requires the change of the trajectory of the gaze in the movie as well. In the Hollywood tradition (i.e., Alfred Hitchcock's movies) there are two ways of looking: voyeuristic and fetishistic. The woman is always victimized by the male gaze. The man is the one who bears the gaze and keeps the power. Kira Muratova's *Ophelia* is an example of those movies which subvert the traditional location of the gaze. In the episode after Opha's first murder, we see the room with abstract paintings on the walls. The camera stops on the mannequin with naked breasts in the foreground and two sleeping people in the background. Contrary to the tradition of objectifying the female body, the case of *Ophelia* differs in that the viewer observes a naked male body instead of a female one. The only naked female body in the frame is the "body" of a mannequin.

The bearer of the gaze/knowledge/power is Opha. Her gaze is voyeuristic – she follows her victims and punishes them, although the nature of her punishment is different from the one performed by men in traditional Hollywood movies. Slavoi Zizek, in an analysis of Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo,* concludes: "The only good woman is a dead woman" (2006). Therefore, woman is punished for being "bad". Opha's case is deeply rooted in her private story of her mother's refusal of her. She punishes only "bad" mothers. In many instances, Opha recalls the image of the *femme fatale*: she uses bright lipstick; she has blond hair and wears the same hairdo as Madeleine in *Vertigo* and Catherine in *Basic Instinct*. But, unlike the heroine of *Basic Instinct*, Opha's character as well as her way of killing refers to the sphere of

the feminine, as she kills her first victim with female stockings instead of a phallic icepick. In this way, Kira Muratova creates the image of her own *femme fatale* through the prism of the female gaze.

3.2.3. The murder of the mother

> When Freud, notably in *Totem and Taboo*, describes and theorizes about the murder of the father as the founding act for the primal horde, he is forgetting an even more ancient murder, that of the woman-mother, which was necessary to the foundation of a specific order in the city. (Irigaray, 1980: 11)

Opha's meeting with her mother and subsequent murder of the mother play a key role in the movie. The murder of the mother has a symbolic nature, which concerns Opha's own refusal to become a mother and to occupy the position predefined for mothers/women in patriarchal culture (the one which is tightly connected to madness). The episode of the meeting of Opha and her mother requires a more detailed description.

In the archive, Opha carefully examines the documents and finds the name and the address she was looking for. After that, she makes a visit to yet unknown woman, but the latter doesn't open the door to Opha – she is alone and afraid of the dark outside. Opha is looking at the woman through the window, then she knocks on the window and hides; she takes a mirror to see the face of the woman, who immediately appears in the window. The shot with the mirror creates an illusion of substitution of Opha's reflection with the reflection of the woman. This episode coincides with the words of Irigaray, "You look at yourself in the mirror. And your mother is already there" (1979: 14-15, quoted in Gallop 1982: 117), which emphasizes the 'unnamed' connection (turned into reflection) between mother and daughter.

The next morning, Opha meets the woman near the entrance of the woman's house. As with Tanya, she follows her on the way to the pier. Both women are dressed in red. The red color has many connotations in our culture; one of them marks red as a color of blood, which opens the dimension of kinship, thus, the dimension of motherhood. In *This Sex Which is Not One* we can read: "No need for a wound to remind us that the blood exists. It flows within us, from us. Blood is familiar, close" (Irigaray, 1985: 206). Another color which is emphasized in the movie is white: very often Opha appears in a white doctor's smock. Following Irigaray: "You are all red. And so very white. Both at once. You don't become red by losing your candid whiteness. You are white because you have remained close to blood" (1985: 207). Kira Muratova's usage of these two colors becomes a good visualization of the mother/daughter bond.

In the next shot we see the same woman in red who is sitting on the pier and reading a book. Opha is trying to talk with her, but she responds very unwillingly. Finally, Opha sits in front of the woman and puts her head on her shoulder. The woman moves away. The following dialogue happens between them:

> Opha: At first sight it becomes obvious that you don't have children.
>
> Woman: I don't want them to repeat my destiny.
>
> Opha: What destiny do you have and you don't want your children to repeat?
>
> Woman: Sometimes coincidences happen in the destinies of children and their mothers.
>
> Opha: We can check. Is it true that now you are reading the book about Ophelia, who drowned
>
>   innocently?
>
> Woman: Yes. Ophelia is my favorite character. But I am sure that you have watched furtively.
>
> Opha: No, I guessed with your method of coincidences.[2] But if it is like that, then it is horrible.
>
>   (Opha snatches the book out of the woman's hands. A small battle takes place between them).
>
> Opha: Sorry my orphan's jokes. […] How can I help you? Are you starving? Do you have any requests?

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[2] As we know, Ophelia is Opha's favourite character as well. Thus, the coincidence that Opha's mother is speaking about takes place.

Woman: No.

Opha: Are you happy?

Woman: No

Opha: Tell me, why do you like this poor Ophelia?

Woman: Because of her beautiful death. I envy her death, as you have exactly said – she drowned innocently. It is so attractive. But the same will never happen to me. It is time to go to have a dinner.

In the next shot the woman searches for the stick she came with and when she bends forward to the water Opha pushes her off the pier with the words: "Mother, it is a good death. I made it come true. Let's say good bye. Mother, now you are not guilty. I forgive you!" Afterwards, we see the drowned body of the woman taken away by the water. Meanwhile, Opha is standing on the pier with the wooden stick in her hands. In this frame, Kira Muratova uses an extreme low-angle shot to stress the monumentality of Opha's figure. The low-angle shot of Opha as well as the wooden stick in her hands in the last episode indicate her power. To illustrate the getting of power through the mother's murder, Irigaray makes an example of Clytemnestra's case. According to the ancient Greek myth, the son kills his mother because the empire of the God-Father, who has seized and taken the ancient powers of the earth-mother, demands it. Irigaray writes: "Thus the murder of the mother is rewarded by letting the son go scot free, by burying the madness of women – and burying women in madness" (1980: 13).

Opha's murder of the mother is rooted in the feminine, in her own fear to become a mother and to become like her mother, as motherhood is connected to madness, to the splitting of the self and the loss of identity and, consequently, of power. Adrienne Rich uses the term "matrophobia", which can be explained as the daughter's fear both to become like her mother and to become a mother. According to Rich,

[m]atrophobia can be seen as a womanly splitting of the self, in the desire to become purged once and for all of our mothers' bondage, to become individuated and free. The mother stands for the victims in ourselves, the unfree woman, the martyr. Our personalities seem dangerously to blur and overlap with our mothers'; and, in a desperate attempt to know where mother ends and daughter begins, we perform radical surgery. (1986: 236)

Matrophobia pushes Opha to murder her mother. With the act of murder of her mother, Opha also performs the symbolical murder of the mother in herself; thus, releasing her identity from the threat of splitting.

3.2.4. The rupture of mother/daughter dyad

In Kira Muratova's movie, the figure of Opha is a product of the rupture of the mother/daughter dyad. This rupture organizes Opha's unfolding story and lays out the basis for her subjectivity. But there is one more dimension of mother-daughter disconnection in the movie, which symbolizes the rupture in the relationship of two generations.

The following episode of the movie is an example of such a rupture. On the way to the pier, Opha and her mother become witnesses of a scene between an old mother and her daughter: the daughter is trying to communicate with her mother, but does not get any clear response. The daughter asks: "Mother, why don't you take the receiver? I am worried!" The old mother responds with a question: "Why don't you call me? I am waiting for your call. I am worried!". The mother is very old and deaf; she doesn't answer her daughter's telephone calls because she doesn't hear them. They repeat the same phrases over and over without any result. There is no possibility for the daughter to be heard or for the mother to hear. There are notes of despair in the voice of the daughter. The women seem to be in the closed circle of disability to communicate.

The image of two women, mother and daughter, who cannot understand each other (because the mother is deaf) serves as a good illustration of the generation gap which is

represented in the movie as well. We have already described the divide between generations which appeared in the movies of the Perestroika period. However, the figure of the mother was slightly presented in the life of heroines in the movies of the above era. Communication between mothers and daughters was disordered: the viewer observed the lack of understanding, respect, and love in the mother/daughter dyad. In the case of Kira Muratova's *Ophelia*, there is an emotional hole in the relationship of mothers towards their children. After Tanya leaves her child in the hospital, Opha asks her what she feels; Tanya answers, "Nothing". Moreover, there is no emotional connection among women in the movie. Opha does not manage to develop a good relationship with her mother or with any woman, which, according to Irigaray, would create an empowered female subject. Opha finds the way to subjectivity in killing her mother rather than in developing a relationship with her.

As we pointed out previously, the cinematic reality is deeply rooted in the historical one. After the collapse of the Soviet Union a good number of new states appeared. The moods of abandonment and desire to find one's origins accompanied the reality of the early nineties. But the connection with the Soviet past was totally rejected by the newborn societies. The huge gap that divided the generations could not be filled through protest (like in the times of Perestroika). Obviously, Kira Muratova didn't have the aim of reflecting the moods of generations, but, still, those moods are presented in her movie. Kira Muratova created a very subversive (from the point of view of patriarchal order) image of Opha, but she also depicted a new kind of gap between two generations, mothers and daughters, which in the movie is crowned with the murder of the mother by the daughter.

Just as the director puts the key in Opha's hands in one of the movie's episodes, the movie itself is the key that helps Kira Muratova to question the issues of femininity and maternity in the newborn society.

3.3. Renata Litvinova as an independent movie director: *Goddess: How I Fell in Love*

> Goddesses never die. They slip in and out of the world's cities, in and out of our dreams, century after century, answering to different names, dressed differently, perhaps even disguised, perhaps even unemployed, their official altars abandoned, their temples feared or simply forgotten. (Chesler, 1972)

Renata Litvinova became well known to the post-Soviet public, first of all, because of the movies of Kira Muratova in which she used to star. In spite of featuring very different women on the screen, all of Renata Litvinova's heroines share one common characteristic: they are usually on the brink between madness and normality, breaking the traditional representation of woman on the post-Soviet screen.

The representation of women in the post-Soviet space has its specific features. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Soviet ideology changed into an ideology of consumption. The representation of woman on the screen also changed. A new genre of melodrama appeared in mass culture which was aimed at female viewers. Rebecca Kay states that after the collapse of the Communist regime, ideas about the Russian woman had been turned inside out: the Soviet ideal of the strong worker changed into a model of delicate femininity (1997: 77-98). Russian gender theorist Irina Tartakovskaya (2000) brings out three types of female images which are widely represented in post-Soviet mass culture. She characterizes them as the independent woman who builds a career; the traditional woman with a deep linkage to family and the Soviet past; and the woman-consumerist.

Renata Litvinova's female characters stand independently in post-Soviet cinematography. Her images are never complete; thus, she doesn't allow stereotypes of post-

Soviet femininity to get into the frame. Litvonova's characters are workers of a morgue, tram drivers, criminal detectives, murderers, etc. As happens in the case of Opha, the confusion of the viewer appears as soon as he or she understands that there is something beyond nomenclatures and ideologies in her. Renata Litvinova's characters epitomize Julia Kristeva's idea of the unrepresentability of femininity. Litvnova's heroines have a very low ability to adapt to reality, as they don't know the rules of the game: they exist out of the phallocentric order. Thus, they invent their own rules and act according to their own logic.

Renata Litvinova is less well-known as a script writer and movie director, but her works are interesting and deserve our attention. In all her stories and movies women play a central role. Her first documentary, *There is no Death for Me*, was shot in 2000. The documentary consists of interviews with old Soviet actresses. In this movie, Litvinova raises the question of fading beauty and the process of getting old of women who were considered as the most beautiful and successful actresses in Soviet times. In 2007 she published the book *To Possess and to Belong* with her novels and scripts. The next year Litvinova shot the first movie-concert in the post-Soviet and Soviet space of Russian pop-rock singer Zemfira, *The Green Theatre Inside of Zemfira*, which became very successful.

In this chapter I will analyze Renata Litvinova's first full-length feature movie, *Goddess: How I Fell in Love* (2004), which brought fame to her as a movie director. The movie is based on Litvonova's own script; she also plays the main female character – police investigator Faina. The core of the plot is the detective story of the disappearance of a little girl. Despite the fact that a whole year has passed after the girl vanished, Faina feels that she is alive and keeps searching. The movie represents a detective story, but Renata Litvinova disrupts the narrative with surrealistic inclusions that help her to depict the relationship between Faina and her dead mother.

3.3.1. The maternal space: nostalgia/madness/reunion

The idea of nostalgia runs throughout all of Litvinova's movies and scripts. In *There is no Death for Me,* the nostalgic space is represented by the stories of old actresses about their youth; the narrative of the movie interweaves with nostalgic black and white episodes from Soviet movies as well. In Litvinova's script *Principled and Compassionate Look* nostalgia takes place in the form of memories of the main heroine, in which she remembers herself as a little girl. In *Goddess: How I Fell in Love*, Faina's dead mother visits her in her dreams and awakes the memories of the past.

The movie begins with Faina's dream of her dead mother, who comes to her daughter in a red dress and red lipstick, performing some kind of slow dance. The same as Opha in Kira Muratova's movie, Faina shares common features with her mother: the same hairdo as well as the same way of moving (Faina and her mother use the same gesticulation, which was invented by Renata Litvinova at the beginning of her career as an actress). Faina tells her mother that everything is alright with her, that she is renting a flat in the center, but she has not got married yet as her mother had asked her to. The mother replies that Faina is getting old. The mother also asks Faina to speak with her, repeats several times that she misses her very much and complains that Faina never has time for her. In one of the episodes the mother says that she is an envoy and has been sent to tell her daughter that she (Faina) has some unknown power and has to be strong. According to the theories of mother-daughter relationship, the main function of the mother is to prepare her daughter for adult life by means of sharing her experience; in other words, to provide a ground for the daughter's future separation and individuation. In "Women and Maddness", Phyllis Chesler also contends that mothers have a special function to train their daughters to be "feminine" (1972: 19). Although in Litvinova's movie the mother is not real, she has some important mission: she is an envoy,

and therefore, the bearer of some important information that she needs to transmit to her daughter.

In the following episodes of the movie, we begin to understand the meaning of the mother's appearance in Faina's dreams. The mother is preparing her daughter for death. In one of the dreams, Faina tells her mother that she is afraid and doesn't want to die; the mother calms her saying that death is not scary at all. Death then becomes the main motif of the movie. Litvinova uses the image of black crows as a symbol of death: all the time crows come to Faina's window, enter her room and sit on her table. In one of her dreams, Faina herself sits on the windowsill like one of those crows.

The appearance of Faina's mother brings the image of death into the movie. Thus, nostalgia or longing for the mother receives an additional meaning: longing for death. In my analysis of Tarkovsky's *The Mirror,* I mentioned the nostalgic space of motherhood created by the author. However, motherhood in Tarkovsky's masterpiece was described through the patriarchal gaze, which was extended in *Antichrist* by Lars von Trier. Faina's longing for her mother, the appearance of the dead mother in her dreams, and the mother's mission to prepare her daughter for death allude to the longing for the first home/maternal space or desire of reunion with the primary mother. The return to the first home or reunion with the primary mother as opposed to separation and individuation implies the loss of subjectivity and, consequently, madness.

As the story unfolds, Faina looks for ways to enter the space of her dead mother. The movie also changes at the narrative level: the events in the movie become disconnected and the story acquires surrealistic features. Finally, Faina finds the way to enter the maternal space: she uses an old mirror for it. There is a kind of exchange that takes place in the movie: Faina steps into the mirror at the same time that her twin comes from the mirror into the real world to replace her for the time of her absence. The image of the twin looks like a distorted

image of Faina. The twin has tousled hair, careless makeup, she tells Faina words of love (throughout the movie Faina can't say words of love to anyone; moreover, she constantly repeats that she has never been in love). We can recognize a mad woman in the image of the twin. The appearance of the mad twin is called for to show the impossibility to enter the maternal space without crossing the border of madness, in Irigaray's words, the "dark continent" (which is connected to the feminine/maternal as well).

After Faina enters the mirror, we see her in the tower; she is slowly dancing, exactly like her mother at the beginning of the movie. The tower represents the border space, the one between life and death. There is an important dialogue between Faina and her mother in the tower:

> Mother: When will you speak with me? But you need to go.
>
> Faina: Mother, listen… I remember the smell of your dress when you were lying. I remember the warmth of your hand. I hear your voice in all the saddest songs. But I cannot speak with you. I am so sorry that I cannot speak with you.
>
> (Faina is crying)

Faina's words to her mother are central in the depiction of the relationship between the two women. Moreover, they are the only words of love that Faina expresses in the movie, which makes this moment the most intense one. After pronouncing these words, Faina hears a voice coming from the report evidence lying on the floor. The voice tells Faina to jump from the window of the tower; it also claims that she will not crash, as there is a sky both above and below the tower. Faina follows the voice and jumps out of the window. I want to underline the metaphor of the space without earth/sky dichotomy (the sky is both above and below). This space into which Faina jumps is also a maternal space or non-subject space of death.

In the next shot we see Faina's twin, who is a mad woman walking in the streets. Very soon she dies as well. The voice-over says that Faina was found dead with the report evidence in her hands, in which was written the only one word – love – on all the pages. In Faina's case the reunion with her mother becomes possible through words of love, but it is also followed by madness and death.

3.3.2. Historical dimension of motherhood

The references to the Soviet past can be found in numerous episodes in the movie. The first important reference concerns the detective story of the disappearance of the girl that Faina investigates. The story is taken from the Soviet criminal archive and tells about a family of doctors who kidnap the little daughter of their neighbors' just because the neighbors have run over their dog with their car. Later, the children in the Soviet Union will tell this story as a scary one to each other. Thus, the Soviet scary story of the lost daughter becomes a starting point in the movie.

In one of the first movie episodes we see the correlation of the past and the present as well. The figure of the mother appears under the rain; she enters the old Soviet-type café and orders a plate of soup. In the café the mother tells about her mission as an envoy to the unknown women. After the mother's words, subtitles appear. The background for the subtitles represents a range of Soviet-type people (predominantly women) and press cuttings of the magazine *Vogue* on the walls. By using the image of *Vogue* with the appearance of Soviet-type people in the frame, Litvinova outlines the dimension of past/present or old/new, and figures out the dimension of nostalgia for the Soviet space. The nostalgia for the Soviet past is structured as the mythology of bad and good motherhood: on the one hand, the Soviet past is idealized; on the other, it is blamed. In one of the dialogues, Faina asks: "Mother, do you want me to live my life as you?" The mother answers that she had a good life: she visited

health resorts seven times, and that all her life she lived with one man. Faina replies: "Enough. Go away please. I remember how you washed me with domestic detergent in the river". A kind of grudge for her mother appears in Faina's memories.

In *Principled and Compassionate Look* (1995), based on Renata Litvinova's script, we see a difficult relationship between middle-aged Alya and her old mother. In one of the episodes, Alya tells a story similar to Faina's from her childhood in which she sees the source of her conflicts with her mother. She remembers how in her childhood they were traveling on a train, and when the conductor came to check the tickets, her mother pretended that she was not her daughter in order to save money. That situation became a deep trauma for the female protagonist. The story with the domestic soap and the story of travelling on the train are very familiar for people who grew up in the Soviet reality. The individual trauma of both heroines is also the trauma of a whole generation who shared the Soviet space. Thus, the problems of communication between mothers and daughters in post-Soviet movies have one more dimension rooted in the historical past and in the everyday life of people in Soviet reality.

The female protagonists in all these movies are afraid to become like their mothers, but they cannot get rid of the images of the past in their adult life: Ophelia, who being traumatized by her mother's refusal longs for her death; Faina, who sees her mother in her dreams and cannot find words to speak with her; Alya, who quarrels with her mother all the time because the images of the past haunt her. The connection between mothers and daughters is always stressed by the directors, who dress their heroines in dresses in the same color, or make both mother and daughter share the same gestures or have the same hairdo. Thus, the figure of the mother in post-Soviet movies is endowed with extensional meaning – she is a container of memories and traumatic past experience that the young generation of daughters has to deal with.

Conclusion

As a result of analyzing feminist psychoanalytical thought, we found out that the mother-daughter relationship is important as it forms the maternal/feminine space in which the appearance of a liberated female subject is possible. The lack of articulation in classical psychoanalysis of this mother-daughter relationship made the mother-daughter dyad invisible.

Luce Irigaray was useful in that she made the development of the relationship between mothers and daughters central in her theoretical framework. Irigaray emphasized that the figure of primary mother stands at the birth of our culture, and that the reproduction/production dichotomy should be subverted with the help of a new language between both mothers and daughters and all women. The absence of an adequate representation of motherhood can be explained through the absence of such a language, which is substituted by a male one. Julia Kristeva, in turn, took the Virgin Mary as the representation of the mother figure as sacred. She described this representation of maternity as 'looking without seeing'. At the other end of the sacred mother, Kristeva located maternal abjection. Abjection places the mother in the situation where she is neither subject nor object. In Kristeva's theory the mother is deprived of adequate representation as she is always balancing between the sacred and the abject. On her part, Nancy Chodorow contends that the tendency in our society towards motherhood goes from idealization to blaming mothers. Apart from analyzing Soviet cinema, we have seen that the main shifts in the representation of motherhood and the mother-daughter bond in Soviet cinematography have been marked by the same trajectory: from an ideal and symbolic mother to a weak and hysterical one. Thus, the representation of motherhood and the mother-daughter relationship in the Soviet space have had three main shifts: in early Soviet movies, the mother is represented as a symbolic figure of revolution or fertility, while the figure of the daughter is not articulated at all and is

replaced by the figure of the son. In post-Stalinist cinematography, the mother-daughter dyad and the connectedness between women based on the issue of family happiness/unhappiness appear. In the movies of the period of Perestroika, the figure of the mother loses the power and control over her daughter while the figure of the daughter becomes central and symbolizes protest and rebellion. All these shifts are tightly connected to social and historical changes in the Soviet Union and reflect the ideological changes in the sexual politics towards women and motherhood. The gaze in the movies of the Soviet period is predominantly male and coincides with the gaze of the Party as well.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the post-Soviet space, a lot of women's filmmakers appeared who understood the lack of a female gaze and absence of a female representational language in Soviet and post-Soviet cinematography. These women aimed to show the world through a female perspective. Among such directors are Kira Muratova and Renata Litviniva. Both work in the genre of auteur cinema and use the strategies of construction and deconstruction of narrative in their movies. Through the example of *Ophelia* and *Goddess: How I Fell in Love*, I have showed how directors break through the traditional representation of motherhood and the mother-daughter relationship. There is a symptomatic rupture between mothers and daughters in their movies. However, this rupture is articulated in different ways. Kira Muratova's women don't follow social prescriptions of motherhood. In Opha's words, "I don't touch children" or "I don't want to bear your fetus inside of me", we can read disgust to any kind of involvement in the process of giving birth. She refuses to follow the traditional female role marked by maternity. In *Ophelia*, there a symbolic hole appears in the relationship between two generations of women, which becomes typical for a post-Soviet generation that has lost its roots and origins. In the movie, the space of this hole is filled by the traumatic experience of mother-daughter disconnection. In the case of *Ophelia*, the main heroine needs to carry out the murder of her mother in order to release her

subjectivity and gain power. Contrary to mainstream cinematography, Opha in Muratova's movie is the bearer of the gaze; with the help of this character the director undermines the production/reproduction and mind/body dichotomy.

Faina, the heroine in *Goddess: How I Fell in Love*, in contrast to Opha, needs to overcome her trauma through the moment of forgiveness and unification with her mother. The act of reunion becomes possible through Faina's death. In the movie, a moment of nostalgia between Faina and her mother is present; nostalgia as a longing for home refers to Irigaray's the "first home", which has been so rarely represented in our culture. In the movie of Renata Litvinova the imaginary space of Faina's dreams, where she meets and speaks with her dead mother, embodies the maternal space. The surrealistic inclusions used by Renata Litvinova in order to depict the space of Faina's dreams indicate how the maternal space breaks through traditional narrative. In the movie, the dialogue of the past and the present is established. The nostalgia for the mother in *Goddess: How I Fell in Love* is also the nostalgia for the past.

The representation of the mother-daughter relationship becomes the tool for women's directors to articulate a traumatic past and the ways to deal with it. As a result, in the movies analyzed here the maternal space is inseparable from the historical one. The dialogues between mothers and daughters are the ones between past and present. In *Ophelia*, the final rupture with the past, the symbolic murder of the mother, indicates the appearance of a strong female character. In *Goddess: How I Fell in Love*, the reunion with the past, the return to the "first home", is followed by the death of the daughter. Thus, mother-daughter relationships in the movies are represented through the death of either mother or daughter, which means that a constructive dialogue with the past has not been found yet.

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