

Andre Zvyagintsev : The Return, The Banishment, Elena  
How Fathers Exile Their Children

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to analyse exile condition in Andre Zvyagintsev's three films; *The Return (2003)*, *The Banishment (2007)* and *Elena (2011)*. It consists of exile theme in cinema and how cinema can be considered as exile. Exile condition, which has so many dimensions, basically will be analysed in terms of fatherhood. Therefore, how fathers exile their children will be main questioning in Zvyagintsev's three films.

## ÖZET

Bu tezin amacı Andre Zvyagintsev'in Dönüş (2003), Sürgün (2007) ve Elena (2011) filmlerindeki ortak sürgünlük temasını incelemektir. Tez bir sürgünlük olarak sinema ve sinemada sürgünlük temalarını kuramsal olarak ele almaktadır. Birbirinden farklı pek çok metodla ele alınabilecek sürgünlük 'babalık' teması üzerinden analiz edilmiştir. Babaların çocuklarını nasıl sürgün ettikleri Andre Zvyagintsev'in üç filmi üzerinden analiz edilerek tezin ana sorgulamasını oluşturmuştur.

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## INTRODUCTION

Czech writer Jan Vladislav notes that ‘Exile [...] exists in numerous forms, although ultimately it is the basic condition of all men’.<sup>1</sup>

Exile is the main condition of being human. It has started with the creation of the world and still continues by facing some changes. Religious discourse includes Adam and Eve’s exile from the paradise when Adam ate the banned apple. So, according to religious heritage, it can be possible to claim it is the first exile of human being. Since then, our fathers exile us. But, fundamental core of living as exile remains the same. Whether external or eternal bases of the exile are the same; journeying, loss, longing and impossibility of return which all become stuck in the memory of an exile. These principles of exile can be seen in three films of Russian director Andrei Zvyagintsev that are *The Return* (2003), *The Banishment* (2007) and *Elena* (2011). Before passing following sections, it is necessary to define what exile is and what it means.

The word “exile” derives from the Latin “exilium” and further back from the Ancient Greek “alasthai” which means ‘to wander’. The exile is the one who is relocated physically, mentally or both to another universe of discourse; politically, culturally, or linguistically. According to Edward Said: “an exile is always out of place.”<sup>2</sup> He\ she tries but never reaches the destination. Home is everywhere and nowhere.

Human history is shaped with exile. As it is mentioned above, according to religious discourse, it began with Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Kingdom of God; the Old Testament is also witnessing the sons of Israel trying to return to their own lands from exile. In both terms, exile is a case of punishment: Adam and Eve were banned from Heaven and the Sons of Israel from their native land after both disobeying their Father’s

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<sup>1</sup> Domnica Radulescu, ed. *Realms of exile: Nomadism, Diasporas, and Eastern European Voices* (Maryland and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2002), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p.143

rule. Yakub was named “Israel” after fighting his father – God, and winning. Despite his loss, God always loved Yakub because of his faith.<sup>3</sup> So, fatherhood is the main notion in religious books. In terms of religion, the ‘real life’ is behind the clouds; earth is a temporary place for human beings, who are in exile here, at an experimental stage. If they pass their Father’s tests, then they will enter the real world from where they originally come from.

Plato also claimed that: “Birth is our first experience of exile.”<sup>4</sup> As a species, human race begins to grow in the mother’s womb, which is full of water. After birth the baby becomes separated from this world and he/she enters another world. So, placement and displacement are bound to each other. Here, it can be said that it is not strange to find mother figure in Plato’s words and father in religious books. In the Old Testimony, Earth is called as feminine (= the Mother) and God as masculine (= the Father). So, mother – the Earth- belongs to the Father. So, in a way it is possible to say that the father exiled his children – Adam and Eve -. But, religious people believe in ‘heavenly home’ where they will return after death. So, in a way death, which means a separation from ‘mother’ earth, carry them to the God – the father -.

All these different sides of exile become very important concepts for all forms of art because as I tried to mention above, exile is tried to be defined in different decades in terms of different disciplines. So, some artists deal with internal exiles and the others portray external exiles. For example; Nabokov, abandoned from his native land where Stalinism became as ‘evil’, and then he escaped from the Holocaust. As a result, he wrote about the condition of exile as an external exile. There are works like Emily Dickens, which can be example for internal exiles. The division of exile can be explained by Hamid Naficy’s own words:

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<sup>3</sup> Kitabı Mukaddes, *Eski Ahit*, Tekvin and Çıkış (Istanbul: Kitabı Mukaddes Şirketi, 1993), p.1-97

<sup>4</sup> Domnica Radulescu, ed. *Realms of exile: Nomadism, Diasporas, and Eastern European Voices* (Maryland and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2002), p. 3

Traditionally, exile is taken to mean banishment for a particular offense, with a prohibition of return. Exile can be internal or external, depending on the location to which one is banished. The tremendous toll that internal exile, restrictions, deprivations, and censorship in totalitarian countries have taken on filmmakers has been widely publicized [...] For external exiles the descent relations with the homeland and the consent relations with the host society are continually tested. Freed from old and new, they ‘deterritorialized,’ yet they continue to be in the grip of both the old and the new, the before and the after.<sup>5</sup>

Naficy defines exile according to territorial displacement. Nevertheless they both create each other. Even one is banished from his\her nativeland or in the same land the loss and alienation common in both situations.

As it is seen, exile is a human condition since the beginning of the world. However, this century is structured with exiles, immigrations and genocides. To sum up Eric Hobsbawm, the 20<sup>th</sup> century begins in 1915 with the First World War. Twenty five years later the Second World War broke out. In the years between hunger, poverty and deterritorialization ruled the world. America opened its doors to all immigrants via green passport. Nationalism increased in the world, and especially in Europe. After the Second World War, boundaries were changed. There were three main powers in the world: America, USSR and Germany. Germany lost the war and Soviet Union began to decline although they won the Great Patriotic War. The largest and most painful genocide crime was committed against the Jews in all over the world. Besides, the Cold War broke out with nuclear machines. The European Union was structured, the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Berlin Wall was built in 1961 and destroyed in 1989.<sup>6</sup> Apart from historical

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<sup>5</sup> Hamid Naficy, *Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.11.

<sup>6</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The age of extremes: The short 20th century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus,1994), pp.33-71.

facts, because of these wars, violence and changes, millions of people killed, exiled, forced to immigrate etc. These are visible side of the history. However, today's world lots of people live in exile in their soul. Hamid Naficy states: "Because of globalization, the internal and external exiles of one country are not sealed off from each other. In fact, there is much traffic and exchange between them."<sup>7</sup> So, people, who are marginalized or have belonging problems, can also break the boundaries and reach each other. Of course, their state of exile continues but globalization blurs the thin red line by allowing connection. That is why, there is an interaction between internal and external exiles. But, how technology effected exile condition is not the main notion in this thesis. It is just necessary to know that exile condition and its conceptual framework changes according to historical, psychological etc. changes. It is not something stable. But, the origin remains the same: deprivation, loss, impossibility of return etc., which will be explained during the thesis.

Internal and external exiles used to be very common throughout the Russian history, that is why Russian director Andrei Zvyagintsev's films will be in my focus during the thesis. Russia is one of the important countries in the context of exile. Throughout the eighteen and nineteen centuries, Russian idea has been main target for Russian intellectuals. As a term, Russian Idea used by Nikolai Berdyaev, refers: "nationalism and logic (a strange juxtaposition in itself), yet it aspires above all to universality and faith."<sup>8</sup> In other words, Russian Idea can be understood as a cultural model that is shaped as a result of contradictions and need of justifications in Russian culture. In generally, exile is an identifier, a root, for Russian Idea or Russian 'geist', which is a German term used by Hegel to define mind and spirit at the same time.<sup>9</sup> To sum up Edward Hallet Carr, in tsar era, development of bourgeoisie was complicated. During this period, intellectuals had discussions about being westerner and being

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<sup>7</sup> Naficy, *Accented Cinema*, p.11.

<sup>8</sup> Nancy Condee, "No Glory, No Majesty, or Honour: The Russian Idea and Inverse Value" in *Russia on Reels: Russian Idea in Post Soviet Cinema*, ed. Birgit Beumers (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1999 – 2006), p.25.

<sup>9</sup> Kai Froeb, "Philosophy of Spirit/Mind (Geist)." Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit/Mind (overview)-hegel.net. <http://www.hegel.net/en/spirit.htm> (accessed June 4, 2014).

Russian. In a very short time, the discussion caused political divisions in intellectual circuits. As a result, intellectuals, especially who had travelled to Western countries, perceived tsar regime as the enemy of modernization and westernization. After a while, a new definition of an intellectual occurred, especially under the influence of French Revolution. They began to sustain the necessity of change in society and embody their thoughts instead of being passive. But, they faced with backlash due to their desire of freedom and effort to change 'undeveloped tsar regime'. As a result, in mid 1800s, writers and intellectuals who have had strong influence on society banished to the West. It is even said that Russian Idea or 'geist' was born in exile.<sup>10</sup> So, apart from historical continuity and nationalism, banishment, which is common in all three films of the Zvyangitsev, is the core of the Russian Idea.

First of all, 'exile' was a main punishment throughout the Russian history. Second, for a long time, many people felt to be exiled in 'the Soviet Motherland' because it was a union. No one actually lived in their own lands. They often 'inter-moved' in the union land with a main speaking language the Russian. Here, it is important to define what is home. John Berger states that:

The term *home* (Old Norse *Heimer*, High German *heim*, Greek *komi*, meaning "village") has, since a long time, been taken over by two kinds of moralists, both dears to those who wield power. The notion of *home* became the keystone for a code of domestic morality, safeguarding the property (which included the women) of the family. Simultaneously the notion of *homeland* supplied a first article of faith for patriotism, persuading men to die in wars which often served no other interest except that of a minority of their ruling class. Both usages have hidden the original meaning. Originally home meant the center of the world--not in a geographical, but in an ontological sense [...] Without a home

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<sup>10</sup> Edward Hallett, Carr, *The romantic exiles* (London: Serif, 1998).



at the center of the real, one was not only shelterless, but also lost in nonbeing, in unreality. Without a home everything was fragmentation.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from defining what home really is, Berger points the main psychology of exile. Fragmentation causes to be 'in between' for exiles. Noemi Marin in her article *The Rhetoric of Andrei Codrescu: A Reading in Exilic Fragmentation* notes that “ [...] exile always entails a clash between cultures, identities, and discourses.”<sup>12</sup> So, being banned from homeland also includes those clashes, or hybridism in state of exile. Russian motherland is so important because it includes both exile conditions in its origin throughout the history.

Another condition of exile is to become uprooted from the motherland and also the mother tongue. On a basic level, the noun is feminine noun. According to Hamid Naficy, “Significantly, the discourse of memory feminized the house as an enclosure of femininity and domesticity, associated with motherhood and reproduction. This is how many exiles feminize the homeland.”<sup>13</sup> The desire of man to rule and direct, are effective instincts, which shows the point of view of exile. First of all, man wants to rule in their lost country as they rule the woman. Secondly, it is associated with reproduction because a land gives birth to a nation like a woman gives birth to a child. So, land becomes feminized or closer to motherhood in the mind of an exile. Ultimately, Boglárka Mácsai in her thesis *Little Motherland* analyzes the meaning of motherland in Russia. She writes: “ [...] Soviet/Russian motherland, which was personified as Motherland - Mother (Rodina-Mat') during the war. The word 'rodina' derives from the verb 'rodit', to give birth.”<sup>14</sup> However, there is another reason, another side of the coin, which explains why Russia has been called as motherland. It shouldn't be forgotten that religion had always great power since the tsar. Although it lost its power during the communist era, it

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<sup>11</sup> John, Berger. *And our faces, my heart, brief as photos* (New York: Random House LLC, 1984), p. 61.

<sup>12</sup> Radulescu, ed. *Realms of Exile*, p. 87

<sup>13</sup> Naficy, *Accented Cinema*, p.169

<sup>14</sup> Mácsai, Boglárka. *Little Motherland*. Diss. Central European University, 2013, p. 16.

regained its importance after collapse of the Soviet Union. Even, Soviet regime eliminated Orthodox Church's power upon the system, they took advantage of it during the Great Patriotic War. Birgit Beumers states that "The notion of sacrifice of life for the country carried within it religious overtones, further enhanced by the sudden return of church officials to the public arena at the height of war."<sup>15</sup> So, although religion and the state ideology were against to each other, they moved together when there was a threat against to the motherland Russia.

Religious leaders used to call Russia as motherland. William Van Bercken quotes Patriarch Pimen's sentence from the 1981 calendar: "devotion to and love for their earthy motherland."<sup>16</sup> As it is seen, church feeds also patriotism. Ultimately, in the religious books, God 'The Father' calls earth as feminine. So, in Russian history, religious and political leaders -father- call their lands as 'Motherland'. It should be mentioned that Stalin was the father of the nation. Evgeny Dobrenko and Andrey Scherbenok claim that: "the person who creates history becomes the 'father of the nation' – so the father of the Soviet nation was Stalin (not Lenin!)." <sup>17</sup> Stalin as father exiled many of his 'children' while 'rewriting the history'. Here, it is possible to say that God created human history, so he is the father of all. Then, he exiles people from their eternal paradise. As a result, as a father, God rule his children on their motherland. Russians always ruled under patriarchy in a motherland. It can be said that the religion and Russian society always had a connection 'in the name of the father' who exiles his children from their mother to teach them to be a 'real man'. In a sense, existence or non-existence of our fathers affects our lives – history –. Russians deal with father and son relations in cinema as a result of

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<sup>15</sup> Birgit Beumers, *A History of Russian Cinema* (New York: Berg, 2009), p.103.

<sup>16</sup> William Van Den Bercken, "Holly Russia and the Soviet Fatherland." *Journal Religion in Communist Lands* 15. (accessed March 17, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Evgeny Dobrenko and Andrey Sheherberenok. "Introduction to Between History and the Past: The Soviet Legacy a Traumatic Object of Contemporary Russia." *Journal Slavonica* 17. (accessed November 1, 2012).

weakened patriarchal power. Yana Hashamova notes: “the deconstruction of patriarchy projected in the volatility of male positions only produces one unified desire for the (return of the) father.”<sup>18</sup> That is why in contemporary Russian cinema father and son relation are one of the main themes. They try to build up lost patriarchy and gain their power again in Russian motherland.

Additionally, motherland and exile have strong connection in Russia in terms of nostalgia. Olga Gershenson in her article *Accented Memory: Russian immigrants Reimagine the Israeli Past* gives a specific information about the issue: “Starting with the authoritative 1881 dictionary by Vladimir Dal’, Russian dictionaries define nostalgia as “longing for the motherland.” Russian nostal’giyah is a gnawing aching for Mother Russia, a condition inflicted on the e’ migre’ for leaving it behind.”<sup>19</sup> First of all, after being a largest empire and communist country, Russian people try to find out their own history, boundaries and values to become a nation. That is why, Russian nostalgia is both internal and external longing for the ‘loss’. As it will be defined later on, Nostalgia refers to home and pain. Besides, longing is connected with memory because an exile remembers the past, especially the childhood. Exile contains a deep nostalgia because of impossibility of return. Russians are longing for a childhood when they had hopes for the future, but there is no chance to go back again. Actually, this is what Russian regimes tried to impose throughout their history, especially during Stalin era. So, believing in a ‘bright future’ was represented in cinema with children. As David Gillespie noted: “In Russian culture children have long symbolized not only innocence, but the hope of the future.”<sup>20</sup> In Andrei Zvyagintsev’s films presentation of children usually refers to lost values, norms, believes of the past which will be discussed during film analyses.

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<sup>18</sup> Yana Hashamova (2010), “Resurrected Fathers and Resuscitated Sins: Homosocial Fantasies in The Return and Koktebel”, in *Cinepaternity, Fathers and Sons in Soviet and Post Soviet Film*, eds. Helena Goscilo and Yana Bloomington and Indianapolis: Hashamova, Indiana University Press, p.185.

<sup>19</sup> Olga, Gershenson, "Accented memory: Russian immigrants reimagine the Israeli past." *Journal of Israeli History* 28. (accessed February 27, 2014).

<sup>20</sup>David, Gillespie. "Reconfiguring the Past: The Return of History in Recent Russian Film." *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 1: 22. (accessed May 11, 2013).

As a result of summarized perspectives above, I will try to analyze Andrei Zvyagintsev's three films; *The Return* (2003), *The Banishment* (2007) and *Elena* (2011) in the context of being exiled by father. All three films are examples of internal and external exiles in terms of family relations, fragmentations in identity, Russia's own history and religion. Besides, the fathers or their absence play key role in the center of these films which strengthen the situation of exiles in Russia.

As Robert Tully cast the same idea of Gilles Deleuze, "the nomad is not necessarily one who moves: some voyages take place in situ."<sup>21</sup> As it is mentioned above, some can be internal some can be external. Journey can be done in the exile's memory by remembering. Or, identity shifts can be even considered as 'voyages'. Andrei Zvyagintsev's characters in his three films are in this kind of exile. In *The Return*, mother, father and brother are living in exile in their soul. The life which they live, it's not what they want. Additionally, the journey of the film is a form of exile by itself. After *The Return*, Zvyagintsev shot his second feature *The Banishment* in 2007. As it is understood from its title, in the film all characters, and especially Vera and Alex, are exiles in their own, deep soul. Vera does not want a marriage in which she feels alienated, that's why she chooses to kill herself to become apart from her life; while Alex becomes the murderer of his own wife and kid. Besides, the family in the film goes to the village where Alex grew up, and this journey represents another notion of exile. Displacement is bound to placement. Moreover, it can be an example for accented cinema which is defined by Hamid Naficy. Sadness, loneliness, and alienation are frequent themes, and sad, lonely, and alienated people are favorite characters in the accented films which will be further examined in another chapter later on. Director's last film *Elena*, which was shot in 2011, is another example of internal exiles. Elena as a former nurse lives with her old and rich husband. But she also belongs to a different class and has another family in another part of the city where is poor and violent. So Elena, who is exiled from her class and social life, becomes far away from her character when he kills her husband.

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<sup>21</sup> Gilles Deleuze, 1977, qtd. Robert. T.Tully ' Mundus Totus Exilium Est, 2011, par.19.

All three films of Andrei Zvyagintsev have common notions, which make their exilic condition stronger. First of all, fatherhood is the main theme, which is underlined in these three films. Especially for the last century of Russian history ‘father’ has always referred to critical issues or notions, like Stalin as ‘Father of the Nation’. As biological fathers, they affected next generations, whose memories are full of their past leader’s image. As it is mentioned above, an exile continues to be effected from both old and new identity, country, condition and past and present. This is the condition of generations in Russia. As internal or external exiles they are in between. So, all three films can be reference to different times of Soviet history when fatherhood was in the center of politics and society. On the other hand, each film contains a journey to one’s self. This makes them both internal and external exilic films.

In conclusion, before analyzing Zvyagintsev’s three films, I would like to give some brief information about exile theme in cinema and cinema itself as an exile. Finally, the three films of Zvyagintsev, *The Return*, *The Banishment*, and *Elena* will be analyzed in the context of being exiled by the Father.

## EXILE THEME IN CINEMA & CINEMA ITSELF AS AN EXILE

It is necessary to discuss cinema itself as an exile condition and exile condition in cinema because as principle of exile originally contains a duality, its connection with cinema carries the same. Besides, it is important to know theoretical definitions of exile in cinema to achieve a better understanding of Andrei Zvyagintsev's films in terms of exile. My intent is to use some description and classification from Hamid Naficy and Laura Marks. *Accented Cinema* by Hamid Naficy will be my focus to give qualifications of exile condition in cinema. While analyzing cinema itself as an experience of exile, Laura Marks *The Skin of The Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and The Senses* includes many references about the issue, especially description of fetish and fossil.

According to Laura Marks, cinema functions like a fetish. She states that: "Gilles Deleuze's term for certain kinds of images with the power to revive memories, the 'fossil', is also powerfully descriptive of cinema's disturbing ability to recreate its object in the present."<sup>22</sup> First of all, it is necessary to define what is fetish. According to Freud, "the fetish is a penis-substitute", to be precise for the "woman's (mother's) phallus which the little boy once believed in and does not wish to forego."<sup>23</sup> The boy refuses to accept that a woman has no penis. He thinks that his mother once had a penis but was castrated by the father. So, if a woman can be castrated then he is in danger, too. As a result, he fills the lack of penis with an fetish object. Freud theorizes the fetish: "vehicle both of denying and of asseverating the fact of on."<sup>24</sup>

In other words, fetishism is the displacement of desire and fantasy onto alternative objects or body parts (eg. a foot fetish or a shoe fetish), in order to obviate a subject's

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<sup>22</sup> Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of The Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, And The Senses* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 22

<sup>23</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Fetishism, Miscellaneous Papers*, 1888-1938. Vol. 5 of *Collected Papers*, (London: Hogarth and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1924-1950) p. 199.

<sup>24</sup> Freud, *Fetishism, Miscellaneous Papers*, p. 203

confrontation with the castration complex. Here I would like to mention that, ‘imaginary order and mirror stage’<sup>25</sup> comes to the surface when fantasies are analyzed. It should be also mentioned that the mirror stage establishes the imaginary order, which is the fundamental narcissism, by which the human subject creates fantasy images of both himself and his ideal object of desire.<sup>26</sup> So, watching a film can be compared with looking at the mirror as a child. So, a film becomes our imaginary order where we create fantasies with full of fetishes. In other words, cinema as fetish somehow is the substitute of our own ‘real world’.

If the psychoanalytical field, which supports Marks idea of fetish and cinema connection, is left, Laura Marks notes: “all fetishes are translations into a material object of some sort of affect [...] Some objects embody memory as well as labor: theories of fetishism describe how a value comes to inhere in objects that is not reducible to commodification [...] fetish works in the same way as the ‘radioactive fossil’, in Deleuze’s casual term for a certain kind of cinematic image.”<sup>27</sup> Fossil is the trace of animal, plant or live organisms that remain from the past. So, they carry or represent past life in or with themselves. They are protected for decades because their bound to the air is all of a sudden cut. This process is similar to photographic process, further to film process. Laura Marks states that “the metaphor of the ‘radioactive fossil’ describes the unsettling quality of certain inexplicable but powerful cinematic images.”<sup>28</sup> Here it can be said that fossil triggers people’s passion for remembrance. So, it is connected to our memory. As much as people try to remember, the more they structure their memory and fill in its gap because memory contains lots of blank moments. In other words, by filling the blank moments with stories memory is built. In our memories objects become meaningful. A glass becomes ‘the glass that was broken when we were kids’. Objects get

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<sup>25</sup> see. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: a selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 1966-2001), p. 1-32.

<sup>26</sup> see. Lacan, *Écrits: a selection*, p. 1-32.

<sup>27</sup> Marks, *The Skin of The Film*, p.80.

<sup>28</sup> Marks, *The Skin of The Film*, p.84.

their meaning from our stories. Or it can be said that an object is meaningful as long as it has a place in our history. A film either fiction or documentary, resembles and mostly reflects our memories. From both sides, the filmmaker and the audience try to fill the blank spots during the action of making the film or watching it. Each uses their own fossils, objects in their personal or collective memory, to fill the black points.

Laura Marks claims that “both fetish and fossil carry within them histories that, once unraveled, make the present untenable.”<sup>29</sup> In other words, they carry memories, like cinema itself. There is just one difference that cinema ties us to the future as well. Deleuze notes cinema does not include any particular time. It contains combination of past, now and future at the same time. According to him, time is perceived through cinema. Deleuze casted the same idea of Bergson about time and memory, truly he developed his ideas. Bergson defines memory as a place where ‘past’ lives in ‘now’. According to Bergson:

Memory, as well as time, is forever growing and ‘pregnant’. Memories are not forgotten, only stored and subject to the whims of perception and recall. Consciousness is similar to time, duration and memory: it is ever frugal, so nothing is "lost." The time and consciousness of yesterday lives on in the time of today. Likewise the frames of a film remain stored after they are seen and there is no absolute present in any one frame. At 1/24 a second a frame is not perceptible to the naked eye. Therefore accumulation plays an integral part in cinema.<sup>30</sup>

The definition of Bergson about memory leads us to the exile condition. There is a tense connection between memory and exile. Thus, cinema as fossil-like and fetish-like

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<sup>29</sup> Marks, *The Skin of The Film*, p.91.

<sup>30</sup> Donato Torano, "Time, Bergson, and the Cinematographical Mechanism." *Offscreen* 5. (accessed March 7, 2013).



medium becomes as exile by itself through the memory practices. For most of the exiles, home becomes a kind of fetish. They dream to go to their home in their memory. In spite of this situation for external exiles, 'time travel' in the memory becomes a powerful notion for internal exiles. So, a film itself can be considered as exile due to intersection between memory and time .

A film captures moments of time and makes the audience to capture it within a period of 90 minutes or 4 hours. The moments structure the narrative of the film which resembles to the structure of the memory. Joanna Zach – Blonska notes that “ our understanding of the past is guided by what amounts to a ‘narrative strategy’. The past is made up of plots we invent in order to ‘shape our confused, formless and in the last resort mute temporal experience’.”<sup>31</sup> So, how a person shapes images in his\her memory to have memoirs, a filmmaker combines images to create a story. As a result, base of a film can be considered as base of the memory. Furthermore, it is the same process for audience, too. An audience should follow narrative, finds the black holes etc. Put it another way, shaped and formed narrative by the filmmaker begins to be deconstructed by audience. Olga Gershenson quotes from David MacDowall: “Films have a disconcerting resemblance to memory.”<sup>32</sup> An exile also remembers certain moments about the past. Then, she\he creates a lifestory from that remembrance by combining plots and filling the black holes that is unremembered moments. So, film can be considered exile in terms of memory.

Additionally, cinema is an exile by itself because of its fetish quality. As I mentioned above, fantasies and fetishes are emerged to each other. Mirror stage which can be considered as cinema itself directs us to the fantasy world. Audiences identify with a character, feel an emotion and become part of the filmic world. Here, of course the

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<sup>31</sup> Joanna Zach-Blonska, “*Memory in Exile: Notes on Milosz, Identity, and Writing*”, in *Realms of exile: Nomadism, Diasporas, and Eastern European Voices*, ed. Domnica Radulescu (Maryland and Oxford: 2002), p. 149.

<sup>32</sup> David Moedowell, 1998, qtd. Olga Gershenson in *Accented Memory: Russian Immigrants Reimagine the Israeli Past*, 2009, par.1.

experience of watching a film can be considered as to be exiled from one's own reality to the film's reality. Here, I would like to mention the 'mimesis' term to have another point of view, which supports the connection between the mirror stage and cinema. Mimesis from Greek *mimēsthai*, 'to imitate', suggests that one represents a thing by acting like it. Through mimesis we can not only understand our world, but create a transformed relationship to it – or restore a forgotten relationship. So, experience of an artist through mimesis can be considered as parallel experience of a child in mirror stage. Moreover, it can be adapted to the experience of the audience. 'Restore a forgotten relationship' becomes important for the experience of exile. This is what an exile does with his/her lost land, memories and emotions. Furthermore, he/she identifies with another 'self' who left in past but still exists. Another interesting similarity between exile condition and film practices is repetition and continuity. Exiles rewind and forward their memory for 'dreaming of homeland, return etc' over and over again. Repetition and continuity are the spinal cord of cinema. In addition, a film is a deterritorialized object and causes its audience to feel deterritorialized which is one of the important notions of exile. Furthermore, a film deterritorializes our own world by recreating, deconstructing, decoding etc. So, it is exilic from the very beginning.

Milan Kundera as an exilic writer notes: "Writing, imagining and capturing people's stories, protecting the personal and historical narrative against oblivion, is a political act. 'Let's not forget'" <sup>33</sup> So, an artist captures until it turns out into a narrative. Later on, it is filmed. And when it reaches to the audience, it becomes another film for everyone because of senses. But, in any way, all process is exilic because the film is 'recreated' over and over again during each process. Yet it loses its territory while touching people.

I tried to analyze exilic condition of cinema itself. Now, I would like to give some information about the notions of exile in cinema. The characteristics of exilic films will be in focus until the end of this chapter. As I mentioned above, Hamid Naficy's theories

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<sup>33</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, trans. Aaron Asher (New York:Harper Perennial, 1996), p. 46.

will be my guide during my writing. It is important to learn how Naficy defines exilic films to understand Andrei Zvyngitsev films clearly.

Critical legacy of 'Third Cinema' of the 1960s now seems to be reclaimed by 'accented cinema' theory. The term was launched in 1968 by the Argentinean filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in a manifesto entitled 'Towards a Third Cinema.' Third Cinema is the expression of a new culture and of social changes. Although Third Cinema has attachment with 'the people' in general, the accented cinema is more attached to specific individuals, ethnicities, nationalities, and identities, and with the experience of deterritorialization itself. According to Naficy, accented cinema is 'both cinema of exile and a cinema in exile.'<sup>34</sup> Deterritorialization plays a big role in this statement. The notion both includes the deterritorialized condition of the exiled artist or the content of the film deals with deterritorialization itself. However, as I mentioned above, deterritorialization of the audience can be added to this list also.

Although Naficy narrows his statement mostly with the mention for exilic directors, it can be said that it can be possible for all artists. Edward Said mentions Hugo of Saint Victor's sentences in his article 'Winter's Soul':

"It is, therefore, a great source of virtue for the practiced mind to learn, bit by bit, first to change about in visible and transitory things, so that afterwards it may be possible to leave them behind altogether. The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Hamid Naficy, *Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.8

<sup>35</sup> Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p. 147.

While being supportive for the note of Naficy, Said's sentence points out the idea of humanities exile condition when has started with Adam and Eve. Moreover, it mentions the deterritorialization on basic level and considers it as a basic condition for all masses. Deterritorialization from one's homeland, which becomes a fetishized place to return in exile condition, is given as necessity for human beings. Besides, Hugo's sentences can be considered as reference for internal exiles, too. Here, fetish stands out once more in terms of Laura Mark's statements about fetishistic condition of cinema. So, cinema's exile condition by itself and exile notion in cinema melts in each other.

If we return to Hamid Naficy's statement, it is seen that the notions of accented cinema has lots of similarities with the condition of exile even though Naficy puts a specific parenthesis for exilic filmmakers:

[...] Many accented films emphasize territoriality, rootedness, and geography. Because they are deterritorialized, these films are concerned with territory and territoriality [...] homeland tends to emphasize boundlessness and timelessness, and it is cathected by means of fetishization and nostalgic longing to the homeland's natural landscape, mountains, monuments, and souvenirs. The representation of life in exile and diaspora, on the other hand, tends to stress claustrophobia and temporality, and it is cathected to sites of confinement and control and to narratives of panic and pursuit.<sup>36</sup>

Different types of accented films are created by diverse experiences of displacement and disparate emphasis on the relationship to place, either home or host societies. It should be remembered that the travelling can be real one or to the self in exile condition. So, it can be said that a film includes both. On one hand, the film material travels by itself. Second, there can be a journey in film's narrative. On the other hand, it's

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<sup>36</sup> Naficy, *Accented Cinema*, p.5.

a voyage for the audience in themselves when they watch a film. But, in any way it is an exile condition for every 'supplemental' of the film in the way of journeying, deterritorialization, fetishistic hesitation etc.

'Journeying', according to Naficy, is a major thematic preoccupation characterizing the accented cinema.<sup>37</sup> Revolving around homeseeking, homelessness and/or homecoming journeys, accented films are deeply concerned with the issues of territoriality, rootedness and geography. Their preoccupation with place is inscribed in three modalities of narrative 'chronotopes' (a term that Naficy borrows from Mikhail Bakhtin) or 'time-space' configurations. Briefly Naficy explains, 'Open' chronotopes, emphasizing boundlessness and timelessness, are usually reserved for the representation of idealized homeland (with a visual emphasis on its nature, landscape, landmarks and ancient monuments). Stressing claustrophobia and temporality, 'closed' chronotopes, on the other hand, are often utilized to depict life in exile and diaspora. 'Third-space' chronotopes involve transitional and transnational sites such as borders, tunnels, seaports, airports, hotels and transportation vehicles, he says.<sup>38</sup> Here, I would like to mention that 'open chronotopes' can be used in films which deal with exile. Instead of having schematic 'separator', it should be mentioned that the lines are blurred in exile condition. First of all, there is traffic between internal and external exiles which will be analyzed in the films of Andrei Zvyngitsev. Second, even an exile stuck in a specific moment what he\she is fond of is return, remember that moment over and over again; they live in a timeless atmosphere because of the remembrance. Moreover, he\she are exiles in present by looking forward to a future. Paul Friedrich in his article *Eastern European and Generic Exile* touches on the experience of an exile. He notes: "the exile struggles to synthesize or at least to accommodate to each other the fractured values of a past and the former home with the future in a new world and, hence, continuously creates personal myths, styles of discourse, and characters for bringing the two lines together."<sup>39</sup> Although

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<sup>37</sup> Naficy, *Accented Cinema*, p.222.

<sup>38</sup> Naficy, *Accented Cinema*, pp. 152-155

<sup>39</sup> Paul Friedrich, "Eastern European and Generic Exile", in *Realms of exile: Nomadism, Diasporas, and Eastern European Voices*, ed. Domnica Radulescu, (Lexington Books: Maryland and Oxford: 2002), p. 160.

the first two types of chronotopes imerges in each other, actually in a film, the third space chronotopes can be also added to the same film. A man can be exiled literally or emotionally from his society, both considered as exile, can be located internal or external shots in a film within a real journey or emotional one. In her article *Exiles on the road: The role of cinematic journeys in the creation of new structures of belonging and cultural knowledge* Tanja Franotović smoothens the thin red line between these cronotopes. She underlines that “ [...] it is possible to be exiled in place, that is, to be at home and to long for other places and other times. It is possible to be forced into external exile and be unable to return and realize that one’s house is not the home that one that hoped for, idealized in the act of memory.”<sup>40</sup> So, in any case he\she can be located interior or exterior in the memory or the filmic world via a vehicle or emotionally. Moreover, all movies, which deal with external exiles need ‘third-space’ chronotopes. There should be a vehicle for journeying. So, ‘third-space’ chronotope can be also adapted to a film. In any way, a film travels in different regions for many years. Finally, it is considered as timeless if its releaseperiod is bounded with the future. Here, audience practices again follow the practices of filmmaking. As Laura Marks mentions: “all cinema has a fetishistic relationship to its object. All cinema is transnational in that its audience will not be able to decode its images perfectly, insofar as they originate from other places and times.”<sup>41</sup> Of course a film can speak to its audience in different ways and in different countries because of audiences interpretation and experiences in life. But, how a film can speak to its audience? Here Naficy has another notion which is epistolarity, which ties exile and film to each other, too.

Janet Gurkin Altman defines epistolarity as: “the use of the letter’s formal properties to create meaning”<sup>42</sup> Epistolarity is an old term which refers to receiving or sending letters. In meanwhile, it includes the act of losing and finding which depends on

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<sup>40</sup> Smieskova, Alena, and Tanja Franotović. "Exiles on the road: The role of cinematic journeys in the creation of new structures of belonging and cultural knowledge." *Across cultures / across centuries – acknowledging the difference* 1. (accessed March 19, 2014).

<sup>41</sup> Marks, *The Skin of The Film*, p.93.

<sup>42</sup> Janet Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), p.4.

the narrative. And of course, writing and reading becomes a part of epistolary films. Naficy divides epistolary films in three different types : film-letters, letter films and telephonic epistles. Briefly, film letter films include letters in the narrative. So, the ‘message’ of the film is set by the letter. However, a film shape up to be the ‘word’ in letter films. The letter can be directed to someone in the narrative or outside the film. The third type, telephonic epistles, refer to technologic devices like telephones, fax machines etc. which are used in the film narrative. As it is seen, a film can speak with its audience in different styles. These information will be necessary to us while analyzing films of Andrei Zvyagintsev, especially *The Banishment*. However, there is an interesting division which strengthens the idea that a film can be considered as exile because of letter-films style. Consequently, a film is the ‘letter’ of any filmmaker as long as their target is the audience. In Naficy’s book, he quoted Solanas’s own sentences from a discussion that took place in UCLA in 1988. Solanas expressed that “ exile is an experience in which one lives expecting and waiting to receive letters.”<sup>43</sup> So, it can be said that there are different sides in film industry to be considered as exile. First of all, a film is exile by itself if we adapt Solanas’s sentence to a film. A film needs to be read by its audience. So, it’s a process of expecting and waiting for a filmmaker. Second, audience expects to watch films, especially from their beloved filmmakers. So, a film becomes exile in the process of waiting and expecting in meanwhile some films have exile theme in their narrative in some common senses.

Additionally, epistolarity becomes important in this chapter because of its connection with exile. According to Naficy, “epistolarity is another chief contributor to the accented cinema’s style [...] Exile and epistolarity are constitutively linked because both are driven by distance, separation, absence, and loss and by the desire to bridge the multiple gaps.”<sup>44</sup> Here, the connection between epistolarity and exile reminds memory, fossil, fetish and psycholanalytical bond between them because they are integrated into each other.

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<sup>43</sup> Naficy, *Accented Cinema*, p.108.

<sup>44</sup> Naficy, *Accented Cinema*, p.101.

To sum up the the idea of cinema as exile, Laura Marks notes that “Andre Bazin (1967) famously described photography as an imprint of the world, a trace of material presence like a death mask. This is the fetish-like\ffossil-like quality that is at work in cinema: it is the trace another material object leaves on the surface of the film.”<sup>45</sup> In any cases, as long as it has a relation with memory, then, it is possible to call cinema as exile. Memory is a system, which has to be filled. Cinema has a narrative, which is structured by fragments. They both need to be in touch with capturing and forgetting, then remembering again according to everybody’s own experience. As Laura Marks says: “When an image is all that remains of a memory, when it cannot be ‘assigned present’ by an act of remembering but simply stares up at one where it has been unearthed, then that image is a fossil of what has been forgotten.”<sup>46</sup> Besides, the definition of Naficy summarizes my approach. So, it can be said that cinema can be considered as exile while facing exile condition in a film. But, the sentence also calls nostalgia in to mind, too. While analyzing Andrei Zvyagintsev’s films, it will be seen that nostalgia is a very common theme.

In all cases, nostalgia has very powerful affect on exile condition. Svetlana Boym states:

“Nostalgia (from *nostos* – return home, and *algia* – longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy. Nostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship. A cinematic image of nostalgia is a double exposure, or a superimposition of two images – of home and abroad, past and present, dream and everyday life. The moment we try to force it into a single image, it breaks the frame

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<sup>45</sup> Marks, *The Skin of The Film*, p.92.

<sup>46</sup> Marks, *The Skin of The Film*, p.85.



or burns the surface.”<sup>47</sup>

As it is seen if the sentence would be fragmented, each word would overlap another side of the exile and film connection. Briefly, loss is the main core of exile. Displacement is mainly mutual in domain of cinema of exile or exile in cinema. ‘Romance with one’s own fantasy’ shifts through mirror stage in psychoanalysis, so it is possible to reach experience of the audience and cinema as ‘mirror’. That is why this combination, discussed in depth above, conveys fantasy for both conditions in cinema and exile. And, of course, fantasies include the fetish. And last, the duality of the nostalgia consistent with the main ideas of Naficy about shared exile notions in cinema. From this point of view, what Edward Said notes about an exile is too nostalgic: “Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted [...] The achievement of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Svetlana, Boym, "Nostalgia." . <http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/n/nostalgia/nostalgia-svetlana-boym.html> (accessed May 21, 2014).

<sup>48</sup> Said, Reflections on Exile and Other Essays, p. 137.

## THE RETURN

*The Return* (2003) directed by Andrei Zvyangitsev starts with the two brothers Andrei and Vanya, ages fifteen and thirteen, at a diving tower with some friends. They all jump but Vanya can not do it. Everybody leaves him who stands alone until his mother comes and takes him home. The unnamed father appears out of nowhere after an absence of twelve years. The brothers are shocked and delighted. The father takes them on a journey when the tension between father and sons builds continually. Head games between father and sons, especially with Vanya, sometimes get psychological. The boys are curious where he was but he never tells. At the end of the movie, death of the father becomes a proof of dissolved Oedipus Complex.<sup>49</sup>

The film is one of the most important examples in New Russian Cinema. Zvyagintsev follows his masters. His film is full of water, rain is one of the characteristics of the film. There are long unbroken silences. The images are strong and always suggest something behind their beauty. However, the film is also important with its context. Exile condition can be seen in every character of the film and becomes into the form with the journey. As it is seen in his next two films, fatherhood and exile are bound to each other with strong ties.

*The Return* opens with a scene of underwater where a boat lies. Then inter title Sunday appears and the story begins. First of all, audience is curious from the beginning and knows some missing parts should be filled during the film. On the other hand, underwater refers to a women womb. One side of the womb refers to the birth and the other carries us to the mother who disappears after ten to fifteen minutes but felt during the whole movie.

After inter title 'Sunday' which becomes a style for the entire film, Vanya appears, later on the father calls him as Ivan, on a high diving tower, afraid to jump into the water. If he climbs down, his friends will laugh at him, and he chooses to stay on the

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<sup>49</sup> see. Lacan, *Ecrits: a selection*, p. 1-32.

top. He cries until his mother comes to rescue him. Vanya and his mother has strong relation which causes immaturity in him. He is still his mother's little baby. When she asks him to go home, he doesn't want because he is afraid of to be called as pig. But, his mother insists and promises to keep it as secret. However, Vanya replies ' But you will know. You will think I am a stupid pig' Suddenly he cries more and his mother expresses he should jump when he is ready. After all, Vanya is in her mother's arms and cries out ' Mama, I am really afraid of sitting here all alone. I would die if you didn't come'. This scene shows the power and importance of the mother in Vanya's life. Mother is there to protect him. The scene is supported by the usage of the water. As I mentioned above, water refers mother's womb. As a result, Vanya afraids to jump into the womb. It is still so complicated for him. However, his brother Andrei jumps immediately. This is the sharp difference between two brothers underlined from the beginning. During the whole movie, Vanya resists to the father although Andrei obeys. Andrei is more mature than Vanya because he is the big brother. In Vanya and Andrei's condition, Andrei takes the role of the father because their father is absent and Vanya needs a father figure. Before appearance of their father, Andrei, who plays with his friend in a building and not a 'pig', tries to catch Ivan to their house. This short scene also proves their roles in life.

The father appears on Monday. The whole film takes place in seven days which is a similar timing to creation of the world in the Bible. Ivan and Andrei enter the room to check whether he is real or not. When they open the door of the room, the sleeping father is seen on the bed. The mis-en-scene bless the father by itself. He sleeps on a silk covered bed, sun shines over his half-naked body and plume flits on his pillow. Terence McSweeney writes on his article: "he sleeps peacefully in a deliberate reconstruction of Mantegna's 'The Lamentation over the Dead Christ'." <sup>50</sup> So, return of the father is blessed from the first moment he is seen. He is blessed psychologically and religiously. After seeing violence in children, for sure, audience would approve the need of a father. On the other hand, God and the unnamed father reflect each other from the beginning.

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<sup>50</sup> Terence, McSweeney, "The End Of Ivan's Childhood in Andrei Zvyagintsev's *The Return* (2003)." *International Journal of Russian Studies* 1. (accessed December 25, 2013).

After using a religious motif in the film, Zvyagintsev continues to give two more shots one by one. Ivan and Andrei runs upstairs to understand if the father is real or not. They open the old box immediately to check some old photographs. There is a photo in a book in which Abraham is seen sacrificing Isaac. Here, another religious motif leads us psychoanalysis. Oedipus complex is in the center of the movie. Ivan will call his father as father after causing his death. According to Old Testament, Yakub is called as Israel after winning the fight with God or the Angel. So, Andrei and Ivan should kill the father and overcome his rules to become adults or to be men. Here, it should not be forgotten that Ivan is more rebellious than Andrei who obeys his father's rules during the journey without questioning. Although Andrei smiles after seeing their family picture in the book, Ivan suddenly closes the book. This scene combines with the scene on the table which reminds the Last Supper of Jesus. The father, the mother, the grandmother, Andrei and Ivan are sitting on the table for dinner. Father sits alone in the middle and the rest surrounds him. This is the first time they sit as a family. The father serves them wine ,which means blood of Jesus in Bible, with a speech on his last supper. Moreover, he immediately starts to give lessons to the kids. When Andrei wants to have one more glass of wine, he refuses him sharply. Last supper and the dinner of the family has a common sense in the rules of the father. Jesus tried to teach and the named father tries to teach now. They both make people mature. Here, another connection makes the whole film stronger. Jesus lived and died in the earth. However, his home was in the sky, next to his Father-The Lord. In whole Yuhanna chapter, Jesus says: "I will go next to my father, but you can not come right now."<sup>51</sup>

In other words, he was somehow an exile in this earth. The unnamed father in the film seems more exilic after all these religious motives. Moreover, he still feels in exile even he comes back to his house where everything changed a lot after twelve years, at least children are grown up. Robert T. Tally Jr. gives Adonro's return as an example to continual exiles. He mentions that "postwar Germany was nothing like the country of his youth."<sup>52</sup> So, he remained as exile throughout his life. This example supports internal

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<sup>51</sup> Kitabi Mukaddes, New Testimony, Yuhanna (Istanbul: Kitabi Mukaddes Şirketi, 1993), pp.93-118.

<sup>52</sup> Robert T. Tally Jr. "Mundus Totus Exilium Est." *Transnational Literature* 3. (accessed February 13, 2014).

exile condition. Here it should be mentioned that mother is in exile too. Adriana Searle states: “standing at a window, taking a photograph of what lies outside, reduplicates a sense of exteriority, and of being one whose sense of place is interior, inside the body, inside one’s own language, inside oneself, behind the eye that reaches out”<sup>53</sup> Here, the sense of identity of the exile is internal, as the only place in which it can exist. Like the example, the mother is seen thoughtful on the veranda of the house by herself. Moreover, when she and her husband are together on the bed, she seems moody. There isn’t any touchy, in other words emotionally, moment between the couple before having sex. So, it seems she just obeys the rules of society and her husband, which is generally a common act for woman in Russian Cinema although there are periods when women portrayed independent and strong. Fiona Hay claims: “ Although by law equal in their right to work, women traditionally have not been equal at home. This is a facet of Russia’s historically patriarchal society in which women are subjected to the rule of the husband or the eldest male in the family”<sup>54</sup>

Internal exile becomes external exile while Andrei, Ivan and the father go on a journey. Children think that they are going to go to fishing, which is a reference to Jesus Fish from the bible. However, the father has other plans. He is on a quest to retrieve something buried on the island. During the whole journey spectator always speculates whether he is in military service or is he a criminal? Most probably it’s the first time in their lives, Andrei and Ivan became apart from their mother. That’s why, external and internal exile emerges during the trip. Somehow the father banishes his children from their mother. Of course he does not do it with a specific purpose, but this is felt by the kids, especially by Ivan. So, they are on the edge of Oedipus complex now. They will start to enter to the symbolic, which will carry them to the Oedipal process. Normally a child faces with the process at the end of mirror stage. However, Ivan and Andrei could not make it because of lack of the father.

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<sup>53</sup> Adriana Searle, 2000, qtd. Rosemary Betterton, 2004, “Spaces of Memory: Photographic Practices of Home and Exile in the work of Breda Beban.” *Journal N.Paradoxa* 13. (accessed 7 February 2013).

<sup>54</sup> Fiona Hay, "The Portrayal of Women in Russian Cinema Today: Some Preliminary Observatons." *The UC Undergraduate Journal of Slavic and East/Central European Studies* 4. (accessed December 16, 2013).

When the journey starts the distance between the characters becomes obvious. Edward Said states that “ Exile originated in the age-old practice of banishment. Once banished, the exile lives an anomalous and miserable life, with the stigma of being the outsider.”<sup>55</sup> In other words, alienation becomes on its highest levels. In *The Return*, Andrei and Ivan become apart because of their attitude toward their father. Andrei is the obedient although Ivan is the rebellious one. Moreover, they do not know how to act with a father.

They have never experienced a journey with their father. So, it's a new process in their lives. But, it is the same for the father as well. He has to be father during the journey. He has to teach them the ‘Law’. As it is seen, three of them are outsiders of this new journey and has to deal with their new identities as father and sons.

During the whole journey Andrei sits next to his father who watches over Ivan from his mirror. At the beginning of the trip the father insists on Ivan to call him as father. Ivan is seen on the mirror with a sad face and starts to follow the flowing road. This small scene is enough to summarize the film. Ivan and his ‘other’ on the mirror. As I mentioned above, he is on the last part of the mirror stage. Moreover, he will put it behind by his father who pushes him with his authority. Moreover, road flows like a river and this image reflects Ivan himself. He feels as a lonely, exile boy, looking for a love. Although Ivan struggles with his father, Andrei immediately identifies with him. The father sends Andrei to find some lunch for them. But, Andrei gets a sandwich by himself and having fun by watching other people. The father gets angry with him and Andrei immediately replies ‘Ok daddy. I won’t do it again’. After all, they go to a restaurant together. Ivan drops a piece of bread to the floor, which makes his father angry. The father insists on taking the bread but Ivan resists by saying they can throw it to the garbage. However, the father wants him to eat it and holds Ivan’s arm when he wants to leave the table. Ivan and his father look each other for a second and Ivan says ‘Ok. Dad’ then he murmurs ‘father’. After this discussion, the father teaches to Andrei how to pay

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<sup>55</sup> Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p. 144

the bills as a 'man'. It is obvious how the attitudes of two boys toward their father, who tries to teach them 'manhood', differ.

The father wants them to return to the home in the following scene. Ivan and Andrei are beaten up by kids when the father calls someone who is not known like other unclear past of the father. The father finds the children and wants his sons to hit them. However, Andrei and Ivan can not do it. After all, the father asks them to get their stuff and go back to their mother. Andrei says 'but we would go to the waterfalls'. When father says that they can go later Ivan suddenly replies 'when? After 12 years?' When the brothers are in the bus Ivan returns to Andrei and says 'he doesn't need us and only stupid kids like you can not see it'. So, this is the moment that they are left by their fathers again. However, the father returns immediately and asks them to come with him for a longer journey because he has to go somewhere for 3 days. Now, it is the time for Ivan to refuse by claiming that their mother waits for them to return on next day. But father says 'what? Don't you want to have three more days with your father? Or do you want to wait for an additional twelve years?'. These scene shows struggle between the father and boys. As much as they make the way long, the father teaches more. So, the external journey and internal journey develops parallel to each other. They become more exiled from their self and learn how to be with a father as they become far away from their house which refers to 'mom' for them. That's why Ivan mentions that their mother waits for them. This scene by itself shows how a father makes his children exiled – both internal and external - by taking them far away from their mother. As it is seen, the mother is everywhere in the film. Another example clears the role of the mother in the film. After father takes the unknown box from sailors, the three stay in a forest, build tents and enjoy fishing. When they leave the place, Ivan mutters in the car and the father leaves him on a bridge. Ivan stays there until it rains. The father and Andrei comes back to pick him. Ivan begins to shout in the car 'Why did you come back? You don't need us. Everything was perfect before you came. We were happy with or mother and grandmother. Why did you take us? Answer!' And the father replies 'Your mother asked me to do so.' Ivan surprised 'My mother asked, ha? And you?' When father says that he also wanted to spend some time with them Ivan replies again 'Why? Did you want it to vituperate us?' It's the time that the pain of the father seen in his eyes. But, he still does

not show his emotions and ask Ivan to change his clothes. Yana Hashamova refers to Lacan for this scene: “to evoke Lacan again, the father normally functions as the third term, interrupting the bond mothers form with their children. The father of *The Return* arrives at home to separate the boys from their mother, thus introducing them to the Law.”<sup>56</sup> So, the father makes exile children from their mother. Here, it should be added that the mother is felt in the film although she is not seen that is told above. It opens another view to the film which can be discussed in the context of post Soviet films. Russians always called their land as ‘motherland’ although they ruled by patriarchy. They always needed a leader as father to feel the power and unity. However, their fathers, like Stalin, tortured hem. But, still they needed because of psychoanalytical reasons. They need a father as a nation to enter the world’s game – symbolic order- by him. They can be part of the world by helping of the father. That is why Putin became the new leader of the nation after collapse of Soviet Union. In the new society, called as Putin era, capitalism increased. In the capitalist world, countries usually defined as fatherland. So, Russia began to call as fatherland. In other words, mother replaced by the father. It is seen somehow in psychoanalysis as well. A child directs his attention to the father to enter to the Symbolic order. So, in *The Return* the mother of the children opens some space to the father. She is the one who wants the father to take the part in his children’s lives.

Ella Taylor of the LA Weekly was also concerned: “*The Return* adds up to an implacable discounting of maternal love, but also, perhaps, of Mother Russia (enfeebling) into Father Russia (character building). I’d have thought this, of all nations, would have had it up to here with tough love from strong leaders.”<sup>57</sup> That is a important explanation for the parents position in *the Return*. During this exchange period, the children can not easily stabilize their position like the society in Russia. All the gaps about the father in the film makes children to feel deterritorialized which is another notion of exile. They are

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<sup>56</sup> Yana Hashamova (2010), “Resurrected Fathers and Resuscitated Sins: Homosocial Fantasies in *The Return* and *Koktebel*”, in *Cinematernity, Fathers and Sons in Soviet and Post Soviet Film*, eds. Helena Goscilo and Yana Bloomington and Indianapolis: Hashamova, Indiana University Press, p.182.

<sup>57</sup> Ella Taylor. "Prodigal Dad: Filial Ecstasy and Agony in *The Return* ." *L.A. Weekly*, February 12, 2004.



not with their mother whom they belong. Thus, they are on the way with their father who they do not know. They do not know where was he and will be. Here, it is important to mention the unknown past of Soviet era, especially Stalin period. Harriet Murav takes attention to the problem of the gaps in Russian history narratives. She claims that Soviet era history was full of blank spots because of the peculiarity of the Soviet relationship with history in general and the authorities' unwillingness to confront certain aspects of Soviet history in particular. This argument can be supported by an example from the film in which father finds the buried box. This box remains secret when the film ends. Once again Terence McSweeney note that "If we approach the text as an allegory the hidden secret might be connected to the enduring legacy of communism, perhaps the repressed secrets of the gulag about which the country finds it difficult, even now, to come to terms with. Russia's perceptions of how the Communist era and in particular how Stalin should be remembered has been frequently debated on television and even in Russian courts in the last decade."<sup>58</sup> So, like Stalin era, in *the Return* there are hidden secrets that we never learn especially about the father. This unknown situation makes children like leaves in the wind. They are here and nowhere. Even this unknown situation, unknown past of the father makes them exile by itself. And the father's appearance causes the banishment. State of lack of information directs them to a real state for the oedipal period. When they build a tent in the forest to stay for a night, Ivan and Andrei talks about their father at night in the tent. Ivan is suspicious about him although Andrei has no doubts. Ivan says that maybe he is a mafia and will cut their throats. After this conversation, Andrei begins to have fun of Ivan's idea about their father. However, Ivan insists by saying they do not know him, so they can not be even sure that he is their real father. Suddenly, Andre starts to shout him by saying not to be stupid. After all, their mother said he is their father. In this scene, it is possible to say that Ivan is in the stage of Oedipus Complex. He is afraid of castration as well.

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<sup>58</sup> Terence, McSweeney, "The End Of Ivan's Childhood in Andrei Zvyagintsev's *The Return* (2003)." *International Journal of Russian Studies* 1. (accessed December 25, 2013).

According to psychoanalytic theory, Oedipal stage refers to the symbolic death of the father. However, in the Return the father really dies at the end. When two brothers go for fishing, the father wants them to come in about an hour. However, Ivan the rebellious wants to go far when they are on the boat. It's almost 7 p.m. when two brothers come back to the seaside. The father gets angry with Andrei who should take the responsibility as an older one. When he beats Andrei, Ivan holds his stolen knife to his father and threatens to kill him. He shouts that he could love his father if he were be another person. Then, he starts to run into the forest. In the following shot, the father runs after Ivan calling him as 'my son' and Andrei tries to catch them by shouting as 'Father'. In the end, Ivan climbs to a tower where reminds the diving tower at the beginning. The end of the film suddenly resonates the beginning. Ivan climbs at the top with lots of fear and tries to avoid his father to come up. He claims he can jump if he reaches to him. But, the father doesn't listen to him. When his hands reaches to the last wood, he falls by saying 'my son' and he dies. This moment clarifies the father as good one who tries to save his son. Besides, all of a sudden father's non existence makes him real, that's why Ivan shouts as father when the sea takes the boat with the dead body of his father. "The true function of the Father [...] is fundamentally to unite (and not to set in opposition) a desire and the Law." Further, Lacan asks: "What is a Father" and (following Freud) replies, "It is the dead Father."<sup>59</sup>After father's death Andrei takes father's role by giving orders to Ivan.

In domain of psychoanalysis, if two brothers lose their father, older one becomes the new 'father'. So, Andrei, with his father's watch on his wrist, starts to drive the car. Audience can not see Ivan as a mature man, however. When two brothers gets into the car Ivan says his feet are wet. It's the time for Andrei to give orders, so he wants him to get off his shoes. Moreover, father becomes real because they see their pictures in the car. At the end pictures from the voyage is given in which Ivan and Andrei smile most of the time. Missing part becomes completed after father's death. However, photographs represent a past that can never be reached again. Rosemary Betterton quotes from Roland Barthes: "unique quality of any photograph is that, unlike other iconic signs, it

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<sup>59</sup> Lacan, 1988, qtd. in Cinepaternity, 2010, p.177.

provokes an awareness of ‘having been there’: the photograph is an illogical conjunction of between the here-now and the there-then.”<sup>60</sup> So, even became matured, Andrei and Ivan will have connection with their father via photographs which are the proof of the journey and the period spent with their father. They are somehow proof of their father’s existence although father is not seen in the photographs of the journey. It can be said that this is the side effect of ‘real’ Oedipus complex. Moreover, their exile condition will continue whenever they look at pictures. They will get the feeling of the father from the journey’s photographs when they live now. In other words, they will still be there and here at the same time whenever they look at the photos. But, here it should be mentioned that ego is structured because of the feeling of guilt. So, it is for sure that Ivan and Andrei will develop their ego because of their guilt. Although the kids exile situation continues, father’s is passed now. When his dead body is taken by the sea in a boat, he finally reaches to his mother’s belly. It is the classical usage of the sea in art as mother’s matrix. Moreover, according to religion he is baptized. So, it refers to resurrection in the field of psychoanalysis and religion. And resurrection refers to return of the mainland – to the garden of Eden again. In other words, exile condition ends.

In conclusion; Russia is full of exiles in its history. Both political internal and external exiles structures Russian art. Some experienced external exile and used different forms of art to express themselves. Some of them went to Siberia to death under the name of exile. And it is possible to say that communist era was an exile condition by its intellectual pressure. One way or another, Russia today is in an identity crisis. After collapse of Soviet Union, they try to figure out what a nation is. Even this questioning proves the exiled situation of people in Russia. Each kind of identity crisis brings the feeling of exile. It can be social identities or sexual identities. It can be analyzed in the field of psychoanalysis or politics. But, after millennium the form of exile changed too. If someone is marginalized from a group or a society because of his\her thoughts or choices, it means he\she is at the edge of experiencing exile. In *The Return*, Zvyngitsev goes in deep to the state of exile by touching it psychoanalytic, religious and

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<sup>60</sup> Roland Barthes, 1981, qtd. in Rosemary Betterton, “Spaces of Memory: Photographic Practices of Home and Exile in the work of Breda Beban.” *Journal N.Paradoxa* 13. (accessed 7 February 2013).

philosophical terms. Moreover, his background brings another layer to the front; social and political structure of Russian society. All characters represent another state of *The Banishment*. The mother refers to the mother Russia except its function in psychoanalysis, father represents the leader who Russia is longing except his function in psychoanalysis in the concept of Oedipus complex. Ivan and Andrei are the children of Soviet Russia where is structured under the shadow of tsar. But, Ivan and Andrei are children who need their father to adapt to the social world by becoming apart from their mother. All the characters of the film need the father figure to overcome Oedipus complex by killing him. However, another state of exile starts for them after killing their father physically. So, one way or another exile is a human condition which ends only by death. That's why only father becomes free when he is dead. He returns to his own paradise where he belongs eventually. It should not be forgotten that longing for a homeland, desire of return is the main topics of exile. At the end of the day, all human being try to return to their mother's womb originally.

## THE BANISHMENT

It was almost unbelievable that out of disaster  
a family could become more truly a family,  
out of disgrace and pain could become more  
proudly and irresistibly a family.

William Saroyan<sup>61</sup>

*The Banishment* (2007) is based on William Saroyan's novel *The Laughing Matter*, published in 1954. The novel is too gloomy which is not a standard for Saroyan. It tells the story of Evan Nazareus, who goes with his wife Swan and his two children, Red and Eva, to a countryside where his brother Dade has a domain. The crisis appears in Nazareus family when Swan tells Evan that she is pregnant, but from someone else. Although Swan does not want an abortion, her husband Evan insists on it. After all, Swan dies because of the abortion. Dade makes the funeral arrangements and he also dies on the way back from the cemetery with the secret of the note that left by Swan. In the note, it is understood that she committed suicide with the painkillers that the doctor gave her after the abortion. Dade had also hidden from Evan that Swan had formerly tried to kill herself. Meanwhile, Evan returns to his home to find his colleague whom he suspects of having an affair with Swan. But, the only truth he is faced with is that his friend was taking care of his wife because he knew her psychological condition. Evan dies in a car accident on the way back to the countryside to pick up his children.

Adapting William Saroyan's novel *The Laughing Matter*, Zvyagintsev preserves telling details about a specific period and time. Besides, the setting of the film like the architecture, type of phones and cars etc., gives the feeling that something is lost in time. There are cars and guns, but no clocks or other obvious references to a specific time.

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<sup>61</sup> William Saroyan, *The William Saroyan Reader* (New York: Barricade Books, 1994), p. 361

Although the film follows the basic line of the novel, there are also several differences. For instance, in the novel, Evan is a more caring father compared to Alex. Moreover, the mother called Vera is presented as a saint although Swan has some psychological problems. It is possible to mention other differences but Zvyagintsev's choice of similar narrative to Saroyan reminds exile condition. Saroyan is the child of an exiled family who was born in USA. That's why his stories are full of memoires with his family and their exile condition. Zvyagintsev is not an exiled filmmaker but he was born in a country that is isolated from time to time in history and exile was a dominant issue in the memories of the Russian society. Besides, troubled family holds in common in his three films. *The Banishment* seems to follow *The Return* in terms of its thematic development. Once again the story is focused on the theme of fatherhood and parental love although it is also about the relationship of Alex with his wife Vera.

*The Banishment* opens up with a scene in which an old tree waggles by soft wind in the middle of nowhere. The silence is broken by a fast car passing by. A tree traditionally refers to family and it's roots, even uprooted families draw their family trees to acknowledge their history. So, the film gives clues about its narrative from the beginning. After discovering the story of the family, the tree appears once more at the end of the movie. However, towards to the end of the film the main character Alex sits there with full of regret because the family tree has broken that will be analyzed step by step.

First shot of the film can be viewed as a mark to the exile condition in terms of what Bakhtin called cronotope, then Naficy used in his theory of Accented Cinema. Bakhtin defines chronotopes as a unit of analysis for studying language according to the ratio and characteristics of temporal and spatial categories represented by that language. Naficy adopted the definition as cinematic chronotopes. According to him, "accented films encode, embody, and imagine the home, exile, and transnational sites in certain privileged chronotopes that link the inherited space-time of the homeland to the

constructed space-time of the exile and diaspora”<sup>62</sup> It can be said that chronotopes function as organizers. Naficy divides chronotopes in three categories; ‘closed’ chronotopes that emphasize claustrophobia and temporality, refer to life in exile. On the other hand, ‘open’ chronotopes, emphasizing boundlessness and timelessness, are usually used for the representation of idealized homeland (with a visual emphasis on its nature, landscape, landmarks and ancient monuments). And, ‘Third-space’ chronotopes, involve transitional and transnational sites such as borders, tunnels, seaports, airports, hotels and transportation vehicles. Although Naficy divides chronopes into categories, these three chronotopes can be used together as well. Chronotopes are important in the film because the director prefers to show two different locations. One of them is the homeland, and the other is where Alex is exiled. However, Vera is an exile in both locations due to her psychological condition. Besides, apart from visual references, chronotopes categorize internal condition of exiles, too. So, each of them function to sleuth the traces of exile in the film. Following to Naficy’s categories, prologue of the film is organized as ‘open chronotope’ because of the usage of the nature, the tree that is equal to an ancient monument. But, importantly a family tree refers to an idealized home as the families are idealized in societies and in the memory of the exile. Eventually, later on it will be understood that the tree is on the way of Alex’s family house. It should be underlined that Zvyngitsev uses all three types of the organizer in *The Banishment*. For instance, next scene signifies closed form chronotope.

The car that passed by the tree goes very fast in the empty streets of the industrial district in the city. An injured man Mark, who is the brother of Alex, seeks solace from him. The film extends *the Return* in many details like the rain. There is a heavy rain outside during the conversation of the two brothers. While Alex is taking care of Mark’s wound, they talk about the family house in the countryside. Alex has just returned home from where he worked in need to make money for his family. The brothers proceed to discuss work. From the conversation it is understood that two brothers spent their childhood far away from the city. The question of Mark about returning to the father’s

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<sup>62</sup> Naficy, *Accented Cinema*, p.152

house gives clues about their uncomfortable situation in the city. Moreover, in the first shot Mark, whose wound can refer to his broken soul, drives the car to the city. All these information emphasizes their life in the city. That is to say, the scene is developed as one of the examples for close chronotopes.

Mark suggests to Alex to go to the father's house with his wife and two children. Along with his advice, Mark is characterized as a father figure for Alex from the very beginning of the movie. Anyway, he will give more advice to Alex when he figures out the secret and will take care of all the process after Vera's death. So, he is a father who gives advices, rules and solves problems. Moreover, he is the one who stands in between the symbolic order and the children. As a result, the family takes the train to the countryside. Before considering the scene according to its approach to genders, it is important to touch on the transportation that is one of the important characteristics of the film. The main car travels around the city at the beginning. Then, except the train they get in, other trains pass by in different scenes. The bicycle of the postman, the car of the old farmer etc. emphasize the feeling of journey. As I mentioned before, accented cinema, used by Hamid Naficy, and exile are strongly bound to each other. Naficy states that "there are the important transitional and transnational places and spaces, such as borders, tunnels, seaports, airports, and hotels and vehicles of mobility, such as trains, buses, and suitcases that are frequently inscribed in the accented films [...] Journeys of and struggles over identity."<sup>63</sup> First of all, the usage of such vehicles projects third type chronotopes, especially if the context is exile. Each place that is passed refers to an identical transformation. Besides, each of them supports the exile condition of a character like the hotel where Mark stays. And the empty train station becomes a kind of a border for Alex when he struggles with himself about what to do with Vera. On top of that, the train station connects his homeland to the city where he lives. And for Vera, the whole situation is a struggle over her identity. Her alienation in the marriage and class differences between Alex and herself are the main reasons of her identity crisis that will deeply be dealt during the writing. That is why Alex and Vera sit in silence on the train

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<sup>63</sup> Naficy, *Accented Cinema*, p.5.



and their face shades when the train enters a tunnel. They are apart from each other and doubled. In other words, it can be said that *The Banishment* is more about the sense of getting stuck in a devouring place like the industrial city where the couple becomes strangers to each other. Or the paternal house where they made a settlement, paid it heavily with death and guilt. Finally, forms of chronotopes establish exile condition in the film externally and internally. Although examples are narrowed, it is possible to say that they will continue to form the film from the beginning till the end. But, it is just one of the bases in the film in terms of exile.

In the train, the son Kirill sits next to his father while Eva, the daughter, lies on her mother's legs. The scene shows the division between masculinity and femininity in both ways; psychoanalysis and social perception. 'Girls with mothers, boys with fathers' is an old traditional expression in countries that have integration difficulties with westernization in their history like Russia. It should be remembered that Vera has only her mother's pictures although Alex has his father's. So, it is a tradition transferred by previous generation to Kirill and Eva. Furthermore, according to psychoanalysis, boys identify with their father and girls follow their mother although they face with some psychological stages like Oedipus Complex that is reversed in the film by killing the unborn baby. But, in male dominant societies people have other problems instead of their gender. However, all these divisions and categorizations cause woman to feel exiled in society. Feminist critic Shari Benstock states that "women in male-dominant societies are in fact exiled, marginalized, she uses also the word 'expatriated' as their values have no place in the terrain of patriarchy."<sup>64</sup> So, even if most people do not face with external exile they are internally exiled, especially woman because of their gender. This is one of the reasons of Vera's exile condition, which is supported by the use of photographs. Even, Alex's reaction to Vera after figuring out the betrayal proves exile condition due to discrimination. What would be Vera's response if Alex had an affair? First of all, neighbors would try to convince Vera to accept the situation. So, originally Vera is exiled like women in general.

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<sup>64</sup> Shari Benstock, 'Expatriate Modernism: Writing on the Cultural Rim', in *Women's Writing in Exile*, ed. Mary Lynn Broe (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p.20.

When they finally arrive at the paternal house, they all try to cognize it. Alex begins to remove wooden screens from windows that is how light comes into the house. In other words, ‘dead house’ radiates or becomes a living space again. The Banishment dislocates the family from its home. Alex came to the industrial city from where he grew up. Then, he always travels to other cities, maybe even countries, to find a job. And he finally returns to his father’s house. So, eventually, he is an exiled man both externally and internally. His life is based on exile condition. Every member of the family tries to overcome their alienation that is also between Alex and Vera. That’s why, especially for Vera, Alex became a stranger in their marriage that is the basic exile condition in Vera’s life. Discovery continues with a family walk to the small church and later on they sit under the shadow of a tree. Kirill asks his father the story of the dry fountain he saw and Alex replies ‘ It used to run under our house and fall into the valley’. Then, when Kirill asks whether he saw it or not, he gives a positive answer. The conversation between father and son reminds ‘the memory transfer’. Alex remembers the past that cannot be reached again. So, one of the characteristics of exile comes out. The vehicles that made possible their journey both externally and internally, remembering the past means journey in time and space. In her article *Memory in Exile: Notes on Milosz, Identity, and Writing* Joanna Zach-Blonska states: “Yet the memory of an exile is constantly disrupted by the need to ‘translate’ the experience of the past in order to retrieve the self.”<sup>65</sup> During the process of remembering, exile catches the details of the past like Alex does because they position themselves in those small moments to remember their feeling which is already lost. Actually, this is what they do not want to lose; themselves. Additionally, the scene refers to drought relations between the couple. Hence, after Vera’s death water will run out under the house again as a result of rain. Alex who was oblivious and loveless, faces the fact after losing his beloved wife.

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<sup>65</sup>Joanna Zach-Blonska (2002), ‘Memory in Exile:Notes on Milosz, Identity, and Writing’, in *Realms of exile: Nomadism, Diasporas, and Eastern European Voices*, ed. Domnica Radulescu, Lexington Books, Maryland and Oxford, p. 152.

The tension between the couple continues when they come back from their short trip, expressively when Vera shouts to Eva almost for nothing. After seeing dried flower in the kitchen, she runs to the veranda and cries. Another drought hits her face as it is the reflection of her soul. Similar to *The Return*, the family has their dinner at night and Alex serves them. They look like a happy family while the camera angles set outside that creates suspense and distrust about the image of happiness. While putting Eva and Kirill to bed, one of the kids ask why it smells very bad. However, Alex replies with another question: is there a bad smell? Alex has lost his sense of smell which underlines his psychological condition, too. Ultimately, the night brings the fact that Vera is pregnant. The other side of the coin shines and the imitation of a peaceful family is ruined with Vera's surprising announcement. Vera says she is going to have a child in one's cups and add that it is not from Alex. After silence, Alex runs into the forest. The rest of the film shifts through issues raised from trust, betrayal and the pain that leads everybody to tragic consequences. According to Naficy, "Paranoia, one of the disease of exilic existence that can distort vision."<sup>66</sup> It is the exact condition of Alex until he meets with Robert. He does not know what to do with this knowledge. He has conflicts and anger. He has to decide what to do. That's why he calls Mark -father- to take his advice. Paranoia of Alex strengthens when the phone rings. Besides, Kirill tells him that Robert was in the house while he was away from home. As an exile character, Alex's internal exile becomes stronger. He is faced with unknown out of his world. This new situation is unfamiliar to him. So, the experience itself makes him exiled once again. Furthermore, according to Lacan, in psychosis the dominant aspect is paranoid knowledge that is associated with systematic identification. Paranoid knowledge refers to the behaviour of the subject toward its 'other', which gives the mirror stage its paranoid status. It is the fear, alienation, suspense, aggression of an infant towards its reflection on the mirror.<sup>67</sup> So, it is possible to claim that all humans are paranoid because we are affected by the sense of 'other' that influences our thoughts and actions. Yet if all humans are paranoid,

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<sup>66</sup> Naficy, *Accented Cinema*, p.174.

<sup>67</sup> Lacan, *Ecrits: a selection*, pp. 18-28

then exile is the main human condition of life. Besides, mirror stage is where condition of exile is perceived.

Alex's paranoid condition changes the perspective of the film from husband and wife to the relationship of the two brothers; Alex and Mark. Here another similarity between *The Return* and *The Banishment* appears. Relationship between gloomy brother Mark and Alex reminds Ivan's and Andrei's characters in *The Return*. As I mentioned above, as long as paranoia increases and Alex feels more exiled, he takes refuge with Mark like Andrei became a father figure for Ivan after their father's death. Somehow Mark represents a safe home for him like a safe port. The photos on the wall of the house points out both Mark's happy family before his wife and children left him. Add to that, photo of Mark and Alex with their father. There is a photo next to it in which Alex, the newborn Kir and Vera is shown. So, all the photos express past happiness when children were happy with their fathers. Alex needs Mark in order to remember the happy past. This is because all these families are broken currently like the family of Alex. Or Mark is separated from his wife and does not see his children. According to John Berger, "an émigrés condition, for us an exile, can be perfectly defined by alienation. Since the beginning of 1900s, there were two hopes; one has been love and the other was historical. Each émigré knew in their heart impossibility of the return."<sup>68</sup> First of all, Alex becomes alienated because his ideal family life is deconstructed. Secondly, as Berger notes romantic love in modern life unifies two people who are roofless. It is true that Vera and Alex are devoid couple; one from the father as it is seen when Vera shows only the picture of her mother to Robert, and Alex's father is dead. So, they were a suitable couple for Berger's definition. However, their illusion collapsed that caused the loss of hope. Only Alex believes that they can become a real family again if Vera accepts the abortion. However, Alex's hope causes an infinite separation. So, at the end of the movie Alex remains 'homeless' again. Besides, one cannot be sure if they would be a family again. As Berger claims, even if the return is psychically possible, it means asking for

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<sup>68</sup> Berger, *And our faces, my heart, brief as photos*, p. 73.

impossible in reality because everything changes in time. Impossibility of return is another notion of exile as it is mentioned previous chapters.

Abortion becomes another phenomenon in the film. Before taking the decision, Alex goes to the farm of the old man with Eva and Kirill. While Vera is watching them on the window, she seems so lonely. It is the first time that the kids hang out with their father. It can be suggested that the father separates kids from their mother for the first time. So, he banishes them or to put it the psychoanalytical way, he introduces them to the symbolic order. Meanwhile, Vera, whose story is explained at the end of the film via flashback, is a misty figure. She seems like a saint and a sufferer. When local Victor who is an old friend of Alex, and his family visit their house, the wife of the Victor and Vera talks in the kitchen. Suddenly, the wife says that they should have three children because three is the lucky number. Here, of course she talks in terms of religious beliefs because she emphasizes that God loves trinity. Usage of religious references is another shared characteristic of *The Return* and *The Banishment*. However, in his previous film *Zvyagintsev* chose to bless the father instead of the mother. Vera's image of purity and innocence causes to wish that she lies or she is with a fatherless child. The second opportunity reminds Virgin Mary which does not seem as a possibility. But, the puzzle, which is tried to be completed by children when Vera was having her abortion, strengthen the religious symbols in the film which will be analyzed according to storytelling order.

Returning to progress of the story, Kirill and the daughter of the Victor talk about their parent's relationship. They try to understand why they fight and have unanswered questions. They make effort to figure out adult's engagement that is unfamiliar to them. So, they feel alienation as children. In adult's world, they are exiled. Thus, in her book entitled 'Sınırlar ve Hayaletler' Nermin Saybaşı quotes John Lockes statement. According to Locke," children as voyagers step in a world that they do not know anything about it."<sup>69</sup> (qtd. in Saybaşı, 2011, p.154) So, it is possible to perceive children

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<sup>69</sup> John Locke, 1998, qtd. Nermin Saybaşı, 2011, Sınırlar ve Hayaletler: Görsel Kültürde Göç Hareketleri, trans. Bülent Doğan, *Metis Yayınları*, p. 154, Istanbul

as exiles who travel to adult's world where they become alienated. While children are playing, Mark calls Alex to meet in the train station that stands like a border. Alex takes his son Kirill with him, and on the way Kirill tells his father that Robert visited their house when he was away to earn money. He emphasizes that they planned to go to a circus with Eva, but Nina took them. When they came back, Robert was in the house. There are two sides in the scene. First of all, Alex prefers his son as company instead of Eva. He again identifies with his son or vice versa because he wants to teach his son how to be a man. Most men take betrayal as a threat to their masculinity and power. So, Alex tries to accomplish his defect out of his son. On the other hand, Kirill tries to be a man by taking his side next to his father. He tells the story as if he knows something, but in fact paranoia breaks out. Here, he wants to identify with his father as a man. Furthermore, shared paranoia between father and son strengthens their identification. Once again, exiled father exiles his son from his mother like he does in *The Return*. Moreover, Kirill becomes more exiled from his mother due to his identification with Alex and his paranoia. Hence, later on, he is so passionate to stay in Victor's house. Kirill has an internal border because of uncanny situation. This also supports the challenge of third type chronotopes; unseen borders necessitate to be crossed as well. Actually, this is the struggle of Alex too. He needs to pass the border to save his family life. As long as he wanders around the border that means to be in between, he is exiled from himself. Carrying their internal borders, Alex and Kirill meet with Mark at the train station. Suddenly, two borders overlap, thin line between external and internal exile blurs.

Alex asks for Mark's advice even though Mark does not have sharp answers. Alex says that he does not want to lose his children like Mark did. But, Mark's answer summarizes his situation; I never lost them, he says. I persuaded myself that they never existed. Despite Alex's questioning, Mark proceeds with the conversation through giving him some money and telling him not to play pitch and toss, in any way one of them will befall. As I mentioned above as father figure for Alex Mark is an exiled character, too. He is separated from his family, free of his paternal duty, and far from himself – the other – because he cheats himself about the existence of his children. Briefly, he left behind what he was and what he had like all exiles. Besides, Kirill signifies Mark's 'decayed'

situation on the way back by telling Mark smells like home. Here, it should be remembered that Kirill asked his father about the stink in the house that is mentioned above. The house stinks because it is left and not the same anymore, Mark decays because he left behind himself. Past can never be the same in present tense in exile condition. Hamid Naficy notes that “The house exists either in memory, as an ideal place in the homeland and in past tense or in the present tense in exile, it ruins.”<sup>70</sup> Naficy’s statement also refers to the impossibility of return because what is steady is the evolution. That’s why once someone is exiled, the situation continues for a lifetime.

After coming home, Vera and Alex talk about their relation and Mark. Vera does not want Kirill to become like Alex and Mark. This is the conversation in which Vera expresses they are liars. They act according to what societies impose them. Vera emphasizes alienation in their marriage. The next day, Alex opens the case upstairs where he sees his family pictures and a gun. Similar to *the Return*, photographs refer to a past that can never be reached again. Avoiding from repetition of what photograph means according to Barthes, it is better to use Hamid Naficy’s ‘Epistolarity’ term, which is described in ‘Cinema as Exile&Exile in Cinema’ chapter, because there are basic examples in the film. In relation to epistolarity, photographs tie the past to the present even though it can never come again. Therefore, they remind what is lost to the exile. So, they trigger exile’s memory. Apart from photographs, unanswered phones can also be considered as epistles. Actually, electronic devices like telephones, fax machines, recorders etc. should serve for communication that is missed in exile’s life, generally with past, or people he\she misses. But in this case they refer to miscommunication by evoking paranoia which is again appears on the following scene by a miscall when Alex hangs up the phone. In *The Banishment* epistolary devices seem to mediate the lack of communication between the characters, themselves and the world. So, it supports also internal exile situation of characters.

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<sup>70</sup> Naficy, *Accented Cinema*, p.178.

Only Vera and Robert, who is 'responsible' of the paranoia, communicate with each other. After Alex orders Vera to prepare breakfast and be parents of the children, they go to cemetery to visit Alex's father's grave. As in *The Return*, the name of the father is unknown in the second film of Zvyangitsev. Similarity causes to think historical context of the two films, which will be analyzed at the end of the writing. Following the storyline, after coming back from the visitation, children go to Victor's house. Meanwhile, Vera speaks with Robert. Then Alex and Vera have a walk together. During their conversation, Vera stresses that she does not want to wait anymore. When she arrives at home, she looks at the mirror, which is used a lot in the film to underline the duality and being distant to the self. Later on, Alex calls Mark who appears with a doctor. Meanwhile, children play with a jigsaw puzzle. In her review, Birgit Beumers claims that: "children's jigsaw puzzle of da Vinci's *Annunciation*, showing the scene where Gabriel tells Mary that she will bear God's child."<sup>71</sup> Yet again religious motifs integrate into the meaning of the film like in *The Return*. The critic of Beumers is also overlapping with the character of Vera throughout the film. Besides, the church is closed when Alex tries to enter during their family visit to the cemetery. So, it can be proposed that he is banished from 'God' also because of what they have in mind about Vera's – Mary's-baby. Additionally, Victor's wife reads the bible to the children before they fall asleep. The parallel editing of these scene and abortion sustains Vera's sacredness because of the elected part of the bible: "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Birgit, Beumers."Andrei Zviagintsev: The Banishment." KinoKultura. <http://www.kinokultura.com/2007/18r-izgnanie.shtml> (accessed December 10, 2013).

<sup>72</sup> Kitabı Mukaddes, I. Korintoslular, 13:4-10 ( İstanbul: Kitabı Mukaddes Şirketi, 1993), pp.178-179.



After abortion, Vera dies, in fact she commits suicide with the painkillers that doctor subscribed. Alex, who does not know the truth, loses himself because of the guilt. Mark as the father does all the negotiations for funeral. Despite the fact that, the doctor misstates that Vera died because of a heart attack. Alex says ‘ I killed my wife. She wanted to stay here’. Alex indicates religious motifs one more time because ‘here’ in the remark means the earth. From religious view, she reaches eternal paradise where Adam and Eve were exiled. However, in terms of philosophy she is exiled from earth where is a real home for all. Paul Friedrich in his essay *Binarism versus Synthesis: Eastern European and Generic Exile* notes that “loss through exile fused with anticipated loss through death. Loss, impossibility of return, separation, unknown experience etc. meshes in both cases of death and exile.”<sup>73</sup> At this point, psychoanalytic view finalizes the questioning between Vera’s death and exile. By giving occasion to Vera’s death, Alex banish his children in terms of psychoanalysis and physics. Furthermore, for Alex’s, who has same ‘fate’ with Mark now, exile become in shape with Vera’s death.

Before Vera’s funeral, doctor gives a letter and empty bottle of Xanax, which are epistles. The letter, which reflects Vera’s desire and is addressed to Alex, refers to separation and loss. Both the bottle and the letter are reminders of the last moment for Alex. All exiles memorize details of their last moments in the home from where they departed, mainly exiled. What was written in the letter remains secret until Alex meets Robert. Through flashback, it is understood that Vera lied to Alex. Vera shows photographs of her family ,which is a kind of a family tree, to Robert. Then she says ‘ It is possible to live without dying’. Nermin Saybaşı quotes Derrida’s writing: “ultimately I want to learn to live.”<sup>74</sup> Actually, this is what Vera wanted. She wanted to be a woman, a mother, a wife and a lover that is lost in time and space. People, as exiles, want to learn

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<sup>73</sup> Paul Friedrich (2002), ‘Binarism versus Synthesis: Eastern European and Generic Exile’, in *Realms of exile: Nomadism, Diasporas, and Eastern European Voices*, ed. Domnica Radulescu, Lexington Books, Maryland and Oxford, p. 168.

<sup>74</sup> Derrida, 1994, qtd. Nermin Saybaşı, 2011, *Sınırlar ve Hayaletler: Görsel Kültürde Göç Hareketleri*, trans. Bulent Doğan, *Metis Yayınları*, p. 66, Istanbul

from the beginning of their life experience. So, whole life, which is the main voyage of our lives, can be considered as an experience of exile.

In the flashback, Vera puts finger on family issues, too. Her sentence, ‘Our children do not belong to us just like we do not belong only to ours’. Examining family relations alike in *The Return* with differences mentioned above. But, similar issues led to continuity between stories in two films.

*The Banishment* can easily be considered in respect of collapse of Soviet Union and its effect on society. During Thaw, the theme of family life brought a new issue to the cinema; widows and single mothers after the war. Thaw revisited the war again and problems of return to ordinary life investigated. Immigration to the countryside or to the cities took place. Nevertheless, the film starts when Alex has already moved to the city. Besides, the photograph, in which Vera’s mother is seen alone, can be viewed as a reference for single mothers. However, time passes, Vera is the second generation who was born during or after the World War Two. So, it is liable to reach approximately to the collapsing of Soviet Union by counting her age. Plus, ‘rewriting history’ was main issue after collapse of SSBC. First of all, there is a huge blank spot in the film, which is filled after Vera’s death. Secondly, Alex wanted to rule the family by taking the decision of abortion. So, what is in the hand is Stalin as father of the nation who murdered of his own ‘children’. On the other hand, Alex as the father of the family ‘killed’ his own child. But in any way how society was nostalgic and longing for Stalin period after the collapse, every character in the film is nostalgic, especially in terms of being family again, which has interaction with exile. If ‘nation’ liken to family, in 1990s, defining nationhood was one of the main issues in new Russia. Tarkovsky notes about the issue: “Fatal attachment of Russians to their national roots, their past, their culture, their native places, their families and friends; an attachment which they carry with them all their lives, regardless of where destiny may fling them.”<sup>75</sup> Tarkovsky melts every notion of exile in one pot. As an exile, the words also fit to his situation. Besides, his argument is nostalgic in terms of

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<sup>75</sup> Andrei Tarkovsky, (1987), qtd. Hamid Naficy in *Accented Cinema*, 2001, p. 178.

longing, loss and resistance against forgetting as Milan Kundera wrote. On that score, *The Banishment* is also about longing for a lost harmony both in the family and inner weather of characters.

In conclusion, *The Banishment* can be argued out as an elegy for family, past and its values. As John Berger states: “people elegize upon their lost hopes.”<sup>76</sup> After the collapse of the SSBC where exiles and murders were main issues, people lost their expectation from ‘the bright future’ which was a created belief for the regime to support its continued power. So, their external exile condition became internal like in the film. In domain of exile, both conditions follow each other.

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<sup>76</sup> Berger, *And our faces, my heart, brief as photos*, p.38.

## ELENA

The Return and The Banishment draw attention mainly to the stories of the resurrection, religious motifs and paternal relations without expressing any specific time and location. In spite of similarities, Elena is very different from his previous works. The Return and The Banishment offer some hope in domain of religion although Elena is totally pessimistic. Besides, Elena takes place after Soviet collapse, in a capitalist 'new Russia' where the rich live in luxury and the poor live in very small apartment buildings with their families by facing gangs everyday.

Elena is a dutiful woman, who is married to Vladimir (Andrey Smirnov), a rich businessman. They met each other when Elena was a nurse and Vladimir was her patient. Elena continued to look after Vladimir into their marriage. Her main role is to provide her husband's needs. They live in a very sterilized apartment which reflects economic status and Elena's imprisoned condition. Both of them have their child from their previous marriages. While Vladimir is very much estranged from his wild child daughter Katya, Elena rides the buses and trains to the dreary suburbs, bringing money and food to her unemployed son and his family. Elena's oldest grandson has failed to achieve enough grades to get into school. So, he has to join the military unless he enters to a private university. Elena asks Vladimir for money to bribe some authorities for getting him into a college. However, Vladimir refuses her wish by claiming that he helped enough to her unemployed son and his family. He insists that Elena's family should take responsibility for their lives. Later, when Vladimir has heart attack, he rewrites his will that all properties will belong to his daughter after his death. So, Elena decides to kill her husband for the goodness of her own family. She loves Vladimir but she also loves her son and grandchildren. In other words, she sacrifices herself.

The film starts from an outside view of an apartment where a crow stays on a tree. Sun rises inside the flat where the details are seen at first sight. Decorated with modern furniture, the house is very clean and orderly. In the last detail shot, Katya's childhood

photo appears on a table. Then Elena is seen on the bed, sleeping alone on a couch in one of the rooms. Elena sits in front of the mirror which breaks her into pieces. So, her divided character is shown from the very beginning of the movie. After opening curtains of windows, she wakes an old man. During these scenes, Elena seems like a housekeeper. The first shot, in which Vladimir is in the bathroom and Elena passes by to go to the kitchen, also gives idea about their relation. The house includes so many doors which separate the couple from each other. They just cross each other in a big house. So, the structure of the scene indicates their alienation, which is the main notion of exile, in the marriage. In other words, how Vera and Alex were strangers in their marriage, Vladimir and Elena are also strangers, but they are the couples of new Russia where money ties people instead of love.

In new Russia TV programs are very popular which is seen in the film, too. While Vladimir is getting prepared for gymnasium, Elena watches a Tv show in which a man's voice expresses that everybody should eat salad to be healthy. These kind of TV shows appear through the film to underline capitalist effect on society in Russia. After Vladimir sits on the table, Elena puts off Tv and they start to have their breakfast. During breakfast, Vladimir wonders about Elena's plans for the day. She says that she is gonna draw pension and go to Sergei, her son. When Vladimir insists that Sergei's concern is money, Elena ends conversation by telling him she doesn't involve his relation with his daughter so he shouldn't, too. The conversation marks their separate lives with their children. So, once again, family issue comes out in another Zvyngitsev's film. Later on, director shows inside the building which is pretty new with a guardian, clean streets almost empty when Elena travels to Sergei's house. First she takes bus, then uses train to reach the district where her son lives. After taking her pension, she arrives at Sergei's house by passing by dirty streets with greenery. In front of the door, there are some young boys who resemble gangs. The director takes attention differences between two districts to emphasize disparity between two classes; rich and poor. So, exile condition appears in gaps between two different social and economical levels. Furthermore, Elena travels between two districts which reminds journeying quality of exile. As an exile, Elena does not belong where she lives with Vladimir. Apart from the district, she comes from

another class. She used to be a nurse in a hospital where he met Vladimir. After they married, actually she continued to nurse him. Her new and old lifestyle intersects. In other words, Elena is in between like exiles all around the world. An exile can be considered as a hybrid. According to Hamid Naficy hyphen may also suggest: “a divided mind, an irrevocably split identity, or a type of paralysis between two cultures or nations.”<sup>77</sup> So, an exile’s existence can be defined by various hybrids: freedom \ imprisonment, origin \ destination etc. like Elena.

While Elena waits in front of the old elevator, Sergei ,who resembles like a teenager, is seen in balcony, smoking and spitting out downstairs. While doorbell rings, Sacha, grandson of Elena, is viewed in playing play station. Father and son in the same shot expresses their unmaturing state in life. When Zvyentsev showed problems of father and son relations in his previous films, the relation becomes complicated in Elena because behaviour’s of father looks like his son. So, problematic fathers raise problematic sons in new Russia. Psychoanalytic practises showed that if a man can not kill their father or overcome their catastrophe, they can not become matured. Furthermore, if Oedipus Complex can not be overcome, a child would be dependent to his mother which is the case in Sergei’s situation. So, Sergei is not a character who is exiled from his mother by his father who meets the child with Symbolic Order. According to Lacan, “Oedipal crisis lies at the origin of the whole process of the cultural subordination of man.”<sup>78</sup> So, Oedipal stage can be successfully navigated without the father as long as cultural norms and prohibitions can be met rather than the father himself. But, Sergei lived in a society which lost their values and hopes. Secondly, Sergei does not teach his son as a father’s role necessitates. When his wife asks him to talk to Sergei about his friends and his attitudes, he goes to the room and sits next to him to join him in play station. Ultimately, Sergei was born in Soviet State whose citizens were effected from Stalin policies even

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<sup>77</sup> Hamid Naficy, *Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.16.

<sup>78</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: a selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 1966-2001), pp. 26-32

after his death. Between collapse of SSBC and Putin era, 1992-2000, people lost their hopes. As Birhit Beumers stated: “ A related theme was that of escape – from reality, from a collapsing society, and from a defunct economy- into other worlds, other countries or dreams.”<sup>79</sup> So, under this dark atmosphere, it is possible to say there were damaged fathers ,who is expected to raise children, too. But, an hopeless father can not expect anything from his children who are representatives of the future. Besides, actually, it is not clear in the film what happened to Sacha’s real father. But, he is totally lost in the story compared to director’s previous films. So, the lost father can be the representation of lost values, economical stability etc. in contemporary Russia, which is causes violence and crime. If the film is analyzed in terms of father and son relations, a new type of father appears.

In *The Return* or *The Banishment* there were also father figures as main characters, but stepfather is a new theme in *Elena*. After SSBC, there were father figures who had no identity or had been lost. Vladimir as a cold and rich stepfather represents Putin’s policy which is criticized by Zvyangitsev throughout the film. Vladimir plays with money and have no mercy toward poor that is emphasized by Elena when Sergei talks about Vladimir’s quetchs and being family. It can be claimed that how Stalin as ‘the father of the nation’ ‘killed’ his children with guns and various panishments, Putin ‘kills’ them by capitalism. Moreover, as Stalin judged by being apart from his society, Vladimir represents Putin in the same way; distance. Here, it should also be mentioned that Vladimir is not a good father for his daughter, too. Also, his relations depend on their economical situation. Rebellious, drug user, careless and, according to his father, hedonistic Katya represents collapsed idea of ‘birght future’ like Sergei. Katya says “We all are rotten seeds,” which supports the stink of ‘bright future’ idea in present.

In the term of family relations, TV show brings another perspective in contemporary Russia. After coming back her apartment, Elena watches TV in which a woman tells that her family separated in 1960s and she tries to find her sibling. This

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<sup>79</sup> Beumers, *A History of Russian Cinema*, p. 214.

scene can also be perceived as longing for Stalinist era, or generally Soviet era. because of its utopia about happiness and 'bright future'. While Elena basically just listening TV, Vladimir watches in his bedroom, too. So, they do not share a common life. Again, another example in the film approves thin red line between their worlds.

Next day, Vladimir mentions that he red Elena's note about the finance of Sacha's school. He doesn't want to pay it because he lives with Elena not with her relatives. He says he can do his military service that educates man better than schools. Basically, his anger is against Sergei who took some money couple of years ago and didn't pay back. So, he decides not give money to teach him a lesson. But, Elena resists by putting their relation with his daughter on the table. Suddenly, Vladimir turns angry and calls her as hedonist. Elena who does not belong to Vladimir's class says that she doesn't know what hedonist means. This is another example for her alienation. And Vladimir proceeds that he is going to think about payment. Later on, they have sex which is one of the duties of Elena. She does what she has to do. Basically, she is just a servant in this life as mother and wife that is typical characterization of woman in Russian cinema despite of some examples, especially in Glasnost era.

In domain of historical and philosophical perspective, it is possible to discuss Elena's condition in terms of Mother Russia. First of all, the marriage of Vladimir and Elena can be liken Putin era. In other words, mother Russia married with Putin or capitalism. Secondly, mother Russia separated from its own nation by immigrations or lost its children because of lost values. Like mother Russia, Elena is apart from its children. Furthermore, as it will be seen towards the end of the movie, Elena has double faces. She is victim and criminal at the same time. So, she is the reflection of new Russia. Actually, she turns into a 'monster'. "Post Soviet films develop three types of heroes; the escapist hero (who follows false ideals), an the war hero (who has no Fatherland to fight for), both follow ideals that are hollow, so that the Soviet hero turned Russian becomes a 'criminal knight' or the 'killer-hero'" writes Birgit Beumers.<sup>80</sup> Marriage of Elena and

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<sup>80</sup> Birgit Beumers, ed., *Russia on Reels: The Russian Idea in Post Soviet Cinema* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1999 – 2006), p.8.



Vladimir can be resembled to the capitalist system in Russia. It can be said that Mother Russia married with capitalist Father whose era increased crime and violence.

One way or another, after getting heart attack in the gymnasium, Vladimir is poisoned by Elena because he announced to leave his worth to his daughter. After Vladimir gets heart attack, Elena calls Katya. Although Katya doesn't want to come, she appears in any way. While Katya talks with her father, Elena goes to a church to pray. She asks the corner of St. Nicholas who is also known as Santa Claus and believed in his generosity and life-save. It is not clear if she prays for her husband or for her son and grandson. But, her reflection on a glass of the frame definitely shows her doubled mind. As a religious woman, she will act against to God's rules because there are 7 main sins and one of them is murder. So, split in her religious beliefs support her exile condition. Moreover, this religious scene cuts to the scene in which Katya discusses meaning of life and their relation with his father Vladimir. Katya is a materialist character and believes in money. When Vladimir says that she can not smoke because its forbidden in the hospital, Katya can not understand why she shouldn't do what she wants if they pay lots of money for the room. According to Katya, who was raised by a businessman, money can buy everything. This is a typical interpretation of generations who were born in a capitalist system. Secondly, she doesn't want to have children because people raise children just to lift their energy. These two typical attitudes of her are different when she is compared with Elena.

Before stressing their relation, it is necessary to understand Katia's relation with her mother because it effects her communication with Elena, too. As Sergei's father never mentioned, Katya's mother never mentioned. On contrary to Sergei's situation, Katya has no dependency to anyone. She even talks very openly with his father. While Oedipus complex is a stage for boys, Electra complex is the symmetrical counterpart to the Oedipus complex. But, Freud never put it in his definitions with this name. In domain of psychoanalysis, the girl changes her attachment from mother to her father. So, she wants to marry her father and kill her mother. Apart from psychoanalysis, Electra was the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. Her father, Agamemnon, is killed by his wife

and her lover. That's why, Electra wants to take revenge. So, she lived to become her mother's murderer. Emma V. Miller claims that "Electra would be to suggest a *knowing* aggression toward her own sex and a deliberate preference for the opposite sex."<sup>81</sup> This explanation is fitting to Katya's condition. First of all, she mentions to her father that she just uses drugs at weekends, but more often she is having sex. Secondly, she is aware of Elena's guilt. Even, it's not clear what happens next between Katya and Elena in the story, but Katya shows her consciousness to Elena. Besides, most probably Katya lost her mother during her childhood because at the beginning of movie her photograph appears in which she is around 10. She grew up with her father. And now, she has a problem with her stepmother Elena. In other words, daughters and sons of new generation, who lost their biological mothers and fathers either psychically or spiritually, have problem with their 'steps'. That is the reason that they have problems in communication because they are not introduced to the 'symbolic'

This comparison also strengthens the difference between two generations. Moreover, previous generations had hope about the future because of their children, but new generation have no hopes for the future. So, it can be said that Russia's new generation are exiled from old values and hopes. There is only one difference that they do not aware of it because an exile should have something, a dream of return, completed again or memories of lost homeland. So, new generation is 'natural born exiles' in Russia. In other words, they are exiles by birth and exiles in terms of psychoanalytical practices.

Kathy who thinks that she has right to do everything in life as it is mentioned above, Vladimir is the same too. When Vladimir talks about his intention about the will, Elena wants to know his decision for financing Sacha's school. Refusal of Vladimir disappoints Elena and asks who gives him all the rights. Why he thinks that he is special.

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<sup>81</sup> Emma V. Miller, "The Naming of Oedipa Maas: Feminizing the Divine Pursuit of Knowledge in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*." *Orbit: Writing Around Pynchon* 1. (accessed May 11, 2014).

And she adds; “so the last will be first” which is written in Bible.<sup>82</sup> Once again two different views collide after Elena gives example from the bible. Vladimir’s answer is that those are the tales of the bible for poor and fool people. Equality and brotherhood can be seen in heaven. The story in Matthew is about a landlord and workers that is told by Christ to his students. Christ starts his story by saying ‘for the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. Briefly, a landlord hires workers from task till dawn. He hires them in different periods of the day, but everybody works until night comes. While he is paying their money, workers who have begun to work since the early morning, complain because they want more money than the others who worked less. However, landlord says that he doesn’t unfair because he pays what they have already agreed. He adds, don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous? So the last will be first’. As it is seen, Elena believes in the judgement in heaven although Vladimir acts like a God in this world. If Elena believes into the heaven then she seems herself as a voyager in the earth. So, it can be said that she already knows that she is an exile in this world.

In spite of her belief, Elena chooses to kill her husband. By the way, she uses her medical skills, which is used for health, for a murder now. So, her there is a change in her identity. Saint turns in criminal. Nurse becomes murderer. She just keeps her motherhood until the end of the movie. While Elena waiting Vladimir to die, a black and white photograph appears on the wall in which she is young and laughs. It underlines the lost innocence of Elena. As it is mentioned in previously, post- Soviet nostalgia includes yearning for utopia that is tied to yearning for lost childhood innocence. Yet exile’s state of nostalgia comes up to the consideration. Of course, it can be said longing all alone doesn’t refer to nostalgia, but if it is combined with the situation of the society, then it is possible to talk about nostalgia. Moreover, black and white photographs always contain nostalgia for the lost time when people were young, happy or healthy, whatever. As a result of lost innocence, Elena is seen behind flames while burning the half written

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<sup>82</sup> Kitabı Mukaddes, Matta, 20:16 ( Istanbul: Kitabı Mukaddes Şirketi, 1993), pp.22.

papers, which could be a clue for the murder. Her image reminds the image of burning in hell. So, last hope of forgiveness disappears, too.

As a dissociated personality, Elena plays her widow role during the funeral. She wears totally black and cries while a soldier consoles her. Actually, she tries to overcome her guilt as well. Paul Friedrich in his essay 'Binarism versus Synthesis: Eastern European and Generic Exile' states; "when the exile leaves often suddenly, traumatically, the fact of being 'untimely ripped' from matrix culture necessarily triggers and then continues to produce a sense of guilt despite original innocence or least faultlessness."<sup>83</sup> As an exile, Elena knows her guilt but again she can not believe herself. After funeral when she goes to where Sergei lives, electricity breaks for some time. While being in the dark with the baby in her arms, she seems scared and regretful. Although she smiles when people surround her, she settles with 'the other' while being all alone. Besides, she took the decision in a very short time. By taking her side, she becomes apart from her own culture, values, belief etc. So, it can be said that as being already exiled from her class, Elena becomes exiled from herself throughout the film step by step.

After the funeral, the film replicates its beginning towards to the end in domain of storytelling. Elena gets up from her bed and getting ready in front of the mirror while the loud cawing of crows, which will be analyzed in conclusion, is heard. Then, she goes to Vladimir's room to lift curtains. At the same time, sad Katya, who is accompanied by the church bells, is seen in her house. She is unhappy because of her loss. Later on, Elena takes the money from the private case and gets a Taxi, which is the sign of her adaptation of the new class and identity. Before going to Serge's house, Elena goes to Vladimir's lawyer's office, where she meets with Katya, to figure out financial situation. She hears that everything will be shared between Katya and her. So, she takes her train to go to Sergei with a definite result. When the family celebrates, Sacha goes out with his friend. They fight with another gang group and Sacha beaten up deadly. Two different Russian worlds overlaps again while Elena takes her family to the Vladimir's house. On top of

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<sup>83</sup> Paul Friedrich (2002), 'Binarism versus Synthesis: Eastern European and Generic Exile', in *Realms of exile: Nomadism, Diasporas, and Eastern European Voices*, ed. Domnica Radulescu, Lexington Books, Maryland and Oxford, p. 176.

that, eventually structuring a nation is one of the main issues for Russians. In the film, apart from ethnical differences, social dissimilarities are very determinate. Russia was always multiethnic but first tsarist regime covered it and then Soviet state tried to built Russian nation by ‘rewriting history. As it is mentioned before, this confusion that Russian people faced with strengthen their state of exile. Even if they solve it, class difference do not allow any return for the exiled people of Russia.

In conclusion, crows that have heard and seen throughout the movies refer to the memory. That’s why they are heard time to time in the film. People used to say that ‘a crow never forgets and takes revenge’. Memory reminds Mnemosyne who was God of memory and remembrance. The ancients believed that when one died and crossed into the underworld one would be given a choice; whether to drink from the river Lethe where you would forget all the pains and terrors of your previous life that brings some lessons, or whether to drink from the Mnemosyne. Those who chose to forget had to be reborn, to return to earth to learn the lessons they needed. Those who had chosen to remember were admitted to the Elysian Fields where they would spend eternity in comfort and peace. So, Mnemosyne is represented by crow in the film. The film ends with the similar shot of the beginning the crow, which is seen at the beginning of the film, is missing. Apart from Elena’s condition, it represents lost society of Russia who forgets their past. They prefer to drink from Lethe, so their punishment is ‘to return to earth to learn the lessons they needed’. Drinking from Lethe can be taken as to choose capitalist values for the comfort. So, they will be punished over and over again until they do not remember their old values and take lesson from the Russian history. Here, if they would choose to remember, their exile condition would end in terms of politics. Besides, in her article ‘Sarkis, Warburg ve Sanatın Toplumsal Belleği’ Uwe Fleckner quotes from Karl Moritz ; “Mnemosyne defines who thinks and remembers about the past.”<sup>84</sup> It is possible to mention Mnemosyne is the God of exiles because an exile never forgets. Memory and exile have fundamental relation in terms of exile as it is mentioned before. It can be said their relation reversed or challenged in terms of politics in the movie. So, to forget is the main punishment for an exile because they survive by remembering and hope to return.

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<sup>84</sup> Karl Moritz, 1975, qtd. Uwe Fleckner in Bellek ve Sonsuz: Sarksi Külliyatı Uzerine, 2005,p. 192.

## CONCLUSION

Exile, which was romanticized throughout the history, is one of the main issues of 21<sup>st</sup> century as Eric Hobsbawm mentioned. Exile is one of the main condition of human being and stands on various legs as it is emphasized during the writing. The reasons or causes can differ according to political atmosphere or region, but in different ages, different philosophers or disciplines are interested in to define what exile is. That is why in all form of arts artists try to understand its condition, too. Cinema becomes important at this point because it is an exile condition by itself and many films deal with the issue.

In Russian cinema, fatherhood, family relations and Russian history are fundamental themes. Andrei Zvyagintsev is an important filmmaker because he brings all these themes together in his films underneath of same issue; exile condition. Besides, as it is analyzed in his three films, he touches both internal and external exile condition in each one of them. Ultimately, fathers who are exiles, make their children exiled. In *The Return*, father take two brothers to a voyage which becomes both an internal and external for characters. In the second film, *The Banishment*, father kills his unborn child. And *Elena* is about an exiled children of Russian society who were exiled by their grandfathers – decision makers of the system- . Add to that, home cannot provide adequate protection from the outside for the characters. They are not banished from their lands but they are banished from their peace.

Some can argue that his films do not represent history. However, as it is seen, each of them has historical backgrounds because of his thematical references. And of course, each character of his films are in between. Their personality crisis, loss, nostalgia that features longing for a moral certainty with a belief in Utopia makes them exile characters. Moreover, the reason of their yearning is that he past experiences has lost and they know it like an exile. Here, as it is underlined before, an exile's memory is always under attack of forgetting. An exile's memory built with images, signs and symbols. In their new world, their memory faces with new experiences. As a result of existence of

new memories in new lands, new occasions or new identities, alienation strengthens exile condition. What is summarized above can be seen in director's three films in different settings. Apart from others, the most important notion of exile is the fathers, who exile their children, in his three films.

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