

# THE COSSACKS' BORDERING PROCESS IN THE CIVIL WAR. FILMIC REPRESENTATIONS

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.23740/TID220203>

## ABSTRACT

The Russian Revolution(s) and the Russian Civil War represent topics revisited by the recent Russian media and film-making. Mikhail Sholokhov's novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* as a masterful case of fictionalisation of historical events is the basis for four subsequent film adaptations. Whereas the destiny of the Russian Cossacks is a generous theme, we would like to focus on the filmic representation of Cossacks' bordering process in the Civil War. Two Soviet film adaptations and two post-Soviet ones present in different manners the impact of the shifting borders on people's lives during the Russian fratricide war. Tzar's abdication had caused confusion in the midst of the Cossack population loyal to the state father figure, while contributing afterwards to a territorial identity construction and a fight to obtain and maintain the autonomy of the Cossack region. Soviet and post-Soviet directors' approaches of the geographical, mental and cultural borders during the Civil War in the Cossack region offer insights into the debatable loyalties and multiple sides shifting. The analysis of the four film adaptations is focused on concepts such as questioned loyalty, divisive Cossack territorial identity, nuanced and shifting identity and active/ passive territoriality. We argue that the Cossacks' territorial identity and their bordering process is differently reflected in subsequent film adaptations of the novel.

Keywords: Russian Civil War, territorial identity, Cossacks' bordering process, the Don Territory, film adaptations

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Cite this article as: Grădinaru, O. (2020). The Cossacks' Bordering Process in the Civil War. Filmic Representations. *Territorial Identity and Development*, 5(2), 41-63. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.23740/TID220203>

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## BRIEF HISTORICAL FACTS

While the history of Russian Cossacks is not the concern of this paper, it is important to bear in mind that initially the Cossack identity was not necessarily linked to a territory. That was due to their lifestyle, linked to the meaning of Turkic *kazak*, "adventurer" or "free man," – self-governing military communities mainly hunting, fishing and working the land without settling for much time in one place. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there were six major Cossack communities of Russian and Ukrainian origin that over centuries had formed their separate identity in the area of the Don, the Dnieper, the Volga, and the middle of the Ural River. Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Cossacks had benefited from the special autonomous status within the Russian Empire, acting as border protectors and ruthless suppressors of rebellions and revolutionary activities. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, given the territorial expansion to Siberia, there were eleven Cossack groups, all of them gradually losing the autonomous status and having to serve in the Russian Army. Due to the territorial expansion, Cossacks were no longer border inhabitants, but they preserved their way of life and frontiersman thinking (Tschebotarioff, 1961, p. 206).

The present study sets to analyse the ambiguous Cossack identity in the Don region, with a complicated ethnic composition, during the border shifting of the Russian Civil War. The Cossack identity is a combination of the socio-professional components – they are military men or “militiamen of the Russian Empire, governed by rules of the military code” (Dingelstedt, 1907, p. 239) – and local regional elements. The fact that they were organized as independent regional hosts contributed to a sense of belonging to a certain territory. We argue that the territorial identity was not that ardently expressed in the imperial period, when Cossacks were loyal to the Tsar and played a fundamental role in expanding and maintaining the empire. The sense of territorial belonging became crucial, as the study shows, in the analysis of subsequent film adaptations, during the Civil War, amidst the bordering process and attempts to create and support the Don Republic. The chaos in this process was caused by the complicated ethnic composition of the region, on the one hand, and by divergent loyalties under the new circumstances after the Tsar’s abdication, on the other. The fluid identity of this borderland, between territories inhabited by Ukrainians and Russians, including these ethnicities within its borders, represent a fruitful research area for territorial identity studies.

The Don Territory had several peculiarities that represented some points of tension between the inhabitants and marked the territorial identity process. Apart from the special agricultural profile, linked to the market, it had a special status due to the Cossack population (39 percent) that gave the Don Territory its local identity (Holquist, 2002, p. 23). During the imperial period, Cossacks differentiated themselves from the native peasants (*korennye krestyane*) and the so-called “outlanders” (*inogorodnie*), the people living on the Don but not officially registered there or, at times, all non-Cossacks. That differentiation was based mainly on the land owning principle and represented a point of tension in the Don region – “land envy” (Holquist, 2001, p. 10). The Cossack territorial narrative was already formed within the Russian Empire and linked to the Don Host Province since 1870; thus, when the Civil War(s) broke in all its variety and complexity and, given the Don Territory’s European location, situated among other Ukrainian and Russian territories, there were no competing visions or narratives (see the comprehensive approach on the Bessarabia’s case in Cusco, 2017). Moreover, the often shifting frontline on the Don left no virtual time for a coherent policy based on a comprehensible discourse for the Don government. The territorial identity vision of the self-proclaimed Don Republic (*Donskaya Respublika*, 1918-1919), known then as the Almighty Don Host (*Vsevelikoe Voisko Donskoe*, 1919-1920), was shaped as a reaction to the established Don Soviet Republic of 1917.

The newly installed Bolshevik regime spared no effort into submitting the Cossacks to the same imperial vision as a wheat provider. The Don Territory was crucial during WWI. Russia’s rich agricultural southwest provided eight percent of the empire’s total wheat harvest, and after the war eleven percent (Holquist, 2002, pp. 22-23). That fact was to be fructified by the newly established Soviet rule only after the end of the bloodshed of the Civil War and introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP, 1921-1928) by Lenin.

We intend to uncover the Don Cossack territorial identity during the Russian Civil War (1918-1920) and the way it is represented in four subsequent Soviet and post-Soviet film adaptations of Mikhail Sholokhov’s acclaimed novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* (1928-1940). That is especially intriguing, since the Cossacks were divided – those from the south were loyal to the White Army, while those from the north tried to achieve and maintain their autonomy by shifting sides – between the Reds, the Whites and Ukrainian military forces. In our view, the Don territory is both the belonging space considered worth fighting for and the relational space (Law & Mol, 1994). While the notion of “active territoriality” in the sense of “dynamic social construction of the territory” (Banini, 2017, p. 17) expresses well the Don Cossacks’ struggles in their bordering

process, we propose the term of “passive territoriality” for the periods of neglect in this process when, despite their convictions, Cossacks stayed at home and hoped for the best outcome of their cause. Given the interdisciplinary character of the research, methodology combines both tools of the film analysis and specific instruments of territorial identity analysis, at times relying on broader notions of the cultural history domain.

The study aims at revealing filmic representations of the Cossacks' bordering process in the Russian Civil War as they appear in different historical periods. We intend to analyse the film adaptations in the chronological order of their production and release, pointing out the major ideas related to the Cossack bordering process and territorial identity. While the border issue is not present in the first partial film adaptation of 1930, Gerasimov's film of 1957-1958 debates rather the divergent ideological views of the Don Territory inhabitants than the bordering process and local territorial identity of the Don Cossacks. From this perspective, the Don Region inhabitants are either enthusiasts of the Red cause or rebels against the social and economic implications of the revolutionary change. Although receiving a mixed feedback, the 1992/2006 film adaptation conveyed less ideological content and more sense to the border identity of the Don Cossack, while exploiting melodramatic patterns in depicting the Cossack love story. The political change in the Don region impacted the Cossack military costumes and distinctions (those received in the Tsarist period were hidden or uncovered depending on the regime), which were considered inherent to the Cossack identity. The last film adaptation may be regarded as the source of the most comprehensive rendering of the Cossack territorial identity and shifting borders situation. In the case of most Don Cossacks, their initial allegiance was to the Tsar and homeland, followed by the allegiance to their kin, territorial convictions and birthplace. The last remaining allegiance of the troubled Grigory Melekhov is to his surviving son after he became a stranger in his birthplace.

While the research topic has not been approached recently by either film researchers or historians, it is evident that our task is both thorny and sensitive. Given the generous research options and potential research directions, our study employs these multiple views on the Cossack territorial identity, offering glimpses into the Cossack history and the filmic representations. This is only a modest attempt and a starting point for several intellectual directions in researching the topic. Therefore, the limitation of such a paper, given the dimensions, is nothing but an invitation to further research.

## QUESTIONED LOYALTY

Mikhail Sholokhov's novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* (1928-1932, 1940) is considered one of the greatest Russian novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, just like Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* was the novel of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia. As Dm. Bykov pointed out, while Tolstoy's novel is imbued with humanity, Sholokhov's masterpiece depicts a continuous spiralling downfall from humanity to utmost cruelty (Bykov, 2012, p. 196). Furthermore, the critic points out that the fatidic love triangle between Grigory, lover Aksinya and wife Natalya may be regarded as a metaphor for the hero's complicated path from the Reds to the Whites, back and forth again.

All film adaptations depict the initial idyllic Cossack lifestyle, customs and traditions of the first two volumes of the novel as opposed to the chaotic fratricide war of the last volume. Therefore, the border issue is absent in the first film adaptation, it occupies less space in the Soviet film adaptation and gradually more space in the post-Soviet subsequent ones.

The first film adaptation of Sholokhov's novel is Olga Preobrazhenskaya and Ivan Pravov's film (1930). It depicts the Cossack lifestyle, but, in Soviet critical terms, not enough of the class struggle and revolutionary cause. The directors adapted to screen only the first two parts of the novel, with a special focus on the love story between Grigory Melekhov and Aksinya. Grigory's adherence to the Red Army cause is unclear, given that the next parts of the book were published only in 1940. Even so, the Soviet criticism required an ideological perspective despite the outstanding ethnographic value of the film (see also Grădinaru, 2019, pp. 906-907). It must be noted that the canon of the Socialist Realism was established only in 1932, while *Chapayev*, D. Furmanov's film adaptation, directed by Vasilyev brothers, 1934, was considered the best representation of the Socialist Realism. And the explanation for that resides in the fact that *Chapayev* included many Soviet myths, including the Stalinist most prominent ones – the myth of “fathers” and “sons” or mentor and disciple, the myth of the martyr, of death and transfiguration. Moreover, the path of the main hero, Chapayev, is the path from spontaneity (*stikhinost*) to consciousness (*soznatelnost*) (Clark, 2000, pp. 15-24). Only one Soviet motif is present in Olga Preobrazhenskaya and Ivan Pravov's film – the relationship between the (Ukrainian) mentor and the (Cossack) disciple, which seems marginal to the fabula.

Nevertheless, the Don Cossacks' life is marvellously portrayed, starting with the costumes and ending with traditions. The first scene of the film is the quiet flowing Don, which appears throughout the 1930 film as defining the identity of its inhabitants. The river was known as *Don batyushka* (“father Don”) in the Cossack conscience and it was inextricably linked to their identity. In M. Sholokhov's grandson's words, in a documentary for the 1<sup>st</sup> Russian TV channel, “Silent Don” is a symbol of Cossackdom, the basis of their Cossack life. Moreover, the title of the novel is ambivalent – the river may seem silent, but impetuous events unfold on its banks (Yakovich, 2015).

Another defining feature of the Cossack life is their loyalty to the Tsar, underlined in the scene of Grigory's initiation in the Bolshevik cause, in the hospital by an unlikely comrade – a wounded revolutionary Ukrainian soldier. The scene of Cossacks suppressing the Revolution of 1905 gains a different meaning in Grigory's perception after getting acquainted with the revolutionary ideas. In the same way, the First World War is presented as an occasion for the Tsar to conquer new lands with the help of the Cossacks. The battle field is the place of unification of the Russians, Ukrainians and Cossacks alike in pointless suffering. After this eye-opening experience, Grigory's first rebellious attitude is being rude to members of the tsarist family who visit the hospital to award the soldiers.

Melekhov is also searching for his new identity by returning to his father's home after learning about Aksinya's infidelity. Grigory's revenge against Aksinya's lover, Evgeny Listnitsky, is thus a metonymical revenge against the exploiter: “For our suffering, for our damned life!” (“*Za muchenie nashe, za zhizn` nashu prokliatuyu!*”). The closing scene of Pravov and Preobrazhenskaya's film is Melekhov walking to the village set near the meandering river Don. One may only wonder how the next film adaptation of these directors would have been, given their extensive experience in ethnographic filming and the introduction of sound feature films.

#### DIVISIVE COSSACK TERRITORIAL IDENTITY

The director S. Gerasimov received the permission to adapt Sholokhov's novel to screen in 1956, during the second wave of the Thaw, after the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress. Gerasimov's request was refused by Stalin in 1939, given the “fate of Grigory Melekhov, a man with no path and

essentially sentenced by history" (Rodionov, 2016 in <http://screenstage.ru/?p=4704>, kino-teatru.ru). Compared to the positive heroes of Socialist Realism novels of that period, the unfinished life story of Grisha Melekhov was regarded with increasingly reluctant attitude. Though not considered as part of the Thaw wave of films, Gerasimov's film adaptation differs from the typical Stalinist films in conveying a different sense of history. However, the ideological discussions from the novel occupy an impressive part of the film. These ideological explanations fill less and less space in the post-Soviet film adaptations.

The Don is also dominating the first scene of the 1957 film adaptation, as well as other key scenes: the love story between Grigory and Aksinya, the fight between Grigory and Aksinya's husband, Grisha's return to his father's home after Aksinya's infidelity. The river is the setting in rekindling the love story between the two during the Civil War, in Darya's suicide, the Don Cossacks fleeing from the Reds and in Grigory's coming back home at the end of the film.

Along with the Don, the steppe is another defining element of Cossack's homeland. In the scene presenting the year 1916, Grigory tells his heart aching dream about the steppe while serving the Tsar. His dream is a nostalgic expression, as, in Svetlana Boym's terms, nostalgia is a disease of displacement, mourning "distances and disjunctures between times and spaces" (Boym, 2011, p. 346).

As in the 1930 film, the war is presented by the Ukrainian soldier as a means of awakening the people and seeing the reality of class struggle. That is the starting point of Grigory Melekhov's identity conflict, adhering to the Reds, then to the Whites, back and forth time and again, depending on the circumstances. This focus on the main character's complicated path may be regarded as representative for the Don Cossacks who yearned for the preservation of their special status.

On the other hand, cornet Bunchuk talks to the lieutenants about the Cossacks' role in crushing the mutineers on the front by reminding that "the Russo-Japanese war sparked the 1905 revolution; this war will culminate in another revolution and civil war." His prophecy came true in the late autumn of 1917, when Grigory Melekhov joined the Bolsheviks. That is the moment when voices of Cossacks' autonomy are raised, distancing themselves from Kornilov's volunteer army, partisans and Bolsheviks. However, Bolsheviks and Don Cossacks established the Cossack War Revolutionary Committee, which, during the negotiations with Alexey Kaledin (representing the Don White government), invoked the people's right to judge the elections of the Cossack Assembly of February 1918.

After an armed conflict, Bolshevik Podtyolkov decided to execute on the spot the White Officers, also Don Cossacks, considered counter-revolutionaries. Such executions took place on a regular basis, showing that violence became a privileged political method (Carrère d'Encausse, 2000, p. 201). According to Carrère d'Encausse, the Russian violence of revolutionary type follows a continuous path when compared to the German violence of WWI and it is part of the Russian culture of violence, also evident in the proletariat dictatorship and war communism policy. Wounded Grigory helplessly assisted at the execution scene, which contributed to his turning to the Cossack's cause.

However, when the Red Guard entered Melekhov's village, Melekhov decided to stay in the village, proving once again that their allegiance is rather to the birthplace than to ideological concerns. The heated discussion between Melekhov, Misha Koshevoy (the brother-in-law to be) and several others revolves around the social status and military status of Melekhov brothers – officers in the Imperial Army. According to the head of Cheka, F. Dzerzhinsky's instructions, any pretention of legality was abandoned in the Civil War presented as a war of the

classes by the revolutionary propaganda; the communist commissars performed their revolutionary justice based on the questions of people's origin, education and occupation (Lynch, 2000, p. 144). Based on those principles, Melekhov could have been executed easily as counter-revolutionaries.

The scene of Podtyolkov's execution by the Cossacks and the brief confrontation between Podtyolkov and Grigory (Figure 1) portrays the clash of two different cultures – the moral culture of the old Russia represented by Grigory and the relativity of the absolute moral law subjected to the requirements of the history and party, introduced by Lenin and represented by Podtyolkov (Carrère d'Encausse, 2000, p. 206).



Figure 1: Melekhov and Podtyolkov before the latter's execution

Source: Screenshot, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, directed by S. Gerasimov, 1957, 2<sup>nd</sup> episode

The discussion between Grigory and his father is essential in understanding the Don Cossacks' position of that period. They discuss about the natural border provided by the river Don and their unwillingness of fighting beyond that; their aim is to scatter *muzhiki* (Russian peasants) from the Cossack land and to go home. The Don is deeply imbedded in Cossacks' conscience and going beyond that border would mean displaying aggressiveness and desire to conquer lands that are not linked to their self-identification. From that perspective, the Don Cossacks see themselves as defenders of their local autonomy rather than part of a larger Cossack group with a common aim and ideal and/or conquerors of the Russian or Ukrainian territories. Scattered anti-Soviet military units throughout Ukraine, Georgia, and Don Region, unable to unify into a coherent anti-Bolshevik front, contributed to their destruction and "people's dictatorship" victory. In many cases, local or regional reasons mattered more than ideological concerns (Lynch, 2000, p. 132).

On the other hand, a coherent attempt in fighting against the Reds is portrayed in the scene where the White movement generals, including the south Cossacks celebrated their alliance with the English and the French, toasting in a grand ceremony for the "great and indivisible

Russia” and their future plans to take over Moscow (Figure 2). The scene was followed by the Reds advancing on the front, lead by Osip Shtokman (Figure 3), contributing thus to a contrast between the two involved parties.



Figure 2: The Whites and foreign allies toasting

Source: Screenshot, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, directed by S. Gerasimov, 1957, 2<sup>nd</sup> episode



Figure 3: The Reds fighting

Source: Screenshot, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, directed by S. Gerasimov, 1957, 2<sup>nd</sup> episode

The foreign interference in what seemed a temporary turmoil caused by the Bolsheviks might have contributed to the inflammation of the Russian Civil War (see the definition of the “civil war” term in Dowding, 2011, pp. 101-102), in an attempt to restore a government favorable to continuing the Great War. These troops, made of Cossacks and foreign units, are named the White Don Army in Gerasimov’s film adaptation and fueled the Bolshevik propaganda on bourgeois states interfering in the internal affairs of the young revolutionary state. The two opposing positions of the Cossacks are telling of their divisive identity. Although Cossacks were united under the Tsar, they took different paths afterwards – the south Cossacks followed the White Guard and Aleksandr Kolchak (of whom there is no mention in the film adaptation of Sholokhov’s novel and a brief mention in the novel), while the Don Cossacks tried to maintain their autonomy by adhering to different sides (see Grădinaru, 2018, pp. 787-796 on the recent Russian films about WWI and Civil War).

At the individual level, after the Bolsheviks pushed the Don Cossacks, the scene in Melekhov’s house presents the unfavourable consequences of the officer status under the new circumstances. Running away from the battlefield, both Grigory and Petro Melekhov feared that staying in their village would bring their certain death. Men leaving the village meant that women had to stay and protect the goods, the cattle and the house; however, both Natalya and Darya refuse to remain, along with the youngest daughter, Dunya. Their attitude infuriated Panteley Melekhov, but it shows the shift in women’s mentality brought by the wave of social changes, occasioned not only by the Civil War (Carrère d’Encausse, 2000, pp. 177-178).

After the Soviet rule established in Tatarsky village, Grigory and the newly appointed representatives of the Bolshevik regime discuss their motivation to fight. While the Sovietized Cossack, the village chairman, rejoices that the district chairman treated him like an equal, Grigory states that he did not fight for generals, but for himself, as he “cared for neither Reds nor Whites.” Moreover, Grigory found it difficult to refrain himself and stated that the Soviet rule gave neither equality, nor freedom to “all the Cossacks.” His statements were considered counter-revolutionary, especially given the fact that the majority of the Cossacks were hostile to the Soviet rule. Melekhov managed to escape the arrest and execution, while others could not.

Another scene of Gerasimov’s film adaptation depicts a typical Cossack assembly with the Soviet rule representatives, where a Cossack has the audacity to say that “the Communists want to wipe us out so that no Cossack will be left on the Don.”<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the assembly was interrupted by the opposing forces that overtook the village. Misha Koshevoy, chairman’s assistant, merely escaped from the hands of the angry villagers, while later Aksinya’s husband was forced by Grigory to join their anti-Soviet forces. That type of forced mobilization was conducted by both the Reds and the Whites in their controlled territories (Lynch, 2000, p. 146).

Furthermore, in a fight between the Red Cossacks and the rebelled Cossacks against the Soviet rule, in yet another fratricide scene, Petro Melekhov is mercilessly killed by the Soviet chairman of the village and Misha Koshevoy. Even the fact that the chairman Ivan Alekseevich was the godfather of Petro’s daughter did not matter under those circumstances. In addition to that, Dunyasha, Grigory and Petro’s sister, was in the worst position – being in love with Misha Koshevoy and losing her brother. She is forced to surpass the war trauma, her family trauma, also forcing her mother to partake in a selective forgetting for the sake of her future marriage

<sup>1</sup> Decossackization is the Bolshevik policy of 1917-1933, consisting of systematic repressions against Cossacks, especially aiming to eliminate the Don and the Kuban Cossacks as an ethnic and economic entity.

with Koshevoy. In the bigger picture, the Don Cossacks had no time and soon no space to acknowledge trauma of the wars, many of them being deported or killed.

Nevertheless, Grigory's path is complicated yet again when his fellow fighters ask him to leave the White generals and fight for themselves, proclaiming Melekhov head of their army. He managed to decline the offer, while the next day he ruthlessly killed several Bolshevik prisoners.

The third part of Gerasimov's film adaptation starts with the discussion between Grigory and his wife. While Natalya bluntly points out Grisha's shameless behaviour with women during his campaigns, he tries to open up about the Don Cossack's difficulties in siding again with the Soviet rule to cast out the White troops. The evershifting front situation made it merely impossible to maintain Cossack autonomy.

All the parties, engaged in different sides of the Civil War, committed atrocities. The villagers, being torn apart by the bigger conflict, each of them with their own issues and losses, said and did nothing to stop such a cruel retaliation not in line with the universally acknowledged moral standards. Under those complicated circumstances, Grigory warned his sister to stop thinking about Misha Koshevoy as of a suitable groom, given the fact that he killed Petro. Dunya marrying Misha complicated Grigory's destiny furthermore, leading to Aksinya's death in the end.

The Don as natural barrier is mentioned by an old Cossack as the last thing to stand before Cossacks' fleeing toward the sea in front of the Reds' advancement. In that process, Grigory had to leave sick Aksinya to be taken care of, while changing sides yet again. After serving in the Red Army, Grigory returned home, but living under the same roof with Misha Koshevoy, newly elected village chairman, turned out to be challenging.



Figure 4: Grigory holding his son (final scene)

Source: Screenshot, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, directed by S. Gerasimov, 1958, 3<sup>rd</sup> episode

Melekhov managed to escape the imminent arrest, but was imprisoned by Yakov Fomin's unit, which was a counter-revolutionary movement in the Don region (late 1920-March 1922).<sup>2</sup> Left with no choice, Grigory joined Fomin although fully aware of people's reluctant attitude toward more fighting and human losses. When it was possible, Grigory left Fomin's band and came back for Aksinya, in the hope to settle far away together. The time ellipsis after burying the deadly wounded Aksinya in summer and coming back home in spring on the frozen river tells nothing about Melekhov's hiding in the woods with other deserters. Nevertheless, his yearning for homeland and his surviving family is well rendered on screen. The call of the blood, archaic bonds weighed more than Grigory's survival instinct (Figure 4).

### NUANCED AND SHIFTING COSSACK IDENTITY

The next film adaptation is a family effort; the project belonged to Sergey Bondarchuk (1920-1994) in 1992 and montaged into a TV series of seven episodes by his son, Fyodor Bondarchuk in 2006 (on details about the film's fate see Grădinaru, 2019, pp. 907-909). The fact that the film benefited from two directors' vision in different decades is telling of the conflicting vision and reception. Apart from the fact that the lead actors of the film adaptation were foreign actors (Ruppert Everett as Grigory and Delphine Forest as Aksinya), the effort of piecing together a film for the audience of a different era may be questioned in terms of relevancy. Moreover, when it comes to the territorial identity and Cossacks' destiny, Sergey Bondarchuk's vision may have been tainted by the son's montage. It is known that three hours of Sergey's footage were not used by his son in the TV series format. On the other hand, this project may represent a fruitful opportunity to research cinepaternity (see this direction of research in Gosילו & Hashamova, 2010), as well as the outcome of filming and montaging in different decades, whilst the public taste has undergone some alterations and the cultural perception of the applauded international film collaborations of the '90s (see N. Mikhalkov's *The Barber of Siberia*, 1998) was replaced by a reluctant attitude. However, with this in mind, we are to explore the end result of the third film adaptation 1992/2006 of Sholokhov's novel in the complicated post-Soviet background (see Grădinaru, 2018, pp. 325-326).

The descriptive aerial scenes of the Don and nature are accompanied by the short introduction of the extra diegetic narrative voice of Nikita Mikhalkov, a device which adds coherence to the chaotic events of the 1917-1920 and complicated matters of the heart. While the first episode sets the mood and atmosphere of the Cossack lifestyle (Figure 5), the second portrays Grigory's departure for his four years of military service away from Aksinya's loving nestle and his wife's wounded heart. However, Grigory left for WWI, not an ordinary military service, a different war than the Turkish one, which was simple and blunt in the opinion of an old Cossack. In this situation, the reasoning was clear – all Cossacks, regardless of their geographical position, fought for the Tsar and Russia. The extra diegetic voice closes with several comments about the increasing discontent in Russia because of the continuous retreat of the Russian Army and difficult war effort.

<sup>2</sup> Fomin's unit launched a mutiny as a reaction to Bolshevik food requisitioning and started a guerilla struggle against the Bolshevik regime. The most surprising aspect was the fact that Fomin was a "Red commander with impeccable revolutionary credential" (Holquist, 2002, p. 274). Moreover, he claimed that he was fighting "against the Communists, but not against the Soviet power," urging people to reestablish "the true power of the whole laboring people!" (Holquist, 2002, p. 275).

The third episode mentions the Czechoslovak mutiny in Siberia, Makhno's movement in Ukraine, the unrest in Caucasus, Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, or, in narrator's words "entire Russia in the struggles of remaking," while the Don Cossacks defected either returning home like Petro or joining the Reds like Grigory. The simple Cossack reasoning is expressed by Panteley Melekhov: "The stinky Russia shouldn't rule here! A Cossack will remain Cossack!" The statement stemmed out of fear of the Soviet rule that intended to split the land to everyone regardless of their social status. From this perspective, the territorial identity matters more than the national identity. Whereas Gerasimov rendered violent communist acts as ellipses, Bondarchuk avoided that device. For example, the image when Soviet rule executed about ten Cossacks, considered dangerous or counter-revolutionary, is suggestive.



Figure 5: Grigory and his wife Natalya

Source: Screenshot, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, directed by S. Bondarchuk, montage by F. Bondarchuk, 1992/2006, 1<sup>st</sup> episode

The scene of Grigory's fight with the newly established Soviet rule, his former friends, revolves around concepts like freedom, rights and equality, fiercely combatted by Melekhov who describes the Soviet rule as "Killing, looting and again blood on blood!" Unable to calm down the spirits in Tatarsky village, the representatives of the Soviet rule had to flee, as enraged Cossacks rebelled (Figure 6).

Given that news were scarce and incomplete, a Cossack village chairman stated: "It doesn't matter to whose God we pray as long as there is God." That attitude is remarkable in its simplicity and it also supports the idea that the Don Cossacks would not go beyond what is known as their homeland against other Cossacks with the same faith. Under those circumstances, the Reds were the only ones with no faith in God and contempt towards faith in general, fearing no consequences in the after life and believing in nothing else than the party. Subsequently, they were regarded as *bezbozhniki* ("godless"), *antikhristy* ("anti-Christ") and strange to Cossacks' beliefs and lifestyle.

Furthermore, a very old Cossack calls the younger ones to stop the Bolshevik movement in the Don region, appealing to Cossacks' identity trait – belief in God: “Why are you staying here while Jewish commissars mock your belief?”



Figure 6: Grigory fighting against the Reds

Source: Screenshot, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, directed by S. Bondarchuk, montage by F. Bondarchuk, 1992/2006, 3rd episode

Unlike Gerasimov's version, Bondarchuk's film adaptation articulates the “imperial and religious turn” of the post-Soviet cinema (Berezhnaya, 2013). The focus on the religious component of the Cossacks' lifestyle contributes to shaping the Self opposed to the Other – the godless, shameless, amoral Reds.

Narrator's text points out that “each and every one had their own truth and swath of land” to protect and to fight for, which complicated the bigger perspective once the Tsar was missing as the authority figure. In Cossacks' view, the Bolshevik government, with its many leaders, commissars and odd ideas of equality and no faith in God, along with the decossackization strategy, were bearers of Cossack identity's annihilation. In a scene of the fourth episode, Grigory finds out about Trotsky's article on the Don Cossacks' rebellion against the Soviet rule as General Denikin's associates – *Denikintsy*. The idea seems repulsive to the Don Cossacks, as they would not identify as members of the White movement during the Civil War. Moreover, they would sense the otherness in the Reds' associations for the Don Cossack identity with the Whites. Given the fact that the Don Cossacks were not convinced of the right path of the Whites, who failed to attract to their ideological project of restoration without a Tsar, they would not wholeheartedly support and therefore would not identify with the White cause. This Cossacks' placing in the category of “other” could be noticed in the Soviet culture, linked to the myth of the violent Cossack (see Petrone, 2011, pp. 95-96).

While Gerasimov's scene depicting Ivan Alekseevich's execution by Darya silences the violent execution of the rest of the Bolshevik prisoners, Bondarchuk's version renders the scene from

the novel sparing no gruesome details. Cossacks against Cossacks became the normalcy during the Civil War and that is the rebuke uttered by an old Cossack – “you kill your own brothers.” The old Cossack, Natalya’s grandfather, was killed brutally by Misha Koshevoy. When returning from the retreat, Panteley Melekhov barely looked at his wife, daughter and grandchildren, drawn to his courtyard as a magnet. A Cossack kneeling and crossing himself thankfully for God’s protection of his goods is a suggestive image of the Don Cossack territorial identity and of the power of nostalgia (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Panteley Melekhov’s return

Source: Screenshot, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, directed by S. Bondarchuk, montage by F. Bondarchuk, 1992/2006, 4<sup>th</sup> episode

The fifth episode adds a new layer to the proud Don Cossack identity, as it is shaped with the help of the White movement members, who dealt tactlessly, with blunt arrogance with the Cossacks. The White General reproached the Don Cossacks that they abandoned the front in autumn of the previous year. Moreover, the Whites’ brutality with the peaceful inhabitants was comparable to the Reds (Lynch, 2000, p. 135), a fact that is probably not enough portrayed in this film adaptation.

One sign of the Cossacks joining the White forces resided in wearing epaulets again, like during the Tsar period. However, Cossacks were careful not to sew the epaulets strongly, to be capable of tearing them off in case of being taken as prisoners. The detail is relevant for the period, as in the Red Army the special uniforms and military grades became superfluous, in an attempt to bring equality within the army (Lynch, 2000, p. 146).

During the retreat of the Don Cossacks, seeing the disaster caused by the typhus and Civil War, Grigory’s thoughts, occasioned by leaving sick Aksinya in strangers’ care in Kuban region, were: “The silent Don is perishing!” Immediately after that, Melekhov learns about his father’s death of typhus, burying him in the “strange Stavropol land.” Panteley’s death far from home seemed

tragic for those times, in contrast with Cossacks' will to be buried in their homeland, near their beloved, in the place overlooking the quiet flowing Don.

The seventh and last episode in Bondarchuk's version of the quiet Don presents the turn of events – Grigory joining the Reds and fighting the White Poles “till he would wash away his sins for the Reds.” But the forgiveness of the Soviet rule was difficult to obtain, as Misha Koshevoy disregards the present pro-Soviet activity because of the past anti-Soviet acts: “Grigory spilled our blood aplenty. It should be established which blood weighs more.” In that way, Koshevoy makes an ideological distinction, overlooking the territorial Cossack identity and the new position within Melekhov family after marrying Dunya, Grigory's sister. The territorial identity and blood relations are subordinated and secondary to the political principles that drive the Bolshevik Cossacks. Unlike his wife, who was willing to forget the past horrors, Koshevoy stresses the otherness in Grigory's status and is prepared to contribute to another ideologically motivated murder within his newly settled family.

Furthermore, the clarifying scene between the two brothers-in-law – Misha and Grigory – adds nuances to the complicated path of Grisha Melekhov. In Koshevoy's vision, Grigory is still the enemy, “an unreliable man.” Grigory's joining Fomin's anti-Soviet band is rendered unclearly and simplified probably to match the TV series format and to present in more touching details the end of Grigory and Aksinya's love story. The same ellipsis as in Gerasimov's version covers Melekhov's period in the woods. Moreover, a similar scene of crossing the river and getting rid of the gun is present in Bondarchuk's film adaptation. In that reading, Melekhov's last decision is prompted by complicated matters of the soul – war trauma and deep mourning for the loss of his passionate love, Aksinya, and his domestic tranquility in the figure of his wife Natalya, on the one hand, and ardent home sickness that could be tied to the Don Cossack sense of territorial belonging, on the other (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Grigory and his son (final scene)

Source: Screenshot, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, directed by S. Bondarchuk, montage by F. Bondarchuk, 1992/2006, 7<sup>th</sup> episode

## BETWEEN ACTIVE AND PASSIVE TERRITORIALITY

Director Sergey Ursulyak's film adaptation comprises more episodes (14 episodes) and depicts more key-scenes from Sholokhov's novel. One of them portrays Aksinya's attempt to lure Grigory to run away together and start afresh (the first episode). His reaction is suggestive to that period's customs: "Where would I go from the household? Besides, I start the military service this year. [...] I won't leave the land. Here there's the steppe, you can breathe freely, but elsewhere ... I won't go anywhere from this village." Both aspects – household/land and military service – are Cossacks' defining traits of the local territorial identity. Moving from his birthplace seems unthinkable to Grisha in peaceful period, especially given the fact that his place of living was intrinsically linked to the military service to the Tsar.

The fourth episode announces the outbreak of WWI and Grigory's involvement, as well as his first time killing a man. Since Hungarian Hussars and Austrian soldiers are identified as enemies, killing them is considered "holy killing on the battlefield" (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Grigory on the battlefield (right)

Source: Screenshot, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, directed by S. Ursulyak, 2015, 6<sup>th</sup> episode

The fifth episode renders Melekhov's heroic deed as he carried a wounded officer, being wounded himself. The sixth episode dwells on Grigory's receiving the first *Georgievsky Krest* (Cross of Saint George) in the village, continuing the tradition of his fathers' bravery while serving the Tsar. Thus, Grisha has become a "good Cossack" (*dobryi kazak*) in his father's and community's perspective (Figure 10).

Grigory's conversion to the Red cause is presented in a nuanced manner: from the blunt statement "We are Cossacks, men of service" (*My kazaki, sluzhivye lyudi*) to embracing the Ukrainian soldier's idea of "power to the people" (*vlast narodu*). In 1917, on the battlefield, Grigory recognizes, after receiving news of his growing children, that he was sick and tired of Tsar's service (*ostochertela tsareva sluzhba*). That is the first time when the "Cossack

government" is mentioned, opposed to the Bolshevik rule. In that scenario, Russian peasants (*muzhiki*) are Cossacks' opponents, as they would get Cossacks' land.



Figure 10: Panteley Melekhov (in the middle, sitting) and the elders reading the letter about Grigory's heroism

Source: Screenshot, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, directed by S. Ursulyak, 2015, 6<sup>th</sup> episode

Both the third and the seventh episode present fragments of documentary footage – WWI, February and October Revolutions, respectively. The next sequences move to the reality of the Tatarsky village: elders of the village gathered in the centre, near the church, and a fragile Bolshevik attempting to give a speech and convince the audience of the right path of the Soviet rule. Director Ursulyak abandons the novel's accuracy to engage in a poetic license with the frail revolutionary character, replacing thus the character of the novel and previous two film adaptations, Osip Shtokman, the Bolshevik leader, resembling Lenin's figure. The irony is evident, as the elders send the speaker home with a paternal care and discuss the news of the October Revolution. The concise statement of Platonych, the literate elder, causes reactions: "We'll live without the Tsar!" The news of the republic, the new order and equality are troubling to the old Cossacks: "If it's equality (*ravenstvo*), then they will level us with peasants (*muzhiki*)." The general complaint is also expressed: "What have they done to Russia?" (*Do chego doveli Rossiu?*) That complaint is a sign of objectivization and detachment from the Russian imperial identity, while the wise Cossack observers are concerned with their local territorial autonomy based on their identity.

The news of Grigory joining the Bolsheviks is not received joyfully by the Melekhovs, but the next scene nuances Grisha's position: "The Revolution is convenient, as Ukraine has Rada, we have our military government, our rules. We'll live like our forefathers in the old days." In this case, we may highlight Grigory's attempt of contributing to a restoration of the mythical Cossack glory and a restorative form of nostalgia is the driving force of this meandering individual destiny.

On the other hand, Grigory's joining Bolsheviks seems a high betrayal to an old Cossack – "embracing the Red faith" is unthinkable to the elder who considers war as a Cossack lifestyle. In contrast to the "Red faith," the church of the village seen from afar is presented by Panteley Melekhov as the symbol of homeland (*rodina*).

Wounded on the battlefield as command of the division, Grigory assists to commissar Podtyolkov's revolutionary trial and execution of fine White officers. The clash between Cossacks' contradictory visions is telling: while Grigory is regarded by the commissar as a man with officer reminiscences, the commissar is called "traitor of Cossackdom" (*izmennik kazachestva*). Thus, Grigory's restorative attempts of his homeland hit the incomprehensible wall of the Reds' rupture from the absolute principles of morality.

After the distressing news of losing the authoritative figure of the Tsar, in an attempt of their bordering process and different understanding of their territoriality, the Don Cossacks engaged in the fratricide war. The civil war supposed several stages of both active territoriality, which, according to Tiziana Banini, stands for a dynamic and open social construction of the territory, "from below" (actors, groups, individuals), and not only "from above", that is to say by institutional, political and decisionmaking actors (Banini, 2017, p. 17), on the one hand, and what we consider passive territoriality, which in the Don Cossacks' case, stands for the subsequent Cossacks' abandonment of the front and passive awaiting of whatever fate would bring, in a fatalistic attitude.

In spring, the White command urges the villagers to protect the silent Don from the "new raids of the wild bandits." His speech underlines the identity traits of the Cossacks – their Orthodox faith and holy churches – as being trampled by the Reds. In the ninth episode, after the establishment of the Red government in the village, an old Cossack still wears his military crosses, proudly displaying them on his chest: "I earned them serving God and the Tsar, but this rule is not from God. While I pledged allegiance to the Tsar, I did not pledge loyalty to [Russian] peasants (*muzhiki*)." Nevertheless, at the end of the 1919, as the tenth episode shows, one of the Cossack elders expresses his anger with the war of Orthodox Russians and Cossacks, reminding of other wars that had ended – the Russo-Circassian War (1864), the Russo-Turkish War (probably referring to the last one of 1877-1878 from the series of twelve wars).

Whereas Grigory is the first choice as command of the division, the elders stated that his recent serving the Red cause represents a risk. Petro Melekhov was their second choice, sealing thus his tragic destiny. Grisha's status as the Other is best developed in Ursulyak's TV version. Therefore, Grigory is doomed to wandering, unable to find his place in the clash of forces and ideologies.

Commissar Podtyolkov's difficulties and execution appear in the eighth episode (Figure 11), caused by his Cossacks' refusal to fight against their own: "We won't fight our Cossack brothers!" This is the case when, in Hall's terms, "what we are" and "where we come from" weighs more than the Red ideal "what we want to become." (Hall, 1996, p. 4) Regardless of this Cossack status, soldiers from Podtyolkov's division were executed.

Later, in the fall of 1918, Petro would exclaim, in a sincere talk with Grisha: "Look how they have divided the people [...] Oh, God! Several years and it's still the same!" The pronoun "they" expresses the ideological "otherness," with far reaching consequences for Cossacks' borders, values, status, lifestyle and future. Moreover, Petro expressed his fear that Grigory has doubts, that he "hasn't found himself yet" and he could lean towards the Reds again. In that case, the terrible *brat protiv brata* ("brother against brother") would become literally true because of "what they want to become" – either part of the independent or autonomous Don or part of the Soviet Russia.

Full of tension is the ninth episode, when the Reds stop for the night in Melekhovy's house, after the retreat of the Don army. Grigory is recognized as a White officer immediately by one troubled Red soldier. Grisha reproached the Red soldier's intolerable behaviour, as he considered that the Reds should not behave as if they conquered the village when the Cossacks left the front voluntarily.



Figure 11: Podtyolkov's execution

Source: Screenshot, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, directed by S. Ursulyak, 2015, 8<sup>th</sup> episode

The settlement of the Soviet rule in Tatarsky village debuts with disarming, then taking the cattle of the Cossacks; rumors of Cossacks' executions and expropriations from Kazan to their area reached the village, followed by the locals' desire to rebel against such a power that aims at evening out the lazy and poor with those hardworking and wealthy. As mentioned in Gerasimov's and Bondarchuk's film adaptations, the scene between the chairman of the village and Grigory points out the issue of equality as the root of many Cossacks' problems under the Soviet rule.

Ursulyak's merit is focusing on the decossackization process – the executions of Cossack elders considered dangerous to the Soviet rule, such is the case of Natalya's father. Cossack rebellion is presented as the natural consequence of the abusive Soviet rule. The metonymical presentation of the broken lives by the Civil War is powerfully rendered in the scene of Petro bringing the body of the executed Natalya's father to the village, while Misha Koshevoy, beaten and wounded by the rebelled Cossacks, was hiding in the snow near the road.

The tenth episode unveils Grigory's anger and eagerness to avenge Petro's death, along with his moral downfall because of "walking on the edge of death all the time." Moreover, in his discussion with Natalya, he admits that "there's no purpose to this constant killing the others." In other words, he lost the sight of "what he wanted/wants to become" after constantly smothering his conscience. Whereas before Petro's death Grigory was inclined to saving lives of the Red prisoners, afterwards he could not stop killing the Reds to quench his thirst for revenge.

S. Ursulyak's film adaptation adds complex layers to the Civil War, avoiding idealization of the Don Cossacks, as one of the Red prisoners admits that "I don't expect good from you – you are Cossacks." In addition to that, when the Don Army instituted its rule, women and children of the Reds were imprisoned on Kuzinov's order, which enraged Grigory upon finding that out. He rushed to liberate the prisoners, causing a scene, convinced of the prisoners' ideological innocence.

In contrast with Gerasimov's human approach of Darya killing Ivan Alekseevich and eluding the scene of the prisoners' murder by the angry villagers, Ursulyak's version depicts villagers rushing to exterminate the other wounded and beaten up prisoners – beyond Darya's gross plan, the blurred ellipsis renders the cruel bloodshed.

Another ruthless act is Koshevoy murdering the old Korshunov; the old man reminded Mitka of his previous status as modest worker and his present status of *Antikhrystovy sluga* ("Antichrist's servant") and fighter against the Cossacks. As retaliation, Mitka Korshunov, upon finding only ashes of his house, murdered Koshevoy's mother and innocent children. Panteley Melekhov banished Korshunov from his household, as "it is not a Cossack deed to be an executioner." Elder's phrasing expresses the values of the Don Cossacks as opposed to those of the "Antichrist's servants" that are led by the so-called "socialist morality," according to which lie, theft and violence are not bad *per se* (Lynch, 2000, p. 180).

The Don as the fragile border point between the so-called *muzhiki* (Russian peasants) and Don Cossacks is mentioned by one of the Red prisoners condemned to death; "You cannot execute all the Russia; when winter comes and the Don is frozen, ours will press you again." This passive position of the Cossacks at winter is part of what we named passive territoriality, along with their unwillingness to go beyond their borders even if that would have served to the bigger purpose of defeating the Reds and thus defending their local autonomy. The active territoriality mood was activated only in case of extreme violence, terror and abuses displayed by the Soviet rule and Red Army.

The shifting border is well expressed in the scene of the eleventh episode, when a Cossack throws away the red Soviet flag and sets the Don flag, while horses trample the red flag uncaringly and people come back from the refuge to their village. Furthermore, the Don government came to Tatarsky village to commemorate the people who lost their lives to "liberate the homeland from the Bolsheviks" and "women who especially distinguished themselves in the armed fight against the Red bastards."

However, under the new circumstances, Grigory Melekhov, as command of his partisan Cossack division in 1919, failed to respond properly to orders and responsibilities of the General. Being blamed for "Bolshevik manners" he managed to threaten the General with his fierce look and his brave Cossacks. Using Petro's words, Grisha "didn't find himself" to that moment. Later, after coming back from the Red Army, Grigory clarified his separatist vision in a discussion with his army comrade from the village, Prokhor: "If only it were possible to have resisted both the Reds and the Whites. It would have been better. To me, they are all the same – either my brother-in-law Mitka Korshunov or Mikhail Koshevoy. Though, I don't know; I envy both – everything was clear for them from the beginning, they had straight paths and endings. But I have wandered since the 17<sup>th</sup> year like a drunken man: I gave up the Whites and did not join the Reds" (*ot belykh otbilsia, k krasnym ne pristal*).

In both Bondarchuk's and Ursulyak's versions, there are similar scenes rendering the discussion between Grigory and Mikhail Koshevoy upon Melekhov's return. Grigory is the "hero of a nightmarish period" in Sergey Ursulyak's words. Moreover, in director's perspective, "There is a

fine line which once crossed, ours become others (*svoi stanoviatcia chuzhimi*), where there comes a global misunderstanding of people talking the same language, thinking apparently of the same things and wishing the same for the country" (Yakovich, 2015). However, the final scenes of the 2015 film adaptation differ from the previous ones: while swimming in the frozen waters of the Don toward his birthplace, Grigory meets his relatives in the after life, a pastoral scenery, where all are dressed in white. He slowly approaches his home (Figure 12), lying in the courtyard as a sign of total allegiance to his birthplace.



Figure 12: Grigory coming back home

Source: Screenshot, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, directed by S. Ursulyak, 2015, 14<sup>th</sup> episode

In a nuanced perspective, in the Don Territory, "ours" are those driven more or less with a restorative nostalgia, while "others" are destroyers of the present social, religious and administrative structure. Whereas "ours" oscillate between active and passive territoriality, "others" are enlivened by the revolutionary ideals applied on territoriality, lifestyle and values.

## CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

Territorial identity represents a response of the local community to inconvenient super-local decisions (Banini, 2017, p. 21), as shown in three of the four subsequent film adaptations of Sholokhov's novel *And Quiet Flows the Don*. Thus, the Don Cossacks unleashed their popular utopianism, following the tradition of peasant and Cossack rebellions of the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Stites, 1989, p. 17) as a reaction to Tsar's abdication, on the one hand, and to the Red terror and abusive Soviet rule, on the other. While autonomy driven Cossacks abandoned the myth of the redeeming Tsar and were inclined to overlook the social inequalities for the sake of their regional territorial identity construction and defense against the Red "Christ's traitors" (*khristoprodavtsy*), the poorer Cossacks yearned for social equality and personal revenge. The

latter went with the flow of destructive violence of the Red terror, regardless of their previous allegiance, values and lifestyle. Nevertheless, both sides engaged in this fratricide war might have emulated peasant and Cossack rebels of the past, be it Bolotnikov, Razin, Bulavin or Pugachev. Though the abdication and then murder of the Tsar might have caused a shock under different circumstances among the Cossacks, their allegiance to their ataman and loyalty to their territorial identity mattered more while facing the Red danger to decompose their society and lifestyle.

Whereas the first (partial) film adaptation of 1930 conveys marvelously the Don Cossack territorial identity, relying on ethnographic authenticity, Gerasimov's version (1957-1958) approaches reluctantly the divisive Cossack territorial identity based on different ideologies, in a thorny post-Stalinist period. Although Gerasimov's film adaptation introduces contextualizing details of the Cossack bordering process, they are scarce and the overall picture is simplified, with a focus on the unifying power of the Red cause and forging the "collective self" in the detriment of the complex nuances of the foreign involvement, of the Soviet policy of "war communism," but a splash of the individual tragedy in melodramatic key. Nevertheless, the 1957-1958 film managed to capture on screen the clash of values of the traditional Cossack society and the rising revolutionary elite conducted by the so-called "socialist morality." Sergey Gerasimov's version of the not so quiet Don Territory may be regarded as an honest Soviet attempt in offering a de-Stalinized concept of history, courageous enough to show the class struggle in the Communist advancement on the Don (Rollberg, 2008). On the other hand, the film is in line with the Soviet myth-making phenomenon and line of argument, according to which the Bolshevik victory was achieved after facing numerous internal and external class enemies. That complex and difficult process in turn offered heroes of the type of Osip Shtokman, commissar Podtyolkov that fit into the gallery of heroes of Socialist Realism.

Though deprived of the original director's completion, the first post-Soviet film adaptation retains more melodramatic patterns (Larsen, 2000, pp. 85-120) than the post-Stalinist version. Moreover, despite the liabilities given by the uninspired choice of the lead (foreign) actors, the 1992/2006 version of Sergey and Fyodor Bondarchuk's quiet Don adds nuances to the shifting border process in the Don Territory and layers to the deepening differences between the Self – the Cossacks that fought, as Grigory put it, "for themselves, not for generals" (imperial, national or revolutionary cause) – and the Other – bluntly reduced to "Jewish commissars." In addition to that, the Self is refined in opposition to multiple others: not only the godless Reds, the neighboring Ukrainians and South Cossacks, but also the scattered units of the White movement, or *Denikintsy*, units under the command of General Anton Denikin in the South Russia. Furthermore, Bondarchuk's TV series succeeds in conveying the deeply rooted Cossack regional identity as weighing more than the post-Imperial and not yet established Soviet identity. The aforementioned Don Cossack territorial identity is deeply imbedded in the inhabitants' lifestyle and fighting style (that is of those content with their social status after the February Revolution), which may be reduced to the principle of non-belligerence over the established border of the Don Territory.

The most recent and comprehensive approach in adapting to screen Sholokhov's novel belongs to Sergey Ursulyak, who accomplished a balanced depiction of the troubled events on the Don during the Great War and the Russian Civil War(s). Given the generous format, the TV series also dwells on matters as war trauma, nostalgia and mourning, and objectivization as means of identification of the Self. Although avoiding the ideological content of Sholokhov's novel, in our opinion, Ursulyak's film manages to avert the trap of close adaptation by introducing poetic license in several cases (the previously mentioned replacement of Osip Shtokman by a fragile

revolutionary and Panteley Melekhov's death in his homeland, not in the exile). The film also eludes the entrapment of White movement idealization into which several Russian directors fell in the previous decade (see Grădinaru, 2018, pp. 787-796). The 2015 film adaptation follows the "religious turn" of the post-Soviet cinema, providing a deeper Cossack identification with the religious beliefs, practices and symbols than in the previous adaptations. On the other hand, the focus on Grigory's individual path, with all its doubts and desertions, uses melodramatic patterns aplenty and offers the occasions to explore the concepts of active and passive territoriality in the Don Cossack bordering process.

All three complete film adaptations convey the idyllic projected image of the Cossack life following the Tsar's abdication as expressed by Grigory Melekhov after fighting in wars on different sides – "staying at home, raising the children, working the land," which may be summarized as the Cossack utopian version of post-imperialism or a Cossack version of republic where the ataman would be the only ruling figure. According to this utopian vision, each can enjoy a peaceful life, regardless of their ideological belief and despite all the war crimes, trauma and spiritual scars the fratricide war had brought upon them. In fact, Melekhov's meandering path may be seen in light of the new forms of "utopianism of rebellion" (Stites, 1989, p. 18) and as an expression of the Russian, or even more specific, Cossack culture of violence (Carrère d'Encausse, 2000), but retaining moral, traditional and imperialist values. Grigory's reasoning and ever-questioning and changing position might be regarded as a form of Cossack daydreaming after the Revolutions, amidst the Russian Civil Wars. In this turmoil and attempt of the making and defending the Don Cossack territoriality, Grigory was not the only one doubting, questioning, weighing the options, trying each side, erring and falling victim to the nefarious circumstances. Furthermore, one might observe Melekhov's path from restorative nostalgia, concerned with the idealized restoration of a golden Cossack age, subjected to no outer power, to reflective nostalgia, which is more "oriented toward the individual narrative, accepting the irrevocability of the past and human finitude" (Boym, 2011, p. 50).

Our present attempt of revealing multiple facets of the Cossack territorial identity in film adaptations of different historical periods represents the starting point for further explorations of this generous and challenging area of study. More profound insights could be accomplished after focusing on the genesis and writing process of M. Sholokhov's novel, as well as on adaptation theories. Moreover, further research into the film making process of each film adaptation could offer insights into the historical background and the existing taboos or special requirements of those periods.

#### Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the project "Quality, Innovative and Relevant Doctoral and Postdoctoral Research for the Labor Market": POCU/380/6/13/124146, project co-financed by the European Social Fund through The Romanian Operational Programme "Human Capital" 2014-2020.

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