

## Heroes of New Russia: Analysis of Character Archetypes in the Works of Alexey Balabanov by Kirill Shidlovskiy.

Alexey Balabanov belonged to the first generation of Russian filmmakers unencumbered by the draconian strictures of the Soviet Union. After the fall of communism in 1991, most Russian films were either kitsch or imitations of American action movies. However, after the initial reaction against the past, Russia once again became one of the leading producers of 'art house' films.

Balabanov, on the other hand, continued on the more populist route. 'I don't make movies with ideas. Ideas make for bad cinema,' he explained. 'I don't make my movies for the intelligentsia, but for the people. That's why they like my films.'

Despite this declaration by Balabanov, Kirill has taken on the difficult task of scrutinising the director's entire oeuvre from an intellectual and/or philosophical perspective.

This thesis is timely as it comes after Balabanov's relatively recent premature death, allowing a wide overview. Kirill has chosen to contextualise the films from different angles. He sees them as partly autobiographical – relating them to personal events and relationships – and biographical – relating them to the vast changes in Russian society after the fall of Communism. At the same time, the thesis attempts to transcend the narrative aspects of the films by taking a more generalised interpretation, by defining and delving into philosophical and psychological archetypes, with surprising references to Plato, Francis Bacon, Jung and Freud. It is an original way of analysing the sort of populist, commercially successful art that is often considered superficial. In this way, the thesis provides a deeper interpretation of Balabanov's films than the director, who saw himself as the 'anti-establishment rock-'n'-roller of Russian film' would admit.

In addition, Kirill has provided a detailed theoretical basis to the thesis, laying out his research methods, as well as a scholarly bibliography.

I recommend the thesis for a master's degree.

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