

Title: Peculiarities of the National Character: Finns and Finland in the Films of Aleksandr Rogozhkin

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This paper will examine the ways in which Finns and Finland are used to create a post-Soviet Russian identity in Aleksandr Rogozhkin's three films *Особенности национальной охоты* (Peculiarities of the National Hunt), *Особенности национальной рыбалки* (Peculiarities of the National Fishing Trip), and *Кукушка* (The Cuckoo). As scholars have noted, Rogozhkin's films are part of a general trend among Russian filmmakers to attempt to define a distinctly Russian national identity following the collapse of the Soviet Union (see for example Birgit Beumers, "Myth-Making and Myth-Taking: Lost Ideals and the War in Contemporary Russian Cinema"; Yana Hashamova, *Pride and Panic: Russian Imagination of the West in Post-Soviet Film*; and *Russia and its Other(s) on Film: Screening Intercultural Dialogue*, ed. Stephen C. Hutchings). Finland, meanwhile, has already been used by earlier Russian artists to help create the current Russian national identity (see for example Otto Boele, "The North in Russian Romantic Literature"). Bearing this in mind, this paper will look at the contrasting depictions of Russians and Finns in these three films. Although Finns are portrayed in them as sympathetic and ostensibly positive, as opposed to the hard-drinking buffoonery of many of the Russians, this paper will discuss how Russian moral superiority and physical dominance over its Western neighbor is actually reinforced through (frequently drunken) displays of "Russian soul" and Russian (or Soviet) military might. This in turn allows these films to define the Russian national identity as one of "superiority through failure," in which typically negative and stereotypically Russian traits such as violence, alcoholism, and impracticality ultimately triumph over the supposedly "Western virtues" of diligence and order represented by Finland, and these post-Soviet versions of Ivan-Durak are thus able to resist the forces of Westernization.